

Stellanova

by

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FADE IN

EXT. SKY OVER CONGO RAINFOREST - DAY

Above the rainforest, a small plane swoops and dives and corkscrews. LAUGHTER and SHOUTING are heard from within.

INT. CHUCK'S SMALL PLANE - SAME

CHUCK NOVALIS watches his 10-year-old son, JACK, perform these stunts. Chuck is 40, lean and mean, with wild dark hair. Jack is thin, fair, with dark hair and big brown eyes.

CHUCK  
Easy, easy, okay, go!

Jack yanks back the throttle and stomps the right rudder. The plane gracefully twirls upward.

EXT. CONGO RAINFOREST - SAME

Through binoculars, a Congolese MILITANT watches the Novalis' plane. He runs through the jungle, stalking the plane.

INT. CHUCK'S SMALL PLANE - SAME

Suddenly the engine SPUTTERS out and stalls.

JACK  
What do I do?

CHUCK  
You know what to do.

JACK  
Dad!

The plane goes into a free-fall.

CHUCK  
Uh oh.

JACK  
What? Tell me!

Chuck closes his eyes and pretends to pray. The plane falls faster as Jack, panicked, flips switches. Finally the propellers DIG in and scoop them into a sturdy climb.

EXT. CONGO RAINFOREST - SAME

The militant, now joined by three other armed men, continues to follow the plane's progress.

INT. CHUCK'S SMALL PLANE - SAME

Ahead, the forest is being slashed and burned on a massive scale. Slender smoke plumes merge into a hazy overcast.

JACK

Dad. Look.

Down below, a herd of antelope retreat from the fires.

JACK (CONT'D)

Where are they going?

CHUCK

Nowhere to go.

JACK

Go extinct.

CHUCK

Ha! You sound like your mother...used to sound.

He hastens to cover his err.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Don't worry about planet Earth, kiddo. She'll take care of herself. Freeze up, flood over. She's done it before.

They spot their destination ahead: a warehouse complex.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Give 'em a barrel roll.

Jack suppresses his guilt and flips the plane over.

EXT. SKAMANIA WAREHOUSE - SAME

Skamania Warehouse houses timber and metals extracted from the jungle.

HAKHEEM IBRAHIM DANJUMA, a wiry 11-year-old Congolese, perches in a tree, strumming a small beaten-up guitar. He looks expectantly at the horizon. When he sees Chuck's plane, he scurries down and runs toward the dirt runway.

INT. SKAMANIA RUNWAY TOWER

Through binoculars, BOSSMAN DANJUMA, Hakeem's uncle, watches Chuck's plane land. He is a large, jolly man of 50.

EXT. SKAMANIA WAREHOUSE, RUNWAY - SAME

Bossman walks outside to greet the visitors. Hakeem comes sprinting to join them. Bossman gives them both a hug.

There is a nasty haze of soot from the jungle fires.

CHUCK

Gah!

BOSSMAN

Come! There is much to see!

Jack and Hakeem take up like old friends, trailing the men toward the warehouse.

HAKEEM

(miming Jack's flying)  
Where you learn that trick?

JACK

Made it up.

EXT. CONGO RAINFOREST - SAME

The militants continue surveying the Novalis/Danjuma meeting.

INT. SKAMANIA WAREHOUSE - LATER

The boys sit at a table eating sandwiches while the men survey custom-built spacecraft components.

CHUCK

Not bad, Bossman.

The men enter a conduit frame full of gears and levers. The walls are covered with schematics and photographs of an enormous SPACESHIP.

As Bossman explains, he points to photographs of the ship.

BOSSMAN

White titanium. Strongest in the world. To bridge your old gravity wheel with the new.

BACK TO LUNCH TABLE

Jack picks up a jumbled Rubik's Cube.

HAKEEM

Don't even try. It's impossible.

JACK

Play me a song.

As Jack plays the Cube, Hakeem plays a song on his guitar.

BACK TO BOOTH

Chuck admires the quality and precision of the components.

CHUCK

You're a genius, Bossman.

BOSSMAN

Oh, ho ho! It was your father's blueprints that pieced it together.

Bossman points to technical sketches tacked to the wall.

BOSSMAN (CONT'D)

But it appears there is a second architect's hand involved. Here, and here.

Chuck squints.

CHUCK

That's Jack.

BOSSMAN

No!

CHUCK

I'm tellin' ya. The kid's something else.

They look over at the boys. By Hakeem's song's finish, Jack completes the cube. He PLUNKS it down and CLAPS for Hakeem.

INT. JUNGLE STREAM - DUSK

SHOT - Underwater, the placid floor of a jungle stream. Suddenly a boy's bare foot steps down, plunging into the sandy bed, and raising an all-obscuring cloud of silt. The foot lifts out; the cloud lingers but is soon swept away.

EXT. CONGO RAINFOREST - SAME

Jack and Hakeem tramp through the jungle, wielding sticks, full of boyish wonder. They pause to sip a canteen.

HAKEEM

You gonna need a wife, right?  
Populate your new planet.

JACK

Yeah, someday.

HAKEEM

Who your wife gonna be?

JACK

Pff. I dunno. That's a ways off.

HAKEEM

You got somebody in mind, c'mon.

Jack whips out his cell phone and shows Hakeem a photo of a pretty young girl.

HAKEEM (CONT'D)

Oh no! Who she?

JACK

The Duchess of Monaco.

HAKEEM

Pretty sexy! Mo-na-co. That's a  
country?

JACK

Sort of. More like a tax haven.

HAKEEM

Huh?

Jack, with a stick, sketches Europe in the soil.

JACK

For rich people. Anyway, here's  
Spain...France...Italy...  
And this is Monaco.

HAKEEM

It's tiny. Let's invade it.

JACK

No resources, no arable land.  
What's the point?

HAKEEM

Gold!

Hakeem rakes an east/west line through the sketch.

HAKEEM (CONT'D)

We'll blow them up. You rule the north. I rule the south. The Duchess will be your queen.

EXT. RAINFOREST - LATER

The boys reach a hilltop overlooking a deforestation outfit in full-swing. The trees and foliage are ablaze while dirty tractor rigs clear the bramble. Lining the walls of a gaping wound in the earth is a mother lode of titanium.

HAKEEM

That is your titanium.

Jack grimaces, stricken with guilt.

HAKEEM (CONT'D)

Heavy metal, heavy price.

Suddenly the underbrush SNAPS. The boys turn to see a militia squad ambushing them. The militiamen seize the boys, pulling thick burlap sacks over their heads.

All around them, the jungle fires CRACKLE.

EXT. DEEP SPACE, INTERACTING GALAXIES

Like a frisbee passing through a hoop, the Milky Way slowly passes through the Other Galaxy.

EXT. DEEP SPACE, THE WALL

The "Wall" is the singular point where the two galaxies touch each other. It CRACKLES and ZAPS with colorful energy.

A procession of white sparkling asteroids passes through the Wall, into the Milky Way.

EXT. ECO SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Orbiting Earth, Eco spaceship is under construction. It is the ship from Bossman's blueprints and photographs.

INT. ECO, LABORATORY - NIGHT

Through a large telescope, MELQUIADES NOVALIS observes the sparkling asteroids. Candles light his sprawling desktop.

MELQUIADES

Eureka.

Melquiades is the traditional mad-scientist: 70 years old with wild salt & pepper hair, twinkling eyes.

Suddenly his lab coat sleeve catches fire from a candle.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Aaahh!

He beats wildly at the flame. MAYTAG, an engineer, hurries in to help extinguish the fire.

MAYTAG

Novalis! Have you gone mad?  
There. You're safe. Now come.  
Hurry. There is horrible news.

MELQUIADES

What is it?

MAYTAG

The boy.

INT. ECO, LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Melquiades stares at the TV in horror.

ON TV - NEWS COVERAGE, CONGO KIDNAPPING

REPORTER (V.O.)

In the Congo, militants have  
kidnapped the ten-year-old grandson  
of renowned astrophysicist  
Melquiades Novalis.

STILL PHOTO - Melquiades posing at a telescope.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Novalis is of course the discoverer  
of the distant Earth-like planet,  
Stellanova, and the architect of  
the Eco spacecraft -

CLIP - "Eco" is a modern marvel, combining biomicry, fractal geometry and mechanics to be a 'living ship.'



REPORTER (V.O.)  
 - currently being built in Earth's  
 orbit, to carry mankind to  
 Stellanova.

BACK TO MELQUIADES ON ECO SPACESHIP

MELQUIADES  
 Get what's his name on the phone.

MAYTAG  
 Who?

MELQUIADES  
 The, the, the... fat, rich, oil --

MAYTAG  
 Burnside?

MELQUIADES  
 Yes! Hurry up. No time to lose.  
 No time to lose.

BACK TO TV COVERAGE

INSERT - Photo of Jack.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
 The boy, Jack Novalis, was born on  
 Eco, making him the first human  
 born in space. Jack was  
 accompanying his father, Eco  
 engineer Chuck Novalis, to procure  
 titanium components for the ship.

CLIP - Congolese mineral mines guarded by militias.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
 In the Congo, titanium comes cheap,  
 and African space launch  
 regulations are lax. But brutal  
 rebel armies fight for control of  
 the rainforest's rich resources.

CLIP - EVERETT DAVIS BURNSIDE, a rotund and powerful man of  
 55, with a Savannah drawl. He stands in a refinery wearing a  
 hard hat and suspenders.

REPORTER  
 Burnside Power chairman, Everett  
 Davis Burnside, operates several  
 facilities in the Congo and Niger  
 (MORE)

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Delta. He received a call from Melquiades Novalis himself, for help in brokering a ransom.

BURNSIDE

Heavens yes, I'll help him out. You know how much of my rocket fuel ol' Mel-kwod-ees has bought over the years?

CLIP - A well-head blows and oil gushes all over, followed by gunfire exchange between rival militias.

CLIP - Burnside walks and talks, leading us through the facility to his office, where he spins the combination wheel on a big safe.

BURNSIDE (V.O.)

See, these insurgents think I'm down here to exploit them so they run around sabotaging my well-heads, pipelines, and loading platforms. Then their rival tribe comes to me, says, we'll protect your site, for a price. It's a racket, but when in Rome... I just happen to have done business with the troublemaker who kidnapped the boy. Weird little feller, but I'll talk some sense into him.

He displays a bundle of cash.

INSERT - Photo of OMAT BOPBOPDA ZISTRO, a Ugandan warlord. He is androgynous, tattooed, a bone through his nose.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Omat Bopbopda Zistro. Not your typical warlord, Zistro is revered as a spiritual leader, some say shaman, some say witch doctor.

INT. CONGOLESE REBEL COMPOUND - EVENING

JACK'S P.O.V. - the burlap sack is pulled from his head. Zistro is there, only inches away, swinging a smoking censer. A cloud of smoke hovers around them. Jack squints.

ZISTRO

Breathe. Breathe this air. Dookta vu nanaba. Bookta jutu naba vu.

BACK TO SCENE - Jack relaxes. He begins to hallucinate.

ZISTRO (CONT'D)  
Do you know where life began?

JACK  
No.

Zistro scoops up dirt from the ground and spits in it.

ZISTRO  
Here.

He swirls his finger in the dirt and saliva, then streaks mud on Jack's cheeks, like war paint.

ZISTRO (CONT'D)  
In Africa. Nakutakia mema kwa siku  
yako ya kuzaliwa!

Tears well up in Jack's eyes.

ZISTRO (CONT'D)  
Yet you come here to kill this  
land, to steal its life so you can  
reach the next planet. Will you  
kill it, too?

Jack is silent. Zistro unsheathes a hunting knife.

JACK  
No!

ZISTRO  
Shh.

Zistro slices Jack's arm, not deep, but enough so that blood drips down into the dirt, which Zistro again swirls.

ZISTRO (CONT'D)  
Now you are a brother of the  
jungle. Your blood binds you.

Zistro signals a militiaman to come over.

ZISTRO (CONT'D)  
(to Jack)  
Go. Explore your new world. But  
do not forget your brother.

The militiaman takes Jack's hand.

JACK  
Hakeem?

ZISTRO

Nobody bought his freedom. He is  
safer with me. You will see.

EXT. SKAMANIA WAREHOUSE - LATER

Chuck and Bossman stand together. Jack steps out of the trees and shakily walks toward them. The men run to meet him; Chuck scoops his son into his arms.

BOSSMAN

Where is Hakeem? Where is Hakeem?!

BLACK

INT. ECO, JACK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jack sleeps, a bandage on his arm. Chuck gazes at him from the doorway for a moment, then goes out.

INT. ECO, OBSERVATORY - LATER

Chuck and Melquiades examine a space-time exploit route from Earth to the Wall, and back to Earth. Hand-sketches show a small spacecraft pulling a gigantic asteroid.

CHUCK

I don't get it, Pop. Thirteen  
years out, but only one back.

MELQUIADES

Look at the curve!

CHUCK

Geez. What?

MELQUIADES

What? Why on earth did you take  
him into the jungle?

CHUCK

I wanted to spend some time with  
him. I won't see him again  
for...how long?

He refers back to the space-time route.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Fourteen years!

MELQUIADES

You were supposed to leave him with his aunt and uncle.

CHUCK

I didn't want him hanging around his cousin Richie. He's bad news.

MELQUIADES

Congo militias are bad news. You already lost his mother. Now you nearly lost your son. My grandson.

Chuck withers. Melquiades relents, and with difficulty lays a hand on his son's shoulder.

INT. MOJAVE SPACEPORT - DAY

NEWS REPORTER

Chuck Novalis and his handpicked crew are blasting off today to chase down a gigantic asteroid -

INSERT - Gigantic, white, sparkling asteroid.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)

- dubbed "Astro" by astronomers. The asteroid is the only known object to have passed through the impenetrable Wall that blocks our path to the distant Earth-like planet, Stellanova. Let's take a look at the ship they've designed for the mission.

CLIP - The "Old School" ship looks like a hammerhead shark: graceful and vicious. Chuck gives a tour.

CHUCK

It's not just any asteroid. It's "Astro." It's huge. Heavy. Indestructible. Here's our ship. Calling it the "Old School." We've got ten harpoons to stick that sucker, half mile of chain to tow it. Steel paddle in case we've got to whack anything out of the way, jackhammer if we get stuck.

CLIP - The Old School launches on a SpaceX rocket.

## NEWS REPORTER

The Old School is equipped with nuclear pulse propulsion, which theoretically can achieve near-light speed travel, in effect, slowing the passage of time for the crew. For us on Earth, fourteen years will pass before the ship returns, but for the crew, it will only be two years.

## CHUCK

Fountain of youth, here I come.

INT. ECO, HANGAR - DAY

Jack says goodbye to his father.

## JACK

If it's only two years, why can't I just come with you?

## CHUCK

Because, bub. When I get back, you got to be ready to fly *this* thing (gesturing Eco) all the way to Stellanova. What I'm doing, that's monkey business. You're the man. So you make sure Grandpa teaches you what he knows, before he forgets.

EXT. SPACE - DAY

The Old School shoots off into space.

INT. ECO - SAME

Jack watches tearfully as his father departs.

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - SAME

It is night. Hakeem lies in Zistro's camp, near a small CRACKLING fire, gazing up into the starry sky. Around him are other abductees, some even younger than him.

INT. ECO, KITCHEN - WEEKS LATER

Jack works math problems as Melquiades prepares tea.

INSERT - Handwritten equations of elliptical orbits.

MELQUIADES  
(peering over shoulder)  
Mmm hmm. Very good.

JACK  
Why can't I just use the universal  
variable formation?

MELQUIADES  
We must walk before we run.

Melquiades' watch BEEPS. He pulls a pill bottle from his pocket, takes out a capsule and sprinkles it into his tea. Jack watches curiously.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)  
Magic dust.

JACK  
What is that stuff anyway?

MELQUIADES  
It helps me remember things.

JACK  
I know *that*. But what's the active  
ingredient?

MELQUIADES  
The good stuff? I...don't know.

JACK  
You just take it and don't even  
know how it works?

MELQUIADES  
I suppose so.

JACK  
What if it's just a sugar pill?

MELQUIADES  
Then *belief* is the active  
ingredient.

INT. ECO, LABORATORY - DAY

The lab is a mix between greenhouse and nuclear reactor. There are dozens of types of plants, liquid vials, and flasks with swirling gases of mysterious hues.

