

B.I.T.S.

by

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Note on all interior sets: the percentage below each scene heading in the **<pov instructions>** indicates how much damage and trashing is to be done to each set, assuming the first scene is 100% and the worst of it. Time references (ie: "(X) hours ago") count back from the opening scene/"present".

Darkness (a black computer screen.) Binary script floods the display; superimpose opening credits. When the credits are done, the camera pans back to show the script is scrolling on a computer screen. The terminal next to it is also displaying binary, and sparks are coming from an input drive. Camera begins quick pan off the computer screen to begin scene. Sounds fade in of mechanical mayhem and sickly electronics (sparks, grinding gears, etc.) [Conspicuously missing is any type of alarm or warning siren.]

1 INT. SHIP

<pov = LEE, time = present, 100%>

Note: this (and the next scene) should have a slight silvery/monochromatic tint to it, with slight silvery light trails, etc.

Fast paced, schizophrenic camerawork: subject is moving quickly and erratically through a badly damaged spaceship. The ship is falling apart: sparks and debris everywhere, much of the lighting is off or malfunctioning/strobing. Camera enters Bridge.

2 INT. BRIDGE

LANIER is at a console, his back to the camera. His left hand is bandaged. View passes by several computer monitors. Some display normal texts and menus, most are scrolling binary. The view stops on an inoperative one, and we see LEE's face in the reflection; his hollow-eyes betray a wild, maniacal intensity. LEE smashes the screen with the pistol he is holding. LANIER turns around at the sound.

LANIER

Lee! You scared me. Tineel said to launch the S.O.S. distress, but I can't find the damned thing....

Camera advances on LANIER, who frowns.

LANIER
Hey, are you okay?

LEE
(off camera/voiceover)
I'm fine, but you're not.

View shows the gun rise and point right between LANIER's wide, surprised eyes. The barrel is about three feet away from his face. LEE's thumb snakes out and cocks the hammer back.

Scene freezes. Camera swings around, showing the scene from a 3rd person perspective. Background melts in a cascade of binary script to be replaced by a different part of ship.

3 INT. CARGO HOLD

<pov = 3rd person; time = 24 hours earlier; 0%>

The images of LEE and LANIER melt slightly, replaced by what they looked like 24 hours earlier (LANIER's hand is unbandaged, etc.) They are prepping a survey explorer robot. Instead of pointing a gun at LANIER, LEE is handing him a screwdriver. BLOOM is also present and helping.

LANIER
(reaching up to accept tool
from LEE)
Thanks.

He takes the tool, and continues telling a story to all.

LANIER (CONT)
Anyway, he dives down and does this awesome one-handed catch as he hits the backboard, and then does this power-squat kick off of it. And damned if he didn't rip his pants wide open!

He begins tinkering with the probe, everybody laughs.

LANIER (CONT)
So he's flying across the field with his ass flapping in plain sight of a billion viewers, and nobody can do anything but stare at his butt-cheeks, so he scores unopposed! Game!

The other two nod appreciatively.

BLOOM

Yeah, Kobiashi's that team's saving grace. You don't dare foul him, because his antics become twice as embarrassing, and you lose due to humiliation, regardless what the score is.

LANIER grunts in approval as makes a final adjustment.

LANIER

Okay, try that.

BLOOM presses a button on a console, is apparently satisfied by the results.

BLOOM

Good.

He looks at a clipboard computer.

BLOOM (CONT)

Next is the Geiger counter.

LANIER

I keyed the 'counter to ignore the ship's engine signature, so it should just read what's out there.

He points at the airlock, then flips a switch inside the probe.

LANIER (CONT)

Geiger on.

BLOOM

(looks at the console)

Geiger on, just background static.

He does something to his compuclip.

BLOOM (CONT)

Not that you'll need it; we didn't detect anything from orbit.

LANIER

Probably not, but we might as well check while we're here.

BLOOM

Hey, if you wanna run up the clock, it's your call.

LANIER

Well, the whole point of hiring you guys to fly us out here was so we can take a proper look at this place. Why go to all this trouble if we're going to do it half-assed? At least we can tell if it's worth coming back to. This planet's probably a rock, but the spectrographs in orbit were unusual enough to merit getting a few samples. You know the drill.

BLOOM

Yeah; and speaking of 'drill'...

LANIER leans back, away from the robot, and a soft *whirr* of a drill is heard.

BLOOM AND LANIER

Good.

LEE

(to no one in particular)
Yeah, PASE paid for two weeks' exploration of four planets, and they're gonna squeeze out every second of it, aren't they?

BLOOM

Yeah, Lee, but you know if we find something, it'll be worth it, and even if we don't, you and I still get paid by Mister Lanier here.

LANIER

You mean paid by PASE. Remember: I'm just a company lackey; I *wish* I had control of the corporate checkbook. Sure as hell give myself a higher budget than what those tight-sphinctered fiends allotted me for this mission...

BLOOM

But how do you *really* feel, Lanier?

LANIER chuckles, then fiddles inside the robot.

LANIER

Anyway, now that we have a better idea of the gravity out there, we

(MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)
should probably recalibrate the
gyroscope in the centrifuge.

BLOOM types something into the keyboard.

BLOOM
Gotcha. Point eight eight I think,
let me check.

LEE
Oh, speaking of gravity, and back
to what you were saying with
Kobiashi's game-winning
ripped-pants catch...

Everybody starts chuckling.

LEE (CONT)
...I'll admit it: Kobiashi & crew
have a great defense, maybe the
best zero-g defense around, but
they just can't score points. Look
what happened when they played
Vatican City last month: tied
zero-zero.

BLOOM
Man's got a point, Lanier. they're
good, but they're not going all the
way. They won't even make it to May
Mania playoffs.

LANIER
We'll see. Even then, a man can
dream, can't he?

LEE
(snorts derisively)
Just like you're dreaming about
finding anything out in this waste
of universal space.

LANIER leans out of the robot.

LANIER
Hey, Lee, can you tone down your
pessimism? It's interfering with
our chances.

LEE snorts derisively, but looks away.

LANIER (CONT)
 (to BLOOM)
 You said point eight eight, right?

BLOOM
 Yeah.

LANIER
 (to LEE)
 I need a sonic needle-nose.

LEE hands LANIER another tool, and the shot freezes. Background melts in binary script, revealing Bridge from Scene 2, then LEE and LANIER melt slightly, returning to their previous appearances (ideally the same pose): LEE pointing a gun at LANIER.

4 INT. BRIDGE

<pov = LANIER; time = present; 100%>

Camera swings to LANIER's pov: looking down the barrel of LEE's pistol.

LEE
 BITS bit ya. You're one of 'em.

He pulls the trigger. View freezes on gun blast. Camera swings to third person perspective. Background melts in binary script, revealing a different part of the ship.

5 INT. COMPUTER ROOM 1

<pov = 3rd person; time = 18 hours earlier; 5%>

LEE and LANIER melt next, showing them about 18 hours earlier. LEE is holding a small, hand-held machine that is in the middle of sparking.

LEE
 (recoiling from the spark)
 Aah!

LANIER
 Oh, and be careful: it bites.

LEE looks at LANIER and smiles condescendingly in thanks of the late warning, then sets object down on a worktable.

LEE

Well, if it's sparking, it's got power.

LANIER

Like I said, I was charging it up, but it won't turn on like it doesn't have juice. So I don't know what the problem is.

LEE

Well, I'll take a look at it.

LEE reaches over for a small toolkit, quickly finds a long, thin tool and begins disassembling the back of LANIER's device. He removes a small battery pack from it. All the while, LANIER is prattling on, and LEE's expression becomes increasingly annoyed with LANIER's continued presence.

LANIER

Yeah, I dicked around with it quickly, but couldn't figure it out, so thought I'd let you play with it. I won't need it for a couple of hours, until when the Rover gets back with some samples.

LEE

(irritated at the obvious)

Sure.

LANIER lingers.

LEE

I said I'd let you know.

LANIER finally takes the hint and exits. LEE returns his attention to the widget, hooking up a new, external power pack to the exposed interior. He flips a switch, and a red light goes on, and a voltmeter-type display comes to life. He puts them aside, and looks around at the entrances. Satisfied he is alone, he begins to fish something out of his shirt pocket.

BLOOM

(over intercom)

Hey, Lee?

LEE sighs sarcastically at the interruption, turns on the intercom, and then returns to his pocket. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, but keeps fishing.

LEE
What's up, Bloom?

BLOOM
(over intercom)
I'm having a brain bubble: how are
dynasplicers grounded: e positive
or e negative?

LEE thinks a moment as he sets the cigarettes aside on the
workbench.

LEE
Negative.
(pause and frown)
Why you fucking around with the
dynasplicer?

BLOOM
(over intercom)
Long version or short version?

LEE
Short version.

LEE resumes pocket fishing.

BLOOM
(over intercom)
Whoever designed this ship was an
idiot.

LEE
(shrugs)
Yeah, but we already knew that...

The power light and voltmeter on the pack both go out, but
LEE does not notice.

LEE (CONT)
...Okay, so gimme the long version.

LEE finally finds a small black vial with an eyedropper lid.
He holds it up to his face and deftly untwists the lid.

BLOOM
(over intercom)
The auxiliary charger in cell D
forward had a power spike and then
went off line. Blew a ring of fuses
like dominoes. That's easy enough
to fix, but unfortunately the
genius that built this ship put the
(MORE)

BLOOM (cont'd)
 box right behind the dynasplicer.
 Not only that, but put it in such a
 half-assed way that you gotta be on
 top of the damned thing to get at
 it. I don't feel like getting my
 sac zapped off for the sake of
 replacing a goddamn fuse.

LEE
 Pussy; it's only 150 volts. Your
 sac can handle that...

He gets the eyedropper ready, then cocks his head at the
 sound of approaching footsteps and voices. He curses
 silently, then quickly begins reassembling his dropper vial.

LEE (CONT)
 ...Yeah, so... you said the fuses
 had blown?

