

Voyage Of the StarStrider

Jason Romanenko

The book cover features a central illustration of a futuristic, white, multi-winged aircraft flying over a planet. The sky is a vibrant sunset with orange, yellow, and blue hues. A crescent moon is visible in the upper right. The author's name, Jason Romanenko, is printed at the bottom right.

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Temperament of StarStrider Crew and Disposition of
Norberg Staff

Character	Unusual traits
SEAN POLLARD	Cosmetically enhanced third eye, result of cosmetic surgery, widely reported to increase default chromosomes to 24. Sean Pollard is exemplary for this.
BILL PITTARD	A little short, a little stout, certainly no slouch. Enjoys ethereal music.
SHEILA DENNINGTON	A very intuitive lady. Qualified to use an ice burner (weapon).
SORAYA MARKOWITZ	Has a collection of solid terrain samples from different planets (and moons).
BRIAN O'HALAHAN	Favourite book "Spice Harvesting Techniques from Byzantium to Red Bush"
DEAN SLATER	Well humoured and witty. Normally optimistic.
MIKE FREEMAN	Enjoys comics, normally keeps a low profile, always available on his communication channel.
Additional character notes and human qualities	
SEAN POLLARD	A little like a Mafioso. He keeps strict control, rewards creativity, detests failure and will not accept failure-ultimately punishes failure.

Character	Unusual traits	(continued.)
BILL PITTARD	(Sean Pollard's colleague) Normally reports to Pollard about scope of projects. Has various sources of information. Is more ambitious than Pollard - a bit of a paradox since only Pollard has the real power to enable missions of (exploration and research), to get underway.	
NEIL ANDURRO	Focus - the more peppermint you consume beforehand - the greater the enjoyment of the spearmint, mood is a thing for cattle and love play. Main weakness is trusting the A.I. Also loves his ship, StarStrider III.	
SHEILA DENNINGTON	Understands the A.I. implicitly and frequently takes it offline for updates, a little unsafe as other necessary updates would not be included.	
SORAYA MARKOWITZ	Always normalising and scanning even if nothing is there. Sometimes over enthusiastic.	
BRIAN O'HALAHAN	Responds to commands from Neil, Sheila and Soraya. Also understands ships sensors and is normally attracted to food deposits, whatever their origin.	
DEAN SLATER	A bit of a joker, always messing around.	
MIKE FREEMAN	Always on standby. Has tools including a torch and circuit testing, welding and measurement devices, falls asleep easily. Sometimes suffers from microsleep.	
XAMEN	Dungeon master / genie type character residing on the Norberg.	

EXTRA SOLAR MIGRATORY ANTAGONISTS

- ARACHNIDROID M Prefers blue, have mastered interplanetary travel with their relatively thin metal shells.
- ARACHNIDROID F Prefers Red, have mastered interplanetary travel with their relatively thin metal shells.
- MAUROPOD Normally left on astral body surfaces which for them is like bird's nest, where they grow until they become arachnidroids as above. M or F designation only occurs as the climax of their existence.
- ARACHNIDROIDS Can disable StarStrider's on board gravity. Can also alter it's trajectory and ultimately feed off the information all sourced from the StarStrider remotely.
- MAUROPODS More than capable of being really nasty to humans, however, must remain local to their astral body for specified period.

KEEP IT STRANGE

Pink Star of Procurement

POSTER

OPERATION INVICTUS : Help protect our Planet from Extra-solar migrations. Recruiting Now, Contact: The Corporation

StarStrider approx 5 speed for travelling 100 million miles ? climb to 150,000 mph then decrease and fall into orbit asteroid. Asteroid at least 14 miles diameter. Establish orbit, actually only very loose orbit. Approx 42 days travel, each way.

Ext. Prime advertising site for large posters -
early morning

Two workers are pasting up Corporation posters.

WORKER 1

They n'arf bring out some rubbish don't they.

WORKER 2

Oh yeah, the Corporation! If you believe this,
you'll believe anything.

WORKER 1

Extra-Solar migration? I don't think so.

WORKER 2

Come on, we've got five more of these to put up
before the rush hour begins.

Ext. Lunch time establishment. day

Husband and wife are enjoying their meal.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Darling. There's something I wanted to
talk to you about.

MR. DENNINGTON

What's that, honey?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

I've found a vacancy that I think requires
my attention.

MR. DENNINGTON

Oh, you know you prefer to work from home.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Not this one. This one's a real opportunity. Good pay, and I'll get to make a real difference. It's better than being at the beck and call of Ostrom Pharmacies, and when I get back we can talk more about getting that house on Hibern Avenue.

MR DENNINGTON

How long are we talking about, honey ? You're not missing Jake's birthday.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

It'll just be three months. Oh lord, Jake will be busy with college work.

MR DENNINGTON

It sounds like you've made your mind up. If you've already decided, then there's nothing I can do to stop you.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Look. I really do appreciate you being there for me. You won't be sorry. I'll see to that.

Newspaper advertisement in bag says :

XTRA-SOLAR - Intervention - Force Initiative

INT. LIBRARY - Day

Soraya Markowitz approaches Foreign Publication. Picks up Science magazine and sits down to read. She obtains contact details.

INT. University Corridor - Day

Ad gets posted on Uni noticeboard. Estimated three months to complete mission. Mike Freeman, mature student, exits a lecture. We see several students approach noticeboard. Edward Whittal is also a student.

MIKE FREEMAN

This one looks good.

STUDENT 1

I've already copied the details of that one.

EDWARD WHITTAL

Me too.

MIKE FREEMAN

I don't want to destroy your confidence, but your engineering SUCKS.

EDWARD WHITTAL

So does gravity, but that doesn't stop anyone walking does it?

MIKE FREEMAN

I'll see you there.

EXT. Shuttle take off from strip. Early evening.

The short range space vehicle and all applicants are ready to board, except pilots Brian and Neil who are already up on the Space Station. Local pilot Jane Brock-hurst is the corporation staff.

Approx 15 short-listed applicants (including Sheila Dennington, Soraya Markowitz, Edward Whittal, and Mike Freeman) board the shuttle which then takes off.

INT. Passenger seating aboard the shuttle.
Getting dark out there.

SPEAKER ON (SHUTTLE) "Welcome to the Corporation, the leading Space Exploration and Research entity. The Corporation currently has ten short range space vehicles and nine larger vessels. ("Approximate flight time one hour and 39 minutes"). We wish you a pleasant transition into the space paradigm and hope you enjoy your stay aboard the Norberg Space station"

EXT. The shuttle docks with the Space Station at a stable orbit, miles and miles high up in orbit.

INT. Applicants walk through the somewhat plush connecting shaft to waiting area outside interview offices. They are now truly aboard the Norberg, a place where day or night is not known for sure.

INT. Trajectory Paths Lounge - lit

Erudite terminals and visuals and feelings of comfort (space nostalgia) and low latency (telemetry).

Xamen activates his strobe information relay and electronic eye attachment.

Xamen scans for ten seconds. Identifies Neil.

Neil walks in.

XAMEN

Hello, Neil, long time no see.

NEIL ANDURRO

Hi. Good to see you buddy. I just got back yesterday from operation Invictus Four.

XAMEN

What was that about?

NEIL ANDURRO

Oh, they just wanted me to bring back some more surface material samples from Venus.

XAMEN

I thought that stuff was already well documented.

NEIL ANDURRO

Yes it is, but recent experiments indicated that stuff can reverse the effects of Mercury poisoning, so they wanted me to measure density and formulation while on the surface and to bring more back to see if it could be used to make element 119.

XAMEN

Surely this is no time for alchemy. And mercury poisoning is quite rare.

NEIL ANDURRO

Yes.

Neil raises his hand.

Hold on a second, Xamen.

Neil answers his communicator and listens intently.

O.K. I'll be with you in ten minutes. Look Xamen, I've got to go check the quantum O.P.C. Unit. (Oxygen Purification Chamber)

XAMEN

O.K. I will see you next time.

As Neil walks out two other pilots walk in. Mature nods are exchanged. One of them has his own corporation sound set for semantic assist mode.

INT. Dust Free Zone with control unit. Lit.

NEIL walks toward the O.P.C. And opens the grate. He notices that the interface between the control unit and e meter is a little loose so he seals off the pipe and replaces the interface unit. Then opens up pipe again.

Maintenance successful.

INT. Trajectory Paths Lounge lit.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Have you seen this?

DEAN SLATER

You're talking about the recruitment campaign for the latest Corporation expansion effort?

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Yes.

DEAN SLATER

It looks like there must be something fishy going on.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Well I suggest we both apply. It will be excellent experience, and I hear the entertainment library has increased fifty fold, only available on the larger crafts.

DEAN SLATER

Hmmmm.

INT. Interview waiting area on the Norberg lit.
All applicants have queue numbers.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'one' to interview room 'two'.

First applicant enters interview room two.

INT. Interview room two lit.

BILL PITTARD

Good evening, please take a seat ...?

