DESTROYER OF WORLDS

FADE IN:

SOUNDS: The chaos of battle: the dull thuds of explosions, the klaxon of alarms, the yelling of soldiers, the pings of ricochets, the screams of the dying.

SIGHTS: A pair of young man's eyes, barely old enough to be in this battle, perhaps not old enough to vote. Brown eyes, the right marked with a visible flaw: they are full of fear.

Then: the cold void of space -- no sound.

EXT. SPACE

It's an all-out war in space with battle ships of two types opposing one another: streamlined, awe-inspiring star-cruisers that look like every boy's dream of a space-ship model; and jagged, dark starfish-like things that can only fill one with dread.

One streamlined cruiser takes a big hit.

INT. SHIP

Inside that ship, it's a nightmare of sparks, screamed commands, men and women running, metal tearing.

The boy with brown eyes sits in the center of it all, his head hooked up to a spider-web of neural lines -- he's pilot and controller of the ship.

But he's now confused and scared.

PIKE

Captain?

He looks over his right shoulder, as he usually does, for his commander.

CAPTAIN MAKIN is slumped back in his command chair, a gaping hole in his chest, blood flowing down over his legs. Dead.

PIKE

Captain!

A FLASH

Of an alien thing: a face framed by the void. An enormous snake with glowing red eyes! It seems to mouth something.
PIKE
Reacts in fear as if he'd seen this thing in the ship with him.

PIKE
Wha?

THEN: A shadow falls over the ship.

Pike thinks a thought and the front viewscreen opens on his command. He looks and sees a gigantic globe moving right in front of the ship.

An ensign near him screams.

ENSIGN
It's attacking!

The globe moves closer. Pike's eyes widen with fright.

Others crowd the viewscreen.

LIEUTENANT
What is it?

ENSIGN
It's coming right at us! Do something, Pike!

And Pike does, he thinks a thought quickly and sees a confirmation light on the board in front of him.

EXT. SPACE

Outside, the port side of the ship opens and a laser cannon reveals itself, pointed directly at the globe.

CLOSE ON: PIKE'S EYES

He's never been so afraid.

THE GLOBE

Comes closer and closer.

PIKE

Blinks his eyes: a command to the neural network above him.

OUTSIDE

The cannon fires!
The globe evaporates in a flash of light, which expands outwards over the nearby warring ships.

The ships are scattered as if by a giant wind.

INSIDE

As his ship flounders, Pike's eyes look questioningly: what has he done?

THOSE SAME EYES

Older and colder. Wind whips long brown hair across the eyes.

A FIGURE

Seems to stand on a cloud miles above the earth, gusts making his clothes flutter around him.

He's godlike, solitary and seems to be gazing at humanity beneath him.

A SOUND

The whirring of massive machinery.

THE CLOUD

Moves away, revealing that the man stands on some kind of platform suspended in air by itself.

The whirring becomes louder.

And a huge, two-story structure, towed by two small flying tug-craft, moves into place above the man. The workers on the tug-craft gesture down to him and he gives them a thumbs up.

JESSE, a bald, black man on a tug-craft yells down.

JESSE

Ready for it, Cutter?

THE MAN BELOW

Is obviously the same boy from the battle, but now disguised. He nods and deftly maneuvers the structure onto the floating platform on which he stands.

CUTTER

Anti-grav units set and go. Let her drop.
The two-story structure drops lightly down on the platform and holds firmly.

A BUILDING

Rises on this structure. A cloud-scraper: a massive edifice floating way over earth, in the clouds.

A group of twenty or so men and women make this happen quickly and efficiently, tier upon tier.

They work hand in hand, perilously hanging over the void beneath them, each one watching out for the others, helping when things get too dangerous.

Except for Cutter. He is always on the highest level, by himself, doing his job solo.

Halfway up the building, he sets a gargoyle on the outside wall, then another, then two more. He looks at one gargoyle’s face closely.

CUTTER

Seen worse.

A voice makes him nearly drop the sculpture.

JOY (O.S.)
Don't play with the merchandise,
Cutter.

ABOVE HIM

Stands JOY, a commanding presence. She's queen of the building team, as tough as one of the gargoyles, but that strength seems hidden by a girlish charm.

Cutter is not happy to see her.

CUTTER

You think the rich feebs paying for this gonna notice if a replica ain't perfect? All they care is what it cost.

He leaps up past her, climbing the side of the building like a monkey, all the way to the top. He yells back down to her.

CUTTER

They should spend time down below with the real people.

She looks up after him, joined by Jesse.
JOY
Two weeks with our team and I still
don't know grub about him.

She fingers a silver lightning bolt on a necklace she wears.

JESSE
What do you know about any of us?

JOY
I have your records. I know how bad
you were. And I know what good you
can do.

JESSE
We all appreciate what you've done
for us. No one else would even look
at us, let alone give us a job.

JOY
He doesn't appreciate it. Or
anything.

ON TOP OF THE CLOUDSCRAPER

Cutter puts up a series of decorative angels around the
corners of the very apex of the building. In the middle of
the angels sits a large flight deck.

Jesse climbs up beside him.

JESSE
This flight deck big enough for
angels?

CUTTER
Angels don't come to Old Earth.

JESSE
Too sinful?

CUTTER
Too far away. We're out past the
suburbs. We done?

Jesse looks from the building to Cutter.

JESSE
Guess so. Look, Cutter, don't run
off like you always do. Have a drink
with us.

Cutter takes out a keyring, hits a button on a flat object.
CUTTER

Don't drink.

A small buzz comes from beside them, then a beat-up three-seated flyer lands on the flight deck. Cutter starts to walk to it. Jesse intercepts him.

JESSE

Boss woman thinks you don't like her. Or us.

CUTTER

Is that a requirement for the job?

He opens the driver door of the flyer and gets in.

JESSE

You're a cold son-of-a-grub.

CUTTER

Gotta be to work up here with the angels.

He slams the door shut and takes off in the flyer, which belches some smoke and stutters a bit on lift-off. But it manages to clear the building and head towards earth.

Jesse watches him go, turns and faces Joy.

JESSE

He's a right bastard. Leave him be.

JOY

Can't. He works for me, I gotta know about him. Give me a lift.

JESSE

You got a flyer!

JOY

I'm gonna hitch a ride..

She jerks her thumb after Cutter's departing flyer.

JOY

With him.

Jesse smiles.

JESSE

He ain't gonna like that.

JOY

So? Hurry or we'll lose him.
EXT. MARKET

An all-night market hovers midway between the cloudscrapers and the ground. Cutter pulls into the parking lot.

A large mini-van-flyer pulls in beside him, with a big family inside. A little girl pokes her tongue out at Cutter. Her grandmother gives her arm a slap at that.

Cutter pokes his tongue out at her and goes towards the door.

Near the door, a stretch flying limo hovers, getting its packages delivered to it. Cutter makes a point of bumping into the cart full of packages -- one of which goes flying off to the earth below.

The driver of the limo yells at him and Cutter shrugs as if it were an accident. He enters the market.

Another flyer lands near his -- and Joy gets out. Jesse looks concernedly out the door.

JESSE
Sure you know what you're doing?

JOY
Always sure. You get on.

They hear someone coming.

JOY
Get going!

He flies off. She crouches near the passenger door of Cutter's flyer, works at the lock and gets it open.

She looks up to see him only feet away, dives in the back seat.

He walks up to his vehicle and gets in.

IN THE FLYER

He unwraps a sandwich from a vacuum seal, messily opens a mustard packet and starts squeezing the mustard onto the sandwich, getting more on himself than anywhere else.

JOY
So now I know you like Vacu-dried meatloaf. That's a start.

He whirls around, at the same time kicking open his glove compartment, taking out a gun, pushing into Joy's face.
JOY
Whoa! I'm only a stowaway, not a flyjacker!

He eases up.

CUTTER
Sorry. Been jacked before. Wasn't pleasant.

Then realization hits him.

CUTTER
What the hell are you doing here?

JOY
Part of my job. You work for me, I gotta know you. Find out who you are.

He just stares at her.

JOY
You can fly me home. It's not far.

He shrugs, starts up his flyer, but turns to talk to her as he begins to take off.

CUTTER
Believe me, you won't like what you find.

She starts to reply, then shouts and points her finger. He spins around the see the family flyer-van right in front of him -- he's about to crash into it.

He quickly jabs at his controls, jerks the wheel -- and narrowly avoids hitting the other flyer.

He pauses to catch his breath.

CUTTER
Close.

The family flyer-van appears outside his window. He leans out.

CUTTER
My fault! Sorry!

He waves them away.

JOY
Good thing you build better than you fly.
CUTTER

Hey! I've been flying longer than you..

The family flyer-van now floats directly in front of them. He sighs in frustration.

CUTTER

Look, I said I was..

Then he realizes that the passenger of the family flyer, a mom, is holding a lethal blaster on him.

CUTTER

Holy Grub!

He jerks the wheel again and floors it. The blast from the weapon scorches the back of his flyer.

JOY

What's going on?

EXT. THE FLYERS

Cutter's flyer swoops forward, but the family flyer is right behind -- and catching up.

Cutter leans out the window again and takes another look at it.

THE FAMILY FLYER

The little girl he saw earlier rolls down her window and leans out, blaster in hand. She sticks her tongue out at him and points the blaster directly at his face.

CUTTER

Yells and spins his wheel again. Joy screams, looks out the window.

JOY

They're shooting at you!

CUTTER

I've never been popular.

OUTSIDE

His flyer whirls about to face the family flyer dead on. It's a game of chicken. They both move at each other fast.

Then the family flyer's roof pops open and grandma pokes her head out. She's got an econo-sized blaster and she's gonna let it rip.
CUTTER

Floors it and smashes directly into the family flyer, sending grandma spilling out into the air.

JOY
Cutter! You'll kill her!

OUTSIDE

The family flyer manages to get underneath her and she lands safely. It pulls around and heads back to Cutter. He wastes no time in T-boning it from the side, sending it smashing into a nearby cloudscraper.

CUTTER

Leans out of his window with his gun. Joy tries to restrain him and he pushes her off. Then he fires.

THE FAMILY FLYER

Is raked by gunfire, but only on its bottom chassis. Sparks erupt and flames shoot out, extinguished by built-in firefighters. But the flyer is crippled and unable to move.

The family makes gestures at Cutter as he flies away.

IN CUTTER'S FLYER

Joy stares at him as he flies on, not acknowledging her look or saying a word.

JOY
Does that happen every day?

CUTTER
I'll take you home. Then I have to go.

JOY
To the police?

CUTTER
(shakes his head)
No police. Just away.

He finally looks at her.

CUTTER
You're hit!

She touches her forehead and finds blood.
JOY
Must have hit my head. I'll be all right. Take me home.

CUTTER
Need directions.

JOY
Your home. We have to talk.

CUTTER
I'm leaving. Nothing to talk about. I don't work for you any more.

She leans over him, pulls out the necklace with the lightning bolt charm on it.

JOY
I have to help you. It's my duty.

CUTTER
Bolt-baby, huh? Look, I don't give a damn about your religion. I've gotta go.

JOY
And leave me bleeding here? You owe me. You have to take care of me. And you live closer than I do.

CUTTER
How do you know?

JOY
Can't hide everything.

His face shows that he would prefer that he did.

EXT. FLYER

They descend through mazes of huge, rundown buildings, past more floating markets and vendors, past an enclosed transparent display case (plastered with graffiti) housing the Liberty Bell, down to the streets. They hover over cars on the street below. Each car looks about a century old.

IN THE FLYER

Cutter stares down at the cars.

CUTTER
Poor schlubs. Stuck down here, way out in this forsaken solar system.
JOY
But the history -- this is Old Earth!

CUTTER
Think they care about the history?

He turns the wheel suddenly and they enter a parking garage on the top of a twenty-story building.

EXT. BUILDING

The garage floats over the actual residence. Cutter and Joy walk down floating stairs to the roof of the apartment complex.

A couple sits on the corner of the roof, gazing at the stars. Cutter glares at them.

THE COUPLE

The girl is a pretty teenager. The male is covered in blue fur with pointed ears.

CUTTER

Snorts in disgust and stalks over to the elevator. Joy keeps up with him.

JOY
You have a problem with them?

CUTTER
What's a Sirian doing here? Probably a criminal hiding out.

JOY
Maybe he's a pilot; maybe they're in love.

CUTTER
Just wants his green card, I'd bet.

JOY
You should talk about hiding out. Are you going to tell me why that family attacked you?

As the elevator whirs, he turns to her angrily, then grabs her and throws her on the ground.

She looks up to see the top of the elevator housing glow red and melt.
THE COUPLE

Both stand with heat-pistols in their hands.

CUTTER

Stands between them and Joy.

        CUTTER
        Shit! Not here, too!

They aim at him again and he dives right for them.

The blast goes wild, melts a hole in the floor near Joy. She looks down to see an elderly couple in the room below pointing at her in fear.

CUTTER

Slams into the Sirian, knocking the heat-pistol from his hand. The girl smashes the butt of her pistol into the back of Cutter's head, but Cutter does not let go of the Sirian.

All three are heading dangerously close to the edge of the roof.

JOY

Jumps up and runs to them, taking hold of the girl and prying her loose from Cutter.

THE GIRL

Screams and claws at Joy, but Joy's solid as a rock and will not let go. The girl tries to bring her heat-pistol up to Joy's face -- they struggle silently.

CUTTER

Gets the upper hand in his battle, hitting the Sirian in the midriff, making him double over. He grasps the alien's blue fur and tosses him forward -- right over the edge of the roof!

THE GIRL

Howls, frees herself from Joy, runs over and dives off the roof after her lover.

JOY

Just stands there in shock, looking at Cutter. He breathes heavily, stares back at her.
JOY
You killed them!

CUTTER
What if I did? They would have killed me.

She turns away from him. He strides quickly across the roof to her, seizes her arm and pulls her to the edge where the couple went over.

Joy fights with him, thinking she's the next to go. Finally, he takes her neck and forces her head out over the edge, looking down.

HER P.O.V.

The couple are both very much alive below, on the ledge of the next building over, hanging like flies to the wall.

CUTTER (O.S.)
If you'd been watching more closely..

JOY
Looks from the couple to Cutter.

CUTTER
You'd have seen the anti-grav bands on their wrists and ankles. They were ready to make a jump after they took care of me.

He pulls Joy back from the edge of the roof.

CUTTER
I just hurried up the process.

He walks alone toward the elevator shaft.

JOY
What is happening, Cutter?

CUTTER
I'll fix you up. Then you go. And so do I.

Joy trembles a bit.

JOY
You have any booze down there?
INT. HALLWAY

Cutter and Joy walk softly down the hallway towards Cutter's door.

He motions her to be quiet as he listens, then nods to her, indicating he hears something.

He pulls his gun out of his coat pocket, then thrusts open the door.

INT. CUTTER'S APARTMENT

Inside, Cutter sees movement and fires!

In front of him is a soldier in full battle regalia, with a laser-rifle aimed right at him. The bullet passes right through the soldier.

A voice resonates from somewhere nearby.