EMERSON and TINEEL enter, their talking becoming audible.
 LEE has just hidden his paraphernalia back in his shirt. The
 smokes are still out on the worktable.

TINEEL
 ...granted, all that plankton made
 the atmosphere breathable, but who
 wants a water-world except
 colonists?

EMERSON
 True, but there's always some cult
 that wants their own planet and
 who'd be willing to buy...

TINEEL
 (interrupting)
 Ah, Lee, there you are. Are you
 busy?

LEE
 (smiles ingratiatingly, though
 with a touch of loathing)
 Actually, yeah, I've got a couple
 things going right now.

TINEEL
 Is smoking one of them?

LEE frowns, then follows TINEEL's gaze to the crumpled pack.

LEE

Oh, no sir.

TINEEL stares at him skeptically; there is the faintest suggestion he is sniffing the air for smoke.

LEE

That's just an emergency pack I kept in the toolbox; I'd forgotten about it. Found it when I was working on this.

TINEEL

Uh huh. So what are you doing?

LEE

Oh, uh... I'm fixing one of Lanier's widgets, plus helping Bloom with a problem with the, uh...uhh...

BLOOM

(over intercom)
Dynasplicer grinding.

LEE

(nodding solemnly)
Dynasplicer grinding.

EMERSON

Is there a problem with the dynasplicer?

View freezes on EMERSON and TINEEL. Background melts in binary script, revealing Medlab at present (in about the same condition as the Bridge at present. The walls have various impressionist paintings for ambiance.)

6 INT. MEDLAB

Camera swings to EMERSON's pov. [sometime during scene, EMERSON should be reflected off something]

<pov = EMERSON; time = present; 100%>

EMERSON

(off camera/voiceover)
All non-autonomous systems on this ship are either down outright or up but infected. All of them, Tineel, and that includes navigation, flight, and life support. Internal
(MORE)

EMERSON (cont'd)
 atmosphere and temperature will
 become uninhabitable in about
 15 hours. Even if we can fix that
 in time, shipwide the power use is
 in an exponential j curve, and at
 this rate we've got at most 30
 hours before the engine either
 melts down or blows up... or both.
 A meltdown would give us a huge
 hull breach at *the least*. If it
 just blows up, the blast range will
 be substantial and quite
 vaporizing.

TINEEL
 Wonderful. So I guess we have
 15 hours to either figure out how
 to fix everything, or get out of
 the blast radius.

Camera bobs to indicate EMERSON is nodding in agreement.

EMERSON
 (off camera/voiceover)
 I'd rather we try to beat this
 thing than abandon ship. I'm sure
 Lee'd feel the same. After all,
 it's our ship.

TINEEL
 I understand that, but we can't
 really risk spending too much time
 on the effort, because so far we've
 done nothing but fail at it. Before
 you get back to it, I really think
 we should prep the life raft. Just
 as a preemptive precaution, and
 better sooner than later. We'll do
 it as soon as as soon as Lanier and
 Lee get back.

EMERSON
 (off camera/voiceover)
 Where are Lanier and Lee, anyway?
 They've been gone a *while*.

Image freezes. View shifts to third person. Background melts
 with binary script into Cargo Hold 10 hours ago. View of
 TINEEL and EMERSON melts to what they looked like 10 hours
 ago; BLOOM and LANIER are also present, the latter standing
 next to the Rover robot. It is now weather-beaten and
 dirty.

7 INT. CARGO HOLD (10 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov = 3rd person; time = 10 hours earlier; 35%>

LANIER

I didn't even bother having it bring back any samples from the crater, because I could tell from the quick-check Rover did that it wasn't grade. We already knew it wasn't pure Malardite to begin with, but I was hoping there'd be a few pockets of purer quality. Didn't find any, and doubt we will, either.

TINEEL

So we've found a crater full of crap?

LANIER

Pretty much. Malardite has its uses, but it's just uncommon, not rare, and not worth the cost of a mining enterprise. Hell, that meteor isn't even all that big to begin with, even if it was pure. To be honest, I was kind of surprised you wanted to check it out in the first place.

TINEEL

As you said: Malardite has its uses, and it's uncommon. I'm just running this by the PASE exploration playbook.

LANIER

Sure; but what's out there is an impure alloy. Aside from the cost of mining it, there's the additional expense of having to get all that aluminum out of it. I knew it was shit just by how easy Rover's drill went into it. Pure Malardite's harder than a diamond, and this...

(he taps Rover)

...has a bort tip. If that meteor...

BLOOM
 (amusedly)
 Excuse me, uh... *bort*?

LANIER
 (seriously)
 Yeah. Three centimeter solid tip.

BLOOM
 What is *bort*?

TINEEL
 (immediately and also
 seriously)
 Industrial-grade diamond. Too many
 flaws for gemstone quality, but you
 can still use them for drill tips
 and such.

BLOOM looks at TINEEL with amused surprise.

BLOOM
 Okaaaay...

Turns his attention back to LANIER.

BLOOM (CONT)
 ...*Bort*!

LANIER smiles condescendingly, nods politely, and continues
 on to TINEEL.

LANIER
 Anyway, the short version recap is
 we found shit.

TINEEL
 Agreed.

LANIER
 Personally, I think that applies
 not only to that meteor crater out
 there, but this whole damned
 planet.

TINEEL
 That's your professional opinion?

LANIER
 No, my professional opinion is this
 place is a 9.5 on the scatometer.
 However, my PASE opinion is that
 there's nothing else on this rock
 (MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)
that has potential investor
incentive.

TINEEL
Okay then. Hopefully we'll have
better luck at the next one, so
let's get moving and find out. How
long will it take you to get Rover
ready for the next run?

LANIER
I dunno; should probably scrub him
down, check the treads and the
oil... couple hours. He seems to be
running fine. The atmosphere out
there was very electrical, but
luckily Rover didn't get any
lightning zaps. I want to make sure
he's okay, though. No idea what the
prep time will be for the next
place, but if it's anything like
this chunk, that's...
(to BLOOM)
...what'd that take us, two hours?

BLOOM
Something like that, yeah. Next
place we're going is another rock,
right?

LANIER
Yeah; it's actually the closest to
the sun. About the size of the moon
back at Earth. Lots of iron ore;
we'll see what else we find when we
get close enough for a real scan.

TINEEL
Flight time there should be about
eight hours; I'll see what Palmer
says for a more precise estimate.

EMERSON
The planets' alignment out here
doesn't make for the simplest or
quickest flight paths.

TINEEL
True, but the last gas giant alone
has an orbit of several centuries,
and PASE doesn't want to wait
around a couple decades until the
(MORE)

TINEEL (cont'd)
 system's in a more convenient
 alignment to shave off a few hours
 of flight time.

BLOOM
 Hey, it's your dime we're flying
 on.

EMERSON
 Thank you, Bloom.

TINEEL
 Indeed it is, so let's get going.
 I'll go check with Palmer right
 now, but we originally estimated
 about eight hours if we jump at the
 high end of the sublight spectrum.
 Is that enough time for you to get
 ready, Lanier?

LANIER
 (shrugs)
 Don't see why not.

TINEEL
 Okay then.

TINEEL nods curtly at LANIER, and exits. EMERSON looks at the Rover, and then at the retreating TINEEL. EMERSON follows after him and leaves. Camera follows. They walk through an access corridor that is barely wide enough for them to stand side by side in, but EMERSON purposefully does not catch up.

BLOOM
 (off camera and fading)
 You know, some of the gunk on your
 Rover here might be really hard to
 scrub off. Maybe we should try some
 bort cleanser.

Camera follows TINEEL and EMERSON into Computer Room 2.

8 INT. COMPUTER ROOM 2 (CONTINUOUS)

LEE is standing on a stool, reaching into an open light panel on the ceiling. He is changing a long, thin light tube.

TINEEL

We're leaving, so when you get done with that, I need you to do a strap-down for launch and sublight.

LEE

(putting finishing touches on installing the tube)

Uh huh.

EMERSON

Lee, do you know where Lake is?

LEE

Last I saw her, she was up on the Bridge playing chess with Palmer. They both looked bored, so I suggested she see if he played.

The new light tube grows increasingly bright.

TINEEL

(without stopping)

Androids don't get bored.

EMERSON

This is true; we were all randomly programmed with hobbies. You know that.

The light becomes painfully bright.

LEE

Oh hell yeah I do: you babble on more about Rossini...

LEE finally notices the light and squints at it just as it gives one final pulse of light and then burns itself out to darkness; this is accompanied by an electrical popping sound that should have the same grating effect as nails on a chalkboard. LEE recoils slightly, but the bulb is still intact.

TINEEL can tell that something bad has just happened; he stops and turns around.

LEE

God-damn-dipshit-gypsy-dildo-punk!

He reaches up and pulls out the burnt tube; inside is gray swirling smoke that is quickly turning an ugly bruise hue. LEE shakes it disdainfully at EMERSON, who was about to walk by his stool.

LEE

That's two in a row! Three! Three if you count the one that originally burnt out! What're you doing to me, Emerson? You're in charge of supply, so you buying cheap piece-of-shit xenon lights and pocketing the diff? You know, it's not like we got an ton of these on board to spare.

EMERSON

Mea culpa. When we get back to Tarshish, I'll talk to the guy I got them from.

LEE

At least get a refund. You save the receipt, you fiend?

EMERSON

Didn't get one. The man didn't have the proper forms.

TINEEL

Lee.

LEE

What man was this? The man selling supplies out of the back of a black mini-hover...

TINEEL

(louder)

Lee.

LEE sighs with more than slight melodrama, and looks at TINEEL. Awkward pause.

TINEEL

The strap-down is more important than the light. Rig the ship for launch and zero-g.

Another awkward pause, and then LEE hops off the stool. As he rights himself, he casts an unhappy glance at EMERSON, who just watches him passively.

TINEEL

Don't get me wrong, Lee: you can get back to fixing your light once we're under way. I just need you to prep us for flight first.

EMERSON

I think what he means is, the faster we fly out of here, the faster we can finish up and go back to the fringe of the Wilderness and get better lighting supplies.