Melquiades and Jack work in mentor/apprentice fashion.

JACK  
Are there jungles on Stellanova?

MELQUIADES  
Oh, yes. Dense and lush.

JACK  
(nodding down at Earth)  
All the jungles down there are  
burning up.

MELQUIADES  
That's why it is so important to  
find new planets.

JACK  
So we can crap on the old one?

MELQUIADES  
Pff.

JACK  
This ship? We had to chop down  
trees and blow up mountains --

MELQUIADES  
That's the price of progress.

JACK  
Heavy metal, heavy price?

MELQUIADES  
Precisely.

Jack frowns.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)  
Come.

Jack follows Melquiades deeper into the wondrous lab. He gazes around in wonder as the old man rifles through drawers.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)  
Jrndrnkrmnrdrnj! Ho ho!

With a flourish he whips off a decorative cloth draping a glass ecosphere.

INSERT - Ecosphere: the size of a softball, containing a miniature jungle, a sandy beach and lagoon, sky and clouds.



MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

When you can't take the circus home, you take home a souvenir.

JACK

Wow. Did you make this?

MELQUIADES

Your mother made this. Back when you were in her tummy. It's a souvenir. The best stuff on Earth, she called it. So we remember where we came from...

JACK

What's this stuff?

MELQUIADES

That is coral from an ancient reef that broke apart and died, well before you were born.

JACK

What killed it?

MELQUIADES

Pollution. Overfishing.

JACK

Is this sea water?

MELQUIADES

No, dewdrops collected from a special little tree that grows in the jungle. Believed to have healing properties --

JACK

Potenco trees.

MELQUIADES

So you know! The point, my boy, is that planet Earth is infected with destruction, like a disease for which there is no cure. And when something dies, the best we can do is honor it and remember it for what it was. Hence, this souvenir. The very best of Earth!

He closes Jack's hand around it.

## MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Cherish it. Let it inform your decisions on Stellanova, for its fate will soon be in your hands.

## INT. ECO, LABORATORY - NIGHT

Jack, alone, waves a spectral scanner over various objects; their molecular models appear on a large computer monitor.

Melquiades' ecosphere hovers nearby. Jack takes it and scans its contents, one by one, marvelling their atomic makeup.

He peels back his bandage and scans his healing wound.

In Jack's eyes, an epiphany occurs.

## EXT. OUTER SPACE - 13 YEARS LATER

The Old School courses the far reaches of the Milky Way.

## INT. OLD SCHOOL - SAME

Chuck wakes up. His beard is long, but he has barely aged.

Groggy, he slips into a pair of coveralls and floats along the circuit boards, turning dials and flipping switches. Throughout the ship, lights and other systems spring to life.

He floats past his crew's cradles and grouchily CLANGS his knuckles on the metal panels to stir them.

## INT. OLD SCHOOL - LATER

Chuck, with a steamy cup of coffee, settles into the Comlink and boots up the system. He loads communications sent from Earth and Eco.

(1 year has passed on Old School; 13 have passed on Earth.)

## ON COMLINK - VIDEO

During Chuck's absence, Maytag has beamed out home videos to document Jack's childhood and the evolution of Eco.

Chuck sees Jack growing up, shadowing Melquiades, becoming a handsome young man, performing experiments of his own.

MAYTAG (V.O.)

Been following his grandpa  
everywhere, learning everything,  
like a sponge for knowledge:  
mechanics, thermodynamics, particle  
physics. He understands it all.

VIDEO - Jack, 12-years-old, saddling into a small ship,  
preparing to take off from the space dock.

MAYTAG (V.O.)

Boy wonder Jack Novalis unveiling  
his own custom-built spaceship.

Chuck advances.

CLIP - FRANCESCA GENOESE, the DUCHESS OF MONACO, is a  
gorgeous, curvy young woman of 20 with silky black hair,  
glowing olive skin, with a sexy French accent.

NARRATOR

He claims it was love at first  
sight. You say love came later.  
When did you know it was love?

DUCHESS

I'd have to say when he wrote my  
name in the heavens with moon dust.

NEWS CLIP - Night time: A news reporter delivers a stand-up  
from a field. In the sky Jack has written, with silvery star  
dust on the black canvas of space, the word "FRANCESCA."

NEWS REPORTER

Sixteen-year-old space explorer  
Jack Novalis had a Valentine's Day  
message for one young lady tonight,  
certainly meant for Francesca  
Genoese, the Duchess of Monaco.

Chuck grins widely and tracks forward.

VIDEO - Melquiades winning the Nobel Prize in physics.  
SUPER: "STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN. NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY"

Melquiades addresses a distinguished audience. He wears a  
distinct tuxedo with a spritzing flower on the lapel. He  
rambles and digresses, exhibiting tell-tale signs of  
dementia. Cutaways to the audience reveal their discomfort.

MELQUIADES

... to spread the miracle of life  
into the cosmos! And take root in  
new, untouched soil. We are not  
(MORE)

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)  
baboons, but bumblebees. We dip  
our fingers in this planet's  
pollen, to buzz off to the next  
fertile patch of earth, to plant  
our seed. We are tools forged by  
the iron will of nature, tools with  
wings and rocket fuel. Titanium  
fruit flies. We believed we were  
stewards of the Earth, masters of  
field and beast. We are drones!  
Slaves to the evolutionary urge of  
protozoa, to challenge the  
intergalactic hymen with our cock-  
shaped rockets and ejaculate our  
digital DNA. An evolutionary  
orgasm!

The audience is aghast.

CHUCK  
(saddened)  
Ah, Pop.

CLIP - Jack exiting a court building.

REPORTER  
Jack Novalis spent his 21st  
birthday fighting off a lawsuit  
filed by Eco investors to remove  
Melquiades from the spaceship,  
fearing his declining mental state  
endangers their investment.

Jack pauses for reporters who bark questions.

JACK  
I talked them out of it.

CLIP - Melquiades' funeral. It is well-attended.

NARRATOR  
A long chapter in the history of  
space exploration has ended with  
the death of Melquiades Novalis.  
His parting words expressed his  
confidence in his grandson Jack's  
voyage to Stellanova, and his son  
Chuck's safe return from the  
galaxy's edge.

Chuck's eyes are teary.

BACK TO SCENE

Behind Chuck, his crew members have stirred. JEROME and WALLY come huddle around the Comlink.

JEROME  
Watching re-runs? Anything new?

CHUCK  
Yeah, more equipment upgrades.

JEROME  
They're the ones getting older, but we're the ones going obsolete.

ON MONITOR - A new transmission from Jack.

JEROME (CONT'D)  
Who's that? That Jack?

Chuck gazes proudly at his handsome son, now 19.

WALLY  
Looks more like you every year.

The loading completes and the video plays.

JACK (ON MONITOR)  
Hey, Dad. Jerome. Wally. By the time you get this, you should be pretty close. We've had some breakthroughs on spectral imaging sensors and I've attached a software patch so you can update your scanner. It's very important you update before you scan the asteroid. Just plug your wand into the Comlink and it will download.

Chuck plugs in the spectral scanner and the update begins.

EXT. SPACE

The Old School cruises through an asteroid belt.

INT. OLD SCHOOL - SAME

The crew stare out, spotting a WHITE GLINT in the jumble of craggy, lackluster asteroids. Moving closer, it becomes an enormous, sparkling snow-white asteroid.

JEROME  
Thar she blows.

WALLY  
Astro.

CHUCK  
Let's get a reading.

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - LATER

The ship floats alongside the immense Astro.

Chuck spacewalks, tethered to the ship. Taking out a spade, he scrapes Astro's surface, loosing its sparkling grains.

He scoops out a fistful of glittery white dust, sifting it through his fingers into a sample pouch.

INT. OLD SCHOOL - LATER

Wally scans the asteroid sample with the spectral radiation scanner. Its imaging appears on the computer monitor.

Its molecular design looks eerily similar to Jack's childhood tamperings with the ecosphere scans.

Chuck SENDS the data without a hint of suspicion.

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - SAME

The ship's transceiver beams a light ray through space.

The light beam rushes through space, passing familiar features of the Milky Way: the Gould Belt, Local Bubble, Local Fluff, Orion's Arm, and finally our Solar System.

INT. ECO, JACK'S QUARTERS - DAY

The room is cluttered with disassembled machinery and tools. Everything not strapped down floats in the air. Two goldfish swim in a sphere of water.

A stack of tattered encyclopedias towers in the corner. A Greek language audio lesson PLAYS.

GREEK VOICE (O.S.)  
Keró éhume na ta púme!

JACK (O.S.)  
Keró éhume na ta púme!

Jack, 22, sits at an easel, painting. He is a mix between Melquiades and Chuck: a dashing young astrophysicist.

TRANSLATION VOICE (O.S.)  
Long time no see!

GREEK VOICE (O.S.)  
I kiría tha plirósi giá óla.

JACK  
I kiría tha plirósi giá óla.

TRANSLATION VOICE (O.S.)  
This lady will pay for everything.

The ship intercom BINGS on.

MAYTAG (ON INTERCOM)  
Hey, Jack?

JACK  
Hey, Maytag?

MAYTAG (ON INTERCOM)  
New signal from the Old School.

INT. ECO, BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and the crew of engineers gather around the largest Comlink monitor. Chuck's message is garbled.

MAYTAG  
It's got some analog flak or --

JACK  
Run it through the old system.

The tech punches buttons rapidly. Success. Chuck appears.

CHUCK  
Greetings, old farts. I got the goods. Take a look.

A 3-D model of an atom appears.

The men look to Jack for confirmation. He takes over the Comlink and rotates the image to view multiple angles.

JACK  
I think we can work with that.

The crew all CHEER.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

"Global Spin" is like CNN's 'The Situation Room,' but even more tabloid and sensationalistic.

JOANNA HANSEN hosts. She is 50, busty, abs and buns of steel, glamorous.

JOANNA

Thirteen years ago to the day, the planet hunters up on Eco sent a manned mission into deep space to find a way to reach Stellanova. Well, they may have found it. Today, Jack Novalis released a statement from the Eco spaceship.

INTERCUT - BROADCAST AND AUDIENCES WORLDWIDE

People all over the world watch the broadcast on television:

- 1) a suburban family
- 2) a pack of barflies in a tavern
- 3) travellers at an airport gathered around a terminal TV
- 4) two skaters at a bus stop share an iPhone screen
- 5) a grade school classroom
- 6) hundreds pause to watch the 'One Times Square' wall screen

Jack appears in a single-camera setup on Eco.

JACK

We've known for some time the Milky Way is passing through a larger galaxy, the "Other Galaxy," where Stellanova resides.

CG - Telescopic view of the galactic Wall.

JACK (CONT'D)

But our path to Stellanova is blocked by this radiation "Wall" that burns up anything it touches... except for this:

CG - the sparkling asteroid.

JACK (CONT'D)

"Astro," passed through, from The Other Galaxy right into ours. It  
(MORE)



JACK (CONT'D)  
contains an exotic element that  
absorbs the radiation.

CG - a model of the exotic atom with Periodic Table specs.

JACK (CONT'D)  
We have secured Astro and, having  
analyzed its makeup, devised a  
plan. To reach Stellanova, we must  
hollow out the asteroid like a  
shell -

CG - Eco pulls into a hollowed Astro, and Astro penetrates  
the Wall.

JACK (CONT'D)  
- and pull a spacecraft inside.  
Then, when we pass through the  
Wall, it will shield us from the  
radiation.

Pulling this off will require the  
cooperation of private industry and  
government agencies. And just like  
in any conquest in history, there  
are many dangers and the potential  
to make great mistakes.

You see, there might be oil on  
Stellanova. There might be  
diamonds and gold. And there will  
certainly be indigenous beings.  
And if we skim through our history  
books or today's headlines, we see  
the cause of all bloodshed. First  
it was gold. Then it was oil. It  
was always killing-off or enslaving  
the native people.

I don't want to see history repeat  
itself on Stellanova. Do you?

Therefore, if we're going to  
colonize this immaculate new  
planet, we're going to need a  
constitution and a governing  
system. If Eco is to be our  
vessel, and Astro is to be our  
shell, I have a simple condition:  
the colonists and governing body  
are elected democratically by every  
citizen of the world. If we can  
come up with a fair, democratic,  
peaceful colonization system, we

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
 here on Eco are willing to expand  
 the ship to accommodate two  
 delegates from every country of the  
 world.

He holds up a document.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 In these pages is my simple  
 proposal, which I've submitted to  
 the United Nations. If they like  
 it, we can get to work right away.  
 Thank you.

EXT. SDF GROUND CONTROL - MORNING

Space Defense Force (SDF) headquarters is an opulent complex  
 crowned by antennae and satellite dishes, adjoined to the  
 United Nations building.

INT. SDF GROUND CONTROL - SAME

Surveillance monitors line the walls, fed from SDF spy  
 satellites. Dozens of SDF personnel observe and report.

SPACE CHIEF LOUIS LOMAX arrives. Louis (**pronounced Loo-wee**)  
 is a short, squarely built American, 45 years old. He has a  
 childlike manner, full of pomp and zeal.

Louis pauses at the "BEIJING" monitor, where a satellite's  
 powerful optics show two slick men exchanging briefcases.

LOUIS  
 Who are these guys?

SDF OPERATIVE 1  
 Taiwan liberation.

LOUIS  
 Ooh. Keep an eye on them.

He moves on to the "CARACAS" monitor, showing a paunchy,  
 middle-aged politician poolside with a stunning young woman.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
 Oh, there's Isidro. What's he  
 doing in Venezuela? And who's that  
 he's - must be his daughter?

On screen, the subject kisses and fondles the woman.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Wow! No, definitely not his daughter. And definitely not his wife. You've seen her. Yikes. Who the heck --

SDF OPERATIVE 2

His concubine?

LOUIS

Good word. "Concubine." And good work. Nice scandal for him in the next election, the slime ball.

Louis pulls out a wallet photo of his beautiful wife.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

If he had a wife like that, you think he'd cheat on her?

SDF OPERATIVE 2

No, sir.

On one of the "PACIFIC" monitors, a fishing convoy trolls the open sea. Louis studies it.

LOUIS

Russia fishing Chinese waters. Okay, not quite as juicy, but good to know, good to know.

INT. LOUIS'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Louis unpacks his briefcase, settling in for the day.

GLOBAL ADVOCATE GENERAL (GAG) THOMPSON BRYCE slithers into the room with a slight KNOCK on the door. He is a willowy, multiracial man of 55, with a continental accent.

LOUIS

Captain my captain! Have a seat. Cup o' joe?

BRYCE

Why not?

Louis touches the intercom button on his phone.

ELSEWHERE IN THE BUILDING

SDF employees flinch at Louis's blaring voice on the PA.

LOUIS (OVER PA)  
 Can I get two coffees, please!  
 (aside, muffled)  
 Cream and sugar?  
 (loud again)  
 Cream and sugar.

It clicks off with a SQUELCH, but he has a second thought.

LOUIS (OVER PA) (CONT'D)  
 And a couple Danishes. Cherry.

BACK TO OFFICE

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
 What brings the *Global Advocate*  
*General* to my office?

BRYCE  
 A general feeling of trepidation --

LOUIS  
 Ooh, good word.

BRYCE  
 -- over this Novalis Proposition.

LOUIS  
 Why? What's the problem? Everyone  
 loves it. It's unanimous.

BRYCE  
 That's just it. When is anything  
 ever unanimous around here? This  
 young man, Novalis, stands to gain  
 unprecedented influence over the  
 hearts and minds of billions. Does  
 that not strike you as dangerous?

LOUIS  
 Since you put it that way.

A female page arrives with the coffee and danishes.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
 There she is. Wow! Fresh and hot.

She blushes as she hurries out, bowing to the powerful men.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
 (digging in)  
 Okay!

Bryce watches Louis. His cold stare drowns Louis's gusto.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

What?

BRYCE

Idealists like Novalis historically have had polarizing effects, and young Jack could become an asset for us, or an adversary. Should the latter occur, I must know where your loyalties lie.

LOUIS

If he gets out of line around here, boy, I'll...

Louis shakes his fist.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

My loyalties lie like a rug.

Bryce stands, leaving his coffee and pastry untouched.

BRYCE

Good day, Lomax.

He exits. Louis sighs with relief, taking the extra Danish.

LOUIS

(mocking Bryce)  
Unprecedented trepidation.