ANNOUNCER
Learn to kill! Join the Army!

A huge explosion takes place in the center of the room, with dead bodies flying everywhere -- then they disappear.

Cutter relaxes and motions Joy inside. The soldier is replaced by a news broadcaster. Cutter looks embarrassed.

CUTTER
Left the holo-vee on.

He makes a hand motion that turns down the volume on the 3-D transmission. She laughs. He looks at the far wall, poking at the bullet hole.

CUTTER
How do I explain this to the landlord?

Joy smiles, glances at the holo-vee. The announcer points to a picture of various aliens, one of which is a huge snake-creature with glowing red eyes. Joy looks curiously from the snake-thing to Cutter.

Cutter has a decanter of liquid, pours it into two glasses and turns to Joy.

Then he drops the glasses, scrambling for his gun.

Joy looks at the open door, sees nothing, then at the holo-vee. Stepping right through the news announcer from the other side of the transmission is a very large figure.
Obviously part-human, part-robot, it holds up its right arm and a pencil of red light shoots out of its bionic hand. It aims the hand at Cutter.

Cutter dives under the light, fires his gun at the man-robot and hits it, but does very little damage, the bullets deflecting off its metal surfaces. The killer speaks.

RILEY
Say your prayers, Pike.

Cutter picks up a large metal table and slams it into the cyberman.

CUTTER
Say yours, cyberman.

Joy dodges twisted metal flying her way. Cutter looks at the table and sees only about a third of it is still in his hand, the rest having fractured on the cyberkiller's steel body.

Nevertheless, he smashes the remaining table into Riley's right hand -- and the hand goes flying off, much to Riley's dismay.

RILEY
Dang second-hand replacements!

Riley's face is half human, half steel-plated, with one eye a mechanical thing that radiates red light. A blaster sits in a holster on his hip, cowboy style. He also sports a Stetson.

Cutter feints to the left, Riley moves to take him, then Cutter runs to the door.

But Riley literally blasts off from where he stands -- boot-rockets -- and swats the door shut ahead of Cutter. Then Riley holds up his left hand.. the only one still attached.

His fingers detract and a blade with a glowing light around it slides out.

RILEY
The sonic blade will make your death quick and painless, pardner.

But the glow around the blade sputters, then sparks.. and the blade stands inert, unmoving.

Riley slams it against a wall several times.

RILEY
Durn mail order weaponry!
Cutter takes the opportunity to help Joy up and they dash out of the room. He grabs a bag from a table near the door as they leave.

INT. CUTTER'S FLYER

Cutter takes off hastily in his flyer, scraping it against a wall of the floating garage on the way out.

This pushes Joy into him; he tries to push her back, but she grabs the key and switches it to neutral.

The flyer stops in mid-air, humming but not moving.

JOY
You have to tell me what's going on.

CUTTER
I'm leaving is what's going on. I'll drop you at your building.

JOY
It's my duty to help you!

CUTTER
You bolt-babies really think you're something, huh?

She starts to speak in anger, then holds back.

CUTTER
Some zealot hit with a lightning bolt in the year 2100 -- over ten centuries ago. And you still follow his teachings?

JOY
He was a wise man. He said we're all one family.

CUTTER
Well I'm the black sheep. You don't want anything to do with me, believe it.

He starts the flyer back up, zips off into the night sky.

EXT. JOY'S BUILDING

On the flight pad on top of Joy's building -- a much nicer apartment complex than Cutter's -- the flyer lands.

She steps out, hesitantly.
JOY
I know you're in trouble..

CUTTER
Trouble doesn't even begin to describe it. You'd be dead inside of an hour if you came with me.

He gives her a little pat on the cheek -- about as close as he can get to affection.

CUTTER
Take care, Joy. You're a good boss.

He shuts the flyer door, starts to rise back into the air.

CUTTER
But you're too damn easy on those workers! Kick their butts!

He flies away. Joy looks after him for a moment. Then she takes a signalling device out of her pocket and presses it.

A few seconds later, her flyer lands silently next to her. She gets in.

EXT. SPACEPORT

The sprawling Spaceport Of Brotherly Love is actually several miles long, with buildings of all sorts and sizes shoved next to one another in no real order. In the center of it all sits a huge landing pad where spacecraft of every design are taking off and landing.

Cutter flies over the spaceport, pulls into a floating garage.

INT. GARAGE

He sees a sign for long-term parking pointed way back into an area hundreds of feet away. He turns the other way, into short-term parking and takes a handicapped spot.

He locks his gun in the glove compartment, gets out, gives the flyer a rap on the hood as he exits with his bag.

CUTTER
You'll wind up with a better owner than me, believe it.

He shoulders his bag and heads over to the floating escalator.
ON THE ESCALATOR

Taking the open, floating escalator down to the interior of the spaceport waiting area, Cutter looks down on hundreds and hundreds of aliens of all kinds.

There are tentacled Hyadeans, gaseous Rigelians (in containers to protect them from earth's atmosphere), spider-like Achernarians, flying tiny Pyxians with their insect antennae on top of very human heads.

Cutter's wary, looking to see who the next enemy might be.

He steps off the escalator onto the spaceport proper.

INT. SPACEPORT

As he walks, he gazes at more and more alien passengers, mixed with even more humans. This is just a stopover for most and they're all rather antsy.

A whole flock of feathered Polarians pass him, dressed in hooded monk outfits. They take frequent breaths from small cannisters they carry, to help with their adaptation to alien air. A huge, mollusk-like thing slides past Cutter. He looks at it with apprehension, but it merely coasts on over to a ticket counter.

Cutter himself heads for one of the ticket counters and gives his passport and papers to the woman behind the counter.

The attendant looks suspiciously from the passport to him.

ATTENDANT
Your destination, Mr. .. Cutter?

He wonders if he's about to be caught.

CUTTER
Antlia III.

ATTENDANT
Very few people travel to Antlia III.

CUTTER
Well I want to.

She shuffles some papers and surreptitiously presses a button under the counter.

ATTENDANT
You'll have to take FTT transport to Vela Delta and then fly local. It's a difficult journey.
CUTTER
I don't mind.

ATTENDANT
And the reason for your trip?

Cutter stares at her, measuring the situation. The silence becomes awkward -- then suddenly interrupted.

JOY (O.S.)
Running away from something?

Cutter turns to see Joy standing behind him.

CUTTER
Business.

JOY
What?

He turns to the attendant.

CUTTER
I have business on Antlia V.

ATTENDANT
What kind of business?

CUTTER
Your job is to plot my space hookup and issue tickets. So do that. I'll be back.

He takes back his passport, squeezes Joy by the arm and drags her to a quiet corner.

Nearby, the monklike Polarians chant in a bird-like choir.

CUTTER
You've gone too far.

JOY
You're going too far. Antlia V. Not a nice place.

CUTTER
It's my business. And I am not your business.

JOY
I've made you my business.

Cutter starts to reply angrily -- but Joy steps back and gasps.
Cutter quickly spins to see the whole flock of Polarians pulling blasters out of their robes and aiming them at him.

He jumps on top of Joy, forcing her to the ground as the Polarians fire. The heat singes Joy and Cutter's clothes.

Deafening alarms sound throughout the spaceport. The sound of many running feet shakes the ground.

Airport security -- goons in black outfits -- round a corner right at them.

Cutter pushes Joy ahead as the Polarians prepare to fire again.

JOY

Makes it around a pillar.

CUTTER

Stumbles for a moment, turns to look right at the Polarians.

THE POLARIANS

Look like a gentle brand of geese, but they have hands and those hands have guns about to fire on him. The blasters begin to spark.

A BLAST

Scatters the Polarians. The security goons are gunning down anyone with a weapon.

SECURITY HEAD

Drop your weapons now.

Cutter runs ahead to Joy while Security deals with the Polarians.

CUTTER AND JOY

Walk slowly and normally away from the scene.

CUTTER

You go out the front door. Act like you don't really know me. You'll be safe.

But their egress is blocked by two tentacled Hyadeans. Cutter tries to get around them.

CUTTER

Excuse me.
The Hyadeans emit wet noises that are translated through a metal box around their necks.

**HYADEAN**

No excuse for you, Pike. Only death.

Both wrap their tentacles around him. Joy starts pulling at them to let him go.

Cutter has his air cut off; he's being strangled.

Joy slams her elbow into the lone eye of one Hyadean. It lets go, mewling. Cutter gets leverage on the other one and throws it across the way into a ticket counter.

He starts sprinting.

But the tiny, flying Pyxians buzz around his face, blinding him.

He tries to brush them off, but they send him crashing into a wall. Their small translated voices surround him.

**PYXIONS**

Now! Now!

**CUTTER**

Now what, goddamit?

**ACHERNARIAN**

Now you die!

The spiderlike Achernarian waves several heat pistols at him from its many arms, firing them all at the same time.

Cutter dives, Joy runs headlong into the Achernarian, making his shots go wild.

In front of them, a whole slew of aliens and humans are taking out their own weaponry -- a gauntlet to be run.

Cutter yells to Joy.

**CUTTER**

Go left! They only want me!

Joy does so -- and is immediately fired on.

**ACHERNARIAN**

Kill the friend of the killer!

**JOY**

I'm not with him!
ACHERNARIAN
Do not attempt to lie. Only die.

He fires at her and she dives out of his path, runs back to Cutter.

JOY
I'm with you, for better or worse!

She and Cutter then both run the other way -- as spaceport security bears down on them.

JOY
(breathless)
Security will help us!

CUTTER
Not hardly.

Security begins firing at them as well. Cutter takes Joy's hand and pulls her forward even faster.

CUTTER
How well can you jump?

JOY
Jump?

EXT. SPACEPORT

Outside the spaceport, Cutter and Joy can be seen through the transparent plastic. They're several levels above the ground.

Cutter kicks at one of the plastic panels in the wall till it falls forward. He pulls Joy up to it and over the edge.

She screams. And they fall.

But just before they hit the ground, they slow down and come to a catlike landing.

Joy pushes him away angrily.

JOY
Why didn't you tell me you had anti-grav boots on?

CUTTER
No time.

The ground around them starts melting in spots as humming sounds come closer and closer.
CUTTER
   They're still firing!  Run that way!

He points out to the landing and take-off area of the spaceport where huge ships are blasting off.

   JOY
   Are you kidding?  We'll be fried!

   CUTTER
   We'll be fried if we don't!

They run.

ON THE LANDING FIELD

They dash past flames from a ship taking off, avoid another one landing.

Cutter pulls her to a small, rickety looking antique off to the side.  It's oval-shaped, about the size of a handful of flyers.

   CUTTER
   Get in.

   JOY
   This thing?  It's not functional.

   CUTTER
   It will be.

He pushes her inside.

Spaceport security appears across the landing field.

IN THE SHIP

Inside, it's tight quarters for two, but it actually looks like all the parts work.

Cutter immediately works on the control panel, ripping off the top of it and immersing his hands in the wires beneath.

   CUTTER
   Bypassing security codes, getting us airborne fast.

   JOY
   Done this before?

Cutter doesn't answer and soon the ship shivers from the rumble of engines starting.

He points to one of the chairs.
CUTTER

Strap in and pray.

He locks himself into the pilot's chair and begins working the controls.

Through a view-window, Joy can see spaceport security only yards away.

JOY

How soon..

She's stopped as the ship makes a massive lurch into the sky.

OUTSIDE

The security guys yelp as they're almost scorched by the flames coming out of the rising ship.

The head security man talks into his wrist-box.

SECURITY HEAD

Get me planetary security. We got a wild one.

He looks up at the ship, making shuddering thrusts up into the sky. It recedes and almost looks like an old-time flying saucer.

IN THE SHIP

Cutter and Joy shake so much that it seems like there's more than one of them in each chair.

Then it stops as they burst through the atmosphere. Cutter's out of his chair, working on the neural network over his head.

JOY

Do you know what that is?

CUTTER

FTT Drive neural network. Used to build them.

JOY

Then what the hell were you doing on old earth building cloudscrapers?

Before he can answer, the ship jolts backward as if it's been hit. Cutter swears as he looks out the view-window. Joy joins him.
THEIR P.O.V.

Three ships the same size as his float outside.

INSIDE

The radio crackles and a voice fills the ship.

PLANETARY SECURITY
That was a warning shot. Surrender now and move yourself to our tow line.

Cutter keeps working on the neural network but talks into the communications console.

CUTTER
I have an innocent person on board who needs to be taken to safety.

PLANETARY SECURITY
You are both in violation of security and will be treated as criminals. Surrender now.

Cutter doesn't answer, gets the neural network up and running.

JOY
We can't outrun planetary security! Not in this thing!

OUTSIDE

The three ships move to attack positions; weapons appear, bristling around their outside hulls.

INSIDE

Pike works on the wiring, putting the spider-web helmet on his head and attaching the inputs to his temples, finally pulling down his collar and jabbing one line into a jack in his neck.

The radio crackles again.

PLANETARY SECURITY
Prepare to be fired upon. If the blast doesn't kill you, the vacuum will. Bad way to die.

Joy blanches, looks at Cutter.

JOY
Say something!
CUTTER

Sit down!

She stands there. He pushes her into the chair and sits himself, attached to the neural network.

She turns to the view-window, just in time to see all three security ships fire at once, point-blank range.

She screams. Cutter closes his eyes.

And the ship blinks out of existence.

OUTSIDE

The ship disappears right as the three blasts hit it. A voice can be heard over a radio.

PLANETARY SECURITY

Did we hit it?

IN PSY-SPACE

The ship whirs through a place with no stars, no planets, just grayish matter and whirling white clouds.

IN THE SHIP

Cutter still sits with eyes closed. Joy, braced for impact, holds onto her chair for dear life.

Cutter opens his eyes, smiles at the sight of Joy.

CUTTER

Exhale.

She does and relaxes.

CUTTER

Ever been in Psy-Space?

She shakes her head, at a loss for words.

CUTTER

It's a smooth ride. FTT -- I mean, Faster-Than-Thought travel is something special.

He moves about the cabin, still hooked up to the neural network.

CUTTER

Didn't have time to think about a destination, so let's take a look.
He closes his eyes again.

OUTSIDE

The ship blinks into existence amidst stars and planets. One planet looms close, dark and grim.

INSIDE

Cutter takes in the view. Joy remains in her chair.

CUTTER

Pluto. Didn't get far. We'll have to figure out where we need to.

He realizes Joy is not listening to him, comes up to her softly.

She's crying. He touches her shoulder.

JOY

It's all gone. My job, my home, my life.

Cutter is awkward about consoling anyone.

CUTTER

No, no. It's all still there. I just have to get you back.

JOY

I'm a criminal! You've made me a wanted felon! I can't go back!

CUTTER

I'll explain to them that you...

She turns on him suddenly.

JOY

You!

He steps back, surprised.

CUTTER

I can get you back. We'll dock at the outer station and I'll get you a ride home.

She stares at him for a moment, then...

JOY

You killed them.

He doesn't know what to say.
They called you Pike. You're the..
He winces and beats her to the punch.

Destroyer Of Worlds. In person.
He looks out the view-window at the stars. It's hard for him to speak.