TINEEL

Thank you, Emerson. So...

He looks expectantly at LEE a moment, and then turns and leaves. EMERSON puts a finger up to LEE's lips and shakes his head, silencing whatever caustic comment he knows is about to come. EMERSON exits, and Camera follows him and TINEEL making their way to the Bridge.

9 INT. BRIDGE (CONTINUOUS)

LAKE and PALMER are present, sitting opposite each other at the flight console.

LAKE

Six six three five one five. I'll take forty-two for that. Done.

PALMER

Four five one two two four. I'll pass, and I'm done.

TINEEL

Palmer?

PALMER

Sir.

TINEEL is about to speak, but LAKE beats him to it.

LAKE

Tineel, did Lanier find anything?

TINEEL

No; we're taking off.

EMERSON

(to LAKE)

Who won at chess?

LAKE

He did, ten zero.

PALMER
 (holding up a quick power fist
 of triumph)
 Go Team Penguin!

LAKE
 I noticed the pattern after five
 games, confirmed at ten. I can't
 touch him.

PALMER
 Don't sell yourself short; you made
 me work for it several times.
 Androids are usually easy to beat,
 because they typically play one of
 the 88 classic strategies. I never
 could figure out what you were
 doing.

LAKE
 Simple: I didn't have a strategy, I
 just improvised based on the
 situation. I never understood
 planning a game out 8 moves in
 advance; the board will have
 changed too much in that time, so a
 long-term strategy is useless.

PALMER
 True to an extent, but if you know
 your opponent, you can still
 compensate. Besides, maneuvering
 chess pieces is similar to plotting
 an ultra-light flight. I play a
 lot, to keep in practice.

EMERSON
 I can plot ultra-light, but I can
 only beat her 23% of the time. You
 must have done some complicated
 flying.

PALMER
 Sometimes.

EMERSON
 Have you ever flown in combat?

PALMER
 No; I have a standard anti-violence
 chip implant. Why? Have you flown
 in combat?

EMERSON

Once, putting down the uprising at the Frederic's Star Perimeter. It's how I bought myself out of corporate ownership.

TINEEL looks over, annoyed both at the unproductive chit-chat and the fact that it had drifted to android sovereignty.

PALMER

Oh, congratulations.

TINEEL

(a little louder than necessary)

Palmer. Prep for flight and start plotting a course.

PALMER

(nods obediently)

Yes, sir. The inner one next, as agreed?

TINEEL

Yes.

EMERSON

(to LAKE)

What game were you playing just now?

LAKE

(to PALMER)

We never did name it.

PALMER

(busying himself at controls to his side)

Well, you suggested the majority of the rules, so how about we call it Lake's Game.

LAKE

Okay...

(solemnly, to EMERSON)

...We were playing Lake's Game.

EMERSON

Were you winning?

LAKE

Yes.

TINEEL

Well, since you suggested most of the rules, I don't doubt it....

(to PALMER)

...Work on that: I expect better out of my pilots.

Quick cut to an intercom speaker. There is a burst of grainy static, over which LEE says something unintelligible.

TINEEL looks irritably at the speaker, then walks over to it and thumbs a button.

TINEEL

(into speaker)

What?

TINEEL's voice can be heard from one of the intercom speakers; it is garbled. He releases the button, and after a moment, there is another static pulse with more distorted gibberish.

PALMER

Course plotted and proofread; I can fine-tune on the fly. Should take 8 hours and 18 minutes.

He turns to the computer in front of him and begins flipping switches.

PALMER

Warming up thrusters.

TINEEL nods at him briefly, and then thumbs the speaker button again.

TINEEL

Lee, was that you? Please repeat.

Again, there is a distorted echo of this over the intercom.

LEE

(off camera)

I said we're done with the strap-down...

LEE enters the Bridge.

LEE (CONT)

...but apparently our intercom is now on the fritz.

TINEEL

(sourly)

Wonderful. Well done.

LEE

What, wonderful well done that I finished a strap-down in record time, thank you, Mr. Lee... or wonderful well done that something else is broken, you're obviously an incompetent slob?

EMERSON

Lee...

TINEEL

You said we're ready? Good; go tell Bloom and Lanier to buckle up for lift-off.

TINEEL pointedly turns his back on LEE and sits down in a console chair, making an elaborate display of buckling up. LEE looks at TINEEL, then exits with a disgusted shake of his head.

EMERSON

I'm sorry, Mr. Tineel. You have to take Lee with a...

TINEEL

Later. And since he's your crewman, I'll let you deal with his discipline. Right now, let's get out of here.

He reaches over and thumbs the intercom.

TINEEL

Prepare for launch.

The speakers broadcast is garbled; TINEEL remembers the system is broken just as he's saying it.

LAKE

(a little too sweetly)

Intercom's broken, Mr. Tineel. Remember?

TINEEL nods that he does, and assumes perfect posture in his chair.

TINEEL

Screw it; if they're not buckled in
by now, it's their own damned
problem. Palmer?

PALMER, now buckled into his own chair at the flight
console, merely nods, and begins flipping switches and
pressing buttons.

PALMER

Engines off stand-by...
(flipping more switches)
...Primed and ready when you are,
Sir.

TINEEL

Do it.

PALMER presses a button, and the ship begins to shake
slightly. At the front of the bridge is an observation
window; outside, the swirling clouds begin moving downward.

PALMER

We have lift-off.

Out the window, the clouds are moving more rapidly. PALMER
continues to flip switches and press buttons.

PALMER

Retracting gear...

Close-up of his console, where a subset of switches is
labeled LANDING GEAR. There are four (FRONT, PORT,
STARBOARD, REAR) with red lights above them. Three of them
blink briefly and then shut off, but the FRONT remains lit.
PALMER flips the front switch again. Nothing happens.

PALMER

Forward landing gear is not
responding.

EMERSON turns to his console, and flips some switches. A
video display comes alive, showing grainy, rapidly moving
clouds. He rapidly presses buttons and then moves a toggle;
the view on his screen pans, showing the underside of the
ship. The forward landing gear comes into view.

EMERSON

Confirmed; I'm looking at it, and
it is down.

TINEEL

Christ on a crapper.

Image freezes. Background melts in binary script to Medlab.

10

INT. MEDLAB

TINEEL and EMERSON melt to look like present time. In the background, LAKE, PALMER, and BLOOM (in a space suit) are lain out on tables. View switches to EMERSON'S.

<pov = EMERSON; time = present; 100%>

TINEEL

The trick will be to prep the lifeboat without infecting it. So don't turn anything on until we actually separate for launch.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

Our shuttle does have a cold-launch panic button, so it'll be a bit tricky but still doable.

TINEEL

Just load air, water, and food; nothing electrical. By the way, it should go without saying that we're leaving them behind...

(He indicates the tables behind him holding LAKE and PALMER.)

...It's too dangerous to bring them on board with us.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

They're demonstrably infected, but they're also self-contained. Still, I don't have a problem with that. BITS is something we definitely don't want to take back with us, in any form.

TINEEL

Yeah; that would be bad. Rather than take back a sample, we'll just take back a warning to treat it with care. I'm sure electrobiologists would be interested in it, especially since

(MORE)

TINEEL (cont'd)
it's new and unique. I'm sure they
could find a way to deal with it.

EMERSON
(off screen/voiceover)
Bullshit in triplicate, boss: this
planet needs to be quarantined,
just to keep BITS contained. This
thing screws up all electrical
technology like nothing else, so we
can't let it spread back. Besides,
from an android's standpoint, this
thing's the equivalent of the Black
Plague.

Image freezes, swings to 3rd person. Background melts in
binary script to Computer Room 2.

11 INT. COMPUTER ROOM 2 (13 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov = 3rd person; time = 13 hours earlier; 25%>

EMERSON and TINEEL melt to be replaced as they were 13 hours
ago. BLOOM is also present.

EMERSON and BLOOM contemplate a computer/machine not
working.

TINEEL
Something else break down?

BLOOM
Yeah, but nothing major. Gotta say,
this is getting frustrating real
fast.

TINEEL
When you're done, see if Lee's
finished fixing the freight
elevator. Help him if he isn't.
He's taking too long by himself.

BLOOM
Didn't know the elevator was
broken; I've been busy with fixing
all this other nuisance shit.

He plays around with the back panel.

EMERSON

There are a lot of things going wrong around here all of a sudden. Granted, the Moriarty's an older ship, but Bloom and Lee usually keep on top of things, and I'm not about to chalk all this up to spontaneous warranty expiration.

BLOOM stops tinkering and nods conspiratorially to EMERSON.

BLOOM

I was wondering if it was just me thinking that, so I wasn't going to jinx it by bringing it up, but yeah, you're right. Something *weird* is going on here. Too many things are going wrong too quickly... We had a saying in the service: once is happenstance, twice is coincidence...

EMERSON

Three times is enemy action. Something is obviously going on.

TINEEL

Yeah; you've got bugs in the system.

Scene freezes on EMERSON and TINEEL. Background melts in binary script to show Computer Room 1, then a character melt to show EMERSON and TINEEL 7 hours earlier. LEE and LAKE are also present. View shifts to EMERSON.

12 INT. COMPUTER ROOM 1 (7 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov = EMERSON; time = 7 hours earlier; 55%>

LEE

When I started checking half an hour ago, I'd guess about 1/3 of all our systems were malfunctioning *in some way*. Well, the latest diagnostic poll shows about *half* of all our systems are hit. This shit is spreading like a 2 dollar hooker.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)
And you're still not sure what the pattern is?

LEE

Well it obviously spreads by direct contact when you plug something in from the outside, but with all the interconnected internal shit it's gotten into, it seems to be a bit more erratic, or at least selective. Some systems you'd think would be down show no sign of it and are running fine, while others are down and I have no idea how they came in contact with it.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

Well, let me know if I can help.

LEE

Sure: keep Tineel out of my way. He's distractingly hands-on when he's around.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

He's updating the incident report, so he'll be out of your hair for a good half hour.