LISA MARSHALL

Thanks.

BILL PITTARD

We have three positions available, the first of which is Commander, Second in Command and answerable only to the Captain. Have you ever held a post as Commander, either on the ground, in the air or further afield ?

LISA

No.

BILL PITTARD

Do you possess any engineering skills, piloting skills, or technology communication skills that would serve you well on a voyage such as this?

LISA

Well, I have a relatively flexible outlook and I embrace exploration in all its forms.

BILL PITTARD

Do you have any target practice experience, with live or simulated combat scenario ?

LISA

I scored sixty-two percent in the 3D asteroid universe training exercise and I know how to scan most frequencies. Are there any other positions available besides commander?

BILL PITTARD

We'll get to that in a moment. Do you possess any social skills such as languages or philosophy which can be applied to a role on a space-faring vessel with limited crew ?

LISA

I went scuba-diving once and found an interesting friendship with a bunch of turtles.

BILL PITTARD

O.K. Thanks. I've got all I need for now. We'll let you know. In the meantime why don't you have a look around our museum. It's on the third level, opposite the control room. Good day to you.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'two' to interview room 'one'.

INT. Interview room one. Lit.

SEAN POLLARD

Hello, please take a seat. And you are..?

DEXTER WILLIAMS

My name is Dexter, Dexter Williams, Sir.

SEAN POLLARD

O.K. Dexter. We have three positions available. What exactly are your engineering qualifications ?

DEXTER WILLIAMS

Well, I understand software engineering but I am better at building machines from scratch.

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DEXTER WILLIAMS (contd.)

I brought a certificate with me if you want to see.

SEAN POLLARD

Very good, but we're looking for someone with real experience, for example would you know how to set the centre of gravity on a moving craft ?

DEXTER WILLIAMS

That depends where you're headed. If its a space craft that is...

SEAN POLLARD

Thanks, I've got all I need for now. We'll contact you to let you know how you did. Please ask applicant three to come in on your way out. You can wait on level three now. It might take a couple of hours but we will tell you.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

Ed Whittal has coffee in a styrofoam cup.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'four' to interview room 'two'.

ED WHITTAL

Hello.

BILL PITTARD

Good evening, please take a seat.

ED WHITTAL

Sits down and puts coffee on table.

BILL PITTARD

So you're applying for the engineer vacancy ?

EDWARD WHITTAL

That's right.

BILL PITTARD

Okay, Here's a test question for you. How much surface area would you need on a heat sink to dissipate a temperature of seventy two degrees centigrade ?

EDWARD WHITTAL

I don't really know, but the best choice for a heat sink and fan would be of Dyson manufacture.

As Edward says Dyson, he spills his coffee all over the desk making most of Bill's documents soggy.

EDWARD WHITTAL

Oh! I'm so sorry.

BILL PITTARD

That's o.k. Just...just wait outside.

Bill uses his handy phonecom with two specific buttons.

Maureen, could you please bring a cloth in here?

BILL ON SPEAKERPHONE

We will not tolerate applicants with beverages.
If you want a drink, please go to the designated area after we have interviewed you.

MAUREEN Knocks door, goes in, cleans up and leaves

BILL PITTARD

again on speaker phone

Could applicant four please go to level three
and wait with the others.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Please send in applicant three into interview
room one.

INT. Interview room one. Lit.

SEAN POLLARD

Good evening, please take a seat.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Thank you.

SEAN POLLARD

Have you done any research on the Corporation ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

I read an interesting article all about the
managing director. That's you isn't it ?

SEAN POLLARD

This sounds good. Tell me more.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

I've never been one to advocate cosmetic surgery.
I had no idea it could be so, well, so real. Tell
me, how can you control your eyes ?

SEAN POLLARD

Well it's quite easy really. The third eye normally follows the other two, even though it's on a slightly different wavelength, but the truth is it's better than your average wrist-watch. Ah yes... you must be applying for the position of Commander.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

That's right.

SEAN POLLARD

Do you have any relevant experience ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

I'm well versed in commands of virtually all types. I have my own command reference which can cover virtually any scenario and I agree completely with certain specifications of specific languages when it defines them as limitless.

SEAN POLLARD

Very good. You're okay socialising with a mixed and limited crew then. Tell me, is there anything you're afraid of ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

To be honest, the only thing I'm really scared of is crashing. I really don't like wasting my time doing tedious procedures just to remain afloat.

SEAN POLLARD

But you do your own backing up periodically ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Yes, but I like to do that when the state of the

SHEILA DENNINGTON

(Contd.) particular machine is as good as it can be. Not as risky as gambling, but you catch my drift.

SEAN POLLARD

Very good. I don't see a problem with your application. You can go through to the T.P.L.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

What's the T.P.L. ?

SEAN POLLARD

The trajectory paths lounge. It's the pink door on your right as you exit.

As Sheila leaves the room, she behaves like an X-Factor winner.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Please send in applicant five to interview room two.

INT. Interview room two. Lit.

BILL PITTARD

Good evening. And you are ?

IAN GOSFORD

Ian, Gosford.

BILL PITTARD

Ah yes, and you're applying for technology and comms officer.

IAN GOSFORD

That's right.

BILL PITTARD

Okay. What qualities would you bring in the role of technology and comms officer ?

IAN GOSFORD

I have experience with the Gorgar 5.3 sensor.

BILL PITTARD

Oh yes, the 5.3. What's the range on that one ?

IAN GOSFORD

Thirty-five thousand miles.

BILL PITTARD

Hmmm. Any other qualities ?

IAN GOSFORD

I've been a cadet for nearly two years.

BILL PITTARD

Two years! Well I should think you'll soon be ready to go on your own missions. You must have heard of the 5.4 sensor deployment which is standard issue on all our larger craft, nowadays.

IAN GOSFORD

Yeah, but I couldn't afford to go on the training for the 5.4

BILL PITTARD

Well let me tell you. It takes a much more precise control to detect (any) activity. Do you know the range on the 5.4 ?

IAN GOSFORD

I don't know... say 40,000 miles ?

BILL PITTARD

It's actually a fifty thousand mile range. Our friends down in Strategic Development and Design did a really good job on that one. What can we do ? I tell you what. I'll put in a good word on your behalf to see if we can get them to give you a concessionary training period, using the Gorgar 5.4.

IAN GOSFORD

Does that mean I got the job?

BILL PITTARD

No. I'm sorry not this time, but your doing well. We might have other positions available in six months or so. Why don't you try then.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'six' to interview room 'one'.

INT. Interview room one. Lit.

SEAN POLLARD

Good evening. Your name is...?

ZACK PETERSHAM

I'm Zack Petersham.

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SEAN POLLARD

Oh yes, right at the bottom of my list. You're here for the engineer vacancy.

ZACK PETERSHAM

Indeed.

SEAN POLLARD

What's the first thing an engineer should do to prepare for an external interstellar journey?

ZACK PETERSHAM

Secure his station, SIR !

SEAN POLLARD

And what are the most indispensable tools for the engineer ?

ZACK PETERSHAM

Mind, Body, Spirit and an open channel, SIR !

SEAN POLLARD

This isn't an army training exercise, cadet. You can leave your attitude at the door.

ZACK PETERSHAM

Request permission to speak, SIR !

SEAN POLLARD

What is it, Petersham?

ZACK PETERSHAM

I have done seventeen O.P.C installations on seventeen space crafts, SIR ! Just wanted to try for myself, SIR !

SEAN POLLARD

We've talked about this before, Zack. You know your work is essential to us, and quite frankly I wasn't expecting you to apply for a role such as this one. We think you deserve a break. The shuttle will be returning to Earth in a couple of hours. Why don't you go home ? Get some rest. Come back in few days. I'm sure you'll feel better.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'eight' to interview room 'one'.

INT. Interview room one. Lit.

SEAN POLLARD

Welcome. What is your name ?

CRAIG VINCENT

I'm Craig Vincent.

SEAN POLLARD

Yes, and you've come for the engineer position, a very desirable field, so it seems.

CRAIG VINCENT

I assure you, my interest is purely professional.

SEAN POLLARD

Okay. Let's start with your background. It says here you've worked for two years with a company called Microlite (X-Core). Tell me about that.

CRAIG VINCENT

That's right. The pay wasn't as much as you're offering, but it certainly was a useful training ground. I helped design the Lynx aircraft with f... Tom Ashton.

SEAN POLLARD

I would have thought that would be highly paid.

CRAIG VINCENT

Well the thing is, although the technologies used were cutting edge, the actual price of the finished product was a little bit underrated. Anyone with a reasonably low budget could afford one. I would have got one myself. I just didn't have anywhere to park it.

SEAN POLLARD

Tell me some of the specifications of this Lynx aircraft and how you contributed.

CRAIG VINCENT

Well it's got very good fuel consumption, considering it's an electric vehicle. The range on a full load is over two hundred and sixty miles. The pressurised cabin can go to an altitude of fifteen kilometres. I helped design the pressurisation and cockpit instrument panel which was based on a sports car layout.