It was a war.

You weren't fighting them!
His turn to pivot angrily.

How would you..!
He stops himself, returns to the cabin controls.

I've run this race too many times.
His silence is deafening. She moves softly behind him and speaks as if he would shatter if she spoke too loud.

Tell me what happened.
He half-turns over his shoulder at her.

What happened..?
FLASHES IN BLACK-AND-WHITE
His eyes -- frightened.
The dead captain.
Explosions.

We were fighting the Valerans and taking the worst of it.

On the viewscreen of his starfighter: the Valeran ships, starfish-like, closing in.
PIKE (V.O.)
I was jacked in -- the weapons master. Captain Makin called me his 'thought police'. Captain Makin.

The captain -- dead, blood flowing.

PIKE (V.O.)
Then they were there.

On the viewscreen: the huge globe, shadowy, frightening.

PIKE (V.O.)
I said: identify yourself! Identify yourself! They didn't.

His young voice yells over the din of war. But all he gets in response is a FLASH in his brain of an enormous snake with glowing red eyes.

PIKE (V.O.)
Worms, big worms in my head. I was frightened.

He hangs like a scared fly caught in a web, his neural network shaking around him on the starship.

PIKE (V.O.)
I thought..

His eyes look to the screen, thinking something.

PIKE (V.O.)
I thought they should die. It was just one thought, one quick thought.

On the viewscreen the globe explodes, the explosion engulfing his ship, washing them away like so much flotsam.

PIKE (V.O.)
One thought. Thoughts can kill.

BACK TO JOY AND PIKE ON THE SMALL SHIP

Pike stands in the same position, half-looking at her over his shoulder.

PIKE
I was scared. I was just a kid. It was a mistake.

He turns to face her fully.

JOY
A mistake..
PIKE
I didn't know they were.. who they were.

JOY
The Mirgi.

He nods, the words coming out with difficulty.

PIKE
Their whole race was on that ship. The most peaceful race in the universe, along with ambassadors from every other race.

He looks out the viewscreen at the stars.

PIKE
They just wanted to stop the war. And I killed them all. I killed peace. The Destroyer of Worlds.

Quickly he jacks back into the neural network and the ship blinks into Psy-space.

PIKE
So for ten years I've been running. But they always find me.

JOY
They?

PIKE
Friends of the Mirgi; relatives of the ambassadors; people who lost their loved ones in the war. It kept going for five more bloody years. You wouldn't know because it never got to Old Earth.

Joy remains silent.

PIKE
Planets, worlds were destroyed. Because I killed peace. They say it's all my fault.

He's angry, jabbing at controls on the console before him.

JOY
And you say it's not?

PIKE
It was an accident! I had no control over it!
JOY
Then they can't hurt you.

PIKE
They want me to stand trial for war crimes. Crimes! What crime did I commit? Did I run a penal colony on Arcturus 3? Did I pillage burnt worlds of their jewels and valuables? Did I?

Joy shakes her head no.

PIKE
I need to go far away, but I'll get you to the station, get you home.

JOY
But they're after me now, too.

PIKE
I'll make them understand you're not part of it.

He works on the controls, almost nonchalantly now.

JOY
You don't feel guilty about it?

PIKE
Guilty? I'm sad for them, but it was a war! It was about survival. I survived.

The discussion has ended, at least for him.

PIKE
We'll be at Sol-9 Station in about ten minutes. I'll leave you there.

JOY
May I send a message home so Jesse and the others won't be out looking for me?

PIKE
Not sure if the communications system is up to par, but go ahead.

He busies himself with the control console. Joy looks askance at him, then works on the communications.

She punches in some numbers, makes certain Pike isn't watching, then punches in some longer message before hitting "Send".
He glances at her and she straightens up, smiles, as if everything's fine.

JOY
That should do it.

He looks suspiciously at her. Then the ship suddenly blinks back into real time and space.

OUTSIDE
The ship nears a huge rotating wheel: the space station.
Several scanning satellites zip over the exterior of the ship.

INSIDE
A voice booms over the radio.

STATION SECURITY
Identify yourself or you will not be permitted to dock.

Pike monkeys with the communications system -- when he speaks over the microphone, his voice sounds altered, almost alien.

PIKE
Station Sol-9, this is two-person craft C0098 with Captain Jameson requesting docking coordinates. Security code TVC15.

Silence for a moment. The on the viewscreen, a huge port opens to receive them.

STATION SECURITY
Proceed.

JOY
Who's Captain Jameson?

PIKE
Someone who'd like me dead. I lifted his personal codes and credit.

OUTSIDE
The ship is taken into the station by a tractor beam.

INSIDE
Pike disengages himself from the neural network.
PIKE
They'll take pity on you when they
know I kidnapped you. They'll let
you hitch a ride home.

JOY
What will you do?

PIKE
Head right back out. They won't
even know I was here.

With a thud, the ship docks. They hear the cabin pressurizing
outside.

Pike works on the door controls. A green light signals that
pressure is normal. Pike hits the button that opens the
door.

The door slides open. And Riley, the Cyberkiller, stands
there, smiling.

RILEY
I don't imagine you missed me,
pardner?

He moves to launch himself forward with his rocket boots.
But one boot misfires and Pike manages to push him back out
of the door.

Pike tries to close the door, but it won't shut.

Riley's cyber-arm reaches inside and pulls him out. Joy
screams and follows them.

INT. SPACE STATION

The large docking area is swarming with humans and aliens,
all now staring at the battle between Riley and Pike.

Both are airborne, with Pike trying to smash Riley's face in
as Riley flies up to a higher level. Pike's fists do no
damage since Riley's face is metal.

So Pike twists around and lifts one of Riley's legs up,
screwing up his trajectory. They both slam into a wall and
slide down to the floor.

Alarm bells start sounding, along with a deafening siren.

Pike drags Riley to the edge of a catwalk -- gigantic
machinery hums below. Riley fights him -- and they both
flip over the side.
Below them, Joy screams again, then starts climbing up to the catwalk herself.

Pike tries to free himself and use his anti-grav boots to float down safely. Riley quickly turns himself upside down, rips off the anti-grav boots with his sonic knife. Pike starts to fall, grabs the ledge above him.

Each has a hand holding onto the catwalk. With their free hands, they continue the fight. Riley pikes at Pike with the sonic knife from one hand. Pike tries to hold it away from his face.

Workmen of many races now surround them on the catwalk. They start yelling and Pike is surprised to find they're on his side. One half-human, half-spider Achernarian moves forward.

ACHERNARIAN
Push the fragging robot over the side!

A teddy-bear-like Fomalhautian agrees.

FOMALHAUTIAN
Help our boy kill the cyberthing!

The workmen kick Riley's hand so that the sonic knife scrapes uselessly against the metal catwalk.

RILEY
Didn't think anyone would help the Destroyer of Worlds!

The workmen are silent for a moment.

ACHERNARIAN
He's the Destroyer of Worlds?

RILEY
I've been sent to make him pay for his crimes. Kind of like a hired gun.

FOMALHAUTIAN
Our mistake, sir.

The workman help Riley up; Pike still hangs perilously from the catwalk.

Joy breathlessly arrives on the catwalk.

RILEY
Would you boys like to decide what to do with him?
ACHERNARIAN
Drop him.

Several of them raise their boots to stomp on his hand. Pike squirms, uncomfortably.

JOY
You can't kill him!

FOMALHAUTIAN
Ma'am? He murdered thousands, maybe millions.

PIKE
I didn't. The war did. You can't blame me for that.

RILEY
I think we can, bucko.

Riley places his metal rocket boot on Pike's hand and starts to press.

Joy dashes forward and lunges for Riley, but the workmen hold her back.

Suddenly, a form smashes through the workmen, scattering them.

Riley is thrown backwards, against a railing.

A hand reaches down and lifts Pike easily, holds him in the air.

This is COMMANDER FACE, a huge man whom most would guess had alien blood -- but he's all human, just a mountain of humanity.

He dangles Pike with his one hand, waving a finger in his face with the other hand.

COMMANDER FACE
I'm Face. You're Pike. I don't want you here.

He drags Pike to the ladder that leads below and tosses him down it.

Pike tries to slow his descent by grabbing the sides of the ladder, but he still slams into the floor, hard. Face is on him immediately.

Pike is lifted again and thrown over to where his ship is docked.
Face picks him up once more in front of the open airlock on the ship.

COMMANDER FACE
My station is neutral in government matters but I will not harbor murderers.

He shoves him against the wall of the flyer.

COMMANDER FACE
You leave. You were never here. You show up here again and we disperse you into atoms.

Pike nods groggily.

COMMANDER FACE
It's a better chance than you gave them.

He tosses Pike inside.

INT. SHIP

Pike gets up unsteadily and moves to the controls, starts readying the ship for departure. The ship starts to shudder in response to his actions.

Then he hears a noise in the rear of the ship. He picks up a large hammer and softly heads to the back of the vehicle.

Another noise. He lifts the hammer, ready to kill.

Movement -- he starts to swing.. and stops. It's Joy.

She flinches, then gives a slight, weary smile.

JOY
I couldn't let you leave without me.

PIKE
They would have gotten you home.

JOY
I think you need me more than the guys at home.

Pike doesn't know what to say.

They both jump when a voice booms over the communications console.

COMMANDER FACE
Leave. Now.
Pike quickly returns to the controls, hooks himself up to the neural network, jacks in.

EXT. SPACE STATION

The ship pulls away from the station -- and blinks out of existence.

INT. SHIP

In Psy-Space, the ship travels through grayness. Pike swivels around to look at Joy in her chair.

PIKE
Dreyer Drive, they used to call it. Somehow your mind makes the turn into another warp of reality, then guides it back into our universe, faster than thought.

JOY
I've heard of it. I wonder if the mind that guides it has any effect on the reality we see.

She gestures at the grayness outside, then stands, stretches.

JOY
Think the cleaning cubicle works?

She points to a translucent rectangle in the corner. He shrugs.

PIKE
Guess so.

She takes her coat off, starts to take off her top. Their eyes lock and hold. She doesn't move. He breaks the contact, looks down at the console.

PIKE
I'll program it for the Grus system. Off the beaten path.

She nods, moves around the cubicle. He can see her clothes fall on the floor on the other side of the cubicle, sees her naked outline as she steps inside.

The cubicle begins to hum and Joy starts singing softly inside. Pike stares at the cubicle, then forces himself to look out the viewscreen at Psy-Space. His emotions are turbulent.
Shaking himself as if he were waking up, he gets up and starts bustling around some storage holds, unpacking food packets and water containers.

He pries open one big storage bin in the aft section -- and a blaster points right at his face.

Riley steps up out of the storage area. Pike moves back slowly, unhooking himself from the neural network.

**RILEY**

Commander Face thought it fitting that your sins follow you, pardner.

**PIKE**

Who the hell programmed you? Some old holo-Western fan?

**RILEY**

I programmed mys..

Pike doesn't let him finish, smashes a water container onto the blaster, which spurts fire and evaporates the falling water.

Riley strikes forward with his metal arm, sending Pike flying into the viewscreen -- which doesn't give at all. He falls with a thud.

Joy yells from inside the cleaning cubicle.

**JOY**

Pike, what's the..

Pike has his long hammer, whirling it through the air at Riley, takes a good whack at Riley's head. Riley tries to stand his ground, but staggers back into the cleaning cubicle, knocking it over. Joy screams.

She climbs out, a towel around her, sees the carnage and the fight. She dresses herself as they flail around her

Pike and Riley both smash into the rear of the ship -- almost moving a huge metal pod.

**JOY**

You'll wreck the exploro-pod, you idiots!

They don't listen. Riley has his sonic knife out, cuts the long hammer in half. Pike reaches down to pick up a cutting tool on the floor, Riley quickly fires up a rocket boot and bashes him in the chin. Pike falls back, defenseless.
Riley holds the sonic knife to Pike's throat. But fingers tap him on the shoulder. He looks back to see his own blaster pointed at him by Joy. It's a stand-off.

RILEY
I ought to tell you, ma'am, that I must fulfill my contract even if it means my death.

Joy lets that sit for a moment. Pike, groggy, shakes his head and moans.

JOY
Does that mean his death?

RILEY
It means justice. What else would that be but death?

Pike's now fully attentive to the situation, tries to squirm out of the way of the sonic knife, but Riley's other arm holds him fast.

JOY
Repentance.

Riley considers the concept.

RILEY
Explain.

JOY
He goes to the Mirgi homeworld and makes peace with whatever remains of the race he slaughtered.

Pike explodes at this.

PIKE
Not there! Those grubbing little worms will eat me alive.

RILEY
Not at all, they're a race of highly evolved telepaths.

PIKE
They'll fry my brain! They'll ruin me!

JOY
At least you'll be alive!

PIKE
I'd rather be dead!
Riley puts his sonic knife very close to Pike's eye.

RILEY
This is not a democracy, bucko, and
you ain't got a vote.

Riley pauses, turns his face upward, letting a program run inside him.

RILEY
My employer says that is satisfactory for now. But if he acts up, he's dead. I'll hitch a ride with you to make sure it happens.

JOY
Agreed.

PIKE
What do you mean agreed..?!

She shushes him.

RILEY
Once he is on Mirgi soil, my contract is terminated. But how can we be certain he won't stop us?

Pike looks daggers at both of them. Joy goes to the control console and the neural network, hooks herself into it and jacks in. Pike is surprised to see a jack in her neck as well.

JOY
Used to program computers before I got into cloudscrapers. We're set for Auriga, the Mirgi system.

She unjacks, plays with the console.

JOY
It's got a virus that will destroy the ship if the course is changed.

Riley thinks for a moment, then his sonic knife retracts into his hand.

Pike gets up slowly and goes to the neural network, jacks himself in.

PIKE
How did you do this?
My father knew a lot about computers and the stars.

He unhooks himself. Joy putters about with the food, making a meal.

Join us, Mr..

Riley. I don't need to eat. I'll just recharge myself this way, if you-all don't mind.

A prong protrudes from his back, which he inserts into an outlet in the walls of the ship. Then he settles down and his eyes close.

Joy sets a meal for two. Pike stares at it as if it were poison.

This is all part of your wacko bolt religion, isn't it?

Repentance is good for the soul.

Soul! What soul?

She gets up, guides him to his chair, makes him sit. He doesn't fight too hard.

Were you like this as a child?

He looks up as if shot.

Child?

Your father, your mother, where are they now?

Pike turns to look out at the vagueness of Psy-Space.

My father..
PIKE FLASHES OF HIS MEMORY -- JAGGED LIKE LIGHTNING

His father, a sculpted Adonis in a uniform, medals glistening on his chest.

    PIKE (V.O.)
    My father was a god.

Pike as a five-year-old boy sits in front of the holo-vee, watching a chip play over and over -- it's a scene of a starship exploding in space.

    PIKE (V.O.)
    But even gods die. I swore I'd get those damn Valerans.

CLOSE-UP

Of a lizard-like face with crocodile teeth, evil, inhuman.

Then the face explodes and green blood pours out.

