

"THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT"

by

Steve Johnson

Based on the 'Stainless Steel Rat' series of books

By Harry Harrison

FIRST DRAFT
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EXT. NEW VEGAS - NIGHT

FADE IN:

We are looking out over a vast, neon-lit cityscape of the future. Far, far below, tiny pinpricks of light can be seen, some moving, some stationary. The skyline is broken by fantastically-tall skyscrapers, some with their upper levels piercing the few clouds that speckle the dark sky.

A CAPTION FADES IN, telling us this is 'FIRST LEAGUE BANK, NEW VEGAS, BETA CYGNUS SYSTEM'. The camera pulls back to reveal 'SLIPPERY' JIM DIGRIZ standing on the roof of this impossibly high building. He is a man of average build with dark hair and blue eyes and in his late-thirties. He is wearing an oxygen mask out of necessity and a tight, black, one-piece suit with numerous pockets and a belt full of gadgets.

He checks an electronic device. It shows the time, '26:45hrs', and his altitude, '4,000 metres'. There is also a countdown and it is at '00:45' and counting. He pockets the tablet and runs to the edge of the building.

Leaning over the side, he looks down to see a large, silver ventilation duct, jutting out of the concrete, glass and metal wall. He produces a molecular piton and jabs it into the concrete in front of him. It melds with the wall instantly. He slips a rope through the piton's hoop and pushes himself over the side.

He expertly glides down to the duct and finds a metal grating blocking his way. Hanging in mid-air, he pulls out what looks like a pen and draws an invisible line around the edge of the grille. Instantly, the molecular bonds of the grate are released and it drops down. The man catches it and shoves it into the vent. Then he climbs in after it.

Once inside, JIM unhooks the rope and crawls along the metal tunnel towards a bright light. A beeping comes from his pocket and he pulls out the device with the countdown. It is at '00:10'. He quickly shuffles forward, the beeping continuing.

Suddenly, the light at the end of the vent begins to be eclipsed. The vent is being sealed! He barely makes it through the narrowing gap in time, landing in a heap in a small, dark room.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/MAINTENANCE ROOM - NIGHT

JIM climbs to his feet and looks at the sealed vent.

JIM

(sweating and smiling beneath the mask)

That was close.

JIM pulls off the oxygen mask and tosses it aside. He flicks on a flashlight set into the arm of his suit. Finding the door, he crosses to it and inspects it quickly.

JIM

(to himself)

Simple magnetic lock. Sloppy, guys. Or cheap.

He unclips a small, black box from his belt, sticks it to the door and presses the single button on its surface. The door swings open to reveal a corridor with stark lighting. Jim clips the box back onto his belt.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/CORRIDOR #1 - NIGHT

JIM slips into the corridor, closing the door behind him. He produces the electronic tablet and efficiently calls up a floor plan of the bank, along with an overlay of the security grid highlighted in red. He presses some icons on the screen and the security display turns green, also informing him 'ALL DOORS UNLOCKED'. JIM smiles.

He silently slips through a door at the far end of the corridor and we CUT TO:

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/CORRIDOR #2 - NIGHT

We are in a more ornately decorated corridor, with potted plants and paintings on the walls. There are several side-doors and one set of large, double doors at the end.

Directly in front of JIM are three armed SECURITY ROBOTS. They are human-sized, bipedal and painted to look like they are wearing dark uniforms. They raise their weapons in unison.

SECURITY ROBOT #1

This is a restricted area. Submit to arrest, so you can be escorted from the premises.

JIM throws a disc-shaped object into the air and hits the deck, shielding his eyes. There is a bright flash and when we can see again, the robots are slumped forward with sparks flaring from every joint.

JIM dashes to the double doors, picks the lock with a simple-looking lockpick and slips inside.

CUT.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is in darkness, except for the shafts of moonlight streaming through the tinted windows. JIM heads straight for a painting hanging on the wall and feels around the frame. He finds a switch and presses it. The painting slides to the side to reveal an old-fashioned-looking wall safe.

JIM

(to himself)

Oh. Not what I expected. I wonder how many thousands of years it's been since somebody did this?

He dons a stethoscope and begins cracking the safe. Eventually, it clicks open and JIM pulls out handfuls of jewels, necklaces and hard currency. He stuffs it all in a bag and turns around.

INSKIPP

Just put the bag on the desk, diGriz.

The desk lamp flickers into life to reveal a man of about fifty years of age. He is HAROLD INSKIPP, head of THE SPECIAL CORPS. He is smiling, apparently unarmed and sitting in the chair of whomever the office belonged.