SEAN POLLARD

Okay. What makes you think you've got what it takes to be an engineer aboard the StarStrider ?

CRAIG VINCENT

Well, for one thing, I can tell a finely tuned machine and I instinctively know when that machine is integrated with a powerful engine, like the ones used in space travel... I'm sorry, it's just that I'm not used to..

SEAN POLLARD

Don't worry. Most people are nervous when I'm first introduced. Do you find my third eye intimidating ?

CRAIG VINCENT

Most of the people I worked with idolise you like a god. I never thought I'd actually meet you of all people.

SEAN POLLARD

Right. Let me tell you what I think. You just wouldn't last on a mission like this. I expect in your previous employment you had numerous opportunities to socialise and while you may have been a good designer, I think you probably gleaned a lot of technical know-how from your colleagues and particularly your boss and others at Microlite (X-Core). We need someone who is self-sufficient, since the crew will be limited on this mission. Please lower the dimmer light switch on your way out. Failed applicants are waiting on the third level. The shuttle will take you back to Earth in about an hour from now.

CRAIG VINCENT

But how do you know all this ? It's not on my application.

SEAN POLLARD

It's just one of the perks of being M.D.

Craig bows his head and does as he's asked.

INT. Interview waiting area.

Lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'seven' to Interview Room 'two'.

LINDA MORIARTY

Hello (joyfully).

BILL PITTARD

Good evening. Your name please.

LINDA MORIARTY

My name's Linda Moriarty.

BILL PITTARD

Welcome to the Norberg. I can't find your details. What was the position you're applying for ?

LINDA MORIARTY

The Technology and Comms. Officer.

BILL PITTARD

Right. Well since that rank is above both pilots, what would be your first orders to them?

LINDA MORIARTY

Well that's easy. Detach air vent. Secure the O.P.U. Set trajectory and orbiting for escape velocity.

BILL PITTARD

I'm sorry, the O.P.U. What's that ?

LINDA MORIARTY

The oxygen processing unit.

BILL PITTARD

We don't use those any more. Those processing units were never very efficient. Nowadays we use purification technology, housed in a chamber with interactive computer controlled valves.

LINDA MORIARTY

Oh!

BILL PITTARD

I tell you what, if you can decrypt this message in ten minutes, I will let you go through the pink door. You can do this outside.

INT. Museum Room

lit.

Lisa Marshall, Dexter Williams, Edward Whittal, Ian Gosford, Zack Petersham, and Craig Vincent are all milling around the museum room.

DEXTER WILLIAMS

Did any of you get a look at the M.D? He's so strange.

LISA

I've seen a picture in Science Weekly.

DEXTER WILLIAMS

That guy's virtually the president of the whole planet. Didn't anyone get a look at his (prosthetic peripheral) third eye. What a piece of work.

CRAIG VINCENT

I saw it. Who does he think he is ?

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ZACK PETERSHAM

Dr. Caligari's the one who did that with his patented dna code plasters. If you look closely you can see that the skin around the eyelid is not an exact match. He must have used a doner.

DEXTER WILLIAMS

What you mean is they filled the gaps in the dna with another family member. They would still need to match maybe 93% of the dna directly from his own genome.

LISA

I'm so sad I didn't get the job.

EDWARD WHITTAL

Don't be sad. A job is just like an advance. It's not actually yours. It's just a loan until your business is so good you can run it on your own.

IAN GOSFORD

What's this ?

EDWARD WHITTAL

Let's see what it says underneath.

Points his finger at the plaque beneath a glass case which has metallic looking boots inside, and reads:

"These standard issue anti-hover boots were first invented forty-eight years ago. Their design was such that they enabled crew members of the time to move about freely on board their vessels. They were indispensable before artificial gravity was the norm and they could be used in various scenarios including different gravitational forces".

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'nine' to interview room 'two'.

INT. Interview room two. Lit.

BILL PITTARD

Hello, erm.. Matthew Coleridge? Is that correct?

MATT COLERIDGE

Yes, but most people call me Ridgy.

BILL PITTARD

Right, and you've come for the engineering vacancy, yes ?

MATT COLERIDGE

Yes.

BILL PITTARD

Okay. What can you offer a smallish team as the main engineering support ?

MATT COLERIDGE

Well, I' normally quite good on my own. I can bring my own tools and I'm quite versatile.

BILL PITTARD

Alright. Explain to me two standard engineering tasks you could perform as the engineer.

MATT COLERIDGE

Okay. We'll say the first task is re-alignment of the engine tuning. First I would measure contact

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(Contd.)

MATT COLERIDGE

sounds in the sub-light gear assembly. Then I would normalise it until the frequency is 440 hertz, or there about.

BILL PITTARD

Sounds good. And how about another task ?

MATT COLERIDGE

I don't know, maybe reset solar panels every so often.

BILL PITTARD

Good guess, but that's normally part of the responsibilities of the person who programs the trajectory path. Actually the solar panels are heat and light sensitive. An interactive software controls the angle.

MATT COLERIDGE

Looks around the room. This place is some set-up. How long did it take to build ?

BILL PITTARD

Listen, Matthew. You do show some skill, however, we can't recruit you at this time. If you wish to see some examples of the way the Norberg was built, there are one or two items in the museum room, third floor. Thanks for attending.

MATT COLERIDGE

Thanks.

Matthew Exits.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'ten' to interview room 'two'.

INT. Interview room two. Lit.

BILL PITTARD

Hello, come in. Don't be shy.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Hello. My name is Soraya.

BILL PITTARD

Right. You're here for the Technology and Comms Officer position, yeah ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Yeah.

BILL PITTARD

Now then. What would you say is the most important technology on the StarStrider ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

I think it's the navigation interpreter. Without that there's no way home.

BILL PITTARD

Excellent. And which comms channel is used to scan remote sound sources and converts the raw sounds into audible frequencies ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

That's channel fourteen.

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(Contd.)

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

It's reserved for that purpose, set to record the converted audio by default and there is an alarm which is used to report any identified or non-identified audio message.

BILL PITTARD

Very good.

SORAYA hands Bill a certificate.

BILL PITTARD

What's this ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

It's a reference from Interstellar Collections. I worked there for almost a year. I was chief buyer.

BILL PITTARD

Really. So you do know something about foreign substances.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Not much really, I just collect them.

BILL PITTARD

Okay. Let me give it to you straight. I actually think you'll fit right in. You know this mission is expected to take three months at least. There's only two more senior officers. You can meet one of them now if you like. Your through. As you leave, the pink door is on your right.

As Soraya exits the Interview Room she behaves like an X-Factor winner.

INT. Interview waiting area lit.

SPEAKERPHONE

Applicant 'eleven' to interview room 'one'.

INT. Interview room one lit.

MIKE FREEMAN

Hello.

SEAN POLLARD

Good evening, err yeah, Mike ?

MIKE FREEMAN

Mike Freeman.

SEAN POLLARD

You're here for the Engineer position.

MIKE FREEMAN

That's right.

SEAN POLLARD

Do you have any relevant engineering experience?

MIKE FREEMAN

I've researched dozens of craft, particularly larger vessels. There was a good library there, but the best role for me would be trouble-shooting.

SEAN POLLARD

Really. Why are you saying that ?

MIKE FREEMAN

I'm a problem solver. You want to crank up the power receivers on those solar panels, I'm your man. You want to recalibrate to a modulated transmission with non uniform wavelength, I can do that too. In fact, I will even specify exactly what spares are needed for a three month round trip.

SEAN POLLARD

Hmmmm. Why should I trust you ?

MIKE FREEMAN

Because I'm young, dynamic and reliable. Here..

Mike hands over several certificates including an electronic one.

SEAN POLLARD

Hmmm. I don't know. You are persuasive and you think you'll be alright on your own most of the time and giving full support directly to the StarStrider Bridge Command and the Captain.

MIKE FREEMAN

Relax. It's a breeze.

SEAN POLLARD

Oh, I suppose the crew could do with a confident fellow like you on board. After all - confidence can be contagious, but remember, we will not tolerate insubordination, however if your job runs smoothly you can actually earn an additional premium. The main thing is to stay open-minded and to be available round the clock. Got it ?

MIKE FREEMAN

Got it !

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SEAN POLLARD

You're through. Exit through the pink door on your right as you leave.

INT. Interview room two.

Lit.

BILL PITTARD ON SPEAKERPHONE

Send in Linda Moriarty.

LINDA MORIARTY

I'm sorry. I think I fluffed it.

BILL PITTARD

You've actually had twenty-five minutes. I'm afraid you need to know at least four or five encryption/decryption algorithms to make it to the position you were hoping for. Why don't you apply for a different position in the future sometime. We'll keep your details on file.

LINDA MORIARTY

Thanks for the opportunity, anyway. It has been quite interesting up here.

BILL PITTARD

All right. Bye bye now.

INT. Overview of the entire Norberg installation two hours later.

Lit.