It's a holo-vee ad that a now adolescent Pike is watching. The figure of a soldier comes up behind the dead Valeran, pushes its body into the mud, kicks it a few times, and gives a smiling thumbs-up.

    ANNOUNCER
    The Space Marines are looking for a few good killers!

A UNIFORM

Now on Pike. He stands on a space station with a crew about to board.

Another Adonis in a uniform approaches, medals glowing on his chest: Captain Makin.

    PIKE
    Captain Makin was the best. And he made me the best.

Pike is shown all aspects of the ship, all different ways to kill, with Makin smiling over him like a father.

    PIKE (V.O.)
    I wanted to fight, to kill, to win.

CLOSE-UP

Of a Mirgi: its snake-like face with glowing red eyes in a void.
PIKE (V.O.)
But then that damned accident..

BACK ON THE SHIP

Joy can see tears starting in the corners of Pike's eyes, doesn't press him about the accident.

JOY
What happened since? What have you done?

Pike turns away from the viewscreen to her, then looks down at his food, plays with it without eating.

PIKE
Was a derelict for years. Finally decided to go on living. Knew it wasn't my fault.

His eyes meet hers over that one.

PIKE
New identity. But they kept finding me, so I kept moving further out. Ended up in the sticks, I thought. Old Earth.

JOY
(defensively)
Old Earth is where humanity began!

PIKE
So? Is that something to be proud of?

She finally loses her temper, gets up and starts slamming the food away, cleaning up.

JOY
You're not going to try anything stupid?

PIKE
Do I look stupid? What could I try out here?

Joy shifts her chair so it lies flat, touches a button and it inflates like a cushion.

She walks to Riley, pats him in his shoulder where he sits recharging.

JOY
You watch him. I need some sleep.
Riley's eyes are open and a buzzing sound comes from somewhere inside him.

BLACKNESS

A very loud buzzing sound in the midst of blackness.

CLOSE ON: JOY'S EYES

Snapping open.

INSIDE THE SHIP

She sits up on her bed/chair, looks around. The buzzing seems louder and louder.

Then she sees a red light flashing over the airlock.

She jumps up, runs to the viewscreen.

HER P.O.V.

Outside, they're no longer in Psy-space. Stars twinkle around them. A planet looms in the distance.

But directly in front of her is the ship's small exploro-pod, with Pike on top of it, sitting as if it were a bicycle. He wears a space-suit. Somehow, he's controlling the pod and making it move forward.

IN THE SHIP

Joy swears, runs to the sitting Riley, who still has his eyes open, but has no sign of awareness. She pulls him from the wall and a big arc of electricity shoots out of him.

He jolts awake.

    JOY
    I told you to watch him!

    RILEY
    Sorry, ma'am. Short in my charging system. I was dang well dead to the world.

    JOY
    He's out!

    RILEY
    Out?

She points to the viewscreen.
JOY
Out there! Used the exploratory pod. Somehow he's riding it!

She dashes to the control console, starts scanning radio frequencies. Riley joins her.

RILEY
You seem to know how to work this right well.

She ignores him, finally pinpoints Pike. She talks into the radio.

JOY
Pike! You can't do this!

Pike's voice filters into the cabin.

PIKE (O.S.)
I already have. Thanks for your help, but now I have to go it alone.

She walks to the viewscreen, looks at him as she speaks.

HER P.O.V.
She sees him outside.

JOY (O.S.)
Pike! You have to come back!

He talks into his helmet.

PIKE
You'll be fine. The ship is set to go back into Psy-Space in three minutes. It will take you wherever you want.

JOY
She starts to jack into the neural network.

JOY
This is going to take too long!

She watches Pike zip further and further away.

Riley walks straight to the airlock and punches the button to open the inner door.

RILEY
That won't be necessary. I'll get him.
JOY
You have no suit!

RILEY
Don't need one.

JOY
But you're part human!

RILEY
Not the outside parts. My innards are well protected.

JOY
But your equipment..

RILEY
What about it?

JOY
It doesn't exactly work right.

He snorts contemptuously, steps into the airlock and closes the door behind him.

She sees through a port-hole that the outer door has opened. Frantically, she turns to the viewscreen.

EXT. SHIP

Outside, Riley rockets away from the ship -- and for once, his equipment functions perfectly.

He vaults through space towards Pike. Pike turns, sees him coming, reaches into a compartment in front of him and pulls out Riley's blaster.

Before he can bring it to bear on the cyberman, Riley is on him. Riley tries to lift Pike off of his escape vehicle, but Pike holds fast.

Slowly, Pike raises the blaster closer and closer to Riley's head.

IN THE SHIP

Joy screams into the communications console.

   JOY
   Pike! No!

OUTSIDE

The scream makes Pike hesitate, giving Riley time to get his sonic knife out -- and quickly puncture Pike's space suit.
Pike drops the blaster, using both hands to hold the puncture in his suit.

Joy's voice crackles over his helmet radio.

    JOY (O.S.)
    Get back to the ship!

    PIKE
    I'd rather die!

IN THE SHIP

Joy looks over at a timer mounted on the console, counting down the time till they catapult into Psy-Space. A minute and a half.

    JOY
    Is that why you hid all these years?
    To die for nothing?

Silence. She goes to the viewscreen.

HER P.O.V.

Neither Riley nor Pike is moving. Then she sees Riley circle around and start pushing Pike and the pod back to the ship.

INSIDE

Joy stands near the airlock as the inner door opens. Pike walks in, helmet off, looking contrite. Riley follows him.

Suddenly, Pike's got the blaster out again, pointed at Joy.

    PIKE
    Just so we understand each other.
    I'm in charge now.

Riley's cyberarm comes down with a thud on his head, knocking him unconscious to the floor.

    JOY
    I'm not sure he's worth all this trouble.

    RILEY
    Is anyone?

OUTSIDE

The ship blinks out of the star system and into Psy-Space.
INSIDE

Riley and Joy finish tying Pike down to his chair. Riley is now jacked into the neural network.

JOY
You've got the course set?

RILEY
Mirgi homeworld in round about five minutes. We weren't far.

Pike starts to wake up.

PIKE
You can't take me there!

RILEY
Consider yourself taken.

PIKE
I'll kill us all before I go to that stinking place.

JOY
You need to go there.

RILEY
From what I hear, the Mirgi were a very clean, highly evolved race. Communal intelligence and all.

PIKE
Communal?

RILEY
Shared consciousness. One big racial mind.

The ship jolts to a stop as it blinks out of Psy-Space, making both Riley and Joy tumble to the floor.

RILEY
That shouldn't..

A loud growling sound surrounds them. They look around in concern, then realize it's the communications console. Riley adjusts the translator.

The growls become a hissing voice.

VALERAN CAPTAIN (O.S.)
You have invaded Valeran Space. It is ours by treaty.
Joy turns to the viewscreen, sees that they're surrounded by those starfish-like ships.

Pike crouches like a cornered animal as he sees his old foes outside.

Joy talks into the communications console.

JOY

We are on a peaceful mission to the Mirgi homeworld.

The growls drown her out, then are translated.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Prepare to be boarded.

Their ship's power suddenly dies.

RILEY

They've got control of our computer system.

They turn to the viewscreen.

THEIR P.O.V.

The largest of the starfish-ships comes closer and closer -- they're being dragged into it.

IN THE SHIP

With a clunk, they dock next to the Valeran ship. Their outer airlock door opens.

Riley stands near the door, about to attack.

The inner door opens -- and three huge, space-ship suited Valerans enter. One immediately grabs Riley and holds him easily.

Through their dark, elongated helmets, Joy can see alligator-like faces and fierce eyes.

On his chair, still bound, Pike's eyes are full of hate.

The leader of the trio of Valerans towers over Joy, speaks through a translator-box.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

You will dress in your space suits and come with us.
JOY
We have none. Our only suit is damaged.

The Valerans confer, the Lieutenant gives an order and one Valeran leaves.

The next few moments are silent but filled with tension as the Lieutenant examines them and the ship. He points to Pike.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
Your prisoner?

JOY
No, not exactly.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
Now he is our prisoner.

He has his other man untie Pike, much to Joy and Riley's consternation.

Then the other Valeran returns, bearing three human space suits.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
Left over from the war. But they should work.

Pike, now free, looks at the three Valerans, eying his odds. The Lieutenant unholsters a nasty-looking rifle-like weapon that fits in his hands like a pistol.

Pike, then Joy, suit up in the space suits. Riley waves his away. The Lieutenant sizes him up.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
A robot?

RILEY
Cyberman, you sidewinder!

Puzzled, the Lieutenant waves them onto the Valeran ship.

INT. VALERAN SHIP

The Valeran ship is cavernous, mammoth.. and very dark and dank, as the Valerans like it.

Groups of the reptilians gather to watch the humans, their former deadly enemies.
The mood is uneasy. The Valerans with Pike, Joy and Riley shed their space suits, push along the three of them to an area away from the docked ship.

The walls of their ship look like an underground cavern, the light on the ceiling glowing like a fungus.

A door opens and an even larger Valeran strides through, dressed in royal robes: the Captain.

He extends a large claw and speaks without a translator box.

    VALERAN CAPTAIN
    Greetings. I quote one of your great leaders: "The difference of race is one of the reasons why I fear war may always exist; because race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance."

He offers his claw to Joy.

    VALERAN CAPTAIN
    Let us banish our differences.

Joy lightly, hesitantly takes his hand and shakes. The Valeran shows his teeth.

    VALERAN CAPTAIN
    Our goal must be not peace in our time, but peace for all time.

He offers his hand to Riley, who shakes, then Pike, who won't.

Joy pipes up to stop the unpleasant moment.

    JOY
    You know our language and our history.

    VALERAN CAPTAIN
    I find your race to be full of wisdom. I only wish your scholars would study our wisdom as well.

He stares at Pike.

    VALERAN CAPTAIN
    I know you.

    PIKE
    I doubt that. I only met your kind when they were trying to kill me. They died first.
VALERAN CAPTAIN
I correct myself. I know of you. Destroyer of Worlds.

They are surrounded by Valerans, curious to see this galactic legend.

Then the Valerans start growling and stamping their feet.

The Captain spreads his teeth wide again.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
They applaud you, Pike. You have killed more than any of us. Come, feast with us.

He ushers them through the open door.

INT. HALLWAY

The three humans are dwarfed by the Valerans as they walk through the corridors of the ship.

They see male and female Valerans, chatting with each other, flirting, then looking curiously at them as they go by.

One young Valeran boldly steps forward. His translator box speaks with a boy's voice.

YOUNG VALERAN
Have you come to destroy us as well?

The Captain shoos him aside.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
He is our guest. You must honor him as one of us.

Joy looks at Pike to see how he's handling it. Badly would be an understatement.

INT. MEAL HALL

The Valeran eating area is a huge hall made up of one gigantic square table. The Captain ushers them to the center of one side.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Sit. No seats are better than any others in our hall.

Pike and Joy, in their space suits, look at each other awkwardly.
VALERAN CAPTAIN
You may take off your helmets. I have created a compromise atmosphere in which we both can live.

Riley sniffs the air, cocks his head as he runs some calculations.

RILEY
It's safe.

They remove their helmets and sit. The Captain sits and food is brought in—very earth-like food. The Lieutenant and other Valerans join them, tearing into their food aggressively.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Equality. All men are by nature equal, made, all, of the same earth by the same Creator.

RILEY
Plato.

The Captain shows his teeth again.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Good! A wise man.

He turns to Joy and Pike, who gingerly poke at their food.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
You will be my guests. We will treat you as equals.

PIKE
Isn't that a little difficult when you wanted to wipe us from all corners of the universe a few short years ago?

VALERAN CAPTAIN
We lost. We know how to lose. We agreed to a treaty. Now we must live with you. I'm merely trying to make it agreeable..

PIKE
It'd be real agreeable if you let us go.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
I cannot..
JOY
We must go to the Mirgi homeworld.
Pike has something he needs to do
there.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
(nodding vigorously)
Penance. I know the concept. We
call it..

PIKE
Screw the Penance and the grubbing
Mirgi. Just let me go home.

JOY
(angrily)
And where would that be?

VALERAN CAPTAIN
I appreciate your guilt over that
massacre. But what of us? Who mourns
for our dead? We lost millions. We
lost five planets full of our people.
Are you sorry for that?

PIKE
It was a war, reptile!

JOY
Pike!

VALERAN CAPTAIN
All we get is this slim sector of a
quadrant. When we ruled system upon
system!

PIKE
You're a warrior race..

VALERAN CAPTAIN
You invaded our planets! Tried to
colonize our worlds! We merely
defended our territory! Is that
kind of killing wrong?

Pike's heard that argument before and can't respond. The
Valeran Captain tries to change the tone of the argument.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
War is the father and king of all;
some he has made gods, and some men;
some slaves, and some free.

RILEY
Heraclitus.
VALERAN CAPTAIN
Excellent!

He looks directly at Pike.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
You are free... to roam the ship. I
am adjusting the atmosphere so you
can go where you wish.

He points to Joy.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Both of you go. See our sights. I
want to talk to this well-read
cyberman.

Joy and Pike finish eating, stand hesitantly. The Captain
shoos them away. They go through the door.

The Captain gestures to one side of the room and the walls
part, revealing a magnificent view of the stars and nearby
planets.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Have you words for this?

RILEY
Oh, Lord, I've never lived where
churches grow.
I love creation as it stood that day
You finished it so long ago
and looked upon Your work and called
it good.

The Valeran Captain smiles broadly.

INT. DECK

Joy and Pike stroll along the outer deck of the ship, with a
360-degree view of the stars, brilliant all around them in
all sizes and colors.

RILEY (O.S.)
I know that others find You in the
light that's sifted down through
tinted window panes;
and yet I seem to feel you near
tonight in this dim, quiet starlight
on the plains.

Joy and Pike look from the stars to the decks below them,
filled with the life and activity of the Valerans -- howls,
growls and hisses -- their laughs, shouts and camaraderie.
PIKE
I dedicated my life to killing these things. They murdered Captain Makin. They killed my father.

JOY
You heard the Captain. They were defending themselves.

PIKE
Shouldn't they atone for their sins as well?

The question lingers in the air.

Joy changes the subject, takes his hand and pulls him further out so they have a better view of the stars.

JOY
When was the last time you walked beneath the stars with a woman?

PIKE
I've been with plenty..

JOY
That you didn't pay for?

He stops short, almost embarrassed. Then he turns and looks out at the view.

PIKE
A lifetime.

She holds his hand to her cheek, then softly kisses it. He looks at her, amazed. Then he takes her face in his hands and kisses her fully, passionately on the mouth.

When they separate, Joy pulls him playfully by the hand around a corner.

INT. VALERAN PARK

It's a steamy, mossy park created by the Valerans to give them a sense of home. The water bubbling past them looks sulfuric and emits colorful gases.

The plants are jungle-like and low to the ground. Joy trips along the greenery, laughing. Pike sways behind her, gawkily. He's forgotten how to have fun.