JIM pulls out a handgun and aims at INSKIPP's head.

INSKIPP

Sit down, diGriz, and put that cannon away. If I wanted to kill you, I could have done it while you were on the roof or in that ventilation duct. Nice work, by the way. Reminded me of myself in my youth. No, you're more valuable alive than dead. And there are so few of us left these days.

JIM smiles, drops the bag and gun on the desk and flops down into the chair opposite INSKIPP.

JIM

Who the hell are you?

INSKIPP

I think you already know that.

JIM

(smiling)

The Special Corps. Of course. How did you get on to me?

INSKIPP

We've been shadowing you ever since you pulled that job on Altair. Excellent work. Cleanly in and out and no casualties.

JIM

I've never had casualties. Not purposefully anyway. Well, there was that time on... (pause) Wait, why aren't there armed goons crashing through the doors and windows?

INSKIPP

Because I'm not here to arrest you, Slippery Jim. I'm here to offer you a job.

JIM bursts out laughing and we CUT TO:

INT. SPACECRUISER

JIM is still laughing out loud. He is sitting in a private spacecruiser. Only he and INSKIPP are present in the bright, luxurious cabin.

INSKIPP

Have you finished?

JIM

One minute.

(he laughs some more)

There, done.

INSKIPP

You're considering my offer. You are here.

JIM

I'm here because I didn't want the New Vegas police to get their grubby hands on me. You provided an escape route. (pause) Are you going to tell me your name anytime soon?

INSKIPP

Not too bright. I'd have thought you'd have figured it out by now.

JIM pours himself a large glass of scotch and sips at it, staring at the man opposite without a hint of malice.

JIM

The eyes. You have a crook's eyes. But they say that the Corps only hires reformed criminals.

INSKIPP

Not only. But crime is so rare these days that when somebody decides to break the law, they tend to do it in a big way and the best way to catch them is to use people who think the same way.

JIM takes another sip. Then another. A long pause.

INSKIPP

Oh, for crying out loud. My name's Inskipp.

JIM

(surprised)

Harold Peters Inskipp? Inskipp the Unc...

INSKIPP

Yes, Inskipp the Uncatchable.

JIM

What happened?

INSKIPP

What do you think happened, you blithering idiot? They caught me!
(pause) Like we caught you.

JIM finishes off the scotch and sets the glass down on the low table between them.

JIM

Nobody catches Slippery Jim diGriz.

A pleasant bell sound rings in the cabin.

INSKIPP

We're here.

JIM looks out of the window and we move through the glass to see

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

The spacecruiser glides towards a huge asteroid in open space. A distant sun bathes the space rock in amber light, but there are no other planets or anything else visible.

The surface of the asteroid is festooned with domes and antennae and all manner of technological gizmos. A docking port slides into view with flashing lights blinking into darkness beneath the asteroid's barren surface. The cruiser swoops inside.

FADE OUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/PRISON CELL

FADE IN.

JIM is sitting in a brightly-lit, windowless cell, miserable, with his elbows leaning on his knees. The jangling of keys has him looking up to see INSKIPP approach the barred cell door.

JIM

A bit 'olde-worlde', isn't it? Bars, keys? If I wanted, I could be out of here quicker than you could say 'The Glorious League of Allied Planets'.

INSKIPP

(smiling)

And where would you go? You're deep in an asteroid in an uninhabited star system. You'd be shot before you took one step into the docking harbour.

JIM

Whatever. Go away.

JIM returns to his moping. INSKIPP sighs and shoves a piece of paper, with a photograph of a spacecraft in a planetary drydock on it, through the bars. It flutters to the floor in front of JIM.

INSKIPP

Look at this. What do you make of it?

JIM picks up the photograph and looks at it, his brow furrowing.

JIM

Big warship of some kind. Looks like Empire lines. Now for the last time - go away.

INSKIPP

It's a late Empire battleship of the Warlord class. Undoubtedly one of the most truly efficient engines of destruction ever manufactured. Over a kilometre of defensive screens and armament that could probably turn any fleet existent today into fine, radioactive ash.

Jim yawns and stretches. He stands up and hands the photograph back to INSKIPP.

JIM

Except for the fact that the last one was broken up for scrap over a thousand years ago.

INSKIPP

Somebody has built this thing now. Maybe they've built more. We don't know.

JIM looks shocked. He grabs the paper again and stares at the image as if it will leap out of the page and grab him by the throat.

JIM

Holy shit. This is real? There hasn't been a war for centuries. If some maniac lets loose with one of these, not even the League capital will be safe.