BLACK, MIX OF SOUNDS

A huge crowd gathering: police radio chatter; media banter; airport runway noises; crowd restlessness.

EXT. JFK RUNWAY - DAY

A Virgin Galactic shuttle door slides open; Jack steps forward in a flight suit, the runway breeze in his hair.

Flashbulbs strobe the shuttle. Off-screen, a crowd ROARS.

Pulling back, a crowd of five thousand has gathered.

JOANNA (V.O.)

After their second week of nonstop deliberations over the Novalis Proposition, UN committees have voted unanimously in favor, and as promised, Jack Novalis has come.

Jack strides across the runway toward the crowd.

JOANNA (V.O.)

The Novalis Proposition has laid bare the real motives behind politicians on the global stage. You're either for democracy or you're against it. Listen what he wants to do here:

Jack moves into a regiment of salutary troops and government officials.

JOANNA (V.O.)

The citizens - not the politicians - but the citizens of every country, from the United States of America to the Federated States of Micronesia, nominate their delegates, or "Novas," he's calling them. These Novas get together and draft up a constitution for the new planet, one they can all agree on.

Dignitaries compete to shake Jack's hand.

EXT. UNITED NATIONS - DAY

The media is out in force. Demonstrators have gathered.

An official car pulls up and Jack steps out to CHEERING.

DEMONSTRATOR 1

You're the man, Novalis!

DEMONSTRATOR 2

Don't give in, Jack! Stay strong.

INT. UNITED NATIONS HALLWAY - LATER

Diplomats trickle in and out of the assembly room, preparing for session. When the front door swings open and Jack enters, many pause to gape at him.

As Jack parts the sea of diplomats, the Duchess of Monaco positions herself at the marble fountain.

DUCHESS

Galactic Jack.

Ultra-aware of their audience, she extends her hand, which Jack gently squeezes as he bows.

JACK  
Your highness.

He leans in to kiss her cheeks, but she stops him.

DUCHESS  
Oh, stop. You're thinner than  
ever, look at you! Did you neglect  
your gravity exercises again?

JACK  
(flexing)  
I have been.

DUCHESS  
And pale.

JACK  
So put some color on my cheeks.

DUCHESS  
Didn't you read the papers? We've  
broken up.

Now BOBBY GREENER steps in and squeezes Jack's shoulder.

Greener, 40, is a rugged yet refined diplomat with shaggy  
hair and facial stubble, younger than the other men.

GREENER  
Here's the man of the hour.

DUCHESS  
And here is the mountain man.

Again she extends her hand.

GREENER  
Ciao, Francesca.

Jack cringes as Greener's stubble scrubs her dainty knuckles.  
Now he faces Jack, gloating over his familiarity with her.

DUCHESS  
(holding her nose)  
Ugh, did you scale the building?

GREENER  
Rode my bike here.  
(to Jack)  
Bobby Greener, North American  
Environmental Advocate.

They shake hands. Greener angles himself between Jack and the Duchess. Egos emerge.

GREENER (CONT'D)

Space, huh? Plenty of unclaimed territory out there.

JACK

Greener. You're the guy who used to lay down in front of tanks and bulldozers.

GREENER

Good memory. That was when I was young and idealistic.

JACK

Well, you've still got the beard.

DUCHESS

You know, Jack, Bobby has championed many worthy causes around here.

GREENER

Call me Greener.

JACK

Really? Like what?

DUCHESS

Let's see... environmental awareness, freedom of speech -

GREENER

Accessible health care -

DUCHESS

Military withdrawal, amnesty.

Jack sees through their little audition, clearly rehearsed.

JACK

Ambitious.

From a stairway a clerk announces:

CLERK

Ladies and gentlemen, the assembly will reconvene in five minutes.

Greener nods out with a pseudo-brotherly wink to Jack.



JACK

You two seem friendly. I think he drooled on your hand there.

DUCHESS

Physical contact is a pillar of diplomacy.

She gives him a playful pinch.

JACK

Ooh, don't stop.

INT. UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY - LATER

Louis proudly takes his seat behind his "SPACE CHIEF" plaque, while Bryce takes the room's most prominent seat, labeled "GLOBAL ADVOCATE GENERAL." He calls the assembly to order.

BRYCE

Ladies and gentlemen, today we have a very special order of business. Mr. Novalis has offered to direct an international expedition to Stellanova, and we have voted to provide a democratic forum in which he may organize his efforts.

CHEERING erupts, Louis Lomax the loudest. Jack takes an instant liking to him. Bryce, a stickler, BANGS his gavel.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Before we proceed, a large question remains as to the nature of this "Astro" you plan to drill. Perhaps you'll answer a few questions from our scientific panel.

The lights lower and a large screen blinks on, displaying Astro's molecular data.

SCIENTIST 1

We've clearly got a new element here. As discoverer, have you chosen a name for it?

JACK

How about... "Lomaxium?"

Louis blushes and the diplomats guffaw.

SCIENTIST 2

Judging by its structure, the *Lomaxium* is obviously highly unstable. What do you anticipate its decay rate to be?

JACK

I figure 83, 84. What did you get?

SCIENTIST 2

83.

SCIENTIST 3

84.

JACK

I see two hot spots, these nodes, with separate activation and fluctuation.

SCIENTIST 2

Well, three if you're counting isomeric transition. You see?

JACK

Good eye.

BRYCE

Forgive us, but our scientific vocabulary ended at hot spots.

JACK

Sorry, these guys are sharp.

Jack has duly charmed the scientists.

BRYCE

In layman's terms, if possible.

Jack defers to Scientist 2.

SCIENTIST 2

Basically we need to find or create three substances, one for each hot spot, with the opposite energy. And before we even touch that asteroid, we need a massive amount of these requisites ready to go. Right?

JACK

Right.

BRYCE  
Requisites, you say?

LOUIS  
Good word.

SCIENTIST 3  
Yes. Enough to saturate it six feet deep.

BRYCE  
Any ideas what they may be?

SCIENTIST 1  
If we put Lomaxium over the wires, government and independent researchers alike can start looking.

BRYCE  
Very well. Priority one: identify the Requisites. Priority two, as per the Novalis Proposition, our Social Cause Committee chair, Miss Francesca Genoese, the Duchess of Monaco, has prepared a presentation to address the challenge of a worldwide voting system. Miss Genoese?

The Duchess rises and strides elegantly to the large backdrop screen, displaying a proposed global communications network. As dignified as possible, the assembly ogles her extreme beauty, and she is quite aware of her charms.

DUCHESS  
A system of satellite internet feeds to every populated region of the world will enable every citizen to cast their vote online for their respective country's Nova.

A chart lists tech companies:

DUCHESS (CONT'D)  
So far, these manufacturers have generously committed at-cost hardware to assemble this many wifi-ready tablets. In effect, we will bring internet access to everyone, and bring the democratic process to every corner of the globe.

The assembly is astonished. Bryce feigns concurrence.

INT./EXT. OLD SCHOOL - DAY

Chuck maneuvers around Astro, lining up the harpoon. But the surrounding space rocks are too numerous.

CHUCK  
We gotta isolate her to get a clean  
shot. Let's test out that  
jackhammer.

Chuck nimbly edges up to the rock nearest Astro, bringing the jagged blade of the jackhammer within inches of it.

CREW, TOGETHER  
Whoa! Hey, Chuck!

CHUCK (O.S.)  
Go ahead, knock her outta the way.

Jerome activates the jackhammer. The blade strikes the rock, repelling the ship, but Chuck holds the ship true.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
Hit it.

Jerome hammers again, needling the rock from the jumble.

INT./EXT. OLD SCHOOL - LATER

The crew have an open shot to harpoon the Asteroid.

CHUCK  
Okay, Wally. Let 'er rip.

Wally fires a harpoon. It strikes the Asteroid and a puff of white dust billows out. The harpoon's cord goes slack.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
Now hold tight, we gotta hook 'er.

Chuck slows the ship until the cord goes taut. When it does, the ship lurches forward with a JOLT.

WALLY  
Geez Louise!

JEROME  
Well done, son.

INT. JACK'S SUITE - NIGHT

Jack has taken up residence in the Four Seasons Hotel. He enters his room, looking exhausted.

He flips on the TV, pops three aspirin and flops onto the bed.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN, "THE SHOW" EXPLAINED

JOANNA

It's simply known as "The Show."  
The whole world is watching, and,  
the whole world is starring.

From the traditional -

CLIP - In Santiago, Chile nominees speak at a podium.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

- to the original -

CLIP - In Libreville, Gabon a talent show-like set up with dancers and musicians.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

- citizens of the world are  
choosing their Novas to establish a  
harmonious, participatory  
civilization on Stellanova.

A CG illustrates the global communications network that has been implemented: satellites, cables, and radio towers connect every city, town, and village in the world.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Like manna from heaven, internet-ready laptop computers are pouring into every city center, town hall, tribal lodge, you name it. These are places and people that never thought they'd have access to the world wide web.

CLIP - In Zimbabwe, a truck load of laptops is unloaded into a social hall. Villagers stand around, excited, happy.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

And they're all navigating to one web site: [www.stellanova.tv](http://www.stellanova.tv)

INSERT - [stellanova.tv](http://www.stellanova.tv) screenshots.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

There, they can nominate and vote  
for who they think will best  
represent not only their country,  
but their way of life on  
Stellanova.

CLIP - A crowd of eager villagers crowd around the computers,  
scrolling through the candidates, making their votes.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack's cell phone rings. It's the Duchess.

DUCHESS

Tell me you're proud of me.

JACK

I am proud of you. I was just  
watching your handiwork on TV.

DUCHESS

You don't sound proud.

JACK

Oh, space lag something fierce.  
When are you going to make me feel  
better?

DUCHESS

I told you, stop that. I'm not  
into flings. It's bad PR.

JACK

So now I was just a fling?

DUCHESS

You tricked me, Jack. For years I  
believed your fantasies about a  
perfect civilization on a perfect  
planet, only to watch you forfeit  
your birthright to some utopian  
illusion. You humbled yourself  
right out of the running to win my  
hand, and I'm only too happy to --

The TV yanks Jack's attention from her lecture.

ON TV - REQUISITE #1 DISCOVERED

REPORTER (ON TV)

The first Requisite for the Astro shell has been identified by scientists in the North Pole.

CLIP - At a meteorology lab in a snowy expanse, a team of scientists triumphantly display their findings.

SUPER: "ARTHUR TEMPLETON, CLIMATOLOGIST - PROJECT FOR IONOSPHERE RESEARCH, NORTH POLE"

ARTHUR TEMPLETON

It's a rare Zenith ion, found in our lower stratosphere. Zenith is more scarce each day as it only exists where no pollution is present. Any toxins or greenhouse gas deplete it entirely.

CLIP - High-altitude balloons sampling the atmosphere.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Unfortunately, there may not be enough Zenith ions in our atmosphere to stabilize the Lomaxium asteroid --

ARTHUR TEMPLETON

If we hope to find enough Zenith to reach Stellanova, I believe drastic air quality measures must be taken to restore the atmosphere.

CLIP - Smokestacks cease their billowing plumes.

REPORTER (V.O.)

World leaders wasted no time responding to the news, with several countries declaring a moratorium on greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile an emergency summit has been called to address the problem. Of course, in the past, these summits have achieved little or nothing, but now that Stellanova is on the line, lawmakers have no excuse not to clamp down on air pollution laws.

EXT. UNITED NATIONS - DAY

Jack walks up the steps, rubbing the back of his neck. Ahead he sees a horde of protesters blocking his path. Most of their signs read something like "NO CLEAN AIR!"

PROTESTOR 1

There he is. There's space boy.

PROTESTOR 2

Hey, fuck you, space boy!

JACK

Fuck me, huh?

PROTESTOR 3

You shut down our plant. Said our emissions are choking your zeons.

JACK

What are you, coal miners?

PROTESTOR 4

Local 151 outta Strickland.

ALL MINERS

Woo!

Two security guards enter the scene to protect Jack.

PROTESTOR 3

You're so worried about the next planet, well what about this one?

JACK

You need jobs? Come with me.

They hesitate.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on! Let's build a spaceship.

INT. UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY - MOMENTS LATER

The assembly hears out lobbyists. Bryce presides.

INDUSTRIALIST

You can't just come along and say 'plug up that smokestack,' or shut down that plant. They're putting people out of work here.



The assembly is abruptly disturbed when Jack and his dozen new friends pour into the room.

BRYCE

What is the meaning of this?

JACK

Phase one of Eco's expansion calls for digging 800 tons of steel from demolished buildings. These guys dig coal out of mountains. It's a perfect match.

BRYCE

There are far too many union policies and labor laws to just --

One of the diplomats speaks up.

DIPLOMAT 1

We'll make a new law. We're the UN for crying out loud.

Other diplomats voice their support.

DIPLOMAT 2

We can employ them under the International Project clause.

Jack leaves them to it. Bryce looks daggers at Jack.

INT. UN, INTERNATIONAL LABORATORIES - DAY

Reporters surround the scientists who discovered Requisite #2. Louis has come to share the praise.

REPORTER

Right on the heels of Requisite #1, UN scientists at International Laboratories have discovered the second Requisite, a delicate sea grass that grows in coral reef.

Louis wraps a stately arm around RITA WINSLOW, the brainy/sexy research team leader. Rita is 25 and would be stunning if she loosed her dark hair from its ponytail and removed her Coke-bottle glasses from her luminous eyes.

LOUIS

You know what? Let's name it after you. Lomaxium is named after me, right? What's your name again?

RITA  
Rita Winslow.

LOUIS  
Rita, Rita. Winslow. Doesn't  
really work. Middle name?

RITA  
Hazel.

LOUIS  
Hazel... Hazel grass? There it is.  
It's called Hazel grass, folks.

The reporters busy themselves.

RITA  
I heard you're flying solo to the  
Burnside party Friday night.

LOUIS  
How'd you know that?

RITA  
Well, when you called her your wife  
this morning, your office phone was  
on speaker *plus* intercom, so the  
whole building heard.

LOUIS  
Ha! She hates it when I put her on  
speaker! Nah, she's not too crazy  
about the Burnside, so...

RITA  
That's too bad. Sounds like a fun  
party. Wish *I* was invited.

LOUIS  
Nah, it's a bunch of bush-wads.

She deciphers his erroneous vocabulary.

RITA  
Oh, bourgeois! Totally. Still, it  
would be kind of cool to meet Jack  
Novalis. He's going, right?

LOUIS  
Ooh, somebody's got a crush.

RITA  
No, I --

LOUIS  
Tell ya what. Why don't you come  
along?

RITA  
Really?

LOUIS  
Yeah, it'll be fun. You got a  
fancy dress?

RITA  
Um, yeah. Your wife won't mind?

LOUIS  
What, you think *she'll* be jealous?

He whips out his wallet photo of his gorgeous wife.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
Not the jealous type.

INT. UN, ATRIUM - DAY

Jack and Greener walk along, Greener pushing his bike.

GREENER  
Go on, take it for a spin.

JACK  
Nah.

The Duchess slinks up and hands a fancy invitation to Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)  
"A *soirée* to celebrate the dawn of  
asteroid mining."

DUCHESS  
Wear a tux. We'll take my car.

GREENER  
Am I invited?

DUCHESS  
To Everett Davis Burnside's  
mansion?

GREENER  
What!

He grabs the invitation and scrutinizes it.

GREENER (CONT'D)  
You gave *him* the drilling contract?

DUCHESS  
Lowest bidder, by far.

GREENER  
He's a cancer on the planet.  
Wouldn't be caught dead.

DUCHESS  
Ciao, boys.

She departs, thrilled to have riled Greener.

GREENER  
Burnside?

JACK  
It's a long story.

Greener gets on his bike.

GREENER  
Listen, pal. I don't mean this in  
a mean way, but you look stressed  
out. Like you're in pain.

JACK  
I sort of slacked off on my gravity  
workouts for the last five years.  
Or more. So I'm not used to --

GREENER  
The weight of the world? Gotcha.  
Hey, why don't you come work out  
with me later on, get your heart  
pumping.

JACK  
I'm not a real gym guy.

GREENER  
No, I got a little set-up in my  
garage. No gawkers. Promise.

INT. SDF, PRESENTATION AUDITORIUM - LATER

The lights are dimmed. On a small stage Louis demonstrates his "Peacemaker" system to the Space Oversight Committee.