LEE

How productive to the situation at hand. Meanwhile, for those of us doing *real* work... We should start shutting down things we don't immediately need, just as a preventative measure.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

Good call. It'll save power, too. You said we were drawing a lot more juice now. Makes sense, I guess...

LAKE

Yeah, and I wonder if that's because this thing is feeding on the Power. Electricity's not only its medium but food; either way, it's a source for growth.

LEE

Well, we got one thing in our favor: it's not spreading as fast as it could. Everything in here's

(MORE)

LEE (cont'd)

interconnected on a power grid, so once it got into that I'd have thought it'd hit everything drawing power almost simultaneously. It's been a couple of hours since we really noticed all this shit, and in that time it should have spread everywhere by now. Hell, a computer virus in our mainframe would've done so by now, or at least gotten a lot farther along than this has.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

Well, it's comparatively slow and inefficient, but it's still kicking our asses.

LAKE

So it's a patient parasite. Slow and steady wins the race.

LEE

I have noticed one thing. At first, when something was infected, it just shut down and after that was inoperable. Now when something's infected, it shuts down and then restarts. After that, it works, just not correctly.

LAKE

Jesus, this thing's adapting to its environment.

There is an awkward pause, and then the camera looks at LAKE.

EMERSON

(off screen/voiceover)

Lake, what are the chances that this thing is becoming intelligent?

Image freezes, swings to third person. Image melts in binary script, to be replaced by MEDLAB from 15 hours earlier. Binary melt on the crew, removing all except LAKE. LANIER is added. LAKE is tending to an injured LANIER by wrapping a bandage around his left hand. She has a kindly, helpful expression, he seems rather embarrassed.

13 INT. MEDLAB (15 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov = 3rd person, time = 15 hours ago, 15%>

LANIER

It still tingles, but I can't tell if that's the torpicane kicking in.

LAKE

Probably a bit of both. You got a pretty good zap from that widget. All your arm hair was standing on end when you came in.

LANIER

And Lee had just fixed the damned thing, too.

LAKE finishes wrapping and clips the gauze in place.

LAKE

How's that?

LANIER

Hard to tell with the tingling, but seems fine.

LAKE

Good, but let me know if you think it's too tight, okay?

LANIER

Sure. I must say, you have an excellent bedside manor programming.

LAKE

Thank you. Ironically, after they bought and bonded me, Lee said he found the programming was actually too sweet, at least for him, so he paid to program me with a sarcasm subroutine.

LANIER

I'd never had guessed. So, how's that working out?

LAKE

Emerson ignores it, Bloom's fallen in love with me, and Lee hates it. But I think that has to do with him secretly being an androphobe.

LANIER examines his hand, wiggles his fingers.

LAKE

Now, the nerves in your hand are still jittery from the shock proximity, so give them time to calm down. Use that hand as little as possible for the next day or so, and baby it when you do need to use it.

LANIER nods, and grunts understanding.

LAKE (CONT)

This is especially important over the next few hours, because with the torpicane you're not going to feel anything in that hand at all, so you won't know your limits. After it kicks in, you could break your wrist and not even feel it.

LANIER

Good point. I've never had torpicane; it's illegal back in the core because of the recreational abuse. I thought they only used it on terminally ill patients to ease their pain in their final hours.

LAKE

Well, torpicane is an excellent anesthetic, and I'm only applying a small dose locally. You won't become addicted, if that's what you're worried about.

LANIER

Kind of surprised you can even get it out here on the Rim.

LAKE

Rim rules are more relaxed than in the Core. I am a bona fide doctor droid, all my paperwork is legit and in order, so I can buy it and use it at my discretion. As long as I do it responsibly, no problem. Personally, there are 20 other anesthetics available that would do as well a job, but Lee insists that the Moriarty be stocked with nothing but top shelf pharmacy. He

(MORE)

LAKE (cont'd)
even kicks in more than he should to fund our medical expenses, so I turn a blind eye when an occasional tablet or patch goes missing. Still, he gets the best, and we've assembled quite a little apothecary of exotics.

LANIER
Well, I wish PASE were as generous or flamboyant with its inventory. That widget was old 2 years ago. I asked 'em for a new one, but they said no. Wonder if I'd gotten it, if this would have happened.

He holds up the wounded hand for emphasis, and winces in pain and confusion.

LANIER (CONT)
The tingling changed direction when I did that.

LAKE
That's the torpicane kicking in.

LANIER
Yeah, it feels different than that original static tingling.

LAKE
Well, in a few minutes, you won't be feeling anything.

LANIER
You know, you should probably write me a prescription or affidavit saying you gave me torpicane. PASE drug tests, and are pretty zero tolerant.

LAKE
I can do that.

LANIER
Actually, it's my understanding Tineel was the one who got that policy pushed through. He'll certainly want documentation as to why I have a few micrograms of an abusive drug in my system. Tineel would jump on it, and I'd be out of a job.

LAKE

Admittedly, Mr. Tineel does seem very strict and stringent about following policies. But I'm sure the circumstances mitigate...

LANIER

No, I think Tineel has it out for me, because He thinks I'm a Doubting Thomas.

LAKE

Michelangelo did a painting of that, but somehow I don' think you're referring to John 20:25.

LANIER

A Doubting Thomas is a PASE employee that knows Tineel and his history, and doesn't buy his version of certain embarrassing events; or at least refuses to believe him without empirical proof to back it up.

LAKE

Oh? Sounds like shop gossip, and you just triggered the circuit for my sewing circle subroutine.

LANIER looks a bit hesitant, whether he should open up to LAKE. She flashes him an innocent *your-secret's-safe-with-me* smile, and wins him over. He makes a point of looking around to the doorways, to make sure they are alone, then leans forward conspiratorially. .

LANIER

Alright, before PASE, there was a company called Horizon Exploration. Did the same thing.

LAKE

(nods in understanding)
I've heard of them; they went out of business three years ago. And, actually, Tineel said PASE stared three years ago...

It is LANIER's turn to nod.

LANIER

Yep, and this is not a coincidence. PASE is basically what rose from

(MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)

the ashes of the disaster that was Horizon. This is all before my time, but back then Tineel was with Horizon in some high-level capacity; I'm honestly not sure how. Anyway, Horizon went belly-up because one of their sites had a flash fire; killed everyone in the complex. The Law stepped in to investigate, and found so much wrong that there'd be bankruptcy for the company and jail time for some key people. However, Horizon was able to prove all the problems were a one-off at that single site, and the guy in charge, named Thomas, was to blame. Rather convenient, 'cuz he died in the fire. Anyway, a lot of the people I've met who were around back then say Tineel actually had a hand in this, either in the build-up to it all, or the cover-up blaming Thomas, or even both. Don't know if he was covering his ass or the company's, but the buzz around the beehive is that he's not clean from all that.

LAKE

Do you believe that?

LANIER

Honestly? I don't know. But some of the old timers I've talked to make some pretty interesting points about the whole thing, and they'd know better than I would. It's no secret that Tineel isn't popular among the PASE rank and file. Some people won't work with him at all. Lucky me, I got the short straw and ended up on this run with him.

LAKE

Wait, is this your first time actually working with him, then?

LANIER

Yeah. Y'know, interesting side note to this whole Horizon thing. When it rose from the ashes with new

(MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)

backing and a new name as PASE, a lot of the Horizon crew came over, including Tineel. Whatever his old job at Horizon was, it wasn't managing explorations like this.

He lets that sink in, but she is quick on the draw.

LAKE

Are you saying that our mission commander has no real experience at this sort of run?

LANIER

My understanding is he's done two survey missions: the first about three years ago, the other something like nine months ago. Both were a wash-out; they didn't find anything either time. Apparently both runs went smoothly, but maybe only because nothing out of the ordinary was sprung at him. Personally, I don't think he'd know how to react if something wasn't in the PASE playbook. That's why he runs things so rigidly: he's still new at this and doesn't know how to improvise.

LAKE

He's certainly shown no creativity. Or sense of humor.

LANIER

No. He's got a well-deserved reputation in that department, though my theory is his logic is "if I'm not having fun, you're not going to either."

LAKE

Well, he may be a harsh taskmaster, but perhaps PASE felt that was what was needed. Then again, you do all the real work, he just micro-manages.

LANIER

True, and he doesn't have the experience yet to know he's more in the way than helpful. I'll tell

(MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)
 you, though, one of the old timer
 grumbles was that Tineel got moved
 to the exploration wing to get him
 out of the way. And if he fucks up
 a mission, they deal with him.
 Unless he fucks up fatally, and
 then problem solved permanently.

LAKE
 Just like Doubting Thomas.

Scene freezes. Binary flood changes to show LAKE and LANIER
 from 30 minutes earlier. TINEEL, LEE, and EMERSON are also
 present (PALMER and BLOOM are on tables.) View switches to
 LAKE. She is looking at EMERSON.

14 INT. MEDLAB (30 MINUTES EARLIER)

<pov = LAKE, time = 30 minutes earlier, 75%>

NOTE: this is an excerpt of Scene 31. Dialog from that
 between TINEEL, EMERSON, and LANIER runs in the background.

LAKE
 Amen, brother.

Camera turns toward a workspace where an old fashioned
 microscope has been set up.

LAKE
 (voiceover/off screen)
 I specifically dug this out just in
 case: no powered parts.

She carefully sets up, using a wooden tongue depressor as a
 slide. The end has a glistening goo on it.

Camera zooms in on the microscope's eyepiece. The view blurs
 as the image fine-tunes, finally revealing strange pulsing
 shapes. After a moment, there is a click, and the
 magnification increases. Another click with the same result.

The view swings up as she addresses the room at large.

LAKE
 I've never seen anything like this.
 It's not cellular. This BITS may be
 electrical, but it's behaving like
 a biological virus. It infects
 something electrical and tries to
 rewrite the circuitry to something
 habitable, with disastrous results.

Scene freezes, then swings to third person. Binary melt to show Bridge from 9 hours ago. Then binary melt on crew, showing them 9 hours ago.