She disappears over a hill. He stumbles up to where she was, looking concerned. Her hands reach up and pull him down.
UNDER THE HILL

They strip quickly and make love as if their lives depended on it. Joy smiles and accepts his passion, but he is all fury, twisted into himself. His climax is explosive, not tender.

He falls asleep in her arms. She strokes his hair. His eyes are closed and peaceful for a change.

CLOSE ON: HIS EYES

The peacefulness departs abruptly as his eyes pop open. He hears a humming sound.

IN HIS SHIP

He's strapped and bound to his chair in his ship again. Riley stands over him, examining him as if he were an insect.

Pike struggles with his restraints.

PIKE
You won't get away with this. The Valerans will come after me.

RILEY
Not if they think you've hit the trail for a love romp.

PIKE
Love..?

At that moment, Joy enters the ship, holding a blaster.

PIKE
Shoot him, Joy! Shoot Riley!

Joy just stands there, looking trapped.

RILEY
You oughta tell him.

PIKE
Tell me what?

Riley pretends to make himself busy in the back of the ship. Joy squats down next to Pike, face to face.

JOY
My father was the Ambassador from Old Earth on the Mirgi spaceship.

Pike's in shock.
JOY
He died when you blew it up. I've been looking for you since then.

PIKE
(with difficulty)
It was a set-up -- the cloudscrapers, everything?

She sighs, stands, starts working the controls, preparing the ship for departure.

JOY
We had tabs on you. Knew you'd like a job like that, set you up to find it.

PIKE
(exploding)
And then you fucked me!

She winces.

JOY
I made love to you because I wished to and because I care about you.

PIKE
You care? You just want revenge like everyone else!

The ship starts to move.

JOY
(nods)
There was a time I wanted you dead. But I discovered a belief system.

She fingers the lightning bolt necklace around her neck.

JOY
And after I met you, I knew you could be saved. That's why you must go to the Mirgi homeworld.

PIKE
I'll die there! You know it!

He looks to the viewscreen, sees the Valeran ship as they move away from it.

A voice booms from their communications console.
VALERAN CAPTAIN
Farewell, young romancers. Remember:
Love is space and time measured by
the heart!

Pike screams out.

PIKE
They've got me hostage! Save me,
Captain!

JOY
He can't hear you. I thought the
Valerans were your deadly enemy.

PIKE
If they save me from you, they're my
best friends!

Joy calls to Riley in the back of the ship.

JOY
Set the course for the Mirgi
homeworld, but make it look like
we're headed out of the system.

He nods and jacks into the neural network.

Pike looks hopelessly out at the stars.

THE STARS
From another angle. We're on the Valeran Bridge, watching
the small ship move away. The Valeran Lieutenant speaks to
his Captain.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
(in Valeran)
They make it look like a honeymoon,
but they will go to the Mirgi
homeworld.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
(in Valeran)
That is where they are supposed to
go.

He does not smile as he watches them leave.

IN THE SHIP
Pike smolders in his chair. Joy and Riley work various
controls.
JOY
Were you always a killer, Riley?

RILEY
Hardly, ma'am. Was an explorer centuries ago, like a cowboy. Then got injured in the Centaurian System, they started putting metal in me.

JOY
Did it hurt?

RILEY
Can't rightly remember. But soon there was nothing left to explore and I needed to keep my parts in working order. Took what jobs there were. Can't say I like 'em all.

PIKE
Spare us your morality, cyberman. You're barely human any more.

Riley tries to ignore him, works the control console.

RILEY
Be there in a half hour, give or take. You know about the Mirgi moon?

JOY
Tell me.

RILEY
It's in synchronous rotation with the planet. The Mirgi myths claim the two planets are in love and must always face one another. They call the moon "Mirha", their word for love.

PIKE
Have you got any useful information in that robot brain of yours?

RILEY
My brain is human. My access to it is through cybernetics.

PIKE
And what else does it say about these worms?

RILEY
I told you about their collective consciousness.
PIKE

Meaning?

RILEY

A true communal mind. The whole race was of one mind, always.

Pike almost leaps up, straining against his bonds.

PIKE

That's it!

JOY

What?

PIKE

If there's even one grubbing worm on the planet! Then the race's mind is still alive!

RILEY

Theoretically, the whole race would live on in one mind.

PIKE

Then I didn't kill them! They're all still alive in that one mind!

JOY

Pike..

PIKE

Listen to me! They didn't die! If just one worm is crawling around down there, I am not the Destroyer of Worlds!

Joy and Riley look at him as if he's a mental patient.

EXT. SHIP

The ship passes the Mirgi moon, forever facing its planet. They hit the atmosphere, causing sparks of friction, multi-colored, radiant.

The ship starts shuddering as if it will fall apart as the winds and elements tear at it.

RILEY (O.S.)
The big high lonesome's a place in my mind;
and sometimes when it's storming,
you can look the Lord in the eye;
I stood and watched in amazement
(MORE)
RILEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
out on San Augustine Plain,
while the sky turned black as the
curtains in Hell
and the wind came a'chasin' the rain.

The ship swoops below layers of clouds, almost smashing into
a green mountainside.

IN THE SHIP

Riley's jacked in, trying to control the ship. Joy is pale,
strapped into her chair. Pike lies nonchalantly, still bound
to his.

PIKE
Kill the cowboy poetry, robot. It's
old-fashioned.

Riley tries not to look angry.

JOY
I enjoyed it, Riley.

RILEY
Thank you, ma'am.

PIKE
Why don't you scan for life-forms so
that we can get this over with?

Riley's consults a console.

RILEY
Scanning.. nothing. Wait, there is
something.

PIKE
(eagerly)
Where?

RILEY
Plotting the course. Near their
capital city.

Pike strains at his restraints.

PIKE
I can't see.

JOY
It's very green.

PIKE
Good! Green means life!
JOY
If there is life, Riley and I will find it.

PIKE
You have to take me with you! You said this is where I have to go for repentance!

Joy stares at him, looks to Riley.

RILEY
We need his word that he'll behave himself.

PIKE
My word! You have my word. I'll behave. We have to find that life!

EXT. SHIP

Outside, the ship flies past empty cities, all beautiful, made out of emeralds it seems. But all quite sterile.

Finally, it flies over some massive green structures, lands on a flat area between them.

IN THE SHIP

Riley bends over Pike with his sonic knife, waves it in his face.

RILEY
You gave your word.

PIKE
(irritated)
I did. Get on with it!

Riley cuts the bonds and Pike is out of the chair almost instantly.

He heads for the airlock, but Riley's cyberarm holds him back.

RILEY
You'll be dead in ten seconds out there.

Joy removes two space suits from a locker.

JOY
We, uh, borrowed these from the Valerans. Old, but they should work.
Pike and Joy suit up quickly. Riley removes a small box from the control console.

**RILEY**

This says the life-form is due west.

The three of them enter the airlock. The inner door closes behind them.

**EXT. SHIP**

Outside, Pike just about jumps out of the outer airlock as soon as it opens.

He's on the ground, running west, towards one of the big buildings.

**JOY**

Pike! Stay with us!

**PIKE**

I have to find it!

He's gone, running into a huge, cavernous opening in the building. Riley and Joy follow.

**IN THE EMERALD BUILDING**

The green is overwhelming, with the sunlight filtering through, making everything emerald and jade.

Pike is looking in every cubbyhole, every anteroom, frantically.

**PIKE**

It has to be in here -- somewhere!

Riley and Joy watch him as if he were an unruly child.

**JOY**

Pike, this is not the way..

Pike jumps to Riley, yells through his helmet.

**PIKE**

Tell me where!

Riley points towards a hallway and Pike runs clumsily in his suit to it and away from them. Riley looks at Joy.

**RILEY**

Ain't exactly going as planned, is it?
They both go down the hallway. Riley pats Joy softly on the shoulder to reassure her.

FURTHER INSIDE THE EMERALD BUILDING

An immense room in the middle of the building. Various items that would be furniture and decor for the Mirgi dot the floor and walls.

Pike has found some kind of metal tool and is smashing the decorations.

PIKE
Where the frag is it? Why is it hiding?

Riley quickly takes the tool with his cyberarm and wrenches it from Pike's grasp.

Pike responds by smashing his fist into Riley's face, doing no damage, but skinning his knuckles and making them bleed. He continues to hit Riley.

PIKE
Find it, damn you, find the grubbing worm!

He's almost in tears he's so frustrated.

And a gentle voice stops him cold.

MIRGI
Pike! You have come!

They all look up. On an area that could be a stage in the front of the room, crawls a Mirgi.

It's green, large and seems almost like a cartoon character except for its red glowing eyes.

MIRGI
We knew you would find us!

Pike runs full steam to the stage.

PIKE
Find you! You're my salvation!

He jumps up onto the stage.

PIKE
I could kiss your ugly green wormhead!

He dives at the Mirgi, arms outstretched.. and passes right through it.
A strangled sob escapes him as he turns around, not sure what's going on.

The Mirgi continues talking as if nothing has happened.

MIRGI
We want you to know that we forgive you, Pike. We sent this message back to our homeworld at the moment of our death to let you know that we are now part of the life\death\life cycle of the whole universe.

PIKE
What the frag..

By now Joy and Riley have reached the Mirgi. Riley passes his cyberarm through it.

RILEY
It's a holo-vid. A transmission.

Joy puts her hand on Pike's shoulder.

JOY
It's not alive, Pike.

Pike pushes her aside and jumps up.

PIKE
But something is. You registered a life-form. Something started this transmission. Find it, Riley. Find it!

Riley consults his box, waves it around the room, settles on the holo-Mirgi.

RILEY
Here. The signal was faked. No Mirgi life-forms are registering now.

But Riley sees something else on the scanner.

RILEY
But there is..

Pike bats the scanning box out of his hand.

PIKE
Don't tell me it was faked. There's a grubbing worm here somewhere. I did not kill the whole damn race.
The holo-Mirgi waddles over to him.

MIRGI
You did, Pike. We have all moved Beyond. As we were meant to. We do not blame you. We wish you well.

PIKE
Wish me well?

He kicks at the thing, his foot passing through it. Then he starts kicking the walls, looking for the machinery that operates the transmission.

PIKE
Wish me well? I'm glad you're dead, you grubbing worms! Snakes tempted man; they're evil. They should be dead.

He's just about crying as he barks this out. Joy looks at him sadly.

JOY
You don't mean that. You know what you really feel.

She moves closer to him. So does Riley, more for protective reasons than emotional ones.

Pike moves faster than a snake striking, grabbing Joy's holstered blaster.

PIKE
Don't tell me what I feel! I'll tell you. I feel free. I came here, like you wanted. Now I'm free. That's the deal.

RILEY
Pike..

Pike shoots at him, blasting a hole in his cyberarm. Riley looks down at it, having felt no pain, but very concerned about the damage.

RILEY
I can't rightly afford to fix this..

PIKE
You won't be able to fix anything if you don't get out of my way right now.

A tense moment as all three seem about to try something.
BAXTER
Drop your weapon and surrender to the forces of the United Worlds.

They turn to see the room full of an armed security force, one of each kind of alien race, all with weapons aimed at them.

The human of the group steps forward in his space suit.

BAXTER
Lieutenant Edwards M. Baxter, Space Marines. You are our prisoners.

Pike begins to aim the blaster in Baxter's direction, but Joy acts first, knocking the weapon from his hand.

A gaseous Rigelian, in its crystalline container, hovers over them, coming near Riley. Its voice hisses through its translator box.

RIGELIAN
You have done well, Riley. Your fee has been paid to your account. Your orders are terminated.

RILEY
But this man..

RIGELIAN
Your mission is over. We will talk of this no longer.

Joy stands between Pike and Baxter.

JOY
What are you going to do with him?

BAXTER
Like all war criminals, he will be tried.

JOY
I need to be there.

BAXTER
You are there. The trial will happen now. Right here. This United Worlds group has been formed for the express purpose of trying the Destroyer of Worlds and sentencing him.

Without a weapon, with nowhere to go, Pike has become almost docile.
PIKE
They've got me, Joy. Let them have their silly trial.

JOY
Who is representing this man?

The members of the United World force chuckle among themselves.

BAXTER
He needs no representation.

JOY
I will represent him.

PIKE
You can't..

BAXTER
You're not qualified..

JOY
I claim his right to a defense in full view of this court. Do you contest that right?

BAXTER
Er, no.

JOY
Then proceed with your prosecution and we will respond.

BAXTER
Very well.

He gestures and a wall of the emerald building turns black. On it is projected the battle in which Pike committed his supposed crime.

Pike kneels down below the images on the screen and stares up at them, lost in emotion.

BAXTER
Immanuel Pike, do you deny that you were the weapons master on the ship Tom Payne during the period in question?

PIKE
(painfully)
No, I don't deny it.
On the screen, the Mirgi ship floats in, immense, almost godlike.

Then it explodes in a flash, making Pike wince and the assembled group jump.

**BAXTER**  
Do you deny that you gave the order to destroy the Mirgi ship?

**PIKE**  
It wasn't an order. It was just a thought! I didn't mean...

**BAXTER**  
A technicality. Did you make your ship fire on that ship?

**PIKE**  
I did.

**BAXTER**  
Then you are guilty.

**JOY**  
Guilt is a very subjective thing.

They all look at her. She takes center stage, near Pike.

She whispers to him as she goes past.

**JOY**  
(whispering)  
Follow my lead.

**PIKE**  
(whispering)  
How do I know you're not selling me out?

She winces at that, turns from him and addresses the multitude.

**JOY**  
He was a young boy whose father died in the war. He'd been promoted to weapons master far too fast. His emotions were not equal to the task. The Mirgi ship was an unknown. He did not know if it was a Valeran weapon.

The images on the screen replay, perhaps looking a bit differently this time.
JOY
(to Pike)
Did you think it was a weapon?

PIKE
Yes, I did.

JOY
He reacted as any soldier would: he protected his ship.

BAXTER
He made no attempt to communicate with the alien ship. He could see from its design that it was not Valeran.

PIKE
I didn't know..

BAXTER
Did you communicate with it?

PIKE
I... saw an image in my mind.

BAXTER
Yes, the Mirgi were telepaths. What was the image?

PIKE
It was frightening... a snake with glowing eyes! I knew it was evil.

The crowd rustles; the spidery Achernarian rubs its legs together; the Rigelian emits soft sighs; the flying Pyxian twitters to itself.

BAXTER
You knew it was evil. Didn't it look like that?

He points to the holo-Mirgi.

JOY
Pike, you don't need to..

PIKE
But I didn't know..

BAXTER
You should have known. Case closed.

Baxter turns to the multitude.
BAXTER
Ignorance is a crime when you've been trained otherwise. He should have known all alien races, all of you. He should not have been frightened.

JOY
Not have been frightened? Then he wouldn't have been human!

That causes a stir among the gathered alien races.

JOY
I mean..

BAXTER
We know what you mean. Pike, stand for sentencing.

Pike wearily rises from his knees to a standing position.

PIKE
They said they forgave me! Listen to them! They said it wasn't my fault!

BAXTER
A holo-vid is not admissible evidence.

Joy tries one more time.

JOY
You can't kill him! If you kill him, you're no better than he is!