Louis is hooked up to a simulator: earphones, LCD goggles, countless instruments and displays.

Jack slips in and takes a seat in the back.

P.O.V. SIMULATOR - From orbital perspective above the Middle East, war rages between several hotbed countries. Long-range missiles fly, warplanes scramble, convoys roll. In the gulf, battleships fire cannons and torpedoes while submarines blockade the strait. In the blue sky, drone planes spiral on the breeze, catching sun-glints on their shiny missile tips.

LOUIS

I can see everything that's happening, and pretty much what's gonna happen next. Then, what I do, is broadcast this information to all parties involved. See, if Syria sees Israel trucking rockets up this canyon, they can lob some mortars right up here, boom, no more road. Israel says, "Oh, Lomax ratted me out. Better not send the rockets. You know what? This is pointless. Anything we do, they're gonna see it coming. Let's call off this whole stupid war, eh?"

He stagily climbs out of the simulator.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

A great Chinese warrior, Sun Zoo, said, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acne of skill."

Sandra Ludford, British ambassador:

SANDRA

Acne! Ah ha ha ha! You mean acme!

LOUIS

Whatever. World war averted.

Vasiliy Vatutin, Russian ambassador:

VATUTIN

Again, Lomax, you've spent millions to see the problem, but no firepower to stop it.

LOUIS

That's the point, caveman.

Toshio Muraki, Japanese ambassador, referring to a yellow English phrase book:

MURAKI

All bark and no bite.

SANDRA

Can't this 'eye in the sky' shoot  
lasers beams or something?

Louis grows frustrated. Jack slips back out, giving Louis a sincere salute.

LOUIS

He knows what I'm talking about.

The committee turn but Jack is gone.

INT. GREENER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Greener blends a shake in the kitchen, which overlooks a patio garden, where Jack mills about the plants.

A small radio announces Requisite #2's discovery.

RADIO VOICE

Hazel grass is most abundant along  
coral reef, which has long been  
considered an endangered --

He clicks it off as he walks out to the patio.

GREENER

Coral reef, man. You know what  
that means? All the garbage we  
dump in the ocean. We're going to  
have to overhaul the whole damn  
environmental code!

EXT. GREENER'S PATIO GARDEN - SAME

Jack admires Greener's "green" living. Two solar panels faintly glow after the day's sunshine.

GREENER

(handing Jack a shake)  
Here ya go. Electrolytes, whey  
protein. Pre-workout blend.

Jack sniffs it and takes a sip.

JACK

Whoa.

GREENER

Huh? What'd I tell you? Come on.

INT. GREENER'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Greener's 'gym' is a bench press and some dumbbells, a punching bag, a rubber mat, all in the corner of the garage.

A covered-up car takes up the other half.

Jack looks at a large photograph tacked to the wall.

INSERT PHOTO - Greener, in his hippie days, leading a group that resembles Greenpeace.

GREENER

We really raised some hell.

JACK

Why'd you give that up?

GREENER

Give up! I have zero carbon footprint. In New York City!

JACK

(eyeing the car)

Zero?

Greener whips off the car cover to reveal a Tesla S.

GREENER

All electric. Everything I own is fair trade, organic, or second-hand. All I gave up was trying to convince people, force people, to live like me. Since I went legit, I've saved a million acres of forest - through law...

(gesturing the old photo)

way more than sabotage ever did.

JACK

Quit reading me your resume.

Greener lays down on the bench press and begins lifting.

GREENER

I know you two had a thing.

JACK

Who?

GREENER  
You and Francesca.

JACK  
Everyone knows that.

GREENER  
Well, she and I... at least *I* --

JACK  
I noticed.

GREENER  
And now you're back, larger than  
life, going to soirées --

He stands up and Jack wearily takes the bench.

GREENER (CONT'D)  
Breathe! You know, I just don't  
want anything to get ugly.

JACK  
Don't worry. She's done with me.

GREENER  
How can I, you know --

JACK  
Break the ice?

GREENER  
Ha. Yeah.

JACK  
Francesca is a blue blood. She  
wants to be queen so she aligns  
herself with kings. When she  
thought I'd be some kind of ruler  
on Stellanova, she played her  
cards. When she found out I'd be  
equal with everyone else, she -

GREENER  
I may not have royal blood, but I'm  
moving up the ranks, you know.

JACK  
There you go again.

GREENER  
I want your approval. So what?



JACK  
You want to know what I really  
think of you?

GREENER  
Yeah.

JACK  
I think if everyone lived like you  
do, the human race would make it.

GREENER  
I plan to run for Global Advocate  
General, you know. Against Bryce.

JACK  
Hmm.

GREENER  
What? You can't picture me as GAG?

Jack contemplates. They take turns on the bench.

JACK  
How do you think that, throughout  
history, the few control have  
controlled the many?

GREENER  
Control of food, water, energy, and  
weapons.

JACK  
*Knowledge.* Knowledge to harness  
energy, knowledge to build weapons.  
Power lies in having the knowledge.  
If you want to take over the UN,  
you need to know something that  
Thompson Bryce doesn't know.

GREENER  
Do you know something he doesn't?

JACK  
Oh, yeah.

GREENER  
Tell me.

JACK  
Help me stabilize that asteroid and  
I'll tell you everything I know.  
(beat)

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
 As for Francesca, I'll tell you  
 right now: shave and a haircut.

INT. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Government scientists make a presentation to Bryce.

PRESENTER 1  
 In conclusion, Lomaxium, with very  
 little refinement, could outperform  
 fossil fuel, with zero emission.

PRESENTER 2  
 UN consolidation of the world's  
 energy supply with a clean,  
 efficient, infinite source? That's  
 the formula for world peace!

BRYCE  
 Interesting. Let's keep this quiet  
 for the time being. Understood?

EXT. GREAT PACIFIC GARBAGE PATCH - DAY

20 barges align the world's largest ocean garbage mass, with  
 cranes scooping clumps of plastic and trash from the water.

On the barges, beneath canopies, scores of men and women work  
 to separate the trash. Seabirds circle the sky above.

JOANNA (V.O.)  
 Referred to as the "eighth  
 continent" or "Great Pacific  
 Garbage Patch" this landmass of  
 garbage contains an estimated 4  
 million tons of floating waste,  
 twice the size of Texas, four times  
 the size of Japan.

TALKING HEAD - Boat worker: An elderly, sun-faded islander  
 points out sorted piles of sea garbage.

MAN ON BOAT  
 Here plastic bags, here plastic  
 bottles, cigarette lighters,  
 Styrofoam - here six-pack rings.

SHOT - Greener works on one of the barges, a hands-on man.  
 He is clean-shaved under a battered sombrero.

JOANNA (V.O.)  
Heading the cleanup, North American  
Environmental Advocate Bobby  
Greener.

TALKING HEAD - Greener.

GREENER  
This garbage is killing marine  
life, choking the coral reef, and  
inhibiting Hazel grass growth.  
Sooner we get this crap out of  
here, the sooner the reef will  
revitalize and we can harvest the  
Hazel grass we need.

SHOT - UNDERWATER: In panoramic beauty, a team of divers  
carefully harvest Hazel grass.

SHOT - Blue skies over dormant smokestacks.

JOANNA (V.O.)  
Meanwhile, skies have never been  
bluer following the new clean air  
act to boost Zenith ion levels.

INT. STELLANOVA CODE COMMITTEE - DAY

Thirty Novas around a table teleconference via video monitors  
with Novas from several other countries.

On one of the screens, ARMANDO DIOGO, a Nova from Mozambique:

ARMANDO  
Hello, everyone. I am Armando  
Diogo from Mozambique.

The other Novas break into applause.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)  
I and Hiro Kawasaki of Japan  
discuss Stellanova's cultural and  
political symbols: flag; national  
anthem; holidays; rituals...

INT. JACK'S SUITE - DAY

Jack listens to his voicemail.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)  
You have nineteen new messages.

MELISSA DUNN (V.O.)  
 This is Melissa Dunn with News at  
 6. I'd like to interview Jack -

Jack squeezes his aching forehead.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)  
 Skipping.

DWIGHT MANNHEIM (V.O.)  
 Jack, this is Dwight Mannheim with  
 OPB. I want to get together and -

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)  
 Skipping.

RICHIE (V.O.)  
 Hey Jack! It's your cousin Richie.  
 Been a while! Look, you probably  
 got goons crawling outta the  
 woodwork, so if you need a place to  
 chill out, come by the club.  
 Nobody gonna hassle ya here.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)  
 Message saved.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - EVENING

Jack walks along. Passersby gawk.

PASSERBY 1 (O.S.)  
 Look, it's Jack Novalis!

PASSERBY 2  
 Hey, Jack. Gimme your autograph.

A small mob forms around him. He is obliged.

When he has a chance, he slips into a street kiosk. He buys  
 a ball cap and a pair of shades.

JACK  
 Three packs of Tylenol.

Back on the busy sidewalk, incognito, nobody recognizes him.  
 He strolls along in peace, popping his pain relief.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY SIDEWALK - SAME

RICHIE (Jack's cousin) strolls along, his fancy shoes CLICKING on the sidewalk. He eats saucy chicken wings from a Styrofoam to-go box, sucking the meat off the last bone.

BEGGAR  
Hey, buddy. Help me out.

Richie closes the box and hands it to the beggar, not missing a step. The beggar opens the box to see the pile of bones.

BEGGAR (CONT'D)  
You sonofabitch!

INT. THE WILDERNESS NIGHTCLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Passing the coat check, Richie pats the hostess's bottom.

RICHIE  
Ttssss!

The place is just opened up. One waitress serves the dozen guests; Chico the bartender slices limes.

Richie goes behind the bar and loads the register with bills.

CHICO  
Hey, boss.

RICHIE  
Rafaelo's wings are better than ours. Spice 'em up or something.

CHICO  
You got it, boss.

Jack already sits at the end of the bar, eyeing Richie.

RICHIE  
Cuz!

Richie ambles down and leans over the bar across from Jack.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
What the fuckya wearin'?

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Jack and Richie sit in a booth eating appetizers.

JACK  
Place is dead.

RICHIE  
It's early! So what's up with the princess?

JACK  
Hmm?

RICHIE  
Lips? Tits? The cocktease!

JACK  
The Duchess.

RICHIE  
Yeah. Seen you two together a lot. You hittin' that again?

JACK  
Just politics.

RICHIE  
(w/ a vulgar hand gesture)  
Oh, what? The old import export?

Jack laughs.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
The hoops she made you jump through. Gave me blue balls just watching... Look at you!

JACK  
What?

RICHIE  
Broken heart if I ever seen one.

Jack changes the subject.

JACK  
Well, you've done good for yourself here, Richie.

RICHIE  
Yeah, I don't know. If they didn't tax ya on every goddam thing. You don't pay 'em a hundred today they take a thousand tomorrow.

JACK  
Adds up, huh?

RICHIE

Well, I got some back taxes. Like a weight on my back. Fuckin' IRS.

Suddenly the color runs from Jack's face. He holds his head in his hand, in pain.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

No, I didn't -

JACK

Shh. I know.

RICHIE

- your big shot friends, I don't know, maybe you could - the secretary of revenue or whatever.

JACK

The secretary of revenue?

RICHIE

Throw me a bone here. I'm family for chrissake.

Jack grabs his head with both hands now.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

What? Whatsa matter?

JACK

My head. It's killing me.

RICHIE

It wasn't the food!

JACK

No, it's...

RICHIE

Hey, hey, come on.

Richie jumps up and helps Jack to his feet.

INT. WILDERNESS, BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Richie leads Jack into his private office and points him toward the bathroom, then rummages through pill bottles.

Jack leans on the sink and stares into the mirror.

RICHIE

You gonna yak, use the shitter.

JACK  
Got an aspirin or what?

RICHIE  
I got somethin' better.

Richie displays an RX bottle and gives it a SHAKE.

TIME LAPSE

Jack reclines on the leather sofa, his hat brim pulled over his eyes. A cocktail glass nearby suggests he washed the pill down with booze.

Richie sits at his club surveillance monitors, his feet kicked up on the table. The place is still dead.

He takes out his frustration on the idle bouncers at the front door. He uses the headset:

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
Sweep the fuckin' sidewalk or something!

Jack stirs.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
How you feelin' now?

JACK  
(euphoric)  
Gimme some more.

RICHIE  
Ha ha ha. That's my cuz.

Jack sits up, dazed. He examines the pill bottle.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
Hang on to those.

Jack pockets the bottle. He becomes jovial.

JACK  
Alright, Rich. I've got an idea.  
Solve both our problems. My blue balls and your lack of customers.

RICHIE  
Lacka - what the fuck --

JACK  
We'll pack this place, line around the block, pay your own taxes.



RICHIE  
What about your balls?

JACK  
If the Duchess doesn't want me,  
maybe you can find a girl who does.

RICHIE  
Shit, millions of girls...

The scope of the idea hits him.

JACK  
Jackpot?

JACK (CONT'D)  
Jackpot! That's genius! See? You  
see what happens when you relax?

Richie scampers around the room, flooded with inspiration.

RICHIE  
Here, just keep relaxing there.  
I'm gonna make some calls. Who  
owes me a fuckin' favor?

Jack reclines on the sofa. His phone RINGS; he answers.

JACK  
Bonsoir, mademoiselle.

RICHIE  
Cocktease.

JACK  
What? One drink. Why? Burnside  
mansion, sure. What time is it?  
Alright, alright. Pick me up?  
Okay...okay...okay...bye.

He stands up and nearly loses his balance.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Drive me uptown, would ya?

RICHIE  
Where ya going?

JACK  
Politics.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

CLIP - Engineers of various nationalities happily cooperate.

Joanna steps into frame to deliver a stand-up.

JOANNA

Just as "The Show" is bringing all  
walks of life together as colonists  
of Stellanova, building the ship  
itself is every bit as unifying.

TALKING HEAD - Two engineers, an Israeli and a Palestinian.

ISRAELI ENGINEER

I used to work the Gaza blockade,  
inspecting building materials he  
might use to build weapons.

PALESTINIAN ENGINEER

Now we work side by side.

INT. LIMOUSINE - EVENING

Jack and the Duchess ride in silence. Jack wears an ill-  
fitting vintage tuxedo, the Duchess a silvery gown and tiara.

He watches her touch up her makeup and push up her cleavage.

DUCHESS

I wish we had coordinated better,  
but I suppose nothing could rescue  
that suit of yours.

JACK

This was grandpa's suit.

DUCHESS

That figures. Wake up, zombie.

She slaps his cheeks.

DUCHESS (CONT'D)

What's the matter, darling?

JACK

Your fingers are freezing.

EXT. BURNSIDE MANSION - EVENING

Shiny cars line the meandering driveway leading to Burnside's  
palatial home.

INT. BURNSIDE MANSION, PARLOR - SAME

The elegant parlor is bustling. Guest stand chatting while servants carry trays of champagne and hors d'oeuvres.

Jack and the Duchess stand surrounded by sycophants. Jack reaches for a champagne but she slaps his arm.

DUCHESS

An espresso for him, please?

A debonair man takes Jack by the elbow.

DEBONAIR MAN

Tell me, Jack. Have you considered an insurance policy on the ship?

JACK

There's an idea.

DEBONAIR MAN

Well, anything could happen.

The man slips a business card from his pocket, but before he can hand it to Jack -

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Jack? Oh, there you are!

It is Mrs. Burnside, 60. She is a cordial, seasoned hostess.

MRS. BURNSIDE

There you are, darling. EB has been asking for you, dear. Why, Miss Genoese! Aren't you striking?

EXT. BURNSIDE'S BACK PATIO - NIGHT

On the back patio, another large crowd mingles. A Dixieland orchestra PLAYS a festive tune.

Everett Davis Burnside sits by the pool, chatting with guests. He spots Jack and the Duchess.

BURNSIDE

Well here comes trouble!

He heaves up to embrace Jack and kiss the Duchess's cheeks.

BURNSIDE (CONT'D)

You do realize that when I bailed you out of captivity, I didn't expect a reward... this big!

He laughs loudly. The weight of his meaty arm wrapped around Jack's shoulder is more than Jack can bear.

The RUMBLE of a helicopter emerges behind the sycamores.

BURNSIDE (CONT'D)

What!

A black SDF helicopter appears and makes an elaborate landing on the lawn. The ladies hold down their hats.

BURNSIDE (CONT'D)

(seething)

Lomax.