NORBERG TANNOY

Failed applicants please return to shuttle bay three for return flight to earth. Earthbound departure in sixteen minutes, arriving in London at 9.45 p.m. GMT.

CORPORATION SOUND

Level three and level four explorations officers please make your way to debriefing room. All pilots and co-pilots to the debriefing room.

INT. Norberg Debriefing Room lit.

CORPORATION SOUND

Sean Pollard and Bill Pittard are sitting on swivel chairs with their backs turned in a somewhat plush Debriefing Room. Corporation flags are to the left and right. There are ten chairs facing. We see five qualified personnel in uniform enter after a little waiting. They all sit in the front row. The door closes automatically after a little while.

CORPORATION SOUND

Sean Pollard and Bill Pittard swivel and turn in unison.

SEAN POLLARD

Right, there's only five of you but we are only looking for three. We need a Captain and two flight personnel. A pilot and two co-pilots. As it were, some of you may have seen the details of the recruitment campaign. We'll just go through that now to enlighten you further... Bill ?

BILL PITTARD

We took a standard radar sweep and special analysis of a portion of the Asteroid Belt fairly near to Mars. That was six weeks ago. We discovered an opening in one of the smaller asteroids.

This asteroid is 8km in diameter. We don't really know how this opening got there but this magnified representation also shows that the opening is at least one mile deep. We suspect it's an extra-solar life form living in its own habitat, occupying its own shaded paradigm.

SEAN POLLARD

As you know, many of these asteroids have icy surfaces, such as this silicate one. I have spent the past few days calculating the trajectory needed for the StarStrider to arrive there and orbit that asteroid. The StarStrider is just under 0.023 per cent of the mass of that asteroid meaning that the orbit may be a little loose, but it will be stable enough for you to scan and watch for at least ten solar days.

BILL PITTARD

Now, we all know that craters can happen, but this deterioration resembles a particularly deep well or tunnel and it exhibits all the signs of intelligent activity.

SEAN POLLARD

The main task is to establish communication, and determine whether there is a threat. If you establish that there is a threat, your orders are to neutralise that life form. If there is no threat we want you to set up a small monitoring station with a small android patrol detachment on the surface within a one mile radius. Are there any questions?

NEIL ANDURRO

If the asteroid is near Mars, won't that mean we'll have to use retro-rockets while in the Mars atmosphere to slow down before making our way to that asteroid ?

SEAN POLLARD

Yes. We've also loaded a sizeable ballast which could make that manouvre easier. It's nothing valuable. You can just dispose of it on the Mars terrain, but that asteroid is 3.8 million miles from Mars.

DEAN SLATER

When is the scheduled departure?

SEAN POLLARD

You've got forty eight hours. Now there's nothing special about our selection procedure, however, at this time my third eye tells me that you three on the right are the ideal candidates. So that's Captain Anduro, Brian O'Halahan and what's your name ?

DEAN SLATER

Dean Slater.

SEAN POLLARD

Good. Erm.. Neil, could you step into my office for a second ?

INT. Trajectory Paths Lounge lit.

Bill Pittard and Sean Pollard are seated in their favourite seats when Bill gets an unexpected call.

BILL PITTARD

Hello ? Hello ?

DANIEL SILVA

Is that Chief Pittard ?

BILL PITTARD

Yes, how did you get this number?

DANIEL SILVA

I'm a red faction operative. I conduct research experiments and and City-wide spectral analysis. I called you because there was an unusual reading related to a sodium chloride deposit which

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(Contd.)

DANIEL SILVA

nearly polluted the South West London water table.

BILL PITTARD

Who is this ? What's your point ?

DANIEL SILVA

Look! There's a scaphopod life form feeding off the water. It has some sort of organising structure. I actually saw one of them. It was massive. Then it just disappeared.

Bill motions to Sean Pollard and Sean listens in.

BILL PITTARD

Okay. Just tell me your name. And explain the reading to me so that we can get some context here.

DANIEL SILVA

It's Daniel.

BILL PITTARD

Okay... D.a.n...

DANIEL SILVA

Daniel Silva.

BILL PITTARD

How do you spell that ?

DANIEL SILVA

Da'Silva. (spells out his name. (ex horkos) - Red faction ? ex horkos division.

BILL PITTARD

Why didn't you say? (Oh right). If you give me your shield number we'll arrange for you to patch through your readings and report. You do have the report don't you.

DANIEL SILVA

Yeah.. Okay. Just give me a couple of hours.

BILL PITTARD

Wait. Are there security measures in place?

DANIEL SILVA

Can you do that? Also I suggest keeping this area under continuous scanning. I'm going to look around for a while, see if I can find anything else unusual. This is operative 21475, out.

EXT. A run down old warehouse or building at the 4:00pm
end of a path and near some foliage in a mostly
forgotten park

(sign reads) American Research Projects Agency
Installation. KEEP OUT.

DANIEL Looks around and enters dense foliage until he stumbles across the sign. Eventually he discovers an old abandoned warehouse. He dusts off another sign. It says "Mauropod Designation" There is a short landing strip from the 1940's / 50's. (Blair Witch fl...) Daniel decides to take photos of everything he sees. Also he has a flask of (holy water) and he sprinkles it here and there whilst doing the sacred actions/words..

Finally Daniel finds a secure looking machine, dusty. He searches and gropes for controls. Finds a switch. After using the switch, fluorescent guide lights reveal a weirdly shaped fridge, looks like a relic. Power sound. Decompression occurs and fridge is opened. Inside there are several test tubes. The main label reads: Arachnid Mauropod Purple liquid chromosome Y, and chromosome Z.

Daniel reaches in to get the test tubes. The test tubes are protected with unknown force. Daniel touches one of the test tubes and gasps in pain. There is droplet on the floor and a small wound on one of his fingers. He uses a hanky and puts the two test tubes in a case then leaves.

INT. Bill Pittard's hot seat (in his office) lit.
on the Norberg. When he receives Daniel's report he formulates a strategy to counteract the Scaphapod threat.

BILL PITTARD

Hello... Can I talk to Sgt. Whittaker please.

SECURITY OFFICER

I'm afraid Sgt. Whittaker isn't available right now. Who's speaking?

BILL PITTARD

It's Chief Pittard.

SECURITY OFFICER

This is Leitenant Forbes. It is a bit late. Can you call tomorrow. Sgt. Whittaker is out having a meal with his wife.

BILL PITTARD

I don't care where he is, you bloody well get him on the line. Bill's call is patched through to Sgt. Whittaker's mobile.

Hello. Sgt. We've had a close encounter of the second kind. We need a security detail despatched immediately. Lincoln Park TW14. By the abandoned warehouse.

INT. Norberg - Next day.

Lit.

TANNOY COMPUTER VOICE

The following crew members have been chosen for the StarStrider mission. Departing in three hours fourteen minutes. Please board now to avoid delay.

Captain Neil Andurro.

Pilot Brian O'Halahan.

Co-pilot Dean Slater Johnson.

Engineer Mike Freeman

Technology and Comm's Officer Soraya Markowitz.

Commander Sheila Dennington.

INT. Norberg Green Room two hours later lit.

Time seems to be going very slowly for the prospective StarStrider crew. They are nervous and fidgety, however Neil is slightly more confident.

They make their way onto the vessel and after familiarising themselves with their positions on the bridge they settle down.

INT. StarStrider bridge

(impressively lit)

Tannoy

All Star-Strider crew to launch stations. Star Strider Departure under way. StarStrider control assigned to Captain Neil Andurro. All StarStrider system wide recognition tests, passed. Seven minutes until departure.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Life support systems check
On-board artificial gravity check
climate control check
Inertia feed, Rotary orbit controller check
Flight path programme online Gorgar sensor check
Comms channels one through thirty-nine check
Hud view check
On-screen Adaptive Relational Velocity Curve
frequency controller check
Ice Cannon fully functional check
Sentry Patrol Droids ready check
A-I assist mode check
Navigation and Helm control check
Autopilot stand-by check

NORBERG CONTROL TOWER

Star Strider - you are A-Okay for launch. Repeat
- you are A-Okay for launch

Brian O'halahan detaches charging cables, detaches
corridor shaft connection and unlocks.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

We're away captain.

INT. Red Faction HQ. Daniel Silva's station 11:50am

Meanwhile Daniel Da'Silva is doing a follow up to his report in his workplace - office. (Red Faction HQ building). He is using a word-processor. We see his text ? copied from Prof. Blakeny's Chromosome Y composition report statement [100,000 ways to witness Higgs Boson. 65,000,000 neutrinos (vision related) ... first impression of chromosome Y ?. These tiny organisms exhibit replication of rare elements at an incredible rate, although the internal mechanisms are certainly inferior to most nucleic acids, there is no way to predict their activity once the amph... cycle has kicked in.