BAXTER
We're far better than he is. Pike, you are sentenced to.. Inferno.

The assembled aliens nod -- or do whatever their race's equivalent of that is.

Pike groans an inhuman groan. Joy and Riley look at each other, ashen.

JOY
But Inferno..

BAXTER
You will be held in confinement until your transportation is arranged.

Two aliens come forward and take Pike away. He does not struggle.
The others in the assembly file out, Baxter remaining behind. He approaches Joy.

**BAXTER**

You were eloquent. But he is responsible. You know that.

**JOY**

Do I?

**BAXTER**

We will arrange transport back to Old Earth for you at your convenience.

(looks at Riley)

Both of you.

Then he leaves. Joy and Riley remain alone in the cavernous jade tomb.

**RILEY**

"The big high and lonesome is only God's way of putting man in his place."

**JOY**

Amen to that.

They slowly walk out of the room, Riley patting Joy on her shoulder.

**INT. MIRGI HOME**

Pike looks around his confinement to see that he's imprisoned in a Mirgi house.

The building is like a burrow, with smooth floors from the wormlike movements along it.

Cupboards and cabinets open at floor level, though there is some hanging decor over his head.

A tiny model of a burrow sits in one corner with little Mirgi dolls near it -- playthings of the children of this house, when there were children many years before.

Dust covers everything. He slumps to the floor and closes his eyes.

**EXT. MIRGI HOME**

Outside, two large aliens, the spidery Achernarian and the mollusk-like Deebian guard the entrance.

They both jump at a noise, then laugh at one another for jumping. Their space-suit helmets fog up from the laughter.
Suddenly, there is someone in front of them. They both start to jump again, realize it's Joy.

She looks up, way up, at the large aliens from her space suit.

    JOY
    Baxter said I could see him.

She hands them a computer chip on a card. The Achernarian inserts it into his suit and a little holo-vid of Baxter appears in front of him, saying that yes, indeed, Joy has permission.

They part and let her inside.

INT. HOUSE

Joy looks down on Pike, sound asleep on what would have been the Mirgi bed -- a rug-like thing on the ground in the corner, with ornaments strung around it for privacy.

Through his helmet, she can see him, almost innocent in his sleep.

But he hears her and starts awake, eyes wide with fear.

    PIKE
    Is it time?

    JOY
    No, not yet.

He sits up forlornly.

    PIKE
    Inferno.

The word hangs in the air between them.

    PIKE
    That's for the worst criminals in the universe. It's the hell planet.

    JOY
    I know. I'm sorry.

    PIKE
    Maybe I deserve to be there.

But a muffled sound stops him. He listens -- a humming, getting closer and closer.

They both look frightened. The humming is more like a whirring; they can't figure out where it's coming from.
PIKE
One of them has come to kill me before
I can even get to Inferno.

JOY
Don't talk like that.

PIKE
Don't tell me they haven't thought
about it.

The whirring seems right beneath them -- and it is. The
ground crumbles in front of them and they jump back with a
yell.

Riley pokes his head up through the hole, then holds up his
cyberarm, now equipped with a rotating shovel.

RILEY
This connects to a whole lot o'
tunnels beneath these houses where
the Mirgi used to socialize.

He disappears back into the hole, his hand comes up and widens
it. Then his head pokes up again.

RILEY
You coming?

Pike looks at Joy, at Riley. He's frozen.

JOY
Go! It's your only chance!

He abruptly takes her by the arms.

PIKE
Not without my lawyer!

She smiles and whispers to him.

JOY
You go ahead. I'll talk for a while
so they'll hear me.
     (she gestures outside)
Then I'll follow you.

RILEY
We'll head east. It's the big tunnel.

Riley disappears down the hole. Pike glances at Joy, squeezes
her hand -- and jumps down the hole.
Joy
(a little loud)
Take my advice and behave yourself on the trip to Inferno. They might give you time off for being cooperative.

She smiles as she looks down at the ground where Pike has escaped.

In The Tunnels

Pike and Riley move through the dense green tunnels. Riley flashes a light out of his chest, although the tunnels are dimly lit by some kind of phosphorescence.

Pike
Why are you doing this, Riley? Your job is done.

Riley
A man's gotta choose his own trail; not have others force it on him.

Pike
That wasn't what you thought when we first met.

Riley
You reminded me of why I went into space in the first place. Or, rather, she did.

They move on in silence for a while.

Riley
She's sure something.

Pike
Yes, she is.

Then: a shadow to their left; Riley raises a blaster, shines his chest-light on the shadow.

Pike is prepared to kill with his bare hands now that he's tasted possible freedom.

But it's Joy, smirking a little -- did she hear the last conversation?

Joy
You two make more noise than a horde of Cygnians.
RILEY
Just trying to be sociable.

JOY
So be sociable quietly. Nice hand.

She looks at his cyber-shovel.

RILEY
The Fomalhautians are quite adept at repairs.. and enhancements. I think I might like to visit their world after this is over.

PIKE
Will this ever be over?

JOY
It will if we keep moving.

They move into the massive tunnel ahead of them.

FARTHER DOWN THE TUNNEL

They reach a point where three tunnels diverge from the main one.

JOY
Which way?

Riley examines all three.

RILEY
One ought to lead right to..

Behind them come shouts and growls. Pike almost jumps out of his skin.

PIKE
They found us! Which way, Riley? Quick!

Riley decides -- though it's obvious he's not sure.

RILEY
This one!

They head to the left.

RUNNING

The three are moving as fast as they can. They hear the crowd behind them hit the three tunnels -- and some definitely come their way.
PIKE
Faster!

Pike's actually the slowest of the three. Joy, in top shape, is ahead. Riley paces himself but could leave them behind if he wanted to. He scans ahead of them.

RILEY
If I'm right, the ship is right above us!

He leaps to a ledge running along the side, starts working his shovel-arm at the ceiling of the tunnel. He's fast, but their pursuers are gaining.

PIKE
Throw me the blaster!

Riley does. Pike turns, ready to kill.

Then from the darkness, the Achernarian pounces. The spider-being is large and all legs, grabbing Pike and immediately immobilizing him.

It emits some whistles that are translated by its translator-box.

ACHERNARIAN
This way! I have the Destroyer!

Pike struggles to get the blaster up -- and the Achernarian bats it away like a toy. It skitters across the ground.

Riley yells down from his perch.

RILEY
I'm through! Come on!

Joy looks from Pike to Riley.

JOY
We can't..

More noise from behind them: the rest of the hunting party is about to catch them.

Joy picks up the blaster and points it at the Achernarian.

PIKE
Shoot him!

JOY
Let Pike go!
RILEY
Hurry!

ACHERNARIAN
I will crush him if you do not put down your weapon.

The Achernarian makes good on his threat, crushing Pike's windpipe beneath his helmet.

More guards are visible in the darkness, yelling and growling.

RILEY
Now or never!

Pike gasps for air, about to lose consciousness.

Joy is torn. Then she fires, hitting the Achernarian square in the head.

It crumples, its legs withering. Joy looks at it in horror.

But Pike is up quickly, taking her arm and pulling her upward.

PIKE
Come on, Joy! Now!

She's limp, but allows herself to be dragged onto the ledge.

The other aliens are just feet away -- but they stop when they see the dead Achernarian.

RIGELIAN
The Destroyer has killed again!

Pike and Riley are through the hole in the roof. Joy is last, taking one last look at the being she killed.

The aliens below start to scramble up after them.

ABOVE GROUND

Their spaceship sits where they left it, but a troop of guards approaches it in the distance -- alerted to Pike's escape.

The guards see them and step up their pace.

But Pike, Joy and Riley are closer to the ship. They dash forward. Behind them, the other pursuit team appears in the hole in the ground. The first alien, a tentacled Hyadean, aims a long-range laser rifle at them.
THE SHIP

Is just yards away, but the guards running from the other side are very close.

Riley suddenly sprints forward.

    RILEY
    Get in the ship!

He passes the ship, confronts the guards. With what looks like a mighty effort, the light in his chest flares up, shining so brightly that it blinds the pursuers.

Then the laser-rifle slices through the ground at Riley's feet. He jumps back, heads for the ship.

The laser rifle fires again, this time cutting off part of one foot. Riley pauses in pain, hobbles forward to the ship.

Pike is leaning out of the airlock. The ship's engines are already running.

It's just about to lift off, but Pike leans down, helps Riley aboard as it careens into the sky.

The laser rifle fires useless shots after it.

The aliens gather below and look up angrily at the ship as it climbs higher and higher.

IN THE SHIP

Pike is now hooked into the neural network, his space-suit gone. Joy is strapped into her chair, looking lost.

Riley attends to his wounded foot.

    PIKE
    Good thing it was robotic.

    RILEY
    Not all of it.

He's dabbing at blood flowing from what remains of his foot. Pike is aghast.

    PIKE
    How much pain..

    RILEY
    A lot.

He continues to treat himself. Pike looks at the viewscreen.
PIKE
Almost out of orbit. Soon we'll hit Psy-Space and be home free.

He looks over at Joy, who is unresponsive. Then he gets up from his chair, still jacked in, stretches over to touch her shoulder. She still won't respond.

PIKE
I'm sorry you had to do that.

Finally she turns angrily to him, her face wet with tears.

JOY
Sorry? I killed a living being! My religion, my whole life-system, forbids that!

PIKE
There was no other way.

JOY
Is this how you felt? When you killed the Mirgi, did you feel as if your whole life was a lie?

He can't answer that.

Without warning the ship shudders and stops. Riley's up fast, hobbling to the viewscreen.

RILEY
Tractor beam.

Pike immediately starts working controls.

PIKE
Prepare for Psy-Space.

RILEY
In the middle of a tractor beam? We could end up being ripped apart -- I might survive. You won't.

PIKE
I'm open to other solutions. If you have any in the next second or so.

He adjusts one last control and prepares to blink them into Psy-Space... when the whole ship shuts down. The communications console rumbles and a deafening voice fills the room.
VALERAN CAPTAIN (O.S.)
Remember: War has made some of us slaves. Much as I'd like you to go free, I must stay on the good side of the victors. Your ship is mine.

Pike has turned pale. Joy continues to cry.

RILEY
The trail ends here, gang.

OUTSIDE

The starfish-like Valeran ship pulls the small ship inexorably towards it.

FADE TO BLACK

CLOSE-UP: PIKE'S EYES

Those brown eyes that looked so young and frightened now look weary and lost.

There are stars reflected in them.

INT. DECK ON THE JEHOVAH

Pike sits in front of a mammoth viewscreen showing the stars moving away from him.

He stares at the stars but doesn't see them.

CAPTAIN DODGE
Do you believe in fate, Pike?

Pike turns slowly, all emotion seemingly drained from him.

He faces a middle-aged, muscle-bound man in full Captain's regalia, wearing the uniform and proud of it. Captain Dodge carries a large book with him.

PIKE
At this point, I can't say.

CAPTAIN DODGE
Uncertainty doesn't become a military man.

PIKE
I'm hardly a military man.

CAPTAIN DODGE
Once in the service, always in the service. Just as if you're in the service of the Lord.
He pats the book under his arm.

PIKE
Captain Dodge, I appreciate your efforts, but I am very tired of discussing the Bible with you.

CAPTAIN DODGE
On your way to hell and you can't spare time for God? A little shortsighted, eh?

PIKE
I know you have to escort me to Inferno, but was it in your orders to convert me as well?

CAPTAIN DODGE
Fate brought you to me. All the possibilities in the universe and you're here.

He gestures to the stars.

CAPTAIN DODGE
To answer your question: yes, it is in my orders to convert you. My orders from above.

He smiles grandly.

PIKE
Captain Dodge...

CAPTAIN DODGE
Yes?

PIKE
Go away.

Dodge doesn't like that, but heads for the door.

CAPTAIN DODGE
You're here for a reason, Pike.

He exits and the door closes behind him.

PIKE
The reason may be to strangle you, you idiot.

There's a laugh from the shadows behind him. Pike turns, anxious.
And Riley comes out of the shadows, his cyberparts looking new and in mint condition.

RILEY
Plays his hand kind of heavy, doesn't he?

PIKE
One more quote from Jesus and I'll put him through the airlock. I'd rather hear your collection of cowboy poetry.

RILEY
(surprised)
That is a change!

PIKE
I mean it.
(gestures to stars)
Give me something to go along with this. Because soon I won't see them any more.

Riley thinks for a moment.

RILEY
(reciting)
And remember God Almighty's been about a million years; A-pointing us back to Eden through this sinsunk Vale of Tears.

THROUGHOUT THE SHIP

As Riley recites, the passengers and crew of the Jehovah go about their jobs: crews work machinery, water plants, make sure the park area is neat.

Guests, including a flying Pyxian couple -- small and wondrous in their miniature life; an iridescent Polarian, glowing like a star; a creature that looks like a bejeweled praying mantis, from the Magellan constellation.

RILEY (O.S.)
He give to nature the winter so she could recuperate; And the night he give to us folks to forget our pains and hate.

Finally, on a lower deck, looking out at the same stars is Joy, in prison-like garb. She's crying.
RILEY AND PIKE

Look out at the same stars.

RILEY
So if we learn to all be joyful,
just the way we like her, see; Why
the trail will be lots shorter and
the quicker we'll be free.

One red star shines brighter than the others. Pike points
at it without saying anything.

RILEY
Algol, known as the Demon Star. Its
only planet is..

PIKE
Inferno.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

The Jehovah, proudly wearing its name, makes its way to Algol,
the Demon Star.

INSIDE THE SHIP

The guests, including Pike and Riley, gather for a meal around
a long table. Captain Dodge sits at its head.

CAPTAIN DODGE
I will read from the good book before
we partake of this bounty.

The male Pyxian flies a few inches off the table. His small
voice squeaks through his translator box.

MALE PYXIAN
Cap-tain Dodge. Most of us are from
worlds where your religion has no
place. Why do you force it on us?

The Magellanian and Polarian agree with the Pyxian, while
the Pyxian's mate looks at him with admiration and love.

The Captain is angry.

CAPTAIN DODGE
Your are the guests of an earth
starship. You would do well to heed
our beliefs.

PIKE
Captain, that is both arrogant and
ignorant.
CAPTAIN DODGE
How dare you!

PIKE
I'm already going to Inferno. What the frag else can you do to me?

RILEY
Pike!

CAPTAIN DODGE
I can confine you, as I did your accomplice.

PIKE
Joy..

CAPTAIN DODGE
Tried to escape. So she is confined to her quarters.

PIKE
Confine me. Let her go.

Captain Dodge shakes his head.

CAPTAIN DODGE
I prefer having your company.

The Captain begins eating, which means the conversation is finished. The male Pyxian buzzes near Pike.

MALE PYXIAN
Thank you for de-fending us.

Pike glowers at him.

PIKE
I didn't do it for you. I did it for me. Can't stand that man's arrogance.

That gives the Pyxians pause, but they try to be sociable. Their mellifluous buzzes are badly translated by their boxes.

FEMALE PYXIAN
We are sorry you go to Inferno.
Death in wartime not a crime.