MRS. BURNSIDE

He'll ruin my maple saplings.

From the helicopter, Louis Lomax bounds out onto the lawn. Rita is with him, but wisely waits for the propeller to slow.

The lawn is mushy, so she slips off her shoes. She hangs onto Louis's arm as he strides toward the party, his shoes SHLUMPING in the soggy earth with each step.

LOUIS

Got a real mud hole out here, EB!

(aside to Rita)

They're Southern.

The couple reach the patio, Louis beaming and Rita coolly admitting her embarrassment, her feet grassy and muddy.

Jack and Rita's eyes meet. Zap! Sparks fly.

Louis's shoes and pant heels are covered in mud as he pays his clownish respects to everyone present.

Jack and Rita sneak glances at each other. The Duchess observes this with scorn.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

*Monsieur* Burnside, and the monsieur...esse? Ah! The Duchess of Monaco. Enchanté. And, oh, wait...don't tell me, it'll come to me...uggh! Jack! No, I knew!

The Duchess looks conspicuously at Rita's shoes, which Rita still holds dangling comfortably by their straps from her pinky finger, as if she hadn't a care in the world.

DUCHESS

Lovely shoes.

Rita quasi-curtsies to the Duchess, whose envy burns at this nobody's coolness.

LOUIS

(to Rita)

Why don't you go rinse your feet  
off in the pool?

MRS. BURNSIDE

Um...

Rita calms her with an "I'd never do that" look. Burnside hollers to the butler.

BURNSIDE

Ah, Sinclair! A washbowl and a  
towel, my good fellow?

JACK

Who's your date, Chief?

LOUIS

Meet my concubine, Rita.

DUCHESS

Your what?

LOUIS

Concubine. It's Venezuelan.

DUCHESS

It is not.

LOUIS

Latino. Whatever. It's an  
affectionary title.

DUCHESS

It means whore.

LOUIS

No it does not.

BURNSIDE

Jack, you're the walking  
dictionary. What's the definition  
of the word?

MRS. BURNSIDE

A walking dictionary?

BURNSIDE

He remembers everything he reads,  
right Jack? Memorized Miriam  
Webster at six years old, I heard.

Everyone perks up to witness Jack's mental luminosity.

JACK

Concubine. From the Latin,  
actually: a woman residing in a  
harem and kept, as by a sultan.

DUCHESS

You see?

LOUIS

Okay. I *keep* her in my *harem* of  
scientists, as by a *sultan*.

MRS. BURNSIDE

So you're a scientist?

LOUIS

Sheesh, Mrs. B. She found the  
second whatchamacallit.

RITA

Requisite.

BURNSIDE

Ah, the Hazel grass!

LOUIS

Didn't you see us on TV?

DUCHESS

Oh, you wore the big glasses.

BURNSIDE

(taking Rita's hand)

Well, the stars are out tonight!  
Welcome, my dear. Allow Sinclair  
to, uh...

SINCLAIR, Burnside's butler, arrives with a towel, washbowl  
and stool. He sits at Rita's feet.

SINCLAIR

Left foot, miss?

Rita graciously dunks her foot into the bowl. For balance  
she places a hand on Jack's shoulder.

The Duchess is irked. Even she hasn't received a public foot-washing. But Mrs. Burnside distracts her with conversation, and Burnside pulls Louis aside to scald his helicopter stunt.

Jack and Rita are free to talk.

RITA  
This is awkward.

JACK  
Kind of strange.

RITA  
How do you know the Burnside's?

JACK  
He put up a ransom for me when --

RITA  
Oh, in the Congo.

JACK  
You remember that?

RITA  
It was big news. I was a big fan of yours. Still am.

He grins; she blushes. Sinclair has patted dry her left foot and moves on to her right.

JACK  
So, are you a marine biologist?

RITA  
Molecular. I actually developed a nontoxic dispersant for that big oil spill near the reef, and that particular sea grass makes an enzyme... that's boring.

JACK  
No, what happened? The enzyme...

RITA  
(flattered)  
The natural enzyme did the same work as the sulfonic acid -

The Duchess listens in and feigns a dainty yawn.

RITA (CONT'D)  
- in the industrial mix.

She is surprised at his interest, which is intensified by his pain pill/champagne diet.

JACK

I'm sort of a chemist myself.

RITA

Sort of? I wrote my thesis on your ship's biomimicry. Magical.

Burnside butts in.

BURNSIDE

I'm going to dance with my wife before we get down to business, boys. Bourbon and cigars, gazebo yonder, nine o'clock sharp.

He points to a prim gazebo where servants lay a table.

Meanwhile, Louis has persuaded the Duchess to dance. She struts off with him, casting a lioness glance back at Rita.

Sinclair finishes his chore and bows out.

JACK

So, where were we?

RITA

Magic.

JACK

Ah. You like magic?

He whips a silk flower from his sleeve and offers it to her.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's my grandfather's suit. He only wore it once.

RITA

That's the Nobel Prize suit.

JACK

I'm impressed. That was twelve years ago.

Rita takes Jack's arm to examine his magic sleeve.

RITA

I told you I was a fan. I was ten, you were eleven. The space explorer family. You guys made science seem...cool.



JACK  
Dance?

RITA  
(toward the Duchess)  
She won't mind?

JACK  
She will.

They move out to the dance floor. Louis twirls the Duchess. He is an excellent dancer. Jack grabs a champagne from a passing waiter's tray. He downs it and returns the glass.

RITA  
What happened? With you two? Just didn't work out, or --

Jack boldly takes her by the waist.

DEBONAIRE MAN (O.S.)  
Ah, there you are. You know, I --

The debonair insurance salesman dances nearby with his wife; he maneuvers closer to Jack, waving his business card.

Jack sprays him with the trick flower on his tuxedo's lapel.

JACK  
Whoops.

DEBONAIRE MAN  
Oh, dear!

Jack twirls Rita away from him.

RITA  
Twelve-year-old water?

JACK  
Potenco dew.

RITA  
What?

JACK  
A joke. You know, the...

Jack realizes he has just made a drunken blunder.

RITA  
I don't get it.

She shakes it off quickly, though, remembering where she is and with whom. She squeezes Jack to show her interest.

EXT. BURNSIDE MANSION, GAZEBO - LATER

Jack and Louis have joined Burnside and his billionaire business partners: OVERTON, QUIMBY, and PETTYGROVE.

Overton extends a box of Gurkha cigars.

OVERTON  
His Majesty's Reserve.

LOUIS  
An acquired taste.

As Overton lights Jack's cigar, Louis clumsily tries to light his own. Quimby and Pettygrove watch him with amusement.

BURNSIDE  
Now, I heard a rumor that a fistful of Lomaxium yields more energy than all my oil fields and coal mines put together. And it's clean. Now why'd you keep that a secret?

Louis finally takes a drag. His eyes bulge and he squeaks, trying not to cough.

JACK  
Who told you that?

LOUIS  
Gah! I'm sorry, that's -

Louis coughs uncontrollably on cigar smoke.

PETTYGROVE  
Take a drink, for Pete's sake.

Louis grabs the nearest carafe and guzzles it.

OVERTON  
That's bourbon, you boob.

Louis holds up a finger, trying to compose himself.

BURNSIDE  
Well?

JACK

If we try to use the asteroid for anything other than the shell, we're just going cause problems.

PETTYGROVE

Like what?

JACK

War.

QUIMBY

So we just scoop out the middle and let it go to waste? Decay?

BURNSIDE

Not if we wet it down! With your *elixir*, er, Requisites.

JACK

There's barely enough Zenith or Hazel grass on the planet --

BURNSIDE

Not the way you and that hippie are pussy-footing around it. Just imagine if you applied some good ol' industrial tactics to it.

JACK

Such as...

BURNSIDE

(roaring, stomping)

Heat! Pressure! Guard those Requisites with a gal-darn army. The Hazel grass'll be a foot high by Christmas! See, Jack, fossil fuel is just getting to be too --

PETTYGROVE

Dangerous.

OVERTON

Bloody.

QUIMBY

Unpopular.

Jack sips his bourbon, contemplating his response.

## NEWS COVERAGE - COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MEETING

A montage of different news network feeds, each with its own station's graphics, reporters, etc.

CLIP - People swarm the campus.

REPORTER 1

Hundreds of the world's best-known and most influential have people gathered today at Columbia University in New York to celebrate a monumental achievement in human civilization: the completion of "The Code," the official constitution for Stellanova.

CLIP - distinguished guests arriving by limo.

REPORTER 3

Leading thinkers in many fields, from astrophysicists to civic leaders, have contributed their ideas in establishing civilization on the new planet.

Bill Gates and Larry Page pause for the cameras.

SUPER: "BILL GATES, MICROSOFT CO-FOUNDER; LARRY PAGE, GOOGLE CO-FOUNDER."

REPORTER

Mr. Gates, Mr. Page, Microsoft and Google are each other's fiercest competitors, yet you joined forces to make enormous donations in cash and equipment for The Show.

BILL GATES

It's a wonderful time in history, all these remarkable people coming together. This is beyond business. This is humanity.

LARRY PAGE

We were thrilled to contribute. Working with competitors enriched the company, and Bill here is a lot nicer guy than you thought.

He wraps an arm around Bill's shoulder, and the camera flashbulbs immortalize the gesture.

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie pause for the reporters.

BRAD PITT

We were in the neighborhood...

ANGELINA JOLIE

We came to show support for this vision of universal cooperation.

REPORTER

You have also made considerable financial donations to the effort.

BRAD PITT

A lot of us have been trying to accomplish something like this for years, and if it takes a new planet to bring this planet together, great.

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - SAME

The auditorium is packed with a colorful variety of people.

International Novas stand together onstage. A projection shows INSERTS of "The Code:"

- 1) "Encountering Indigenous Beings"
- 2) "Fair Currency and Trade"
- 3) "Sustainable Development"

The center Nova holds up a copy of "The Code" in book form. Wild APPLAUSE.

INT. INTERNATIONAL LABORATORIES - DAY

Rita works at the lab computer terminal, skimming long lists of substances tested for use as the third Requisite.

She types in "P-O-T-E-N-C," but quickly deletes it when JALEEL, another scientist, walks in.

JALEEL

Hello, Rita.

RITA

Hello, Jaleel.

JALEEL

Congratulations again on the big find. How was the party?

RITA

Nice. Fancy.

JALEEL  
Did you meet Jack?

RITA  
Yeah.

JALEEL  
Well? What's he like?

RITA  
Um...mysterious.

JALEEL  
Ooh!

Rita wills Jaleel away, then resumes her search.

ON COMPUTER MONITOR - A search for "POTENCO" turns up a moderate body of research. The items that stand out are "CONGO," "AMAZON," "RAINFOREST," photos of lush jungle, and finally a molecular diagram.

She accesses the labs's Lomaxium data, isolates its diagram, and overlays it with the third "hot spot" on the Lomaxium.

They are reciprocal matches.

RITA  
He already knows?

She hears VOICES approaching, so she quickly switches her screen to her web browser. And there in her news ticker is the headline, "REQUISITE #3 DISCOVERED." She clicks with a mixture of surprise and suspicion.

SCIENTIST (O.S.)  
Hey, Rita. Did you hear?

ON WEB TV - GLOBAL SPIN

JOANNA  
Researchers in the Indonesian rainforest discovered the third and final Requisite for the Astro shell. Here to explain what it is and how it works is Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Sanjay?

Dr. Sanjay Gupta stands before a video wall, which displays illustrative graphics for his presentation.

DR. SANJAY GUPTA  
 Joanna. The process is truly  
 miraculous.

SHOT - Potenco dew under a microscope.

DR. SANJAY GUPTA (CONT'D)  
 This is a dew drop from the Potenco  
 tree, a rare plant that grows in  
 the densest rainforest. Its unique  
 molecular structure is a key  
 ingredient in the process.

ANIMATION - REQUISITES INTERACTING WITH LOMAXIUM

DR. SANJAY GUPTA (CONT'D)  
 Lomaxium, when it interacts with  
 Potenco dew, Hazel grass, and  
 Zenith ions, essentially  
 stabilizes.

BACK TO SCENE

Rita is overwhelmed as Gupta continues his explanation.

JOANNA  
 So just how much Potenco will it  
 take to do the job?

DR. SANJAY GUPTA  
 A lot.

JOANNA  
 Got a ballpark for me?

DR. SANJAY GUPTA  
 We'd better stop cutting and start  
 planting, that's for sure, Joanna.

INT. OLD SCHOOL - NIGHT

The crew watch recent broadcasts from Earth.

JEROME  
 This ain't old news anymore. We're  
 getting closer.

CHUCK  
 What's he saying there?

(It is Jack's announcement from earlier in the script)

CG - a model of the exotic atom

JACK (ON TV)

We have secured that asteroid and, having analyzed its makeup, devised a plan. To reach Stellanova, we must hollow out the asteroid, like a shell --

Chuck rewinds and pauses the frame on the atomic model.

JEROME

(thumbing between the Lomaxium and their cargo)  
This ain't that.

WALLY

So... did we grab the wrong asteroid? Chuck? Chuck!

CHUCK

No, we didn't grab the wrong asteroid.

JEROME

Because if this is that, we'd better slow the hell down or --

CHUCK

Quiet.

Chuck retrieves his spectral reader and plugs it into the Comlink. He scans it over the tabletop. On the monitor, the Lomaxium atom appears. He scans it over his boot tread and the Lomaxium atom appears again.

JEROME

See! That radioactive shit's all over everything.

CHUCK

No it isn't. That software patch he had us install...

JEROME

What, he duped us?

Chuck shrugs.

INT. UN, HALLWAY - DAY

Bryce and his AIDE walk down the hall.



AIDE

It's just a rumor, sir. If Greener challenged you, he wouldn't stand a chance.

BRYCE

Thank you for your confidence, but do not forget how fickle our constituents can be. Let us look for ways to take him out of the running.

AIDE

Sir?

BRYCE

A pleasant distraction.

INT. UN, PRIVATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Bryce, Louis, and a DEFENSE LOBBYIST discuss Lomaxium.

LOBBYIST

Well? Do you like it?

LOUIS

It's a biological bomb. How is this any different than the ones we've already got?

LOBBYIST

You see, with the Lomaxium, drop it on a city, you get total loss of animal life, basically the people and their pets, pigeons, rats. But all - well, most - plant life and, most importantly, infrastructure remains intact.

BRYCE

So a nuke without nuclear winter?

LOBBYIST

Precisely, sir. You see? Einstein thought he fucked up showing us  $E=MC^2$ , but this kid --

BRYCE

He fucked up.

LOBBYIST

There's more. Look, Chief.

He displays a sketch of small laser canons.

LOBBYIST (CONT'D)

Lomaxium scramblers. Mount this on any drone or low-level satellite, sends a concentrated burst of radiation, size of a pencil eraser, like a mini-EMP. Disrupts any electronic device. Kill a tank. Kill an F-22.

Louis snatches the sketch and puzzles over it.

BRYCE

Put some bark in that bite.  
(to lobbyist)  
And the Requisites?

LOBBYIST

Still mandatory.

BRYCE

Excellent.  
(to Aide)  
Voilà, our pleasant distraction.

INT. UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY - DAY

The room swarms with diplomats, lobbyists, and media.

BRYCE

Motion to allocate surplus defense vessels for patrolling Requisite-rich areas: passed. Motion to enforce rainforest protection measures: passed.

CHEERING. Greener pumps his fist. The Duchess squeezes his hand. Bryce smiles benevolently and approaches Greener.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

You've done such a fine job with the ocean harvest, I'd like you to personally setup operations in the rainforest.

Greener and the Duchess fret as Bryce slithers away. She drops his hand and ices over.

DUCHESS

I'm not going to the jungle.

ON TV

Customers flock to bookstores.

NEWS VOICE

Fresh off the press, "The Code" is an instant best seller, selling well over a billion copies in 60 languages in its first week. Readers have flocked to bookstores, and booksellers cannot keep the hot copy in stock.

SERIES OF CLIPS - Man-on-the-Street sound bites

WOMAN

(with book)

It's the best self-help book I've come across. Positive thinking, nutritional plans and exercise programs. It's a way of life.

SCHOLARLY CHAP

It's a wonderful blend of social philosophy, borrowing from the ancient Greeks, Enlightenment thinkers, lessons from literature. I am literally in awe.

YOUNG MAN

(holds up book)

We should be living like this anyway.