Daniel then looks at the small wound on his finger. It looks slightly worse. (some). It is a little septic with microscopic organising pattern. We later learn that the infection of chromosome Y is leading to a growth on the outside of (Daniel's) the body. The substance is turning normal cells into an exoskeleton solid shell. Daniel treats his finger with anti-septic, then continues with his text. "Additionally the membranes are more tensile than anything I have experienced. It's like a metal machine or a round rock. Chromosome Z yet to undergo analysis. Daniel then checks his photos.

INT. Lincoln Park abandoned warehouse. 3:15pm

The droplet of chromosome Y is unpredictable to say the least. The drop of liquid is (virtually climbing uphill towards a compartment which reads "Danger Large Circuit". There is evidence that it does not necessarily obey the empirical physics here on Earth.

INT. StarStrider Mission Caprion Day four

DEAN SLATER

Oh boy! And this is only day four.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Are you kidding? Days mean nothing in space. What was that you were reading?

DEAN SLATER

Tales of Ten Worlds, Arthur C. Clarke.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Hmmm... That's not a book. That's a pamphlet. Why don't you join Soraya ? I think she's doing a composition analysis on one of her samples.

DEAN SLATER

You mean she brought those samples with us ? How creepy ? How did she obtain most of that stuff anyway ?

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

A remote control probe droid of course ! It's still quite feasible, even in Venus orbit.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

That stuff doesn't interest me. Yeah, it's fun controlling droid probes, but how can anyone be stimulated by a rock ?

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

What's Commander Dennington doing ?

DEAN SLATER

Ya... I believe she's updating the Optimist.

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EXT. Lincoln Park abandoned warehouse. 4:40pm

Daniel retraces his footsteps, finds the 'Danger Large Circuit' sign, and opens the cover using leverage. Inside there is a somewhat old circuit, currently dead. On the reverse of the cover is a circuit diagram. He uses a special solution to remove the diagram and paper and uses his favourite method to preserve this relic of electronics in schematic form. He then leaves discretely. After he goes the relatively small chromosome Y droplet is getting ever closer to the circuit box, currently with the cover partially removed. The droplet is still appearing to move contrarily to the rules of physics, ever closer to the circuit.

INT. Norberg control tower. Lit.

SEAN POLLARD

What's the status at the Winslow Park site ?

BILL PITTARD

Don't you mean the Lincoln Park site ?

SEAN POLLARD

Oh yes. forgive me. It's been a long day. I take it there's been no change.

BILL PITTARD

Correct. No change, although the weather there is currently wind and rain. We think this could aggravate the situation, maybe bring the presence out in the open.

SEAN POLLARD

Out in the open? I think you underestimate this life form. Whatever it's doing, I'm sure it's related to the remote activity on that asteroid in the Asteroid belt.

Sean points to the Solar System map location.

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INT. StarStrider Bridge. Mission Caprion Day 17. Lit.

All the crew are enjoying food in the dining area. Spicy selections. No one can pretend to have fun, however everyone is having a really good time, with plenty of wit and laughter. (room for improvisation to capture bonding moments and genuine laughter). Table for six.

Suddenly audio pulse-waves hit the StarStrider. All the crew panic and cover their ears, screaming and on their knees. The Captain obtains earplugs after much suffering. He shares them out. Then to communicate he uses pen and tells Mike to compensate for the unwanted sound with noise cancelling. He then communicates to Sheila D telling her to seek clarification using Optimist.

Sheila Dennington uses keyboard entry and questions Optimist to resolve current dilemma.

QUESTION 1: Uncomfortable audio pulse-wave. Please clarify.

ANSWER 1 : Continued exposure will result in all systems malfunction. Current prediction, seven minutes and four seconds to life support malfunction.

QUESTION 2: Pinpoint source of danger.

ANSWER 2 : Source unknown.

QUESTION 3: Seek resolution.

ANSWER 3 : Resolutuion harmony. Amplified audio tone accompaniment (required) recommended.

QUESTION 4: Resolve dilemma.

ANSWER 4 : Dilemma resolved. Flight Path Velocity unaffected.

Sound continues for a while. Computer controlled audio tone provides accompaniment for a while. Audio pulse-wave fades.

OPTIMIST A.I. RESPONSE

Normal function resumed. Audio frequency annihilation averted.

INT: Red Faction HQ Lab Mid Afternoon

DANIEL: is looking at his finger (now blue) through a magnifying glass or microscope. He shudders. Next he contacts Prof. Blakeny with intercom.

DANIEL SILVA

Professor Blakeny ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Yes... Daniel !

DANIEL SILVA

I've had an infection. I don't know what to do. It wasn't even as bad as a paper cut. I don't know how this could have happened. It's been getting worse.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Okay. Come down to my workroom and we'll run some tests.

DANIEL SILVA

Goes down two flights of stairs and knocks on Chemist's workroom.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Come in... Hello Daniel, let's see. Please take a seat. When did the infection occur ?

DANIEL SILVA

Nearly three weeks ago.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Why didn't you tell me sooner ?

DANIEL SILVA

I thought it would heal.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Okay, let's have a look.

DANIEL: shows his infected finger.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Hmmm... Put your finger in here.

DANIEL SILVA

What's that ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

And how did this happen ?

The Professor uses a pin art prop.

DANIEL SILVA

I can't remember. How will this thing help ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Each of these green rod shafts is tipped with an alkaline solution and is mixed with Chia seed allowing us to measure any cellular activity such as simple physical charge, cellular conversions, fused protocell reaction, amphiphilic absorption rates, and most importantly we will obtain results as a comparison between your other healthy fingers and this infected one. We should be able to determine two sets of results. Right, put your hand in. Hold Still. Right, stay there, just two minutes.

Results are displayed.

Catalytic Agents : phosphorous
 sulphur
 rubidium
 Atomic No.15
 Atomic No.16
 Atomic No.37

Impermeable bodily shell encasement process.
approximate total conversion time 504 hours
(21 days) Result: New buoyant life form

INT. StarStrider Helm - Mission Caprion day 20

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Incoming video message for Dean

DEAN SLATER

On Screen please.

DEAN'S WIFE

Hello sweetheart. I hope things are going well for you out there.

DEAN SLATER

Oh, we've had our share of excitement.

DEAN'S WIFE

Remember that little plot of land. I managed to get a nice crop of tomato.

DEAN SLATER

Well that's nice honey. I always thought that allotment was worth it.

DEAN'S WIFE

Baby Jack drew this picture of you. We're both looking forward to seeing you. It will be what... two months ?

DEAN SLATER

Yes... These sub-solar missions are always less than the six months it covers. It's only The Asteroid Belt.

DEAN'S WIFE

We miss you, sweetheart. Safe journey.

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DEAN SLATER

Okay honey, see you soon.

Screen returns to Corporation logo

Corporation sound.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Incoming audio message from the Norberg.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Play audio

BILL PITTARD ON SPEAKER

Hello. This is Chief Pittard. There's been a development. We've identified a site on Earth that may have been compromised. When you get this message, we will be in phase two of our investigation here. It looks like a close encounter of the second kind. It was a well hidden site where certain artefacts and relics have been stored. Proceed with the mission. I will update you in four hours. Chief Pittard, out.

EXT. Abandoned warehouse at Lincoln Park Midday

Scenario - a handful of men in (masks) white suits and carrying metal detectors are scanning every inch of the site. Fridge covered with clear cling-film polythene. Energy switch is on, door open. Team of electronics engineers rocking it back, taking the (large circuit), to pieces. We see two of the men in white suits sprinkling white powder on the floor/ground. The powder's purpose is to indicate unknown and dangerous substances. One of them finds a clue and motions to one of his colleagues. They both look at the clue before them. Looks like reddish growing matter, a little like a growing sponge (glob). They scrape it off the ground and put it inside a special container (thermos flask (protective)). They then spray neutralising agent on all surfaces where the droplet of Y chromosome shows through.

ONE OF THE TEAM

looks like it was heading for the erm.. the large circuit.

INT. Electronics workshop 16:30:pm

Two electronics engineers are learning all they can about the original intended purpose of the large circuit.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 1

It looks like this part of the circuit was designed to take measurements and data relating to climate and habitat, but we don't know how this information would have been collected.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 2

There must be some other device we have yet to find. Maybe connected remotely.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 1

There it is! The relay mechanism.

He pulls apart the electromagnet and capacitors.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 1

Ah...this was intended to send a signal out into space. This signal amplification part would ensure that the message wouldn't be reflected by the atmosphere. There's also power for a light of some kind.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 2

Maybe the large circuit was the result of a human extraterrestrial visitation alliance. This stuff is obviously dated, but that doesn't mean it's antiquated.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 1

An old technology can still be a good technology.

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER 2

Indeed.

INT. Red Faction HQ. The next day, 11:00am

Daniel Silva is making more progress than the intervention team techs. He feeds the circuit diagram into the (his) p.c., i.e. scanning it in. Then he asks the p.c. To identify.

P.C. results

Spatial Communications Prototype circa 1949 Non-Digital information signalling Mauropod habitat foundation locate and colonise machinery. Beacon No. X112.