Pike's turn to be taken aback.

PIKE
Uh, thank you. You are going to the Algol system?
MALE PYXIAN
No, we go to Cassiopeia for what you call honeymoon.

Bzzes and twitters. Pike looks from one Pyxian to the other, surprised.

PIKE
You marry?

FEMALE PYXIAN
As you do. We are same, if smaller.

She twitters what might be a laugh.

MALE PYXIAN
We are dip-lomats, so Captain Dodge gives us a ride.

Riley smiles at Pike's astonishment over the friendliness of the aliens.

RILEY
Might I say that your bride is 'specially radiant?

The Pyxians seem to blush. The other aliens clap their hands.

POLARIAN
You are very kind to our friends.

Pike swallows hard as he looks around at this little wedding party of aliens.

Captain Dodge loudly slurps his soup and eyes them all with discontent.

JOY
Stares out at the stars from her quarters.

PIKE
I'm sorry.

She turns to see him in the doorway and starts, nearly jumps up to greet him, but stops herself.

JOY
You must have some pull with the Captain.

PIKE
Must be my reputation. He seems to want to convert me or something.
He walks directly up to her, puts his hand on her shoulder.

    PIKE
    I'm very sorry that I dragged you into this.

She touches his hand.

    JOY
    I dragged myself into this. I sought you out.

    PIKE
    But you'd never have done what you did if not for me.

She turns her face away from his as her eyes fill with tears.

    JOY
    I see him every time I close my eyes. How he died.

    PIKE
    He?

She taps a sheaf of papers.

    JOY
    The Achernarian that I murdered. I've found out about him. He had a family, two children.

    PIKE
    It was him or me.

    JOY
    If we'd just given up, we'd be right where we are now. And he'd be alive.

The door whooshes open behind them. Riley stands silhouetted in it.

    RILEY
    We'll be entering into Inferno's orbit in thirty minutes.

They nod and he tactfully steps back out into the hallway. The door closes.

Pike, filled with emotion, takes her by the shoulders.

    PIKE
    Joy, I..

She looks up at him wordlessly. They kiss passionately.
PIKE
You're an amazing woman. You don't deserve Inferno.

JOY
I do. I killed someone.

AN EXPLOSION

Throws them to the ground -- the ship shudders and quakes.

Alarms start going off all around them.

The door opens and Riley runs in, lifts both of them off the ground.

RILEY
The ship's been damaged. It's breaking apart. Get to the life-pods!

PIKE
Where are the others?

RILEY
Others?

PIKE
The Pyxians, the Captain.

Riley consults a wall computer console.

RILEY
I'm reading that the captain is on the bridge. The others are trapped on an upper level.

PIKE
You can survive a vacuum. Get to them. I'll try to help the captain.

Joy is amazed at his leap into action.

JOY
I'm coming with you.

PIKE
No. Get a life-pod ready for us. I'll be back soon, I promise.

She doesn't like it, but she goes. Riley and Pike race off in opposite directions.
THE BRIDGE

Pike enters amid chaos: klaxons, screams, shouts, alarms.

He pushes through smoke and sparks to the center of the bridge. Captain Dodge sits in his captain's chair. He smiles when he sees Pike.

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    I'm happy you're alive, since this is all for you.

The other crew members pay no attention as they all frantically try to save the ship.

    PIKE
    For me? Are you insane?

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    I'm one of the few sane ones around.

He stands and leans forward to Pike, whispering.

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    The snakes had to die! They are the symbols of Satan! It says so in the book!

    PIKE
    What the frag are you talking about?

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    You were right to kill them! God created man in his own image. Not these others, especially not the Mirgi!

He gestures at the chaos around them.

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    And so I couldn't deliver you to Inferno, to Hell! You are our savior!

    PIKE
    This was your ship! Your crew! You're mad!

    CAPTAIN DODGE
    No, I see the truth. You must go free to do the Lord's work. Destroy those who are not God's work. You are the Destroyer. It is up to you!

Pike looks at him in utter astonishment, then steps up and smashes his fist into the Captain's jaw.
PIKE
Go down with your ship, killer!

He runs out of the bridge. The Captain stands, opens his Bible and starts reading passages from it as his crew fights for their lives around him.

UPPER DECKS

Pike rushes through the confusion to a hallway full of fire and electrical sparks.

He hears something, then realizes the air is being sucked forward. He knows he's in trouble.

He looks ahead, sees the Pyxians and the Polarian unconscious on the floor.

The air is escaping quickly and Pike could just make it back through the door from which he entered. But it's closing fast.

Instead, he runs to the fallen aliens, tries to revive them. The Polarian weakly raises her head, sees him and waves him on to the Pyxians. She manages to get to her feet, but her glow is weak.

Pike goes to them, lifts them both up, goes back to the door, but it's shut and locked now.

He's having trouble breathing. He goes forward, carrying them. The Polarian stumbles behind him. He catches her, helps all three forward.

But a jagged gash in the hull starts tearing, getting bigger and bigger. Soon they will all be sucked into the vacuum of space.

Pike swears, pushes through some fallen metalwork, gingerly helping the Polarian, carrying the Pyxians.

He sees another door ahead of him, pounds on it. It won't open.

He swears again, puts down the Pyxians, digs his hands into the cracks of the door, growls mightily as he struggles.

The door opens a fraction, then slams shut.

He looks at the Polarian. She salutes him, then slumps to the ground. Pike puts the Pyxians in a corner, tries to shield them with his body, waits to die.

The air hisses out, pulling at him, at his clothes, but he's able to wedge himself in the wreckage and keep himself and
the Pyxians there. He adjusts the Polarian so she is wedged in as well.

As he's about to lose consciousness, he looks up.

HIS P.O.V.

In rippling waves of delirium, he thinks he sees the door open. A cyberarm pokes through towards him as everything goes black.

HIS EYES

Snap open -- and he is indeed safe. Riley and the praying mantis-like Magellanian hover over him and the others.

   RILEY
   Thought you'd gone to that prairie in the sky.

   PIKE
   Unfortunately, no. How are they?

   RILEY
   Alive, thanks to you. But this ship is gonna go soon.

   PIKE
   Any way to the lifepods?

Riley shakes his head.

   RILEY
   Too much damage on the lower decks.

   PIKE
   The madman wants us all dead.

Riley looks at him quizzically. But then the floor shakes and another tearing sound is heard.

Riley dashes down the hallway and quickly returns.

   RILEY
   Everybody up. We're losing this deck.

He picks up the Polarian and helps her. The Magellanian gently takes both Pyxians. Pike manages to get to his own feet.

   PIKE
   Which way?

Riley points ahead and they run.
But they come up against another set of locked doors. Riley pries them open, but a loud hiss warns them that it's a vacuum on the other side.

Pike looks around frantically.

PIKE
Riley! There's an airlock! You can go outside!

RILEY
We haven't got any suits or lifepods for the rest of you.

PIKE
You go out and climb along the ship till you find some, then bring them back. I'll stay here.

Riley looks at him, sees he means it, punches open the inner airlock and steps inside. Pike watches him through reinforced glass.

PIKE'S P.O.V.
Riley opens the outer airlock, turns and waves.

Just then an explosion tosses the ship around like a leaf and Riley falls out of the outer airlock.

PIKE
Yells and startles the others.

PIKE
Riley!

He waits for the outer airlock to close, then opens the inner one and rushes inside. He looks desperately through the porthole.

HIS P.O.V.
No Riley -- just stars and pieces of ship falling away towards Inferno.

Then: a sphere passes in front of him slowly.

FLASH
The huge Mirgi globe flashes into his mind; it slowly passes in front of his field of vision.
HIS EYES
He's terrified at whatever unknown thing is out there.

HIS P.O.V.
Then the sphere comes into proper perspective: it isn't huge: it's a lifepod. And Joy is waving to him through a porthole.

PIKE
Smiles and waves back.

JOY
Gestures for him to go back inside the inner airlock. Then she points to the top of the pod.

On top is Riley, clinging with his cyberarm. He manages a grin.

PIKE
Dashes back through the inner airlock, closes the door, turns to the group of aliens.

PIKE
We have to leave the ship. There's a lifepod out there.

The Magellanian and Polarian nod to him. The Pyxians are still unconscious.

They turn to see the pod hooked to the outer airlock. The inner door hisses open. Joy walks through in a spacesuit, takes off her helmet.

Pike runs to her and embraces her, hard.

PIKE
I thought I'd lost you.

JOY
Don't worry. You haven't.

Pike then looks up, sees all the aliens, including the reviving Pyxians staring at him. Embarrassed, he lets go of Joy.

PIKE
We better get on the pod.

JOY
(smiling)
We better.
IN THE POD

It's a tight fit as Pike, Riley, Joy and the four aliens squeeze into an area meant for three.

JOY
The good news is we're off the ship. The bad news is that this pod doesn't have enough air or supplies for seven of us.

RILEY
I don't need air or supplies.

JOY
But six of us do. How long till help arrives?

PIKE
We sent out the distress beacon an hour ago. The nearest ship is near Cassiopeia. It could be a day or more.

JOY
We won't make it.

MALE PYXIAN
My mate and I do not need much.

POLARIAN
We could go down there.

The Polarian gestures planetward. The Pyxians start twittering.

FEMALE PYXIAN
No. Is hell down there and many criminals. Not safe.

PIKE
We need another pod. Take us around to the other side and we'll see if there are any left on board.

Joy nods and sets the controls. The pod moves away.

MALE PYXIAN
Thanks you, Pike, for saving our lives.

FEMALE PYXIAN
Yes, you are a hero for us.
PIKE
Riley and your friend from Magellan helped. And if Joy had not been there..

POLARIAN
But without you, we would never have gotten to the lifepod. You are a good man.

Pike really doesn't know how to respond to that. Joy saves him.

JOY
There's one two-person pod.

PIKE
So how do we get to it?

Riley stands and goes to the airlock.

RILEY
Allow me.

He goes through the inner lock, it shuts, then through the outer one.

MALE PYXIAN
Which of us will go on the small..

PIKE
I will.

JOY
So will I.

There's more to this than meets the eye and the aliens sense it.

MALE PYXIAN
No, Pike, stay with us.

There's a clunk as the second pod is attached to the airlock by Riley. He comes back inside.

JOY
Riley, you can manage this pod, can't you?

He nods.

JOY
Pike and I will go on that one.
RILEY
And where will you go?

PIKE
What?

RILEY
You wanna leave us so bad, you gotta be going somewheres.

Silence for a moment.

RILEY
You're going down there, aren't you?

Pike looks at Joy, looks anywhere but at Riley and the four aliens.

FEMALE PYXIAN
Why go there? You are free! You are a hero!

Pike sighs.

PIKE
I deserve to go down there. Besides, even if I escaped with you, the authorities would have me back here in hours.

JOY
I deserve to be down there, too.

POLARIAN
We do not think so.

Pike finally looks directly at all of them.

PIKE
Listen all of you, I am the Destroyer of Worlds, understand? I am the one who massacred the Mirgi and kept the war going for five years. Me, the Destroyer. Tell me, what do I deserve?

FEMALE PYXIAN
You deserve life. You deserve a chance.

PIKE
My chances are all used up.

RILEY
There's always hope.
Where could I go that they would not find me?

No one has an answer to that. He gets ready to leave, looks at Joy.

You could stay. No one would be looking for you.

No one except the family of the being I killed.

She comes forward to join him. Riley stands, blocks their way.

I should go with you, to the end of the trail, so to speak.

These people's lives are in your hands. Take care of them.

He holds out his hand.

You've been a good friend.

Riley shakes his hand. You can almost see a tear in his cyber-eye. Then Joy hugs him.

You are a good man, Riley. A real man. More man than most.

Thank you ma'am. That means a whole lot to me.

The four aliens make their versions of farewells, with the Pyxians finally flying in Pike's face.

You will return, Pike. And we will salute the day.

Pike shakes his head, walks into the airlock. Joy follows. The lock hisses shut.

Riley hides a snuffle.
FEMALE PYXIAN
Are you crying, Mr. Riley?

RILEY
Robots can't cry.

OUTSIDE
The small pod detaches from the larger one, begins to descend.

Near both pods, the huge starship Jehovah is in pieces, breaking apart, flaming down to Inferno.

THE SMALL POD
Descends to the planet. As it goes through various rings of the atmosphere, it's as if they were the circles of hell.

The planet and its atmosphere are harsh and uninviting: sulfurous clouds, acid rain, finally a fiery lake in which they splash down.

IN THE POD
Flames reflect throughout the interior of the pod as Joy and Pike get on their space-suits.

PIKE
I'm sorry I brought you here.

JOY
Is that all you're sorry for?

That stings.

PIKE
Yes, I'm sorry the Mirgi died. But it was an accident, Joy. Nothing can change that fact. If I could bring them back, I would.

The pod shakes joltingly. They both turn to the porthole to see a huge metal hand has emerged from the lake and taken hold of them. It pulls them under the fire.

UNDER THE LAKE
The metal hand retracts through the liquid into the stone floor.

UNDER THE GROUND
The civilization of Inferno is underground. It looks like Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS gone wild: technology run amok; metal buildings zigzag all through the underground layers
haphazardly; the lighting is all man-made and unnatural: the accoutrements of hell.

PIKE AND JOY

Look in amazement -- and horror -- from the pod. Finally the pod is brought inside one large building and brought to rest on a landing pad.

Pike looks at a gauge.

    PIKE
    Earth air. Let's go.

Still in their space-suits, but holding their helmets, they debark.

INSIDE INFERNO

The inside of the buildings matches the crazy-quilt technology of the outside.

They're met by a contingent of guards, mostly human, and one thin, sallow tall man, WARDEN WILLOW.

    WARDEN WILLOW
    Greetings, prisoners. Welcome to your final resting place. Though there won't be much rest for you.

His growling tone is like nails on a chalkboard.

One guard points a scanner at them.

    GUARD
    She is Willis, Joy. Delivered on Jehovah.

    WARDEN WILLOW
    You two destroy that ship? Then I'll make it even worse for you, if you can imagine that.

    PIKE
    Would we have come here if we had? Do we look that stupid?

The Warden gestures and another guard fires a weapon at Pike, who screams in agony, clawing at his skin, falling to the ground.

    WARDEN WILLOW
    Unpleasant, isn't it? I created that one myself.
The guard scans Pike.

GUARD
Pike, Immanuel.

He says it as if he doesn't believe it. The Warden smiles a big yellow smile.

WARDEN WILLOW
The Destroyer of Worlds? I'm honored! We love celebrity guests!

PIKE
Then do me a favor. Let her go.

WARDEN WILLOW
Nonsense! She's as guilty as you are. I will grant you one tiny boon, though.

He gestures and the guards roughly take them both and put them in shackles.

WARDEN WILLOW
You get to be together in hell. Isn't that romantic?

He turns and walks away, they're dragged along behind him.

ON THE CATWALKS

Inside Inferno, the Warden brings them to catwalks overlooking the very bottom of the installation.

It looks like all the paintings of hell: people working and suffering in the midst of fire and smoke. Groans, screams, cries to god.