15 INT. BRIDGE (9 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov = 3rd person; time = 9 hours earlier; 45%>

PALMER

We can't fly with a landing strut hanging out.

TINEEL

Bloom, Lee, can one of you go out fix it?

BLOOM

I think we'd have to. The problem's not something in here; it's out there. Worse comes to worse, I should be able to retract it manually, but if we have to keep cranking it by hand every time we want to land or take off, it's gonna be a pain in the bort.

TINEEL

We'll deal with that when we have to.

BLOOM

Fine; Let's do it.

Camera holds on a close-up of BLOOM and LEE. Cut to same close-up, except now they is wearing a space suit; the Bridge is replaced with the Airlock.

16 INT. AIRLOCK (MOMENTS LATER)

EMERSON

(off camera/radio distortion)
Opening outer doors.

A red light begins swirling overhead. Camera pans back through the parting doors, revealing the side of the hull. His suit has a jet-pack attached; BLOOM uses the controls to propel himself forward. Camera pans to track him.

BLOOM

(radio distortion)
And I'm out.

LEE exits a moment later, likewise attired. He is pulling a small dolly that has been firmly fitted with tool compartments.

LEE
(radio distortion)
Clear.

17 INT. BRIDGE (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

EMERSON sitting at his console, watching BLOOM on the video monitor. LEE follows behind. EMERSON moves a toggle to camera-track them.

EMERSON
Gotcha.

18 EXT. SHIP (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

Camera is following BLOOM. The Planet can be seen in the background; it is swirling storms with faint, sporadic lightning. BLOOM makes his way along the underbelly toward the forward gear. LEE lags behind slightly.

19 INT. BRIDGE (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

EMERSON is watching them on the video screen. Next to the screen is a schematic of the landing gear.

20 EXT. SHIP (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

BLOOM reaches the landing strut. He lands on it, and disengages himself from the jetpack. As he begins to climb up the gear, LEE floats next to the strut, and grabs hold of it to stop his momentum. The dolly palate floats by; he grabs it with his free hand to stop it.

BLOOM
(radio distortion)
First things first, there's no power in here. Lee, toss me a flashlight.

LEE
(radio distortion)
Coming up on your left.

A bright light comes sailing up next to BLOOM. He reaches out and grabs the lamp, and then continues to climb up.

TINEEL
 (over radio)
 Any idea what the problem is?

LEE begins climbing up the side of the ship, carrying a manual hand crank.

LEE
 (radio distortion)
 Screw it; let's just crank it closed. This'll be easier to deal with inside, in flight, out of a suit.

BLOOM is looking at the mechanics of the gear. He reaches out to some wires, and they crumble to dust at his touch. The powder floats around, quite a bit of it getting on his suit.

BLOOM
 (radio distortion)
 Shit, it's like this thing's been burned. All the wiring's brittle...

The lamp goes out.

Close-up of BLOOM (inside suit). His face is illuminated by a few internal lights, but suddenly these die and the scene goes completely black - his suit has just shut down.

BLOOM (CONT)
 (flat, echoless, and fatally aware)
 Oh shit.

21 INT. BRIDGE (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

LAKE is sitting at a console, monitoring a screen displaying Bloom and Lee's lifesigns and vitals. Bloom's is blank, and a red alarm is flashing: contact lost.

LAKE
 Bloom?

LANIER looks over, concerned. Image freezes, swings to LANIER's pov.

22 INT. BRIDGE

<pov = LANIER; time = present; 100%> Bridge melts in binary script, replaced by Bridge as it appears in Scene 4. [note: camera does not move during this scene; shot from floor looking up] LEE is added during the cascade, looking down at the camera. He is still holding the pistol, but also has a bucket of water.

LEE

Not sure if you're still human or not, but I just can't take the chance.

LEE pours the bucket over LANIER's (off-screen) corpse. When he is done, he makes a nervous smile, and begins fishing for something in his pocket. However, he quickly sees that some of LANIER's blood has splattered onto himself. He upends the bucket and lets the remains dribble onto the red splashed.

LEE

(muttering to himself)
Can't take the chance.

Image freezes, swings to third person. Room melts in binary script to Bridge from beginning of the story 9 days ago. Another binary flood to remove LANIER and add BLOOM, LAKE and EMERSON.

23 INT. BRIDGE (9 DAYS AGO)

<pov - 3rd person; time = 9 days ago; 0%>

Over the intercom, faint strains of Rossini's *Petite Messe*. Paired around the Bridge, EMERSON and LAKE are having one conversation, LEE and BLOOM a different one. LAKE is wearing a t-shirt with a Degas painting (L'Absinthe) on it; Bloom a beat-up wifebeater with a large "certified" stamp over the caption: 8" [ie: eight inches.] LEE is smoking a cigarette by a smokeless ashtray; his grimy black t-shirt has a laudanum bottle with the label "Old Bull".

On a console near EMERSON is a video display of the airlock's exterior and the flight hanger; TINEEL, LANIER and PALMER can be seen walking into it. They stop, and TINEEL looks around expectantly.

EMERSON

Incoming.

EMERSON keys the intercom; the Rossini mutes in half.

EMERSON

Welcome aboard the Dean Moriarty.
We're all on the Bridge.

On the screen, TINEEL looks around, sees the video, and nods curtly to it. They walk off screen.

EMERSON presses a button, and the video jumps to the Cargo Room; TINEEL, LANIER, and PALMER walk through it briefly. He stands up, quick-smooths his appearance.

LEE

About time. Let's tell 'em no and then I can get back to my nap.

BLOOM

Nah; let's at least hear 'em out first before we say no.

LEE

What company are they from again?

EMERSON

PASE. Pan-Astral Survey
Exploration.

Blank stares from his comrades.

EMERSON

I'd never heard of them either.
Small company; they've been around
three years.

LEE

You think they're legit, though?

EMERSON

Appears to be. They've filed two
claims in the past two years, and
sold both at a profit, so they
should have the money to fund us.

LEE

A solid million isn't all *that*
much, corporate-wise.

BLOOM

Yeah, but it's cheaper for small
comps to subcontract assholes like
us rather than risk their own
ships.

LEE

(points an accusatory finger)
Yeah, and that's...

EMERSON

Lee, it's more that we've made all year doing freelance cargo hauling.

LEE

It *is*, and don't get me wrong: I'm as greedy as the next one o' y'all. But Bloom's got the point about them not wanting to use their own ships for this. Either they're not *quite* sure what the flight path is, or they're not sure what's *really* out there. Either way, sounds like they want us to make a risk jump. I *hate* risk jumping. We've done it before, of course, and it's shaved years of my life. If your luck runs out at ultra-light, then it doesn't matter what you've been paid because the dead can't spend.

EMERSON

Give me credit, Lee; that was one of my first questions. It's not exactly risk jumping, because they already tested the flight path algorithm with an unmanned drone. As long as we follow the path there and back exactly, we're fine.

LAKE

Lee, if Emerson trusts the flight path, I'd defer to him. He's the one taking the risks. All you need do is just stay out of the way, unless something goes wrong and we actually need you.

BLOOM

Yeah, dude; pretty sweet deal we got. Just like in ancient China, where people used to pay the doctors when they were healthy, but operations and stuff were free.

LAKE

Oh, like you all do with me right now?

BLOOM
 (to LAKE)
 Exactly!
 (To LEE)
 So just make sure everything works,
 and kick back and watch porn for a
 month. I know that's what I'm gonna
 do, unless Lake here has a change
 of heart.

BLOOM blows her an overly-dramatic kiss.

LAKE
 I'm an android: I don't have a
 heart. Or a vagina. So enjoy your
 porn.

She returns the mock kiss.

BLOOM
 (to LEE)
 I'm wearing her down. She'll be
 mine; you'll see.

LEE smiles politely and nods in mock agreement, though there is a bit of revulsion in it, too. He seems about to comment to this effect when he hears footfalls coming from the access corridor. TINEEL, LANIER, and PALMER enter the Bridge.

TINEEL
 Emerson.

He shakes his hand formally.

EMERSON
 Mr. Tineel, this is Lake, Bloom,
 and Lee.

He indicates each in order.

TINEEL
 (mechanically looking at each)
 Lake, Bloom, and Lee.
 (He indicates his two
 companions)
 This is Lanier and Palmer.

LANIER
 Howdy.

PALMER merely nods, and stands unobtrusively in the back.

LEE takes a deep drag off his cigarette and exhales in the general vicinity of the ashtray. Little of the smoke is sucked into it. There is a slightly awkward pause.

TINEEL

(addressing BLOOM, LEE, and LAKE)

I don't know how much Emerson has briefed you all, but we represent a company called PASE. We would like to hire your ship to take us out to a newly-charted solar system. There are four planets; two rocks, and two gas giants. Take us to each, and let Lanier here do an analysis of anything interesting.

LANIER

Now, I know your ship's not equipped for a proper survey, but I've got some gadgets that can do the job.

TINEEL

Palmer here has the flight coordinates programmed into him, and will plug in as the actual pilot.

PALMER

It's a clean path. Eight days there at ultra-light.

LEE

You're sure it's clean? My understanding is, you only tested it once. Normally, Emerson's our pilot; mind if he double-checks your figures?

TINEEL

(visibly bristles)

Actually... The flight path is proprietary information, and PASE's stake in this is still in it's infancy, so I'd prefer to keep that confidential for now.

(to EMERSON)

Don't worry: I'll share it with you if there's a real need to know.

Off to the side, LEE snorts derisively, and coughs the words "risk jump." Everyone ignores him.

LAKE

What system is it, anyway? Or is that proprietary information, too?

PALMER and TINEEL answer at once, differently; PALMER defers to TINEEL.

TINEEL

It's in the right wing of the Jabberwocky.

BLOOM

Heard the name, but couldn't tell you where it is. Dude, we're Rim Rats. I have no idea what constellations are what towards the core where you're from.

EMERSON

That's okay, Bloom; I got it. If you're on Tarshish, it's one of several seen from the southern hemisphere, probably off toward...