INT. Red Faction HQ, Professor Blakeny's lab 2:30pm

PROFESSOR BLAKENY is in his chemist workroom. He contacts Bill Pittard as per Daniel's instruction.

PROFESSOR BLAKENY

Hello... Chief Pittard. I've been asked to update you regarding an unexpected by product of the Lincoln Park site.

BILL PITTARD

OK, give it to me.

PROFESSOR BLAKENY

We have secured some interesting items, namely two small samples labelled chromosome Y and chromosome Z. They're sealed in test tubes. There's no reason to disbelieve the contents, however our position has been compromised. To be specific, it's Da'Silva. He's asked me to request a chromosome Y antigen, if you have one. I tried to formalise my own, however we require more high density lipoproteins which will in turn create more concentrated vitamin D infusion receptors.

BILL PITTARD

Oh dear... That's a bit above my head. I will have to ask the M.D.

PROFESSOR BLAKENY

But the Z chromosomes are 100% secure. If you can put me through to the M.D. I will see if we can help one another. Tell him it's Professor Blakeny, Red Faction HQ.

BILL PITTARD

Contacts Sean Pollard using his preferred buttons, secures the line and hands over.

SEAN POLLARD

Hello. Professor Blakeny. How can I help ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

I've been studying the Y chromosome which we recovered from the Lincoln Park site and I must say, I've never seen anything like it. The bad news is one of our operatives has become infected with a microscopic sample of this liquid. So far it's only the index finger on his right hand that is infected. We've got a limited amount of time to use counter-measures to reverse the effects of the chromosphere infection. If we fail, we may have a new possibly hostile lifeform.

SEAN POLLARD

Where is the subject now ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

I believe he's doing his own research. He's just downstairs.

SEAN POLLARD

It's imprtant that you tell me. Have you recovered anything else from the site ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Erm... yeah. We've got the two test tubes - chromosome Y & and chromosome Z. Oh, I suppose that must be from the site too.

SEAN POLLARD

What's that ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Da'Silva must be researching other more significant evidence. Wait there a second.

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SEAN POLLARD

Okay. Listen carefully. I want you to get Da'Silva into quarantine. If you are unable to do this, we will send in our own team.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

I will have to get back to you.

Puts the phone down and heads downstairs.

SEAN POLLARD

Hello.... Hello. Argghh he's gone. Maureen, can you get hold of Professor Blakeny back on the line, please. It's the Red Faction HQ.

INT. StarStrider bridge

lit.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Incoming audio message from the Norberg. It's the MD.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Play audio.

SEAN POLLARD ON SPEAKER

Hello, this is Sean Pollard. We have a new pivotal objective. We require you to research and if you can, come up with a formula for reversing the effects of phosphorus poisoning, or maybe a reliable method for restoring healthy tactile, (might sound silly but it's essential) hands and fingers. You have the complete digital library at your disposal. If you come up with anything, report your findings to me. Seal Pollard.. out.

INT. Norberg lit.

Sean Pollard walks over to Bill Pittard and questions him.

SEAN POLLARD

Do you have the preliminary Ex-Horkos division report ?

BILL PITTARD

Oh. I had forgotten about that. It's quite interesting. In fact this Mr. Da'Silva is the only one who claims to have seen one of these mauropods. The report says the approximate size is 2.5 metres high. He also thinks they were seeking new habitats. Do you actually believe him ?

INT. StarStrider - Mission day 25 lit.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Deceleration entering final phase. We'll be orbiting Mars in three hours.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Set orbital approach altitude six hundred ninety km.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Captain! Incoming gravitational wave detected on the port side. It will hit in eight minutes.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Can you estimate the strength of that wave?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

No strength indicated.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Source?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Port side camera, magnification five hundred.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

We're going to have to sweep that quadrant, Captain. It's a little difficult to pinpoint the camera target.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Time until wave impact ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Seven minutes, Captain.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Put camera viewport on main hud screen image coefficient assist

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Yes (Sir.)

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Pan right... decrease magnification two times. Again decrease two times. Pan right... There! Centre of view. Full magnification.

All helm officers are silent and also terrified. Main hud views show graphical representation of expanding range.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Computer. Determine gravity field strength... port side.

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COMPUTER

Amplified gravity field emission detected.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

On communication - Mike? Mike... How much ballast do we have on board ?

MIKE FREEMAN

We've got ample ballast. How else do you think we could get our momentum to 150,000 mph.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Yes, but exactly how much ?

MIKE FREEMAN

We've got fourteen tonnes of ballast.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

I need you to do a quick sum.

COMPUTER

Four minutes to gravity wave impact.

MIKE FREEMAN

We'll need to make an S shaped trajectory Captain. - Even if we eject seven tonnes of ballast, we could drift up to fifty thousand miles away from an optimal Mars orbit. So we'll need to eject maybe eight tonnes and rely on the Mars gravity being stronger, even if it's fractional, Captain.

COMPUTER

Three minutes to gravity wave impact.

MIKE FREEMAN

Affirmative Captain.

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Mike Freeman uses his (controls and) calculator first and ejects 8.72 tonnes of ballast.

COMPUTER

Thirty seconds to gravity wave impact.

BALLAST IS EJECTED

COMPUTER

10, 9, 8, .. Two, One.

All helm officers wait with baited breath. After 5, 10 seconds the Captain laughs, thinking they'd coped really well. Then they all laugh. Hud screen view has Mars centered. After a few more seconds the hud view starts to rotate. Slowly at first, then the StarStrider starts to rotate and turn wildly. Ships control is lost. However, trajectory is still sort of okay. It's just the ship's orientation.

MIKE FREEMAN

On board (gravity) Artificial gravity is unaffected, Captain, but we're spinning out of control. We'll have to wait for at least an hour to see if Mars orbit has been compromised or not. Once we're in Mars orbit, it will be possible to regain ship's orientation and recover normal adaptive rotation.

The StarStrider is spinning wildly out of control. Even stranger and more random, even than pi-related movement.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Tactical alert. I'm glad the ship's holding together. (Comm) How's your research going, Soraya ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

I don't really have much to go on Captain. Perhaps you could request more detail. We should still be able to get all the information we need within an hour, if we have the correct search criteria.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Okay. I'll get onto the MD at the Norberg,
presently. Open channel nine please, Soraya.

Soraya indicates that channel is open.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

COMM: - Hello, this is Captain Andurro. We're
requesting more detail, maybe a photo of the
subject, a clear illustration of the effects and
the precise symptoms you want us to compensate
for. If perhaps Pollard could fill us in a.s.a.p.
We'd be grateful Captain Andurro, out.

PAUSE

Do you think that was a little short ?

DEAN SLATER

Yeah that's quite short, considering we could
have told all the trouble we've been having.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Err... Excuse me, but when you were a kid, did
you go running to mother every time something
went wrong? No...

NEIL ANDURRO

Come on people, have a little optimism here. At
the very worst we'll only be fifty thousand miles
off course. Looking at that display makes me
dizzy. Switch if off would you...

INT. StarStrider - 45 minutes later on the bridge/helm. lit

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

on comms. To Mike

Hello Mike, how are your calculations going?

MIKE FREEMAN

It's tricky to say the least. We must actually collect a fair bit of data (because) from the computer. There's absolutely no other way to understand the way the ships moving. Once we have that data, then we can enable shedding the rest of the ballast economically and appropriately. One more thing Captain. We need to eject the ballast quickly, and if possible convert our flight path into a swoop above the Mars surface. And we'll still need to engage thrusters to regain height.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Sheila, can you give us ship's position ?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

We're forty eight thousand miles from the surface of Mars.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Okay. Mike, shed ballast now

Mike Freeman proceeds with his order.

Ballast is ejected from various holds. Strategically lightened, and responding to a known gravitational force, the StarStrider falls fifteen thousand miles. Left, central and right holds eject ballast bringing more stability. Ship swoops and regains height suffessfully.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Brian.. take us to seven hundred and forty mile orbit.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Yes, Captain.

StarStrider is back in it's element quickly establishing stable orbit.

Strategic dialogue is a nice phrase.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Sheila you can switch off tactical alert now. Right. We're going to stay in Mars orbit until we're ready to proceed. We'll be quite safe here for a while. That asteroid is only twenty four hours travel from here.

RANDOM ACCUMULATED NOTES

Audio Transitions.

Finding Artificial Gravity Meter and Counterpart.

Philosophy Barrier - The philosophy of Mars always being upward.

N.B. If the planet is the other side of the Sun from Earth, then the planet is still up. As the Sun is.

A paradigm is a phenomena, - like a wave.

OK'RAI - MBU - NDA OBAYE ' MITRAN

Activity quadrant 0.85 1.35

Space Mantra Become part of a new paradigm, keep one's own paradigm secure. Select and apply paradigm administration using these wavelengths.

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Quantum Burst Available Captain.

Audio transitions

INT. StarStrider Helm several hours later lit.