INSKIPP

(smiling)

I thought that would pique your interest. Our files indicated you had a keen interest in history and a deeply-suppressed suspicion of goodness.

(he stares at JIM for a long moment)

Are you with us now?

JIM

(smiling weakly)

I never really had a choice, did I?

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

JIM and INSKIPP are in the laboratory of PROFESSOR COYPU, an elderly scientist, with thinning grey hair and no time for JIM's quips. JIM is fingering a piece of technology from COYPU's desk.

COYPU

Put that down, diGriz! Do you want to blow a hole in the side of this asteroid?

JIM immediately sets down the small, silver tube and smiles at INSKIPP, who scowls back at him.

COYPU

Now then, diGriz, as you are new here, I will forestall the usual pleasantries and get down to business, as my great-great-great-great-great (pause) great grandfather used to say.

JIM

You knew him? How old are you?

INSKIPP

diGriz!

COYPU

I spoke to him only last week.

JIM

How old is he?

COYPU

(rummaging through a pile of odds and ends)

Oh, he's been dead for centuries. Now, where did I put the blessed thing?

JIM looked quizzically at INSKIPP, who merely raised a hand as if to say, 'I'll explain later.'

COYPU

(producing a utility belt)

Ah, here it is. Now, my boy, this is standard issue for all field agents. A Special Corps Assignment Belt.

JIM

A SCAB? Nice.

COYPU

What? Oh, yes. (chuckles) I never thought of that. Anyway, this has everything an agent might need on his mission, from a nerve toxin tablet to a mini-nuke.

JIM

Mini-nuke? I thought nuclear weapons were banned under the League Treaty?

INSKIPP

There are treaties and there are treaties, diGriz.

COYPU

Don't worry, my boy. It's a Corp nuke. Totally clean and 100% guaranteed to vaporize anything within ten kilometers.

JIM smiles nervously.

JIM

They should get you in the Sales and Advertising Department.

COYPU hands JIM the belt and he slips it around his waist, admiring it as he does so.

ANGELINA

Very fetching. Do they come in pink?

JIM looks up to see a slinky, young woman, with raven-black hair in an attractive bob cut, approaching. She is wearing a tight, black catsuit with pink piping. JIM's pupils immediately widen at her menacing beauty.

INSKIPP

Ah, Angelina. Nice timing. James Bolivar diGriz, this is your partner on this venture, Angelina.

ANGELINA extends a slender hand and JIM gallantly kisses it.

JIM

A pleasure.

ANGELINA withdraws her hand and casts a glance at INSKIPP.

INSKIPP

Knock it off, diGriz. Angelina will be in charge of the operation. Whatever she tells you to do, you do. Got that?

JIM's eyes never leave ANGELINA.

JIM

I look forward to working under you,
Angelina.

ANGELINA

(without a hint of irony)
I'm sure you do, Slippery Jim.

JIM

Slippery by name, Slippery by natu...

INSKIPP

Alright. That's enough. Our only lead on
this battleship is from the image we
acquired from an agent on Cittanuvo in
the Beta Cygnus system.

JIM

I just came from there!

INSKIPP

Yes, you did. And if it wasn't for the
fact that you are strictly 'small time',
you might have been at the top of the
list of suspects! No, we believe a non-
human is behind this plot.

JIM looks genuinely shocked.

JIM

What? How? Almost all of the non-human
races we've encountered have been
peaceful species. How do you think the
Empire spread so rapidly? Why humans are
so ubiquitous in the League? Non-humans
don't share the same levels of curiosity
that we do.

INSKIPP

Well, this one does. I don't know.
Maybe, he thinks it's time for us humans
to be knocked off our perch after five
thousand years. Anyway, you two leave
tonight. Get acquainted, get packed and
get lost.

FADE TO
WHITE

EXT. HYPERSPACE

FADE IN:

A huge, sleek starliner is cruising through the whirling
vortices of HYPERSPACE. We watch its lustrous lines for

several moments before we **CUT TO**

INT. STARLINER

JIM and ANGELINA are sitting in the first-class lounge of the STARLINER. JIM is sipping a scotch, while Angelina is reading papers pertaining to their mission. JIM is watching her intently.

JIM

Your nose wrinkles when you concentrate.
Has anybody ever told you that?

ANGELINA

(not looking up)
Once. He's dead now.

JIM takes another sip of scotch.

JIM

Boyfriend? Husband? Accidental death?
Did he fall down an elevator shaft? Did
you kill him? Throw me a bone, Angie.

ANGELINA

(glancing up from her papers)
Angelina. Not Angie, Ange, Angelica or
Angeleyes. Your attempts to engage me in
small talk are futile.