LEE

(increasingly irritated at the vagueness)

Does this place have a *name*?

TINEEL

The star itself has a big, long catalog number.

Next to him, LANIER holds his hands a foot apart, nodding solemnly.

BLOOM

So if it doesn't have a name, how about if we find anything worthwhile out there we call it Bloom's Star. I'll take that as my bonus cut.

LANIER

(laughs)

Actually, PASE hasn't filed an actual claim on the system yet. We were the first ones there, with a probe. We registered the flight path the probe took there and back; but that's it. Like Tineel said, this whole project is still in its infancy. If there's anything

(MORE)

LANIER (cont'd)
worthwhile out there, PASE will
stake the system, and it'll stop
being a big, long catalog number
and start being PASE 3 or
something.

TINEEL
We're just going out to see if it's
worth it for PASE to buy the system
and then sell it to someone who can
actually develop it.

LEE
Just so we're clear, we'd get paid
even if you don't find anything?

TINEEL
Correct, though PASE takes a bath
financially.

EMERSON
But you did say that there would be
a bonus proportionate to what you
find?

TINEEL
Yes, you get the flat fee we agreed
upon, adjusted accordingly with
what Lanier can find.

LANIER
Basically, PASE'll toss on a tip,
depending on what's out there.

EMERSON
So what do you think the total time
will be?

PALMER
Eight days there, eight days back,
four planets at a day apiece plus
travel time...

LANIER
Longer if we find anything.
Actually, the two gas giants will
probably take longer if they have a
lot of moons.

PALMER
Of course, but a minimum of twenty
days out.

EMERSON

As I explained, with this many air-breathers, we can probably do about 30 days out.

LANIER

And hopefully we'll use them all. I mean, that we're lucky and there's something good out there worth taking the extra time to investigate. Could be a solid gold moon for all we know.

LEE

Yeah, but there could be big, bad-ass bug-eyed monsters out there, too.

LANIER

(slight chuckle)

Nah; if there were, they would've eaten the probe PASE pitched out there.

TINEEL

Any other questions?

Shrugs and silence.

TINEEL

Good; I just have one question for you. It will take us a short while to load Lanier's widgets on board, and probably you the same to rig for ultra-light. I would like to leave as soon as possible, as in, "an hour after *immediately*." Is that a problem?

EMERSON glance-checks with his crewmates.

BLOOM

Aw, man! I had plans to go play the dollar slut machines over at Club Rakdos tonight.

LEE

(to BLOOM)

I guess it's a good thing I just saw my optometrist.

EMERSON
 (to TINEEL)
 Shouldn't be a problem.

TINEEL
 Good. PASE feels time is of the
 essence, lest we dawdle and
 discover claim-jumpers have beaten
 us to something choice.

Quick cut to LEE leaning over to BLOOM.

LEE
 (low, conspiratorial voice of
 incredulity)
 "...lest we dawdle..."???

The two start chuckling briefly. TINEEL is aware of it but
 deigns to ignore it.

TINEEL
 So, Emerson; is this deal
 acceptable?

EMERSON
 I'm in, but this ship's a co-owned
 democracy, so we vote.

He turns to LEE, BLOOM, and LAKE.

LAKE
 Okay.

BLOOM
 I always wanted to take a paid
 vacation to the planets of the PACE
 3 system.

LANIER
 Bloom's Star, if we're lucky.

LEE clearly isn't convinced, but shrugs his grudging assent.

EMERSON
 Okay then; we'll do it.

LANIER
 What do you do if there's a tie?

EMERSON, LAKE, BLOOM, AND LEE
 (in chorus)
 Don't ask.

TINEEL

Very well then. Now I realize that the Moriarty is a sovereign ship, with an independent crew that is democracy in action. However, since PASE is paying for this and I am in charge of the mission itself, I must insist that some reasonable yet practical PASE standards be observed to help us complete this to our satisfaction. First order of business, no smoking aboard this ship.

He looks directly at LEE.

LEE

Smokeless ashtray.

TINEEL

And I can smell it right now. As Emerson said, we will have about thirty days of breathable air. Please do not pollute it.

LEE

(under his breath)

Yes Sir.

Not taking his eyes off TINEEL, he stubs the butt out, badly.

TINEEL

Good. Now you and Bloom go down to the loading dock and help Lanier lug his equipment aboard. Like I said, I want to get underway as fast as possible.

BLOOM gets up to go help, LEE is much more slow to rise.

LAKE

I can help.

LANIER

Sure; thanks. There's a lot of stuff, and half of it's redundant, but better safe than sorry. Let me get the inventory chit...

LANIER walks off the Bridge.

EMERSON

There are still a couple minor things I'd like to discuss...

He gets into (improvised) conversation with TINEEL and PALMER. It is full of technical jargon, such as "flight window" and "space corridor."

BLOOM

(to LAKE as she walks by)

Hey, I thought you said I was gonna get to sit on my ass and watch porn this whole job. I have to lug cargo now?

LAKE

I'm sure the bucket's still spongy from your last film fest, so this'll help give it time to dry. So come schlep some gear. I'll even help with the heavy lifting, so you won't strain your arm.

They reach LEE, who slows their walk out.

LEE

(in a low voice and nodding at TINEEL)

Sooooo, what do you think?

BLOOM

I dunno, kinda sounds like a risk jump, but if it's a safe path...

LEE

No, I meant our new overlord.

The three stop walking. BLOOM looks over his shoulder at TINEEL, then shrugs.

BLOOM

Whatever. Seems to have a bit of a weed up his butt, but so what. Corporate type. Seen worse... but that was in the service. Actually, he kinda reminds me of this one sergeant I had in the Martian Militia. Still, it's only a month at most, and then we probably never see him again.

LAKE

You can make it a month without smoking, Lee. And of course as this ship's medical officer I recommend you quit anyway.

BLOOM

Yeah, you can lay off these...
 (He taps the pack in LEE's shirt pocket)
 ...and you might even want to cut back on this, too.
 (He taps the liquid eye dropper next to the pack.)

LAKE

That's another medical recommendation that I make.

LEE

(taps his pack of cigarettes)
 First off, if I go cold turkey and Tineel wants to spar with me when I'm a week into a nicotine fit, I'll rip his cock off and smoke that in my pipe. Second...
 (he taps the vial)
 We're not in a quad where this is illegal, so I'm fine. Besides, this is gonna be a long flight. You got your bucket of porn, I have liquid silver. Third...
 (he points to TINEEL)
 ...you're missing my whole point.

LAKE

Whatever your point is, you two settle it. I'm going to make myself useful and load cargo.

She starts to leave, but LEE holds up his hand.

LEE

Actually, Lake, you're the perfect one to settle this.

LEE nods at TINEEL. The three observe TINEEL, who is standing silently and expressionlessly listening to PALMER discuss calculus with EMERSON.

LEE

I dunno, but my 'bot-'dar is going off.

(Turns to LAKE)
He one of you?

LAKE
(considers this a moment)
Palmer is, of course, especially if
he's a light pilot.

BLOOM
PASE probably owns him outright,
and he isn't even getting paid for
this, unless it counts toward his
freedom.

LEE
(irritably)
Yeah, but Tineel...

LAKE
I don't know. Can't tell without a
physical examination, and I've only
known him five minutes. Why, you
have a problem if he's a 'droid?

LEE
No, just...
(a sour expression of distaste
comes over his face)
...Just trying to figure out why I
don't like him.

LEE immediately realizes he has just put his foot in his
mouth, and is apologetic.

LEE (CONT)
I'm sorry, that came out wrong. You
know I have no real probs with you
and Emerson. 'Specially after all
this time.

LAKE
That's okay, I know what you meant.
Besides, I can't be offended.
That's why I put up with this
idiot's advances.

She indicates BLOOM, who promptly puts his arm around her
and grins lustily.

BLOOM
I am Don Juan Quixote, you are my
windmill.

LAKE
Honoré Daumier did a nice painting
of that.

She disengages from BLOOM and begins her exit.

LAKE
Come on, let's make ourselves
useful.

Belatedly, BLOOM follows.

BLOOM
I got a use for ya, plus some
modifications I can install on
you...

LEE is left alone at the other end of the BRIDGE, still
staring at TINEEL. TINEEL has not moved at all, except to
nod when asked a question. LEE notices that TINEEL is
looking at him. LEE continues to stare back. Image freezes,
Bridge melts in binary script, replaced by Bridge in present
time. View swings to LEE's pov.

24 INT. BRIDGE

<pov = LEE; time = five minutes before Scene 1; 95%>

Note: this (and the next scene) should have a slight
silvery/monochromatic tint to it, with slight silvery light
trails, etc.

LEE
(off camera/voiceover)
Yeah, I knew it. Androids. They all
are.

Camera looks around, and then makes his way through several
corridors to BLOOM's Room.

25 INT. BLOOM'S ROOM (CONTINUOUS)

The room is a mess, as much because of BITS as by Bloom's
semi-slovenly lifestyle. By the bunk is a video screen and a
bucket full of credit cards that have phallic symbols and
lurid titles embossed on them. Camera goes to the bunk and
pulls out a military-style trunk locker from beneath;
"BLOOM, E." in army font spraypainted atop it. Opening it,
we see LEE's hands rifle through Bloom's paraphernalia until
he finds a pistol: something similar to a 20th century
automatic. LEE checks the clip; fully loaded. Jittery hands
jack the slide back with a loud, ominous click.

Camera turns to the Bucket of Porn, quickly glimpsing a plethora of titles like "Motherfoxers", "Queen of the Carpet", "Venus di Mylar", "Alpha Centari Anal Spinners", "Did I mention I'm HUGE?", "Black Holes", "Androidgenous", etc. A case has been pulled out and leans against the video display; it is labeled "Attack of the Sapphic Vamps! starring Mandarin Bing and Tawny Baud."