NOAM CHOMSKY

It certainly means well. It combines the compatible aspects of several 'successful' models of civilization, ancient and modern. What it fails to address is that the key drivers of any civilization have always been military and economic. How they'll avoid that, I'm curious to see.

NEWS VOICE

But the book is not without its critics.

DICK MORRIS

Seriously here. It will take more than a code to reshape this world. At best, they've plucked the low-hanging fruit of easy diplomacy,

(MORE)

DICK MORRIS (CONT'D)  
 but now, you watch. Somebody will  
 get greedy. Somebody will get  
 screwed.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JACK'S FAME RUNNING WILD

Spinning magazine covers...

1. TIME: MAN OF THE YEAR
2. PEOPLE: SEXIEST MAN ALIVE
3. SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN: MOVE OVER, EINSTEIN!
- 4 - 10. JACK ON THE COVER OF VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINES

The Duchess appears with Jack in many of the photos. She greedily basks in the glory.

MONTAGE - JACK ON TALKSHOWS

- 1) Jack and the Duchess on "Letterman:" Dave holding up "The Code"

LETTERMAN

The book is "The Code," and it will show you how hollow and meaningless your life has been, and a few tricks to fix that. All profits go to the few - the very few - lucky folk on their way to Stellanova.

- 2) Jack and the Duchess on "Leno:" Jay holding up "The Code"

LENO

It's called "The Code", it's at a bookstore near you. I got a copy, lost ten pounds, and stopped fearing China.

- 3) Jack on "Conan:" Conan holding up "The Code"

CONAN

For all you ignorant, obese, mindless Earthlings. Waddle on down to the bookstore and pick up your copy of "The Code" and start living your life right.

OVER THE PHONE

JACK

Hey, could hook me up with a few more pills?

RICHIE  
You hurtin' pretty bad?

JACK  
Ah, you know. Can't sleep.

RICHIE  
Wash 'em down with some wine,  
lights out.

ON TV - RAINFOREST: BEFORE & AFTER

ARCHIVE CLIP: slash-and-burners destroying the rainforest.

GREENER (V.O.)  
Last year, these men couldn't cut  
down these trees fast enough,  
smashing through with bulldozers  
and chainsaws.

LIVE CLIP: Greener tours the rainforest reclamation site,  
where collectors lovingly collect Potenco dew drops.

GREENER (V.O.)  
Now, those same men are doing all  
they can to get these trees to  
grow, walking on eggshells to not  
disturb the delicate undergrowth  
beneath the Potenco trees.

INT. RAINFOREST, GREENER'S TENT - DAY

Greener tries to phone the Duchess. He gets her voicemail.

DUCHESS (ON PHONE)  
Désolée. Je ne suis pas la.  
Laissez-moi un message.

He hangs up and sadly thumbs through a magazine spread of  
Jack and the Duchess working side by side.

INT. LOUIS'S OFFICE - DAY

Louis enters, carrying his golf bag, struggling through the  
door. He turns to find Bryce quietly waiting for him.

LOUIS  
Yikes. I mean, Bryce.

BRYCE  
Please, Louis, close the door.

Louis obeys, then nervously takes a seat.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid that between the Novas and their shell, Burnside and his fuel, and you and your laser scramblers, there simply won't be enough Lomaxium to go around.

LOUIS

Huh. So, what's our options?

BRYCE

Somebody must get screwed.

LOUIS

Burnside. Screw him.

BRYCE

Louis. A new energy supply is for the greater good, as is your defense system. A trip to the stars, however, seems a bit frivolous, don't you think?

LOUIS

It's their asteroid. I mean, if we screw *them*, billions of people would... riot.

BRYCE

If we screwed them out of it, certainly. After all, we're the good guys. But what if a bad guy screwed them out of it, and then we step in and wrench it from his evil clutches?

LOUIS

Who's the bad guy?

EXT. LOUIS'S OFFICE - LATER

Bryce exits, looking satisfied. Louis remains at his desk, alone, devastated.

INT. SECRET PRISON, EAST AFRICA - DAY

Hakeem Danjuma sits in a ramshackle jail cell with about thirty other African and Arab inmates. He is now 26, powerfully built, and deeply troubled.

A guard CLANGS his keys on the bars, beckoning Hakeem.

INT. SECRET PRISON - LATER

Two Caucasian operatives peer into an interrogation room where Hakeem now sits. One operative holds open a dossier with a mug shot of Hakeem.

OPERATIVE 1

Hakeem Ibrahim Danjuma, 26 years old, captured by Chinese forces in Zanzibar, bombing their well-heads.

OPERATIVE 2

That was two years ago. Been in this stink hole the whole time?

OPERATIVE 1

No knowledge of the outside world.

They compare Hakeem to a photo of Armando Diogo, the Nova from Mozambique.

OPERATIVE 2

Same height and weight.

INT. SECRET PRISON, INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The operatives sit with Hakeem at a rickety table.

OPERATIVE 2

You like to sneak around blowing things up, don't you Hakeem? Yeah, you do. That's why you're in here.

Operative 2 pulls out a photo of Jack Novalis.

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)

You know this guy?

Hakeem does not seem to recognize him, so the Operative shows an old photo of Jack and Hakeem together as children.

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)

Ring any bells?

Hakeem's face tightens.

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

He thumbs through his dossier to read a brief history.

## OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)

Says here you two palled around while his old man did some business with your uncle, ya wandered into Zistro's territory, got snagged, and here's the clincher. Says here your uncle wasn't paying the local warlord his protection money on that titanium. Ooh, that's not good. U.N. comes in, whisks ol' Jack Novalis away, leaves you hanging, media makes a big stink until these rebels pay your uncle a visit, drown him in pig shit and burn your village to the ground.

He pauses to let Hakeem's emotions stir.

## OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)

Novalis been living the good life ever since, but you, you been sleeping on a rock eating rat meat and potato peels. All while them sons of bitches who burned your village are running free.

## HAKEEM

No.

## OPERATIVE 2

No?

## HAKEEM

I avenged my father's killers.

## OPERATIVE 2

Yeah?

## HAKEEM

(huffy)

Yes.

## OPERATIVE 2

You and whose army?

## HAKEEM

Zistro.

## OPERATIVE 2

Oh, that's right. You and Zistro chased out those cocksuckers, didn't ya? Brought some stability to your neck o' the woods, didn't ya?



Hakeem blushes with pride.

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)  
Well Zistro's gone. But guess  
who's back.

He flips up Jack's picture.

OPERATIVE 1  
Back fuckin' up the jungle again so  
he can take his spaceship ride.

OPERATIVE 2  
Don't tell me you don't know what's  
going on out there?

Hakeem looks blank. Operative 1 opens a laptop.

ON LAPTOP - TV NEWS

REPORTER  
With the announced pullout of  
Burnside Power from the region,  
fears of staggering unemployment  
are gripping the region.

AFRICAN PROTESTOR  
(in Swahili, overdubbed by  
English translation)  
Jack Novalis has big ideas for us.  
He wants our trees. Will he build  
his spaceship out of wood now?

OPERATIVE 2  
That's enough of that shit.

He pauses on the desperate faces of Hakeem's countrymen.

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)  
Now how'd you like to get out of  
this shit hole?

HAKEEM  
How?

OPERATIVE 2  
Doing what you do best. Sneak  
around, blow shit up. Help us out.  
(gesturing the freeze  
frame)  
Help them out. You got a sick  
wife, don't ya? Couple kids?  
(MORE)

OPERATIVE 2 (CONT'D)  
We'll treat them to American  
doctors, put' em through school.

Hakeem contemplates.

INT. INTERNATIONAL LABORATORIES, RESEARCH WING - LATER

Rita scrolls through microfilm scans of old newspapers,  
magazines, and science journals.

INSERT - article from a 1969 "POPULAR SCIENCE" issue - The  
article documents Melquiades' voyage in the Pacific, where he  
and his team of divers collect samples from the coral reef.

She sets this article aside and continues searching.

INSERT - article from a 1971 "FLYING" issue - Melquiades in a  
balloon high above the earth, taking atmospheric samples.

RITA  
Zenith.

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - EVENING

Rita enters the club. In the back, Jack shoots pool. Richie  
talks on the phone, filling out a supply order.

RICHIE  
(to Rita)  
You're about five hours early,  
toots. What'ya need a job?

Jack sees her.

JACK  
Hey, Rita. Come on back.

RICHIE  
Don't mind me. I just own the  
place.

Rita makes her way back to Jack, who is comfortably numb.

RITA  
Secret hideout?

JACK  
We all have our secrets.

RITA  
Yours is safe with me. Can I play?

TIME LAPSE - They are now in mid-game. Rita takes a shot.

RITA (CONT'D)

If you knew what the Requisites were, why didn't you just say so?

JACK

(inebriated)

Tell me this. When you made your discovery, at the moment you knew you found it... how did you feel?

RITA

Amazing.

JACK

Well, *that* is exactly how the whole world felt with all three.

RITA

It's manipulative! Kind of shady.

JACK

Fine. But when the world gets excited, that's when big things happen. Look at the wave of excitement that spread over the globe...the spirit of discovery! How did you put it? "Make science cool?"

RITA

I don't buy it. You're holding out.

RICHIE (O.S.)

Who the fuck's this broad? You interrogatin' the guy, Cinderella?

Richie has brought a tray of appetizers and a new bottle of wine, which he CLUNKS down with a disapproving look at Rita.

RITA

Cinderella?

RICHIE

You a cop?

RITA

No.

RICHIE

Reporter?

JACK  
Calm down, Rich. She's my friend.

RITA  
You were saying...

JACK  
Picture what would happen if I just came out and said "I've got this magic asteroid that will take us all to paradise, but only if we save the ocean, save the ozone, and save the rainforest first."

RICHIE (O.S.)  
(uncorking the wine)  
I'd say "get the fuck out here with that tree-huggin' new world order bullshit! What are you tryin' to pull?"

JACK  
See?

RITA  
He's not exactly a litmus test for the general public.

RICHIE  
Not exactly a *what*? Shit, cuz. What'ya defending yourself to her for? Like it matters what she says: "Oh, he made a joke at the party! I'm gonna expose him!" What'ya after, toots? You want a payout?

RITA  
Fuck you.

RICHIE  
(pouring for Jack)  
Fuck me, huh? Fuck you! I own the place! Who even knows you're in here? What if nobody saw ya again?

Rita smoothly reaches into her jacket pocket and pulls out a can of pepper spray. She points it at Richie's face.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
Holy shit! Don't!

Richie drops the bottle of wine; it SMASHES on the floor.

JACK  
Hey, hey, hey --

Richie plops down on a chair in surrender.

RICHIE  
Nobody's gonna kill ya!

Rita recovers her senses.

RITA  
Sorry, I...

RICHIE  
Crazy bitch.

JACK  
You did threaten her life.

RITA  
No, I overreacted. I grew up in a rough neighborhood, and - I'm gonna go now.

RICHIE  
Good idea.

JACK  
I'll come with you.

RICHIE  
That's a \$160 bottle!

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack sits on the sofa. Rita enters and sets down a bottle of wine and two stemless glasses.

RITA  
That's a \$6 bottle.

Jack jokingly swirls and sniffs like a wine snob.

JACK  
Subtle bouquet.

RITA  
News flash. You're on Avenue B and I live paycheck to paycheck.

JACK  
Oh, right. Tell me more about the rough neighborhood.

RITA  
Try trailer park.

JACK  
Really?

RITA  
Well, "mobile home." For a while.  
My dad was in a biker gang, so.

JACK  
Was he, you know, violent?

RITA  
Not at home.

JACK  
What about now? They still  
together?

RITA  
Yeah. They made it. No question  
about that.

JACK  
That's rare.

RITA  
Neither of them even finished high  
school, so when I asked for a  
chemistry set for Christmas,  
instead of Barbie dolls or makeup,  
they didn't know what to think.

JACK  
But they gave it to you?

RITA  
Yeah. Next thing they knew their  
little girl was earning \$27  
thousand a year, wearing a white  
coat, working for the Man.

JACK  
You chase your dreams.

RITA  
(scooting closer)  
Yeah, I do. But I'm a peon.  
Enough about me.

From under the table she pulls out a big shoe box full of  
newspaper and magazine clippings.

JACK  
What's all this?

As she spreads it out, he sees they are articles and photos chronicling the discovery of Stellanova, the construction of Eco, and the headline events along the way.

RITA  
It's all you.

JACK  
Stalker!

RITA  
And your grandpa. Your dad. None  
of your mom.

She watches for his reaction. He tightens up a bit.

RITA (CONT'D)  
What happened with her?

JACK  
You mean to her. My dad took her  
out, you know,  
(points toward space)  
sightseeing. Way, way out there,  
the ship breaks down.

RITA  
Oh...

JACK  
So he suits up, goes out to fix it.  
Ship catches fire, burns up right  
in front of him.

RITA  
Oh, God.

JACK  
He had no way to get back, no way  
to call for help. Just floated  
there for three days with the  
wreckage.

RITA  
Who rescued him?

JACK  
Guess.

RITA  
(horrified)  
Melquiades?

Jack takes a deep swig.

JACK  
Tore grandpa up pretty bad. He  
always treated her shabby.

RITA  
Why?

JACK  
She was just a regular working  
girl, you know? What did his son  
want with a --

RITA  
Peon?

They kiss, gently at first, then more and more passionately.  
They make their way through the apartment to Rita's bedroom  
and fall onto the bed. They kiss and undress each other.

RITA (CONT'D)  
Does this mean you're taking me to  
Stellanova?

INT. RITA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Jack and Rita have made love. Jack gazes out the window.

RITA  
What are you thinking about?

JACK  
(absent)  
Nobody.

RITA  
I said 'what,' not 'who.'  
About Francesca?

JACK  
About both of you.

RITA  
What about us? Like who would win  
in a fight?

Jack laughs. She pounces on him.



RITA (CONT'D)

I will challenge her to a duel. I would kick her *ass*!

JACK

I know you would.

RITA

What are you worried about?

JACK

I guess what the press will say. They're gonna vet you. Big time.

RITA

Why, because my ancestors owned slaves and I lied on my college apps?

JACK

Is that true?

RITA

Well, yeah, but I was joking. I --

JACK

I'm not joking. The biker gang stuff, the mobile home. Media's going to have a field day.

RITA

So all the sudden I'm not good enough for you?

JACK

It's not me I'm worried about.

RITA

Well maybe it should be. You're hiding an awful lot yourself.

JACK

Like what?

RITA

Um, Lomaxium, maybe?

JACK

We've been through that.

RITA

Not really. For all I know you doctored the spectral readings to look like whatever you...

Revelation flickers in her eyes.

RITA (CONT'D)  
...wanted.

He hides his face.

RITA (CONT'D)  
Did you? Oh my God.

She tingles with excitement, having penetrated him, but aches with remorse for his plight.

RITA (CONT'D)  
You need help.

JACK  
I'm not crazy.

RITA  
No, not *help*. I mean a confidant.  
You can't carry all that weight.

A tear rolls down his cheek. He fishes through his pants for his pill bottle. It's empty. He panics.

JACK  
Who have you talked to?

RITA  
Nobody.

JACK  
You just came to this conclusion,  
just some peon researcher?

RITA  
Alright, what the hell --

He springs to his feet and angrily dresses.

JACK  
Conspiracy theorist.

RITA  
There's no conspiracy. I would  
never say anything - I've been in  
love with you forever.

JACK  
Well get in line. And keep your  
big mouth shut. Like anyone would  
believe a trailer park peon anyway.

She watches in agony as he throws his tantrum and leaves.

INT. UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY - DAY

Bryce presides, looking queasy. The assembly hears protests from corporate lawyers.

LAWYER 1

Half my client's workers up and ran off to collect dew drops, leaving the beans to rot on the vine. Then you're subsidizing their wages; my client can't compete with that.

An aide comes to Bryce and hands him a newspaper. On the front page is news of Greener's GAG campaign launch.

LAWYER 2 (O.S.)

We've been dumping into the ocean for twenty-five years. That's been the law of the land. Your new bill here has quadrupled our waste disposal cost!

Bryce's thoughts are elsewhere.

ON TV - WORLD NEWS

CLIP - Greener announces his bid for Global Advocate General. He stands in the Amazon rainforest, surrounded by indigenous Potenco harvesters, who revere him like a king.