ANGELINA returns to her reading and JIM finishes his drink, setting the glass down on the low table between them.

JIM

It's a long flight and Inskipp told us
to get to know each other.

ANGELINA slaps the sheaf of papers down on the table and glares at JIM.

ANGELINA

Fine! His name was Pepe, he was my
boyfriend. No, I did not love him and,
yes, I did kill him. Satisfied?

JIM

(smiling)
See? Now we're making progress. Why did
you kill him? Did he beat you?

ANGELINA

(sighing and picking her papers
back up)
No, he did not beat me. He led the
Special Corps straight to me, so I took
my .75 recoilless and shot a hole in his
forehead.

JIM

Yikes. So, before the Corps recruited you, what was it you did? Robberies? Assassinations? Grand Theft Auto?

ANGELINA ignores him, but her eyes betray her annoyance at JIM's line of questioning.

JIM

Never mind. I grew up on a small planet, ooh, I don't actually remember where or what it was called. (pause) Funny that. I had a loving mom and dad. Well, sort of. Did well at school. Stole my first aircar when I was sixteen. Ended up in prison at seventeen. Learned a trade... breaking and entering. The rest, as they say, is history.

ANGELINA glances from her papers.

ANGELINA

What did your parents think of your choice of lifestyle? I can't imagine they were impressed.

JIM

My dad threw me out when I was fifteen, after he went through my pockets one night and found I had more money than he did. I never went back.

ANGELINA

So they could be dead and you'd never know.

JIM looks down at his empty glass.

JIM

Yeah, I guess so. I missed mom at first, but The Life soon teaches you to break any ties. If the League or the Corps found out about my past, they'd have had my folks in an interrogation suite before they could say Gershtinkken. (pause) Was that my home planet? Rings a bell.

ANGELINA

Actually, no it wasn't. Here.

ANGELINA hands JIM a single sheet of paper. He grabs it and scans the text, his eyebrows rising.

JIM

Well, I never. (pause) Hang on! Is this it? My entire Special Corps dossier amounts to one sheet of paper?

ANGELINA smiles and retrieves the slightly crumpled leaf of data.

ANGELINA

Think of it as a compliment, Agent diGriz. You kept a low profile for years. Half of this intel was only retrieved in the last six months. That's how Inskipp tracked you down.

JIM

Jim. How thick is your file?

ANGELINA

Thick, Jim.

JIM

How thick?

ANGELINA

(using her thumb and forefinger to indicate several centimetres)
I didn't keep as low a profile. When you usurp the royal throne of Friebur and try to start a war with the neighbouring system, it kinda gets you noticed.

JIM is impressed. He leans back in his comfortable chair and whistles.

JIM

Wow. That I was not expecting. (pours himself another drink and one for ANGELINA too) So, seeing as we're working closely together on this assignment, what do I call you? Sir? Ma'am?

ANGELINA

Angelina.

JIM

Angelina what?

ANGELINA

(smiles slightly)
Just Angelina.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - CITTANUVO

FADE IN:

A starliner roars into view above the blue-green world of CITTANUVO. The twin suns of Beta Cygnus blaze in the background, the larger yellow sun appearing dominant, while the smaller, blue partner, some six hundred billion kilometers distant, appeared as little more than a bright star.

We follow the starliner down through the atmosphere, passing through cloud layers until it emerges above a vast spaceport. It glides in to land at a passenger terminal and a docking tunnel extends towards the ship.

CUT.

INT. CITTANUVO SPACEPORT - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA casually walk down the tunnel and into the spaceport terminal, each carrying their own single bag. It resembles an airport, with thousands of people (and a few aliens, mostly carrying human luggage) jostling for space or reading the huge departure boards that are seemingly everywhere.

There is a lot of ambient noise and JIM and ANGELINA are speaking normally.

ANGELINA

You all set for our honeymoon, Mr Fodder?

JIM

You have no idea, Mrs Fodder.

ANGELINA

Don't get any ideas, agent. We're here on business.

JIM

(smiling and admiring her curves)
Of course, (beat) Mrs Fodder. By the way, did you know the local custom is for the wife to do anything her husband says?

ANGELINA

Try it and the Corps will need to recruit another crook.

JIM

Now you put it like that. There aren't many of us left.

(he looks around and decides to change the subject)

You know, I don't think is the best place to start looking for an illegal battlecruiser.

ANGELINA

(smiling)

No shit, Sherlock.

JIM

Who?