Camera stops on the video display unit. The power light is pulsing on/off randomly. On the screen, the negative image of a petite orange-haired Asian woman and a buxom blonde (both with vampire fangs and twin bite-marks on their jugulars) writhe in a kiss; the picture plays forward three seconds, then reverses, and then begins again.

LEE
 (off screen/voiceover)
 Hello, BITS.
 (Raises gun to screen)
 Goodbye, BITS.

Pistol fires; screen shatters, and the image dies in sparks. View moves over to the door as if to exit, then notices a small wall clock. The time is randomly flashing ones and zeros. There is a slow zoom on the clock.

LEE
 (off screen/voiceover)
 I don't know what the hell you are,
 but you and your extensions will
 not get me.

The clock sequence flashes all zeros for one instant, and then goes back to a random pattern.

LEE (CONT)
 (off screen/voiceover)
 I'm outta here. You're not. None of
 you are.

Scene freezes, background melts in binary script; the clock now shows actual time and is working (6:10:05 with the seconds counter increasing correctly.) View swings to third person view of Computer Room 2, 8 hours earlier.

LEE melts to as he was 8 hours ago. LANIER, EMERSON and LAKE are also present.

26

INT. COMPUTER ROOM 2 (8 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov - 3rd person; time = 8 hours earlier; 50%>

LEE, wearing rubber gloves, has a small calculator-sized computer; the display is flashing binary gibberish.

LEE

Now, this unit is infected by
BITS...

LANIER

BITS?

LEE

Bugs In The System.

LANIER nods understanding. LEE flips the device over and opens the back with a small screwdriver tool. The wiring is brittle; he rakes the tip of the screwdriver over the wiring, and it crumbles to dust.

EMERSON

Damn; it fried the whole thing.

LEE flips the device over; it is still flashing binary.

LEE

Yeah, whatever this is, is too much
for the circuitry. Crazy thing is,
even without all the wiring,
conduits, and such, it still has
power...

LEE reaches over and picks up a beaker full of water.

LEE (CONT)

...So, let's try this.

He empties the beaker over the back, soaking the device. After a few moments, he flips it over. Water, sludgy from the brittle dust, pours out onto the table. On the display, the screen is blank.

EMERSON

Nice: you shorted it out.

LAKE

Kind of like Chemotherapy, except
it kills the host as well as the
parasite.

LEE

Let's make sure.

He takes a small credit-card and slots it into the machine, waits a second, and then pulls it out. He then slots it into another identical machine sitting on the desk. The display on that says "Ready."

LEE

Looks like that worked, because otherwise this would have shut down, then restarted with binary.

LAKE

Crude but effective. Unfortunately, it's impractical, because we only have a finite supply of water on board. We'd have to flood the whole ship to make sure we got everything.

LANIER

Well, two of the planets out here are gas giants. One of them might have a moon with enough ice...

EMERSON

"*Might?*"

LANIER

(shrugs sheepishly)

That crinkling sound you hear is me clutching at straws. It is possible, though.

LEE

Even if you found a moon that's a solid ice ball and managed to melt a pool large enough to sink the ship in it -- which is pretty much what you'd have to do here to make sure you cleansed everything -- it would crap out every system on board. Remember: the cure kills the patient, too. So I'd have to fix or replace everything, which would be difficult enough under the best of circumstances, but out here...?

LAKE

He's right: there has to be a better way.

LANIER

Agreed, but in the meantime, we
have a short-term cure.

He reaches over to pick up the beaker with his
still-bandaged hand, but numbly fumbles and drops it. Slow
camera slightly as it falls to the floor (taking slightly
longer than normally it should to hit and bounce.)

LANIER

(sheepishly, to LAKE)

Oops... it's the torpicane, I still
can't quite...

LAKE

Do that again.

LANIER

What, display my impaired
dexterity?

The beaker has rolled onto the floor about half-way to LAKE
anyway, so she reaches down and picks it up. She holds it
six feet up, then lets go. The beaker falls, again with a
hint of slo-mo. Her eyes follow it down, concentrating
intently. It hits and bounces.

LAKE

Well, gentlemen, it seems we can
add gravity control to our list of
infected systems. This is six feet,
so assuming terminal velocity of 32
feet-per-second at normal grav, the
time it took that beaker to fall
would put us at, oh, 88% of normal.

LEE

Certainly possible. I can check
next time I'm on the bridge. At
least it's dropping, not rising.
Too much gravity, and it'd be a
bitch to even move around.

LANIER looks at LAKE curiously.

LANIER

Um, I don't know if this all is a
coincidence or not, but the gravity
on that planet was 88.

Scene freezes, rotates to LAKE's pov. Background melts in
binary script to a black screen.

27 **<POV - LAKE; TIME = PRESENT>**

[A new binary script superimposes over the old for about 10 seconds. This binary font/type/size should be different than the one used to fade between scenes so that they can be distinguished.] After 10 seconds "normal" binary script resumes, and melts to show Medlab.

View shifts out to show LAKE 3rd person. Another binary melt to show LAKE and Medlab as they appeared 1 hour ago. BLOOM, still in his suit, is on an examination table.

28 INT. MEDLAB (1 HOUR EARLIER)

<pov - 3rd person; time = 1 hour earlier; 55%>

LAKE at a station in MEDLAB, a BITS-infected display unit before her. Next to her is an uninfected unit, which she is rapidly entering 1's and 0's onto the display (in match of the infected unit.) She fills the screen, and hits Enter. The screen clears.

Quick close-up of display:

Working...
 (...after a moment...)

No matches found. Probability pattern is random: 90%

Despite the impassive android face, there is a sense of frustration in her.

A desk lamp begins to strobe. LAKE looks at it in irritation, then her expression changes to curiosity. She clears the screen and begins adding 1s and 0s again, matching the on/off pattern. She does this for about 10 seconds [quick montage of light/screen/LAKE's fingers to suggest that the time period is longer] and then hits Enter again.

Quick close-up of display:

Working...
 (...after a moment...)

No matches found. Probability pattern is random: 90%

LAKE allows her disappointment to show.

 LAKE
 Damn.

LAKE gets up from the station and goes to another work area. She activates a medical machine which suddenly shuts down, restarts, and essentially attacks her. She escapes out of its reach, just barely. She quickly goes over to a sink, fills a beaker full of water, and hesitantly approaches the malfunctioning machine. Deftly, she pours water on it, and the device dies. Silent survey of the scene, then she reaches for a tool, thinks better of it, and exits.

Cut to LAKE entering Bridge.

29 INT. BRIDGE (CONTINUOUS)

TINEEL, EMERSON, and LEE are in a heated debate.

TINEEL

All I want to know is, can you fix the gear?

LEE

Honestly? I don't know, but I actually doubt it. I'd have to look at it, but...

TINEEL

As near as I can tell, we're air-tight, so opening the landing bay from the inside shouldn't be a problem.

LEE

That's not the point. Look around you: enough things are going wrong, we need to seriously rethink this whole thing.

EMERSON

I'm inclined to agree.

TINEEL

It's not your decision.

LEE

So who else has to die before it is?

TINEEL takes a deep breath, lets it out melodramatically. Realizing he is facing a potential mutiny, he looks over at PALMER. PALMER stares back passively. He looks at LANIER, who shakes his head negatively. He looks back at PALMER.

TINEEL

I assume we can still fly?

PALMER

I believe so.

LEE

(under his breath)

Oh, that's reassuring.

Pregnant pause.

TINEEL

Plot a course for Tarshish. Let's get out of here before something critical goes wrong.

EMERSON

Thank you.

LEE

Let me re-check that we're strapped down and rigged for it. Gimme a minute.

LEE exits.

PALMER plays around with his console. Quick cut of the screen, showing an astral map with a flight course across it. Another screen is full of complex mathematical formulas.

PALMER

Done. Should take 8 days, 5 hours, and 23 minutes.

TINEEL

Let's get to it, then; sooner the better.

PALMER activates some controls, and a headrest rises from the back of his seat. He leans back into it, and there are soft clicking sounds as he physically interfaces into it. Close-up as his hand reaches over to a bank of switches. The first is marked ULTRALIGHT: PRIME; He flips it. PALMER jerks, goes limp, then goes spastic for one horrifying moment. Then his head seems to explode internally, and a glistening, gelatinous green goo pours out of his eyes and mouth. LANIER rushes over as if to restrain him, but PALMER has already gone limp. Carefully avoiding the glistening goo, LANIER manages to disengage PALMER's head from the chair.

Cut to TINEEL, watching passively. Scene freezes, swings to TINEEL's pov. The Bridge melts in binary script to show Medlab at present.

30 INT. MEDLAB

<pov = TINEEL; time = present; 100%>

EMERSON

I should point out that it's all but inevitable that I will become infected at some time, if not already.

TINEEL

(off camera/voiceover)
I think you'd know if you were.

EMERSON

Hopefully, but who's to say? I've been running a diagnostic on myself every 30 seconds, but how do I know my diagnostic isn't infected and giving false readings?

TINEEL

(off camera/voiceover)
I think I'd notice if you were malfunctioning. And I can't become infected, so I'm a neutral opinion.

EMERSON

Strictly speaking, Tineel, how do we know you humans can't somehow become infected too? After all, the brain is essentially electrical.

Scene freezes. Swings to third person. Binary flood changes Medlab to a half hour ago. BLOOM is on a table. Then EMERSON and TINEEL melt to show them 2 hours ago. LAKE, LANIER and LEE are also present, the latter two carrying PALMER by the arms and legs. Both are wearing thick rubber gloves.

31 INT. MEDLAB (30 MINUTES EARLIER)

<pov = 3rd person; time = 30 minutes earlier; 75%>

LANIER and LEE put PALMER on an examination table opposite BLOOM. Robotic fluids are oozing out of every orifice on PALMER's head. Standing safely to the side, LAKE notices that the faint glistening in the fluid is slowly strobing.

As she watches, the glistening grows in the fluid. LAKE takes a tongue depressor and scoops up a sample.

EMERSON

Careful!

LAKE

Wood doesn't conduct; I should be okay.

She holds the sample up for all to see.

LEE

It's BITS.