Soraya enters the helm.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Hello Soraya, I was beginning to worry about you.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

I was just checking the astral map. It seems obvious now even though I pre-checked the flight path. The Asteroid we're going to is a Silicate Asteroid. No real carbon or metal.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

What about water or ice ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

I can't tell at this distance, but its part of the findings database on the sensor array.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

You mean you scanned at this distance ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

No. No... I mean it will recognise water, silly. Incoming message, Captain, audio.

SEAN POLLARD ON SPEAKER

Captain Andurro, I have a few more details, but you're not going to like it. You're familiar with chromosomes audio interference.

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SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Message has been intercepted Captain. Replay..

PAUSE

Audio has become fully at large (use (ground breaking) (maybe lower sampling frequency).

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Panics slightly

What can we do ? What are we going to do ?

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Right, Mike, recalibrate ship's system, use default attribute accumulation to alignment mode. Keep standby systems on line while calibrating.

Sheila - you try to identify origin on that audio. See if you can interpret the two messages. Give me both.

SORAYA, We need to use a little insight here. Get Optimist up to speed. Play for time, (possibly compensate for repeated update procedures). Yeah. We'll use the A.I.

Brian - Go over the flight path and velocity. Give me all the strategic vantage points.

Dean - you find us some accompaniment. I don't want to appear unharmful. Just use that there library, oh just audio harmony, no abrasive lyrics.

DEAN SLATER

I can use your whole phrase as meta-data.

Neil Andurro is a bit hungry at this point.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

I think a blended soup is the order of the day/
the spiciest alternative.

DEAN SLATER

Go easy on the byzantium.

FUTURISTIC ADVERT

Give your food a make-over with this deluxe mainstream blender package. This blender has five sets of adjustable blades and settings, perfect for any occasion with instant fruiteez, the genuine alternative to Robinsons. With pure fruit composition detection you'll know you have your smoothies. Natural sugar identified and consumed. Recommended citrus levels activated. Vitamin C, D and ubiquinol all at peak efficiency. Just enter the code to get your genuine fruit smoothy. Get your own smoothie factory. Administration Corp. Symbiotics.

(Chess Set; Real Character Acting; Observations; and viewpoint.

Long range view of ship (imply the meanwhile)

EXT. Small parade of shops. Early evening

Daniel Da'Silva is walking towards the shops. He goes into Pizza or fast food shop, and explains.

DANIEL SILVA

Hello, I'm from Easy Zap. I've come to service your easy zapper.

PIZZA GUY

We haven't had any problem with it.

DANIEL SILVA

We actually need to obtain data to see how effieiently it's working. It will only take ten minutes.

PIZZA GUY

Nearly sees Daniel's bad hand. (Now two fingers infected).

DANIEL SILVA

I can use this chair, unless you have a ladder.

PIZZA GUY

Well, o.k.

Daniel Silva removes cover from fly swat easy zap after unplugging. Uses a beaker and fills it with the dead flies.

PIZZA GUYS 1 & 2 look at the suspicious Daniel out of the corner of their eye.

Daniel finishes his task.

DANIEL SILVA

Thank you. We'll be in touch

Daniel leaves. Around the corner he devours the cup full of dead flies. Next, Daniel's mobile rings.

DANIEL SILVA

Hello.

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

I've been worried about you. I've got the results from the lab. We want to do some more tests. How soon can you get here ?

DANIEL SILVA

I'm not coming in to work today and if you know what's good for you you'll leave me be.

Daniel puts block on phone. Walks towards phone booth. Dials one of the adverts.

INT. Massage Parlour. One hour later

Daniel Puts coat on hook - mobile in the pocket. Daniel has a massage (and sauna). Mobile gets detected by Professor Blakeny, who sends staff to pick up Daniel.

Staff arrive at Massage Parlour to take Daniel to private health establishment.

Professor Blakeny arrives

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Daniel ?... Daniel you've got to come with us to Wensleydale infirmary. You've been infected with an unknown chemical agent.

DANIEL SILVA

Please, Mr. Blakeny. I think you're overreacting.

One paradigm before Vega came a small moon probe named Negative Int. It was they who saturated the signal ratios and in fact they were so successful, they could even disguise the omitted font shapes which would have spelt Voyager. So once again to the paradox.

INT. StarStrider Helm

lit.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

There's a phantom wave coming in on the port bough, Captain.

PAUSE

Captain, this just through. Interactive "harshness" Control in 100% gradations, to control different optimistic ((e.) memory) engrams effectiveness.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

I don't think so cadet. In this instance the word would take precedence over the control. I won't have that. How many vortices in that double helixes, I want to take a closer look at that planet.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

We've been here approximately two hours fifteen minutes Captain. It's the helix vortex in quadrant epsilon five alpha, there are gas vapour residue trails rising.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Don't worry about that, son! It's just contrail, you still get that on Mars. Let's take a closer look.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Looks like an (R.S.P.) S.E.R. - relay station probe / Station probe relay . It was set to orbit closer to the beacon point, more lateral. I wonder why it's transmitting from there?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

(VORKHOOTA) This just in. A transmission from Maximillan Vorkhoota. He asks, is this just a co-operation stunt to raise funds.

(Vertibrae analysis inconclusive)

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Two phantom waves of rubidium alloy textures and surfaces.

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

(Commander) Captain, I've got to take Morale Builder offline for seventeen hours. The conduit transfer unit is okay but I think we could scan more efficiently if we set the chromatic aberration filter to zero. That's just in case the relativistic (filters) enhancements aren't at full capacity.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Commander Dennington, how long has Morale Builder been off line?

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

Seventeen hours, four minutes, Captain.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

This is the seventeenth time we've had to do this, Captain. You know as well as I do we can't run operation harmony forever and what happens then ?

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CAPTAIN ANDURRO

You know, I think we can run operation harmony forever.

MIKE FREEMAN

Yeah - guys...? Hey looks like we're matching five frequency matching algorithms per second, now. If this keeps up there'll just be too much latency.

O'Halahan - and the rest of the helm are in command positions - Helm starts to vibrate - buzz - judder - The noise tone is threatening.

[same texts two settings]

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Put these in your ears - blocks the audio - noise cancelling.

Captain Andurro offers out the ear pieces.

TACTICAL ALERT

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Incoming scaphapod wave Port bough.

Then some strange sounds occur. All helm crew laugh with comments.

NEIL ANDURRO

hhh... they're just bouncing off the edge of the ship - don't you see? This means they're harmless.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

I have a method. When I was a boy I used to think about colours and I remember the one that stood out to me was mustard. I used to think it was haunted by just one single, solitary blue attribute forever lost within that multitude of yellows. But now we know. Yellow is a colour of phosphorus and sulphur, but blue, that's the colour of metal... water... and

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

The sea.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

You see. Forget what the sub net mask and just concentrate on the numbers. The effective blue zone would be what, maybe a range of uniform pixels, say less than one hundred and twenty shades, in repeating patterns of course. This original colour from this mustard has been matched in over three star catalogues with an average fourteen planets in each system. (for maximum efficiency).

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

What are you getting at O'Halahan ?

INTERMISSION ADVERTISING

Notes on Artificial Intelligence

RELATIONAL DATABASE

Second question invoked under certain conditions. i.e. if measurement count of 'h' being used more than three times in previous response then happiness level detected - nudge question.

New goal for client. Assess sociableness. Qualify remarks, encourage free association

context feeding i) and just how [Var1] has this past week gone for you ?

ii) How has your [Var1] altered your [Var2].

EXT. StarStrider approaches at low altitude orbit up above garrisoned asteroid

INT. StarStrider Bridge Command lit.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Get me visual. We'll sweep the surface until we locate them.

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

There... the cavity is 2.5km ahead right.

BRIAN O'HAALAHAN

We should use a five second recorded burst with no latency if at all possible, Captain.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

For what purpose ?

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Let them know we mean business.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Okay, check to see if operation harmony is still necessary. If not, wait for audio burst on my mark.

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

The channel is silent, Sir. It's been inactive for nearly three hours.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Right, slow down, Brian. Gently now.

StarStrider gains viewpoint advantage.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Save the audio. We'll start with a burst of white light, just to alert them to our presence. Okay, Soraya ?

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

Flicks light switch. No response.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Okay, try blue...

No response.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Okay, try a beam of light aimed at the banks of that crevice.

All the helm crew see one of the arachnidroids exit from the hole.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Light off, now. (luckily not detected) view still okay.

Arachnidroid (blue tinted) covers 100m easily with swift and reliable pace. Collects some ice samples and returns to the hold and disappears (for up to 30 seconds).

Two more arachnidroids exit and do the same. This time somehow, one has a reddish tint, the other blue.

StarStrider is in passive shadow mode (more tactful for these situations). It is yet undetected or it appears so.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

What are they doing, Captain ?

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Does anyone know how valuable a reliable H2O source would be to an invasion of active extra-solar beings ?

DEAN SLATER

Err... they actually look more like machines to me, Captain.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

The human body is a machine. We know that because they're finite. All machines are finite. Can we get a close look without being discovered ?