GREENER

It's amazing how fast the rainforest reclamation took off, like it was waiting to happen and just needed a kick. Now these guys and gals have it under control and they're kicking *me* out, so I can make the Harvest legislation the law of the land. Because when the land is healthy, the people are healthy. And happy.

The harvesters CHEER.

REPORTER

The young powerhouse, who has gained massive popularity heading up the Requisite harvest -

CLIP - The Duchess of Monaco in session.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
 - has named Francesca Genoese,  
 Duchess of Monaco, as his running  
 mate.

TALKING HEAD - THE DUCHESS

DUCHESS  
 I look forward to handling the day-  
 to-day, the diplomacy, so he can  
 get his hands dirty, unlike  
 Thompson Bryce, who I believe is  
 allergic to nature.

REPORTER  
 Adding the Duchess of Monaco to the  
 ticket offers unlimited benefits.  
 Her popularity spans all  
 demographics. Her charity  
 initiatives have fed and housed  
 millions of the world's poor. At  
 the same time, she intuitively  
 protects the interests of the  
 world's super-wealthy.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

Joanna is even more made-up than usual. In fact, she is  
 giddy and nervous.

JOANNA  
 Ladies and gentlemen, today we have  
 a very special guest: Jack Novalis.

Cutting to the two-shot, Jack is indeed there.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
 Jack, your Novalis Proposal has  
 saved the environment and brought  
 democracy to every country in the  
 world. You didn't do it through  
 war, or sanctions, or espionage.  
 You did it through cooperation,  
 generosity, and transparency.

JACK  
 Thank you.

She thumbs through a stack of periodicals featuring Jack.

JOANNA  
 Let's see, they're calling you the  
 'architect of utopia,' the  
 (MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
 'evolutionary,' the 'man who saved  
 the world,' the 'messiah.' I -

Her voice cracks; her eyes get misty.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
 Yet you still insist you are not a  
 politician?

CUT TO CONTROL ROOM

The station manager tallies the viewership feed.

STATION MANAGER  
 Look at that. Highest yet.

JACK (ON MONITOR)  
 Utopia is a dangerous word, Joanna.  
 In a perfect world we wouldn't need  
 politicians. Or messiahs.

DIRECTOR  
 This guy is gold.

JOANNA (ON MONITOR)  
 Sagely worded.

BACK TO FLOOR

Joanna composes herself.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
 Let's look at this -

On the video wall, a mosaic of large, spirited street  
 protests from cities all over the world.

Two man-on-the-street clips from the protests:

M.O.S. - Blake Elliot, 40, very together:

BLAKE ELLIOT  
 We need ratify "The Code" here, on  
 Earth. It's way better than any of  
 the systems we have now.

M.O.S. - Maria Aldai, 35, bookish:

MARIA ALDAI  
 With "The Code," there's no loser,  
 you know? People from every  
 country, every religion, they all  
 got their two cents in.

BACK TO INTERVIEW

JOANNA

What do you think of that?

JACK

I agree. And that's why I endorse Bobby Greener for Global Advocate General. He's somebody who could adapt international law to resemble "The Code."

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT - SAME

Rita watches *Global Spin*, looking depressed, wearing sweats, eating a pint Ben & Jerry's.

JOANNA

Didn't Greener steal your girl?

JACK

Come on. Can you really picture her 'roughing it' on a new planet?

JOANNA

Well, I have to ask... don't you need a *mate* on the ship? On the new planet?

JACK

I do.

JOANNA

Anyone in particular in mind?

JACK

I have a few blind dates set up.

TV COMMERCIAL

Richie stands with Jack on a packed dancefloor.

RICHIE

Hey ladies, get on down to the Wilderness and meet the galaxy's most eligible bachelor. Time is running out for space king Jack Novalis to choose his queen!

BACK TO RITA

With sudden resolve, Rita plunks the ice cream down and loosens her ponytail.

INT. JACK'S ELECTRIC LIMO - NIGHT

Jack, alone, laments. Outside the Wilderness, the car enters a crowd of shrieking female fans bearing signs that read "I LOVE YOU!"

EXT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Jack steps out to yet more fanfare and enters the club.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Rita, dressed to kill, exits a taxi. Ahead, she sees that the Wilderness line wraps around the block.

EXT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - SAME

The line is primarily young women. Richie himself has joined the doormen, collecting the cover charge and issuing wristbands, herding the girls through rapidly.

RICHIE

Alright, we're on a time crunch ladies. Purple wrist bands expire at 10:15, blue 10:30, white 10:45. Do not exceed your welcome or you will be disqualified.

One young woman especially appeals to him.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Black wristband for you, good all night long.

Squeals of protest issue from the nearest girls. Richie points to a placard over the door.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Maximum occupancy, see that?

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHTCLUB - SAME

The place is packed. Everywhere, girls eagerly await their chance to meet Jack.

In a circular booth, Jack holds court with a mélange of young, beautiful women of countless nationalities.

EXT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - SAME

Rita is nearing the front of the line. Wanting to avoid Richie, she lets girls behind her go ahead.

RICHIE  
You boneheads got the hang of it?

The bouncers nod so Richie disappears into the club. Rita proceeds.

BOUNCER  
Hundred bucks.

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Rita inches through the lobby, on the lookout for Jack.

RICHIE (O.S.)  
The girl least likely to succeed.

He blocks her path and backs her into a corner.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
I don't think anybody here wants to see you.

RITA  
I paid my money. I want to see Jack.

RICHIE  
I wanna see... your titties.

With zero hesitation, Rita pulls apart her blouse buttons.

BOUNCER  
Damn.

The bouncer extends a black wristband; she sneers at Richie, extends her wrist, and enters the parlor.

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

In a sea of people, Jack dances closely with a woman. She moves away so Jack can behold her entire body. He sees Rita wandering through the crowd.



JACK  
(to girl)  
Excuse me.

The girl pouts as Jack joins Rita and leads her to the refuge of his partitioned booth.

In the booth:

RITA  
I just want to tell you...

JACK  
Sounds serious.

RITA  
You're wasted.

JACK  
No, come on. What? Say it.  
You're in love with me.

RITA  
I already said that and you spat in  
my face.

JACK  
I'm sorry.

RITA  
Yeah?

JACK  
Yes. I haven't stopped thinking  
about you since the Burnside party.

RITA  
No?

JACK  
No. And I know you've kept my  
secret and I love a woman who can  
keep a secret.

RITA  
Then why all this?

JACK  
Let's get out of here.

RITA  
Where to?

JACK  
Stellanova. If you still...

RITA  
I do.

INT. WILDERNESS NIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Rita move through the club. Up ahead is the EXIT sign, the flashing of Papparazzi cameras twitching outside the door.

INSERT - MAGAZINE PHOTO: JACK AND RITA LEAVING THE CLUB

In the photo, Jack's expression betrays fatigue and relief in finding a worthy lover. Rita is cool and collected.

EXT. ECO - NIGHT

The spaceship is incredible, nearly complete. A great tankard of Requisites floats nearby.

NEWS VOICE  
Hailed as the pinnacle of scientific achievement, Eco is officially open for business and ready to host its full-time inhabitants, the Novas, who have begun their migration up to begin their training.

INT. ECO, ATRIUM

It is a beautiful, efficient, immaculate environment. Novas from all over the world happily go about their chores.

NEWS VOICE  
And tonight, the last Nova delegates will be honored before tomorrow's final launch.

EXT. ROOFTOP SWIMMING POOL - DUSK

Jack reclines by the pool, wearing dark sunglasses. Greener comes striding up, wearing a suit, trimmed hair, clean shave.

GREENER  
Sun's down, Jack.

JACK  
The GAG-man.

GREENER  
You okay, there, bud?

Greener takes off his jacket and eases into the lawn chair, loosening his tie and sighing.

GREENER (CONT'D)  
Where's Rita?

JACK  
Saying her good-byes.

GREENER  
The big farewell. Have to say I'll miss you.

JACK  
Aw.

GREENER  
Okay. I delivered your Requisites. You gonna tell me that secret now?

Jack takes a deep breath and prepares to speak.

EXT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

Thousands of people file into the stadium. The media is there in force. A glittery banner reads "FAREWELL NOVAS!"

EXT. JFK AIRPORT

Armando Diogo, Mozambique's Nova, has landed. He spots a chauffeur with a sign reading "DIOGO," and follows him.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - SAME

Two operatives already sit inside. One of them points a gun at Armando, who puts his hands up as the car pulls away.

INT. JACK'S ELECTRIC LIMO - SAME

Jack and Rita ride together. The sound of CHEERING crescendos as the car approaches the Grand Amphitheatre.

Jack suffers. He swallows a couple of Richie's pills with a swig of wine. Rita sadly takes his hand, kissing his temple.

JACK

Last time.

EXT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

A crowd of people cheer Jack's arrival. Finally, he steps out of the car, deafened by the frenzied adulation. Rita steps out and amplifies it all.

INT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE - SAME

It's a full house. Triumphant music pours from the P.A. In the center of it all, a massive, empty bandstand with a circle of spotlight.

A Virgin Galactic shuttle is parked on a runway that stretches out of the amphitheatre and 400 yards away.

Jack and Rita walk onto the side stage to ROARING applause. She is awestruck by the level of fame that Jack has endured.

EXT. HIGHWAY EXIT - SAME

Armando's car pulls over. A black van pulls up alongside. Two operatives and Hakeem Danjuma step out.

ARMANDO

What? What is this?

The car and van drivers switch Armando with Hakeem, putting a bag over Armando's head and shoving him into the van.

INT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE - SAME

Jack and Rita join a dozen Novas waiting in the wings.

As an MC announces the final countries, the respective Novas take the stage. The Jumbotron displays national flags.

MC (OVER PA)

Switzerland. Australia.  
Philippines. Iran. Kenya.  
Argentina. Mozambique.

Finally, Jack and Rita walk out.

MC (OVER PA) (CONT'D)

Jack Novalis and Rita Winslow.

The Novas form a line, shoulder to shoulder.

JACK  
Where's Mozambique?

EXT. HIGHWAY EXIT - SAME

A car identical to Armando's lies in the ditch off the road, flipped over and on fire. The operatives and Hakeem run toward it, reaching it.

OPERATIVE  
This is it. You ready?

Hakeem braces himself and nods. The operatives methodically beat him with rubber hoses and set him on fire.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENT LATER

An ambulance has arrived and paramedics wrap gauze around Hakeem's facial burns. Firemen extinguish the burning car.

INT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE, BACK STAGE - SAME

Here, two organizers speak in the wings.

ORGANIZER  
Just heard Mozambique's Nova had a  
little fender bender on the way.  
Pretty banged up but he'll live.

INT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE - SAME

Onstage, the Novas one-by-one pledge allegiance to "The Code," then parade toward the Virgin Galactic ship for boarding.

Isabel Kelly from Australia:

ISABEL (O.S.)  
I, Isabel Kelly, pledge to  
represent Australia and citizens of  
the world, upholding "The Code" in  
every encounter...

As Jack listens, a RINGING in his ears grows louder. He staggers. James, another Australian Nova, notices.

KENYAN NOVA  
..."The Code" in every encounter.

Jack clutches his forehead, wobbles, and collapses to the floor. James catches him before his head hits the stage.

MC  
Ambulance!

EXT. GRAND AMPHITHEATRE RUNWAY - LATER

Jack lies on a stretcher under the care of paramedics. Standing around him are the final Novas, Rita, Greener, the Duchess, and Bryce.

BRYCE  
The flight will take hours. The hospital is minutes away.

RITA  
He needs zero-gravity.

DUCHESS  
There is a team of world-class doctors on the ship.

Richard Branson leans out of the shuttle door.

RICHARD BRANSON  
Pardon me, folks. If we don't launch on schedule, the next window is Wednesday, weather permitting.

JACK  
(to Bryce)  
Let us go.

BRYCE  
I know when I'm overruled. I only regret it's such a rushed goodbye.

An ambulance arrives, halting before the shuttle.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Here comes Armando!

Bryce quickens. He lays a hand on Jack's shoulder.

BRYCE  
Farewell, young man. Miss Winslow.

He exits with a bow. Greener signals the paramedics to load Jack onto the shuttle.

The ambulance driver opens the back doors and out steps Hakeem Danjuma, his face disguised in gauze, his arm in a sling. Everyone believes he is Armando Diogo.

From a distance, Bryce watches, smiling malevolently.

EXT. VIRGIN GALACTIC SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

With powerful grace, the shuttle streaks down the runway and lifts off. It pulls nearly vertical, streaking ever upward.

Another intense blast doubles the shuttle's velocity.

INT. VIRGIN GALACTIC SHUTTLE - SAME

The passengers' bodies tremble from the thrust.

EXT. EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE - MOMENTS LATER

The air becomes visibly thinner as the layers of Earth's atmosphere appear in gaseous hues.

The shuttle escapes Earth's gravity and glides smoothly through space, toward the marvellous Eco spaceship.

INT. ECO, SICKBAY - DAY

Jack 'lies' in bed, suspended in zero-gravity. Rita is with him. Dr. DANIEL DYE reviews Jack's blood work results.

DR. DYE

Well, I'd say you're free to move about the cabin. But take it easy. You're dad's due back in three days, so until then, you can relax.

The doctor exits.

JACK

How do you like the ship?

RITA

It's wonderful.

JACK

Have you seen our cabin yet?

INT. ECO, JACK AND RITA'S CABIN - LATER

Jack sleeps in Rita's embrace.

INT. ECO, ARMANDO DIOGO'S CABIN - NEXT DAY

Hakeem Danjuma, still bandaged, is alone in Armando Diogo's cabin. He pulls up his shirt and smooths his explosive vest.

He takes a last look at a schematic of the ship, pointing with his finger to his destination: the engine room.

Shaky and sweaty, he takes a look in the mirror.

INT. ECO, ATRIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Hakeem moves through the various sections of the ship, timidly greeting the Novas as he encounters them.

He is taken aback by what he sees: people from all cultural/political/religious ideologies coexisting in harmony, laughing, smiling.

ICELANDIC NOVA

Hello, Armando. Feeling better?

HAKEEM

Yes, thank you.

INT. ECO, ENGINE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hakeem finally reaches his destination, only to find Jack, looking dog-tired, repairing machinery.

JACK

Armando, hey. Looking better.

HAKEEM

What are you doing?

JACK

(distracted)

Oh, they have these couplings reversed. Hand me that wire spool?

No response from Hakeem, so Jack finally looks over at him.

Hakeem stares at Jack with big frightened eyes. He holds a detonator, his thumb chafing on its red button.



JACK (CONT'D)

Wow.

Hakeem presses the red button. CLICK. Nothing happens.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ah, that's too bad. Neutrino levels in here prohibit any charge above a 9-volt.

Hakeem flinches; Jack lunges, digging his thumbs between the abdominal bandages of his assassin. Hakeem HOWLS.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, at least the burns are real.

Hakeem lands a heavy blow on Jack's shoulders, and with his powerful legs, kicks off Jack, sending each man flying in opposite directions.

INT. ECO, HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Hakeem frantically tries to escape Jack's pursuit, but Jack is nimble, having spent most of his life in zero-gravity.

Jack pauses at an intercom.

JACK

Flight quarters, seal off sections E through H. Now.

It is a mad chase in which Hakeem's only tactic is to topple objects into Jack's path while he desperately seeks a section of the ship in which he can detonate his explosives.

Finally, doors marked with E or H seal off and Hakeem is cornered. He picks up a thin metal pole from a crate and prepares to throw it like a spear at Jack.

HAKEEM

What fine titanium. Where did you unearth this? Or did you forget?

Jack is dumbstruck.

JACK

Hakeem? How did you --

HAKEEM

You invited me. Remember?

JACK

I looked for you. For years.

HAKHEEM

Why? So you could destroy my family and destroy my home?

Gradually, the flight quarter Novas arrive on the scene to investigate Jack's distress call: EVELYN ASHAMALLAH from Egypt; MAGNUS MAGNUSSEN from Sweden; ESTON WHITFIELD from England; HIRO KAWASAKI from Japan.

JACK

I saved your jungle.

HAKHEEM

You stole it. Again. I saw your green army come marching in.

EVELYN

To protect it, Armando!

Magnus is even larger than Hakeem. He creeps closer.

JACK

This isn't Armando. His name is Hakeem Ibrahim Danjuma and he's my friend. But someone convinced him this ship should be destroyed.