LAKE

Palmer's servo-fluid seems to be a decent agar for it. I haven't been able to observe BITS directly yet. Let me see what I can find out.

She goes over to a workstation with an old-fashioned microscope on it.

EMERSON

See if you can find out a way to kill it.

LAKE

(quick pause to directly acknowledge him)

Amen, brother.

She carefully sets up, using the depressor as a slide.

LAKE

(more to herself than anyone)
I specifically dug this out just in case: no powered parts.

LEE loses interest, and goes over to BLOOM. TINEEL sidles over to EMERSON and LANIER.

TINEEL

So how did we get this thing?
Something the rover brought back?

LANIER

No; rover came back fine; it didn't get infected 'till Bloom and I started prepping it for the next run.

EMERSON

(nodding concurrent)

Things were going wrong long before rover returned. The atmosphere was very electrical, but the Moriarty didn't take any direct lightning strikes. If you want a guess, the front landing gear must have come down on a clump of it. I'll bet that was actually the first malfunction we had, but we just didn't know it.

TINEEL

Just wondering how to put this in the report.

EMERSON gives him a harsh look.

LAKE looks up from the microscope and addresses the room.

LAKE

I've never seen anything like this. It's not cellular. This BITS may be electrical, but it's behaving like a biological virus. It infects something electrical and tries to rewrite the circuitry to something habitable, with disastrous results.

TINEEL

We already guessed that. Let me know when you have something fresh to tell us.

LAKE returns her attention to the microscope.

LAKE

For every six that flash off, nine new ones flash on. I'm not sure if it's growing or breeding.

The rest of the room ignores her.

LEE

(looks at BLOOM)

Sorry I couldn't reach you in time.

His lip quivers, and a slightly silver tear forms in an eye. EMERSON walks over to him.

EMERSON

Bloom was a good guy. I never had a problem with him. You knew him longer than me, of course.

LEE

Eight years, even before we pitched in to buy the Moriarty. I know you and LAKE have a stake in her, too, but I still think of this as his and my ship originally. Gonna be pissed if we lose it.

(he slyly indicates TINEEL and lowers his voice)

I somehow PASE ain't gonna pay us for a new ship, because I have a rather low opinion of them in general and their middle management in particular.

There is a short, awkward silence. Very softly, EMERSON begins humming part of the Overture to Rossini's 'Semiraminde.'

LEE (CONT.)

So tell me, how do you think this jackass is handling this?

EMERSON

(shrugs and stops humming)

Seems pretty cool under pressure. I don't hold him responsible for Bloom and Palmer.

(Lowers voice)

I am curious to see what he does to help get our asses out of this.

LEE

...'cool under pressure'... I don't know him, I don't like him, and I don't know if I want him manually flying this thing at beyond-light speed.

EMERSON

Well, I only know how to fly if I'm plugged in, and that's obviously not an option. If we're going home, we're stuck with him.

LAKE looks up from the microscope.

LAKE

I have never seen anything like this. You would probably consider the flash patterns pretty. Would you care to look?

TINEEL

No thanks. Just see if you can neutralize it.

He walks over to LEE and EMERSON, but LANIER steps up to the microscope quickly.

LANIER

I'd like to see.

TINEEL

(to EMERSON and LEE)

Normally I would just fly us on manual, but I do not want to have the engines become a BITS casualty half way through the flight. The course Palmer plotted is now scrambled with ones and zeros, so I'll have to redo it. Lee, go take the nav-lan off-line and prep for manual. Emerson, find out what our complete system status is: what works, what doesn't. Lanier can help you. I'll go break out the star charts and see if I can manually plot a jump back home to Tarshish...

LEE starts to leave.

TINEEL (CONT)

...And don't worry, Lee: this jackass is an adequate manual pilot at beyond-light speed.

LEE stops and stares at him, but TINEEL's face is surprisingly calm.

LEE

Excuse me; duty calls.

He gives a dry wink and exits, already fishing the bottle of silver liquid from his pocket. LANIER walks over.

In the background, LAKE is now bending over PALMER's body. She is doing something to the face, though it is unclear what.

LAKE
 Let's see how it likes this...
 shit!

LAKE jerks back suddenly, and promptly falls to the floor. She restarts (with a shiver) and shuts down again. The others stare in silent horror. After an awkward moment, LANIER picks up LAKE by the ankles and looks at TINEEL.

LANIER
 Give me a hand?

Somewhat reluctantly, TINEEL grabs her wrists, and they lift her up and walk her over to a vacant table. LANIER does so awkwardly, favoring his bandaged hand.

EMERSON
 No; put her on that one.

He indicates a different examination table; on the wall over the pillow is a lithograph of Monet's "Bridge over a pool of Water Lilies." LANIER looks at him questioningly.

EMERSON (CONT.)
 That was her favorite painting.

LANIER nods, and changes direction. They lay her out under the lithograph. LANIER crosses her arms over her breasts; she stares out emptily. They then return to Emerson.

LANIER
 This attrition rate sucks big
 greasy donkey balls.

TINEEL
 Agreed. Lanier, go to the bridge
 and hit the S.O.S. distress. I
 don't know if it's still working,
 but worth a shot.

LANIER
 On it.

EMERSON
 There's an option to also transmit
 a quarantine warning. I don't know
 if this is really a bio-hazard, but
 we're definitely contagious, and I
 think any rescue team would
 appreciate the warning.

LANIER nods both understanding and agreement; he leaves Medlab.

TINEEL

You know as well as I do it'll take eight days for us to get back. Think the engine can hold out that long?

EMERSON

We can't be guaranteed it'll work now.

TINEEL

If the S.O.S. distress works, it will still take eight days to reach Tarshish, and any rescue would be eight days after that. That's minimum; otherwise it's probably about a month before PASE notices we're overdue.

EMERSON

BITS infection is growing on a j-curve, so no way this ship will last that long.

TINEEL

Then neither will we.

Image freezes. Medlab melts in binary script, to show it at present. View swings to EMERSON's pov. TINEEL melts slightly, showing him at present.

32 INT. MEDLAB (ABOUT 10 MINUTES LATER.)

<pov - EMERSON; time = present; 100%>

TINEEL

I think the most frustrating thing about this is that BITS is just some lowly natural thing.

EMERSON

(off camera/voiceover)
What do you mean?

TINEEL

Well, if you're going to be defeated, you want it to at least be from some worthy adversary. Your arch-enemy, the man in the high castle, should ideally be some super-intelligent, super-powerful force that has some sort of master plan for world domination.

EMERSON

(off camera/voiceover)

I think I see what you're saying.
You're incensed that we're losing
to what you consider to be a lesser
entity.

TINEEL

Exactly! BITS probably isn't even
self-aware, and doesn't realize the
havoc it's creating. It's just
doing its own thing. And I don't
want to lose to something like
that.

EMERSON

(off camera/voiceover)

Well, we haven't lost yet; we still
have 10 to 15 hours to try to turn
the tables and beat this thing...

EMERSON is interrupted by noises (running, etc.) from the
entrance corridor. He stops talking and looks over looks
over in time to see LEE run into Medlab, covered in LANIER's
blood and brandishing Bloom's gun.

Confrontation with TINEEL and EMERSON begins as LEE fires
his pistol at TINEEL.

Image freezes, swings to third person. EMERSON and TINEEL
dissolve in binary, and LEE melts to how he was 6 hours ago.
Background melts in binary script to Computer Room #1.

33 INT. COMPUTER ROOM 1 (6 HOURS EARLIER)

<pov - 3rd person; time = 6 hours earlier; 30%>

LEE is sitting at a worktable, resuming work on fixing
Lanier's malfunctioning widget. He pulls out his eyedropper
kit and unscrews the top, but then the widget sparks
violently. LEE is startled and drops the vial and the
dropper right on top of the open circuitry of the widget.

LEE

Oh shit!

Cut to close-up of the vial. Silvery liquid is pouring out
in a steady stream onto the circuit board. There is another
spark, and a quick flurry of electrical glistenings in the
liquid. The pool grows to touch the tip of the eyedropper.
By now LEE is on top of things and quickly picks up the
vial. There is another spark from the machine, and a pulse

of glistening in the remaining pool and the glass stem of the eyedropper. LEE finally picks up the eyedropper, then looks at the small puddle of silver.

LEE (CONT)

Well, there goes most of my bonus
when we get back.

Self-consciously, LEE looks around to see if anyone saw this; he finds himself alone. His expression changes from embarrassment to narcotic greed, and he does another quick survey to ensure his privacy. LEE inserts the eyedropper, loads up a dose, and then holds it up to his right eye. Squeeze of the black rubber bulb, and a glistening silver drop plummets to his eyeball. LEE doses his other eye, a wan smile already spreading over his lips. As he screws the dropper back into the vial, his head begins to loll, and after a moment he falls face-forward onto the table. He is out cold for several seconds. Finally he comes to, obviously groggy and unsure what has just happened. Unsteadily, he gets up and stumbles out of the room.

As he exits, he walks by a wall of five blank monitors. Each comes to life by starting a binary cascade as he passes.

34 INT. MEDLAB (MOMENTS LATER)

LEE enters, rubbing his head. LAKE is at an exam table doing something; she looks up to see LEE.

LEE

Hey Lake, got any aspirin? I got a
killer headache.

Image freezes. View swings to LAKE's pov. Medlab melts in binary script, replaced by MEDLAB at present. Superimposed over this, a second wave of binary descends; it is the "new" type [scene 24]

35 INT. MEDLAB

<pov - LAKE; time = present; 100%>

EMERSON, TINEEL, & LEE are all dead, laying in a loose triangle on the floor; the pistol is in the middle. LEE's neck is broken. TINEEL has been shot in the head and has a growing pool of blood around it. EMERSON also has a head-wound, with an accompanying flood of the clear gel fluid. [it does not glisten.]

Superimposed over all this is "new" the binary script font. Then after ten seconds, "usual" Binary script floods down. It quickly superimposes over itself and fills the green [effectively a reverse fade-out].

END