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

I can enhance all hud-viewports with monochrome heat filters.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Let's see what that one's doing. Points to upper right of view.

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

Yes Sir.

The scaphapods / arachnidroids are so interesting more interesting than ants, even more interesting than spiders or dogs.

Hud view zooms in on red tinted mauropod. After a while watching it gather some frozen H2O a baby female Mauropod appears. There is some sort of charisma in it's expression. It flashes some red light back to base (cavity) - at this point it looks automated.

(Use random attack half speed distorted samples 22.1 Khz. Make sure each new note is in no way predicted, by anyone).

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

Audio activity on a new channel, Sir?

Colour band and mauropod synch lights with audio. The appearance of relation between different tones of light and the scaphapod movements becomes scary, like a meeting with a derranged hypnotist. The audio bursts are trying to make sense of this with precise computer control.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Audio on.

The StarStrider and the Mauropods are matched in time and space on the asteroid. Inside the StarStrider vessel are spiritual sounds (i.e. strange and getting quieter) on all remote shots.

SUDEBKY arachni - mother-ship is detected directly above the StarStrider, illuminated like collidoscope. The Mother-ship emits a lightning bolt on to StarStrider.

Power aboard StarStrider shuts down.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Emergency power and reserve life support.

Helm lights come on, dimly. Mothership proceeds with a transaction with a number of Mauropods.

There is plenty of automation going on. We see what looks like the mothership dropping off an adult maupod (bi-ped mech droid) and giving it instructions. This Arachnidroid is still large and this droid is now in full control of its own abilities.

Blue highlights as the Mothership leaves.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

How can we have missed an infestation on this scale?... In our own God-damn solar system.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Okay, everybody... keep calm. Back-up systems are okay. We've got to find a way out, whether it's backwards or sideways.

SORAYA MARKOWITZ

But how can we tell what they're doing if we can even see them ?

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Right now my experience tells me that we have one advantage. We're led by faith. All of us. So we must commit - to a faithful activity, all of us.

Captain Andurro uses his control panel and contacts Mike Freeman in engineering.

CAPTAIN NEIL ANDURRO

Erm... yeah Mike, Mike. What's the situation ?

MIKE FREEMAN

Have you ever seen a fly escape from a web ?

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Come on people - we need to build morale. Can we get the A.I. Up and running?

COMMANDER DENNINGTON

It's a simple solution, Captain. We need a uniform regulated nine volt D.C. Current with the correct interface. The current R.J.45 is totally fused, so maybe we could re-route some power from the emergency power.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Mike, we need you. Can you convert an eighteen watt current to 9v dc ?

MIKE FREEMAN

We've got fourteen power cells. Each one should last at least ten minutes. Just give a mo to fix an adapter.

INT. Wensleydale Infirmary Early evening

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

Your adapting to a chromosome that has yet to be discovered. We have no idea of the consequences. Look at your arms. The skeleton skin will soon cover your whole body.

DANIEL SILVA

How long will it be before the Norberg comes up with counter measures ?

PROFFESSOR BLAKENY

I don't want to disappoint you, but the chances of us finding the required substance are slim to say the least. Even then, we may not actually get the antigen for a long while. Try to think of a message for your family.

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PROFFESSOR BLAKENY (contd.)

I will tell them, of course. You can be sure we will honour your wishes.

DANIEL SILVA

My wife... tell her the M.D. Was right. There really are other dimensions to life. I feel less vulnerable now than I ever have.

INT. Norberg - Sean Pollard's office. Lit.

Bill PITTARD ON INTERCOM

Yes erm... I have reviewed the StarStrider ship log status. The last one come in nineteen minutes ago. It looks like something's jamming status transmissions, and there's no signal feed right now. What should we do? Sean...?

Sean Pollard is using some eye bath solution. He comes into the main room in his quarters.

BILL PITTARD

Sean are you there?

SEAN POLLARD

Hello Bill, what's up ?

BILL PITTARD

The StarStrider Log status transmission is four minutes late.

SEAN POLLARD

I'm thinking about an alternative scenario. Do you think we should float D'Silva's carcass on the atmospheric tether ?

BILL PITTARD

Erm.., well, I don't know that much about Da'Silva's current activities.

SEAN POLLARD

I'm quite sure that his infection is in it's final stages now. Soon we'll (be able) be able to use his empty body for a spiritual mid-point. Get me the tether crew.

BILL PITTARD

Okay Sean, whatever you say.

EXT. Asteroid orbit

The StarStrider is all dark and floating out of orientation. However, it is in shade of the asteroid. (difficult to detect).

INT. StarStrider Engineering

MIKE FREEMAN

Try again. Just hold me there for thirty seconds while I replace boards thirty-eight and thirty nine.

DEAN SLATER

Okay - clasps his hands under Mike's foot.

Mike Freeman reaches inside power assembly and replaces the boards. When he comes down, he tries and tests several power switches. There are a few engine start up sounds, one engine fail error check sound.

MIKE FREEMAN

We're gonna have to reset the engine start-up sequence from the Optimist terminal. It's the only way.

MIKE FREEMAN

(Contd.)

We'll power up Optimist and copy the backed-up start-up procedures into this computer key. Bring it down here, reload and try again. Oh yeah, we must also reset default start-up conditions and for a while, at least, maintain black-out particularly on all external lighting. You go, Dean.

INT. StarStrider Helm

lit.

DEAN SLATER

How many nine volt power cells have we got now?

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Ten, including this one. I must get a copy of StarStrider engine start-up software.

Suddenly the effigy of Daniel appears before everyone on the helm. He speaks.

DANIEL SILVA

If you receive this message, then there's still time. In my former state as a chief ex-horkos operative, I found no way, to neutralise this threat. Soon I will grow into a buoyant life form and quite probably, my body will turn into an empty shell, but there is a way to bring these entities under your control. Charity is the answer. I found two test tubes containing chromosome Y and chromosome Z. I didn't even have enough charity to leave well alone. These entities are experts at creating booby traps. So you'll have to negotiate. Give them what they want. After that you will be free to return to Earth.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

We don't know what they want. For all we know, they could actually still be looking for Earth.

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DANIEL SILVA

They're already found Earth, Captain. It's your job to rid us of this evil. Negotiate to the last.

Daniel's effigy vanishes.

DEAN SLATER

Mmm... How absorbing. Can I get the data we need now ?

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Go ahead.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Captain, you know that we're presently in the shadow of this assteroid.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Yes.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Well, currently the rotary orbit controller is not functional. If we don't restore power, soon we'll drift into the light. They're bound to see us.

Dean Slater removes the computer key which now has the required data.

DEAN SLATER

Captain, from what Mike says, it should only take about ten minutes to restore power, but we have to allow for resetting default start-up environment settings for engine and full power.

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DEAN SLATER (Contd.)

We should be able to maintain external black-out, though.

INT. StarStrider engineering lit.

Mike Freeman completes the job. Power restored (interesting audio).

MIKE FREEMAN

You're okay, Captain.

INT. StarStrider - Helm lit.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Right. Let's gain some altitude. Brian ? You know your scruples. What do you think is the purpose of the asteroid belt ? What's your gut instinct?

BRIAN O'HALAHAN

I would say the asteroid belt acts as the metaphorical beach of the known universe. Amphibians made it onto the land, and maybe one day man will be at home in space, surely there's lots that is unknown beyond the belt, however we may still be following other creatures into space and we should keep the coast clear.

CAPTAIN ANDURRO

Precisely. Keep the coast clear. As soon as we're safe, send in Auntie Melba. We'll neutralise this threat once and for all.

SHEILA DENNINGTON

Let's give them what they came for.

EXT. Tether Base-Sam and Barry are in uniform. Mid-morning

SAM

Help me get this body onto the tether climber. There's enough room for three. I don't know whether to feel excited or sorry for this poor soul. They say in this dormant state if we place the body at the corner-stone of the Earth, eventually this body will inherit the purest salts.

BARRY

Salt, the very stuff of life.

Barry, Sam and the shell of Daniel's body are on the tether climber. They go to a generous altitude.

BARRY

So we'll be waiting for a new buoyant life form related to all of us.

SAM

Indeed. Tether climber goes up, up, and above a solid plateau. Sam and Barry dump the carcass onto the plateau from just above.

Plateau is a like a large cup keeping contents safe. As soon as Daniel's evolved body makes contact with the plateau there is a wonderful breeze in the wind. There is no conflict. There is an unknown harmony in the air. There is serenity.

EXT. StarStrider is cruising at full power with fleet insignia glowing an imperial shade of magenta. A small transaction of gratitude between the vessel and the crew.

Target obliterated. All antagonists destroyed. The asteroid gone. Somewhere out there: Mothership somehow surviving, however in this new resolve, there is no fear, only a deeper understanding of the harmonies which regulate inter stellar activity and peace, in our solar system at least.

Fanfare, Captain's ? summary report and end music negotiable.

FADE TO BLACK

Credits and end theme.

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