ESTON

(unaware of the bomb)

You gonna smash it up with your spear then, mate?

Magnus GRABS Hakeem and kindly chokes him out.

INT. ECO, FLIGHT QUARTERS - LATER

The flight quarter Novas have cuffed Hakeem to a chair and sit together at a long table.

ESTON

I can't believe what I'm hearing, man. You fabricated a fuckin' element and sent the world on a goose chase for your Requisites. That's fucked!

MAGNUS

It's a white lie.

ESTON

Lie's a lie.

RITA

It's genius. Look what happened.  
The ocean is clean. The air is  
clear. The rainforest --

ESTON

Based on a fuckin' lie!

Evelyn lays a calming hand on Eston's shoulder.

MAGNUS

If we don't need the shell, let's  
just take off.

HIRO

All systems are go.

JACK

We need the shell. The Requisites,  
well, any adhesive will do.

ESTON

Aaaugh! I'm calling in.

He lunges for the door but Magnus grabs his arm.

RITA

They'll shut down the Harvest and  
go right back to --

MAGNUS

What happens when they began  
drilling? The truth would out.

JACK

Greener will handle that.

ESTON

Greener knows? Fuckin' politician.

JACK

Look. By the time they build  
another Eco, find another Astro,  
and harvest enough Requisites, the  
new environmental laws will be too  
entrenched to throw out. As long  
as that world believes it needs the  
Requisites --

ESTON

Fine! Fuck it! Perpetuate the  
hoax! Trick them all into world  
peace and environmental harmony.

EVELYN

Jack? Got anymore tricks?

JACK

They're expecting an explosion.  
Let's give them one.

HIRO

What good will that do?

JACK

Smoke out the rats.

INT. UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY - DAY

A debate between Greener and Bryce is in full swing.

BRYCE

I would commend my opponent for his leadership in the Requisite Harvest, but he has dropped out of his duty there to seek more power in this government.

GREENER

(dominant)

The Harvest has employed thousands of indigenous people, weaning them from counterproductive foreign aid. These people are empowered now --

A clerk breaks up the debate.

CLERK

Ladies and gentlemen! There has been an explosion on Eco!

The room bursts into panic. Bryce sneers at Greener. To reassert his authority, he BANGS his gavel.

BRYCE

Order in the assembly!

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

CLIP - A blue-white flash splits Eco into two parts.

JOANNA

Few, if any, tragedies in history compare to this morning's Eco bombing. 12 hours after the blast  
(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
and still no communication with the  
spaceship.

CLIP MONTAGE - People worldwide mourn the tragedy.

JOANNA (CONT'D)  
We don't know who's alive, or who's  
dead, but the death toll could be  
horrific. The blast separated the  
main craft from the adjoined Astro  
drilling fleet hangar -

CLIP - The mining hangar topples out toward the moon.

JOANNA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
which we see here tumbling out into  
space. The Requisite tankards have  
not been damaged, thank goodness.

INT. ECO, BRIDGE - LATER

Evelyn and Hiro watch news reports and monitor  
communications. Hakeem is still cuffed.

Over the radio, SDF hails Eco.

SDF VOICE  
Spaceship Eco. This is Space  
Defense Force. Do you copy?

The Novas ignore it.

BRYCE (ON TV)  
It was a lack of government  
oversight that led to this crisis,  
so we're now forced to step in and  
take over total operations. The  
Space Oversight Committee has  
assembled a rescue team -

CLIP - An international team suited up in flight gear.

BRYCE (V.O.)  
- and as the ship is unfit for  
intergalactic travel, it will serve  
as a platform for processing the  
inbound Lomaxium.

HIRO  
He was ready for this.

EVELYN  
That's the rat.

JOANNA (ON TV)  
 Meanwhile, the Global Advocate  
 General election has been suspended  
 until the crisis is under control.

SDF VOICE (ON RADIO)  
 Spaceship Eco. This is Space  
 Defense Force. Come in.

EXT. SPACE - SAME

The Astro mining hangar topples slowly into space.

INT. ASTRO MINING HANGAR - SAME

Pitch black.

MAGNUS (O.S.)  
 It is completely dark. I don't...

JACK (OVER HEADSET)  
 Triangle knob below the stick.  
 Click left three times.

Sound of CLICKING knobs. The cockpit lights of three mining  
 rigs flip on, lighting the faces of Jack, Eston, and Magnus.

Jack flips on a searchlight to reveal the hangar: many large  
 objects float about, obstructing their path to the door.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 Come on. They're tough.

Jack moves forward, bumping through the jumble. The others  
 fall in and exit the hangar.

EXT. ASTEROID MINING HANGAR - SAME

The ships glide out.

JACK  
 Okay. Ion pulse only.

ESTON  
 That will take forever.

MAGNUS  
 You want to get radar'd?

ESTON  
 Radar'd?

They creep toward Earth, their ion-pulsers glowing faintly.

JACK  
Hiro, you copy?

HIRO (ON RADIO)  
Copy, Jack.

JACK  
Patch me through to Old School.

INT. OLD SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Chuck and his crew sail along with Asteroid in tow. Straight ahead: Earth. It is but a 'pale blue dot.'

The men watch news reports on the Eco bombing. The Comlink BEEPS. Chuck answers, Jack appears.

CHUCK  
Jack! Jesus! You okay, kiddo?

JACK  
Yeah. Controlled explosion.  
(pause)  
Hi, Dad. Been a while.

Chuck gets emotional, but overrides it with tech talk.

CHUCK  
Looked like a C-4 blast. What's that about?

JACK  
Hakeem Danjuma brought it up.

CHUCK  
Bossman's boy?

JACK  
He had his reasons.

CHUCK  
Saving his jungle wasn't enough?

JACK  
He didn't know.

CHUCK  
Whole damn world knows. Anyway. Your asteroid here. At first I figured you got your readings wrong, 'til the Potenco thing.  
(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Then I knew. Question around here is 'what are we really hauling back there?'

JACK

Magic dust.

CHUCK

Come on, now. You want it or not? I'd hate to think we came out here for nothing.

JACK

Yes, but I need it in dust form. Fine powder if you can manage.

Chuck and his crew look at each other and shrug.

CHUCK

Got a missile handy?

JACK

Just get it up to speed.

INT. RUSSIAN WAR ROOM - DAY

Intelligence officers monitor Astro's approach.

RUSSIAN OFFICER

The asteroid has accelerated.

RUSSIAN GENERAL

Calculate its trajectory.

The officer commands the system to simulate Astro's progress.

RUSSIAN GENERAL (CONT'D)

The asteroid will strike the Pacific. We must secure it.

INT. CHINESE WAR ROOM - SAME

Chinese officers also calculate Astro's Pacific splashdown.

CHINESE GENERAL

Mobilize the carriers and submarines. Evacuate the water within 100 miles until the waves subside. Scramble the South Sea fighter jets to guard the area.



INT. PENTAGON WAR ROOM - SAME

Intelligence officers and brass survey the asteroid.

AMERICAN OFFICER

China's on the move, subs and carriers. Russia's scrambling. Japan is on full alert.

AMERICAN GENERAL

Turn every carrier, cruiser, sub and battleship toward that area and hold at 90 knots.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NAVIES ON THE MOVE

- 1) A Chinese armada booms through the waters.
- 2) Three submarines fall into high speed formation.
- 2) Russian vessels sail at top speed.
- 4) Fierce fighter jets rip through the clouds.
- 3) American destroyers charge through the waves.

EXT. ECO, REQUISITE TANKARDS - SAME

Like hummingbirds pausing to sip nectar, the mining ships edge up to the tankards until their drill bits make contact.

The drills spin, flicking shrapnel bits about.

INT. ECO, MACHINE SHOP - SAME

Evelyn and Rita stand by, looking out the porthole at the drill ships. Jack looks up and smiles at Rita.

HIRO (ON INTERCOM)

Activate the Requisite pumps.

They flip two switches, activating the Requisite pumps.

EXT. ECO, REQUISITE TANKARDS - SAME

The Requisites gush from each hole, forming a liquid sphere that grows larger, eventually ENVELOPING the ship.

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Intermittent thruster bursts increase the velocity 10-fold per blast. The image blurs, suggesting light speed.

INT. SDF GROUND CONTROL - SAME

Louis and an analyst track Astro's trajectory.

SDF ANALYST

It won't burn up in the atmosphere,  
but will disintegrate once  
submerged. The ocean impact  
however, could raise five hundred  
foot swells.

CG - In a simulation, Astro descends from space, blazes through Earth's atmosphere, hits the ocean, and sends an omnidirectional tidal wave toward every shore.

LOUIS

Time of impact?

SDF ANALYST

Two hours, sir. Should we  
evacuate?

Louis's cell phone CHIMES. Text message. He reads it.

INSERT - Louis's phone.

TEXT MESSAGE

FROM: Sun Tzu.  
MESSAGE: Win the War on Acne.  
Ancient Incan Cure Subdues Acne For  
Good. Dial 88-K-240-T-11-229...

At first, Louis thinks it's spam, but then it dawns on him.

SDF ANALYST

Sir?

LOUIS

What? Evacuate? Are you nuts?  
Pull up the intercept. Surface to  
air. Enter 88 K 240...

The analyst inputs the data into a coordinate metric. Louis feigns improvising the numbers, but glances at his phone.

SDF ANALYST

Okay, select device.

A menu displays missiles in SDF's arsenal, with code names like "APACHE," "IROQUOIS," "AZTEC," etc.

LOUIS

Inca!

The simulator shows the ground-based Inca missile firing into space to rendezvous with Astro at a particular point.

The analyst is amazed.

SDF ANALYST  
Damn, Chief! You the man!

LOUIS  
Come on!

EXT. SDF BUILDING, ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Louis power-walks toward his helicopter, barking orders at the analyst who follows, scribbling madly on a clipboard.

LOUIS  
Prep Inca for a moonshot. Halt all satellite launches. Issue EMP alert to all agencies. Ground commercial and private flights.

His helicopter takes off as the analyst salutes Louis with an amplified respect.

EXT. SPACE - SAME

Astro hurls toward Earth.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

JOANNA  
Anonymous sources report that a secret takeover attempt of the Lomaxium-bearing asteroid has triggered a standoff between US, Chinese, and Russian forces. It appears Lomaxium can yield a new weapon, deadlier than nuclear bombs. This could be it, folks. Global Spin will continue to report until --

The broadcast goes to color bars and the Emergency Broadcasting System TONE heralds imminent chaos.

OMINOUS VOICE (V.O.)  
This is the Emergency Broadcasting System. This is not a test.

EXT. BATTERY FIELDS AIR BASE - SAME

Louis's helicopter descends on the air base; down below he sees the Inca surface-to-space missile silo opening up. SDF men scramble. The emergency horn BLARES.

INT. BATTERY FIELDS, CONTROL TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

A Specialist takes aim with Inca.

SDF SPECIALIST  
Chief, we're ready to fire.

LOUIS  
Those coordinates gonna work?

SDF SPECIALIST  
They're perfect sir. Just within missile range, and far enough out to dust that asteroid.

LOUIS  
Dust it?

SDF SPECIALIST  
Oh, yeah. A little sandblasting on satellites. Otherwise --

LOUIS  
Fire!

The Inca missile FIRES. Great flames lick the runway.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

The rival navies come head to head, holding a 100 mile radius from the expected splash-down. Above, fighter jets circle.

MONTAGE - RIVAL NAVY COMMANDERS SIZE EACH OTHER UP

US, Chinese, and Russian forces square off.

MONTAGE - GROUND FORCES MOBILIZED

Ground forces mobilize for a world war.

EXT. SPACE - DAY

Astro and Inca streak toward each other, finally COLLIDING.

Astro EXPLODES into a glittery white dust cloud.

INT./EXT. ECO - SAME

The Novas brace themselves as Jack flies toward the cloud.

Eco, in its liquid sphere of Requisites, reaches the edge of the expanding dust cloud.

Like a drive-thru car wash, all viewing portals are slathered by sparkling white Asteroid/Requisite suds.

Many Novas CRY OUT in fear or excitement.

EXT. SPACE - SAME

Eco is coated with Astro dust, substituting for the shell.

The glob of Eco's runoff Requisite and Astro dust congeal, leaving a free-floating stamp in the **ICONIC SHAPE** of Eco.

The extra dust, meanwhile, blankets out and out and out until it covers a hemisphere of Earth's orbit.

INT. OLD SCHOOL - SAME

Chuck and crew fly past Eco, their faces wedged together to look out the porthole.

JACK (ON RADIO)  
How do I look?

CHUCK  
Magic.

JACK  
You guys coming?

They all know it's impossible.

CHUCK  
Did you leave enough Requisites for  
Eco 2?

JACK  
A whole planet full.

CHUCK  
Then we'll catch up.

INT. ASTEROID DUST SHROUD - SAME

Satellites glide through the electromagnetic Astro dust,  
which stuns their electronics, rendering them mute.

EXT. SKIES OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Two F-35 Lightning 1 fighters rocket through the sky.

CHATTER (O.S.)  
(in Russian w/ subtitles)  
Squadron 8 assume bombing formation  
two zero eight zero nine four -

Suddenly the pilot's look-up goes haywire.

PILOT  
(Russian w/ subtitles)  
I've lost GPS!

MONTAGE - PACIFIC NAVAL STANDOFF FIZZLES OUT

Inside the battleships, the loss of satellite communications  
cripples the control panels. Though the brave soldiers are  
ready for war, they are relieved to be shut down.

MONTAGE - TV GOING OUT

In orbit, network TV satellites blink out in the Astro dust.  
On Earth, TV-watchers everywhere are disappointed when even  
their color bars turn to SNOW.

INT. HOUSEHOLD - SAME

A frightened family watches snow on the TV.

DAD  
Turn on the radio, I guess.

RADIO VOICE 1  
- Lomaxium blanketing the Earth has  
disrupted digital communications,  
and militaries are standing down, I  
repeat, militaries are standing  
down.

RADIO VOICE 2  
Satellite communication is crucial  
to waging modern warfare; without  
it we might as well pick up a club  
(MORE)

RADIO VOICE 2 (CONT'D)  
and start bashing each other.  
Nobody wants that.

EXT. NIGHT SKY - NIGHT

The Eco-shaped Astro/Requisite stamp floats, a sparkly, wavy, cultural emblem, emblazoned on the heavens, big as the moon.

EXT. EARTH FROM ABOVE - MONTHS LATER

A restored planet: oceans, skies, rainforests revived.

ON TV - GLOBAL SPIN

CLIP - Construction on a second Eco spaceship.

JOANNA (V.O.)  
Engineers, led by Chuck Novalis,  
broke ground on Eco 2 today -

CLIP - International workers harvesting Requisites.

JOANNA (V.O.)  
- and all around the world,  
Requisite harvest continues.

Joanna looks vibrant.

JOANNA  
On to the trial of Eco-bomber  
Hakeem Ibrahim Danjuma, whose crime  
will be the first case tried under  
"The Code."

CLIP - Hakeem testifying before a group of Novas.

HAKEEM  
My name is Hakeem Ibrahim Danjuma.  
I was sent to set off a bomb on Eco  
spaceship.  
(static)  
- convinced me the Nova mission was  
evil, but when I witnessed the  
truth -  
(static, snow)  
changed my mind.

CLIP - Thompson Bryce, surrounded by lawyers, exiting a court building, and pausing for reporters.

JOANNA (V.O.)

The fact that Danjuma's family received cash payments from a military contractor connected to Thompson Bryce has raised many eyebrows.

BRYCE

In light of these allegations, I must forfeit my bid for Global Advocate General. That is all.

CLIP - Ceremony to inaugurate Greener as Global Advocate General. He stands triumphantly beside the Duchess.

JOANNA

That cleared the way for Bobby Greener, who, prior to the Eco-bombing, trailed Thompson Bryce in the polls by a thin margin.

CLIP - Greener making a speech.

GREENER

Our quest to build a just and conscientious society on Stellanova has reshaped our own planet. We have discovered an undeniable truth: Stellanova is not a place for refugees from a ruined Earth. It's not our second chance or a last resort. It's a reward, a prize for our excellent stewardship of planet Earth. There are three keys that unlock the door to paradise, three Requisites. We know what they are now, and we know what we must do to keep them flowing.

EXT. SPACE - DAY

Eco blazes through the Wall and enters the Other Galaxy.

To be continued in the sequel...

FADE OUT