The warden smiles as he looks out on it all.

WARDEN WILLOW
I do believe I've found my calling. I created hell and did a pretty damn good job of it.

He giggles to himself.

WARDEN WILLOW
Behold my kingdom! Murderers, rapists, thieves.. (shouting)
Listen to me!

All work stops and the sufferers turn their eyes to him.
WARDEN WILLOW
Meet the new meat!

Murmurs among the criminals as they eye Joy -- and a few large and hungry aliens eye Pike.

WARDEN WILLOW
Not just any meat! We have a star here. You serial killers and murderers think you made it big. This, boys and girls, is the Destroyer of Worlds.

He waits. A hush has fallen over the crowd. Then the Warden starts clapping.

WARDEN WILLOW
A big hand for Pike, everyone!

And they do applaud for him, some whistling, some making catcalls, all genuinely impressed.

Pike is sickened by it all.

HIS P.O.V.

He looks out at the array of psychos, killers and lunatics -- and for a moment he sees them all as Demons, big and leathery with horns and tails.

PIKE

Shakes his head at the vision. Now they're all just criminals.

The Warden hits a switch and the catwalk drops down quickly. He hits another and a crane swoops over, takes both Pike and Joy by their manacles and lifts them, painfully, over the side to the fiery earth.

The Warden gives them a little goodbye wave.

WARDEN WILLOW
Enjoy.

IN HELL

Pike and Joy are put to work -- physical labor that seems totally useless. Mostly moving rocks or shoveling dirt or breaking rocks. Then, it's more rocks, more dirt. They sleep right there amongst the dirt and rocks.

Pike has to fight a few psychos away as they try to take Joy from him. But he soon defends his territory and is left alone.
PIKE AND JOY

Sleep one night. He wakes up -- and thinks he sees a Demon right over his head. He jumps up, yelling. Joy runs to him, thinking he's losing it. He just shakes his head in dismay.

THE WARDEN

Overhead, laughing maniacally as they all slave away again.

JOY

Slumps down in a corner, exhausted. A guard starts to whip her, but when Pike stands in his way, he thinks better of it and leaves him alone.

Pike cradles Joy, then looks up -- and sees that Demon again, in a corner, hidden from the rest. It seems to be gesturing to him.

He closes his eyes and opens them again -- but the Demon is still there.

It motions to him to follow it. He looks around, sees no one is watching. Picks up Joy and follows it.

The Demon seems to pass right through a wall.

Pike comes up to the wall and gingerly sticks a foot out -- it passes through the wall. He pushes on through, carrying Joy right into the caverns, literally.

IN THE WALL

A series of tunnels branch out from the wall. Pike follows the Demon up an ascending one. He tries to talk to it.

PIKE

What the hell are you?

The Demon gestures for him to be quiet, keeps climbing up. Pike follows. Joy slowly comes to herself, looks at him. He puts her on her feet.

JOY

Where are we?

PIKE

We're getting out.

JOY

There is no out. This planet is deadly everywhere.
He points ahead and she sees the Demon, catches her breath. It seems to smile at them, gargoyle-like. It walks to them, touches their shackles, and the chains fall to the ground. Then it moves on. They continue to follow.

NEAR THE TOP

The caverns lead up to the surface. A sulfurous wind blows down the tunnel towards them. The Demon continues upwards.

PIKE
We can't go out on the surface! We'll die!

The Demon stops, looks at them, smiles.

DEMON
Wouldn't that be an improvement?

Pike and Joy stare in disbelief.

DEMON
Sorry. Bad joke. Trust me, you'll be fine. Why would I take you all this way to kill you?

JOY
Why are you taking us up there?

DEMON
To give you a choice. Or a chance perhaps.

He flutters his leathery wings and moves forward. They follow.

ON THE SURFACE

The winds howl, the acid rains fall and fiery puddles spring up all around them. But the three of them remain unaffected by it all.

PIKE
Maybe we are dead.

DEMON
Wouldn't you imagine a better afterlife than this?

PIKE
Who are you?
The Demon extends a claw.

DEMON
Name's Lucifer. Perhaps you've heard of me?

Pike draws his hand back.

LUCIFER
Now, now. I've had a bad rap. You know about that kind of thing yourself.

Pike gingerly shakes his claw, as does Joy.

LUCIFER
Contrary to what you may believe, we are merely life-forms. We're the original inhabitants of this planet. You humans came in and decided to make it a prison-world.

JOY
But you look like..

LUCIFER
Yes, we did make a few trips to your Old Earth in the past. Your people made myths of us because we didn't fit your rules of beauty. Ridiculous, isn't it?

He flaps his wings and flies about twenty feet off the ground.

LUCIFER
Of course, we could have shown them our other face.

PIKE
Other face?

LUCIFER
The pretty one.

Suddenly everything around them transforms. The ground becomes hills of rolling green; the fiery puddles become crystal streams; golden sunlight filters down through beautiful white clouds; trees hold singing birds; animals scamper along the ground.

Pike and Joy stare in wonder, then Joy elbows Pike and points up.
ABOVE THEM

Floats an angel on fluffy white wings, a being so beautiful it's hard to look at him.

LUCIFER
This is also what we look like. Depends on your perspective. You know, like snakes. Which are actually beautiful creatures.

The reference is lost on Pike.

PIKE
You're angels!

LUCIFER
We've been called that.

PIKE
Then you know the plan!

LUCIFER
Plan?

PIKE
The Divine Plan, why everything happens the way it does! It's all part of a Plan, right?

The angel does its best version of a shrug.

LUCIFER
If you like to think so.

PIKE
It's gotta be a plan! It all happens for a reason! The Mirgi -- that had to happen, didn't it? You know!

LUCIFER
We're just a little more advanced than you are, that's all. We don't have a hot-line to god, whoever he or she might be.

The angel descends to the ground near them.

LUCIFER
But there is one power we do have. That's the reason I brought you here. We can communicate with the afterlife.
JOY
The dead?

LUCIFER
Yes. Would you like to?

JOY
More than anything!

PIKE
Why would we want to do that?

Lucifer ignores him, goes over to Joy and touches her on the forehead. She immediately kneels, closes her eyes and is lost in a trance.

PIKE
What did you do to her?

LUCIFER
She is communicating with the Achernarian she killed. What about you?

PIKE
What about me?

LUCIFER
Do you want to talk to the Mirgi?

PIKE
I already did! They forgive me! They..

LUCIFER
You're lying.

The angel turns and regards the paradise now around them.

LUCIFER
It's your choice, it's the choice I give all who end up here. You'll notice most of the prisoners are humans? They're the most stubborn. Think the universe revolves around them. So they go back in there. Is that what you want?

PIKE
Inferno? No!

LUCIFER
Then you have to face the sins of your past. Only then can you move forward.
PIKE
Why do I need to move anywhere?

LUCIFER
For anyone or anything to evolve, it has to take responsibility. You know that.

Pike does, but he doesn't want to admit it.

PIKE
It wasn't my fault!

LUCIFER
Prove it. Talk to them.

PIKE
(angrily)
All right! I will! They'll prove I'm right!

Lucifer steps to him and touches his hand to his forehead.

LUCIFER
Sure you're ready for this?

PIKE'S FACE
Expands hugely, becomes the size of a sun.

PIKE'S BRAIN
Is made of stars and planets.

THE COSMIC PIKE
Looks out at the wonders of the universe in awe. When he speaks, solar flares shoot out for hundreds of miles.

PIKE
Where am I?

His face reflects some pain, some anxiety, then:

HE EXPLODES

The sun shoots out in pieces, traversing galaxies. Pike is little bits of consciousness shooting out through worlds and worlds.

HE SEES

Every kind of race under every kind of sun: living, loving, growing, dying.
Then..

HE STOPS

An alien face confronts him: a snake with glowing red eyes. Then more.. And more.

Thousands of Mirgi surround him, floating above the Mirgi homeworld.

PIKE

Coalesces back into human form, floats with them.

One Mirgi floats forward.

MIRGI

Come with me.

The Mirgi touches him.

MIRGI PLANET

And he is on the Mirgi homeworld, seeing how they live. Seeing how they love their children, cute little worms who still play with Mirgi dolls. How they communicate through thought, so there is no crime, no cheating, no lying. Just truth.

He sees them build towering jade edifices, create masterful artworks, learn to travel through space.

He sees them look in concern at viewscreens showing the Valeran/Human war destroying planets.

They confer among themselves. He sees in their thoughts that they know their planet will be in a war zone, that the Valerans are on the verge of taking it hostage.

So they build the Sphere to house them all. Let the Valerans have the piece of rock. The Mirgi spirit, the people will survive.

They broadcast their message and all the races of the universe agree to send an ambassador to them to talk of peace.

Then they embark, floating high, with high hopes. They fly right into a warzone where they see...

A PAIR OF BROWN EYES

Scared, young, with a visible flaw in the right eye.
THE MIRGI

Try to communicate by thought with the frightened boy.

MIRGI

Peace! We are for peace!

THE EXPLOSION

The Mirgi die horribly, sucked out into the vacuum of space. The ambassadors from the other worlds try to help save the ship, but it's gone.

Mother and fathers try to save their children, getting them into suits -- but it all happens too fast. The whole ship explodes in a ball of fire.

PIKE AND THE MIRGI

Float in space over the Mirgi homeworld. The one Mirgi floats in front of Pike.

MIRGI

That was our life. Why did you end it?

PIKE

It was an accident! I thought you meant to attack us! I didn't know.

MIRGI

Why?

PIKE

I told you why! I was young, scared. I didn't know!

MIRGI

Why? Why were you there?

PIKE

What?

MIRGI

Why were you in that war?

PIKE

I don't know, I just..

The Mirgi floats closer, touches its head to Pike's. Pike tries to pull his head back in revulsion, but can't do it quickly enough.

The Mirgi touches him carefully.
MIRGI

Show us why.

MONTAGE

Pike as a boy, watching the war on holo-vee. He sees the Valerans portrayed as bloodthirsty, evil.

Pike with his father in uniform. His father is a career army officer.

FATHER

We must cleanse the universe of this evil.

His father rests a hand on Pike's shoulder.

FATHER

Humans are the chosen race. It is our duty to rule the others.

PIKE

Watches the war on holo-vee. Casualties mount. He hears quiet sobbing behind him, turns to see his mother holding a holo-gram unit.

Pike takes the unit from her hand and plays it. A little image of his father appears, explosions all around him.

FATHER

I love you both. I die fighting for humanity.

Then the message fizzles out. Pike looks over at the holo-vee, a grimly determined young boy.

PIKE

I'm gonna kill them all!

His mother looks up, concerned.

PIKE AND CAPTAIN MAKIN

Are on the ship, Makin training Pike on how to use the weapons.

MAKIN

You have a blood thirst in you, son.

PIKE

I hate them. They killed my father.

Some crew members come by -- other races: a teddy bear-like Fomalhautian, a blue-furred Sirian. Pike watches them go.
PIKE
Why are they here?

MAKIN
They're part of the crew!

PIKE
They don't deserve to be treated
like humans. One day we'll have to
fight them.. for humanity.

MAKIN
You have some odd ideas, son.

PIKE
Humans are the chosen race.

An explosion rocks the ship.

MAKIN
We'll talk about this later. Get to
the bridge. We're under attack.

PIKE'S BROWN EYES

Are on the bridge, looking out at the globe that approaches
them in the midst of battle.

A SNAKE FACE

Floats before him, a Mirgi, trying to communicate
telepathically.

MIRGI
Peace! We are for peace!

PIKE
The only peace will come when all
you aliens are dead!

He thinks a thought and the weapons fire, destroying the
sphere.

THE BROWN EYES

Are happy with the explosion, reflected in their depths.

PIKE

Floats now in front of the Mirgi race, realizing what really
happened during that battle.

PIKE
A thought. I killed with a thought.
MIRGI
You wanted to kill us in your mind, so you did.

PIKE
I hated you.

MIRGI
You did not know us. You hated something you'd created in your mind.

Pike's older brown eyes fill with tears.

PIKE
I was so wrong. I am so sorry.

He cries like a child.

MIRGI
Now you know, Pike. Now we forgive you.

He looks up at them, surprised.

PIKE
Forgive...

And the Mirgi touches its face to his head again.

PIKE'S FACE
Shrinks, down, down, down from the cosmos back to one lone planet.

PIKE
Looks up, sees Lucifer standing over him. Lucifer removes his hand from Pike's forehead.

PIKE
I did do it. I meant to do it. I murdered them all.

Lucifer nods.

LUCIFER
The first step in evolution is recognizing your own evils.

PIKE
I deserve to be here. I mean, back there.

He gestures back down the tunnel to the prison.
LUCIFER
Your choice. Let's see what she
wants to do.

He touches Joy on the forehead, who has still been kneeling
in her trance.

Her eyes snap open, then a tear trickles down her cheek.

JOY
He forgave me.

She looks at Pike and smiles.

JOY
But he misses his family. Did you..?

He nods. She stands and comes to him, takes his hand.

JOY
What happened?

PIKE
I found out who I was. What I'd
done. They forgave me, too.

JOY
What do you want to do now?

PIKE
What can we do? Go back to Inferno,
pay for our sins.

LUCIFER
That's one option. I can offer you
more.

PIKE
More?

Lucifer gestures at the rolling green hills around them.

LUCIFER
This is really Algol One. We keep
the reality hidden or we'd have no
world. But you can stay as our
guests.

JOY
It's paradise.

LUCIFER
Exactly. You've already paid for
your sins. Now you can begin to
Pike and Joy look at each other, considering it. Then Pike's eyes harden.

PIKE
You said options. What else?

LUCIFER
You can go back to prison. Or you can leave.

PIKE
Leave the planet?

LUCIFER
We will provide you with transportation. You can go wherever you wish.

JOY
Freedom..

PIKE
To be hunted. They'd have me back here so fast..

LUCIFER
Then you can stay here, in this paradise. But perhaps they won't send you back. Not if you tell them.

PIKE
Tell them.. that I did it?

LUCIFER
And what that means. To them, to humans. It may teach some humans something. About living with other species.

JOY
We could teach..

LUCIFER
Yes. Spread the word. It's a good word.

PIKE
They may kill us.

LUCIFER
And if they do..

JOY
We must forgive them.
Pike looks at her, amazed.

PIKE
You want to go out there?

She nods. He turns, staring away at something only he can see.

PIKE
It won't be easy.

JOY
I'll be there to help you.

He turns back to her.

PIKE
(to Lucifer)
We'll go.

LUCIFER
You'll find a ship right over that hill. It's cloaked from any detection. Good luck.

Pike and Joy start to walk over the hill. Pike thinks of something, turns back to Lucifer.

PIKE
Why do you..?

But Lucifer is gone. They move on.

OVER THE HILL

A small ship sits awaiting them. As they approach it, the door hisses open. A familiar head pokes out: Riley!

RILEY
Ready to hit the trail, kids? Good to have you back with the living.

PIKE
Good to be back.

He helps Joy on board, gives one last look to Eden and gets on the ship himself.

It takes off into the sky.

FADE OUT:

THE END