They disappear into the crowds and we CUT TO:

EXT. CITTANUVO SPACEPORT - DAY

An armoured ground vehicle pulls up outside the main entrance of the spaceport. Six guards leap out and form a protective barrier around the vehicle. Lettering on the vehicle says 'LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION'

Another sextet of guards bring a hovering pallet out of a side door of the spaceport. The pallet contains dozens of bags of currency.

As they exit the spaceport, JIM notices the guards loading the money bags into the armoured vehicle. He whispers something to ANGELINA and she smiles mischievously. They head towards a nearby car rental booth.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CITTANUVO - CITY STREETS - DAY

FADE IN:

The armoured vehicle comes to a halt in front of an imposing building with the huge words 'LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION' above the main entrance. The guards piled out and started carrying the money bags inside.

Across the street, JIM and ANGELINA watch patiently from their hired aircar. When the guards come back out, climb into their truck and drive away, JIM expertly drives the car across the street and parks it in the now-vacant space where the armoured truck had been. He pops the trunk and they climb out and head towards the double glass doors.

JIM

Remember, Mrs Fodder, in and out. No fireworks. No need for Homicide to bring body bags.

ANGELINA

(with a hint of disappointment)
Naturally.

JIM notices the tone in her voice and glances at her with worry. Was he doing the right thing? They enter the building.

CUT.

INT. CITTANUVO - LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION - DAY

The interior of the building is large and airy. The money bags are piled near the door as a single GUARD begins carrying them, two at a time, through a security door.

JIM and ANGELINA enter and quickly scan the room with their eyes. ANGELINA pulls out a huge pistol and fires a single shot into the air. JIM almost jumps out of his shoes.

JIM

What the hell? I said no fireworks.

JIM catches his breath and fiddles with a data tablet.

JIM

Right, the security system's disabled. I just hope they didn't trigger it after you decide to shoot holes in the ceiling.

ANGELINA

(ignoring JIM and talking to guard)
You, pass over all of that tax money you have extracted from the sheep-like suckers who populate this backward planet. Carry it outside and dump it in the trunk of the aircar. Don't try to run or I'll drill a hole in you big enough to fly a cruiser through.

The GUARD immediately begins to carry the bags outside, with ANGELINA following him. JIM grabs a couple of sacks and follows. A MAN watches with disbelief.

MAN #1

What are you doing?

JIM
(smiling)
Taking money.
(he reaches into the bag and
removes a couple of wads of cash)
Why don't you have some yourself?

JIM tosses the money to the MAN, who looks around and then stuffs it inside his jacket. JIM carries his loot outside and tosses it into the trunk, slamming it shut.

ANGELINA
That's only half the haul!

JIM
It's enough. Let's go before anybody in
there decides to be a hero.

They climb into the aircar and JIM guns the engine, sending it skyward and away from the government building. The GUARD watches them fly away. He then looks at the wad of bank notes in his hand, smiles, stuffs it in his shirt and re-enters the building.

FADE OUT.

INT. CITTANUVO - HOTEL - NIGHT

FADE IN:

JIM and ANGELINA are sitting in their hotel room, a large penthouse suite at the most expensive hotel in the city. ANGELINA is looking at a holographic projection of the planet's surface, while JIM is mixing cocktails. On the floor are the bags of money, with wads of notes spilling all over the thick carpet.

ANGELINA
I don't understand how anybody could
secretly build a Warlord class
battlecruiser on a planet like this?
They have blanket satellite
surveillance. A project that size would
be noticed by the League.

JIM
(ignoring her)
Lemon?

ANGELINA
What?

JIM
Slice of lemon in your drink? I call it
'The diGriz diZaster'.

ANGELINA smiles and nods. JIM drops a slice of lemon into the glass he is holding and hands it to ANGELINA. She sips the pink drink and coos quietly.

ANGELINA

Mmmm. Yummy. Maybe you should rename it 'The diGriz diLicious'.

JIM laughs. He joins her at the table and looks at the hologram while sipping his cocktail.

JIM

They couldn't even build a ship of that size in one of these remote, desert areas. It would still be seen from orbit. Underground?

ANGELINA shakes her head.

ANGELINA

No. There have been no large-scale underground operations for the last decade and all the existing underground facilities are clean.

JIM

I'm impressed. You really do your homework. How long have you been with the Corp?

ANGELINA

(suddenly serious)
Long enough. (pause) Look, I don't like to talk about the past. Nothing personal. It's my problem, not yours.

She gets up and crosses to the panoramic window. Outside, brightly-illuminated aircars and taxis whoosh by as the city gets on with its nighttime life. She folds her arms and stares out of the window.

JIM

(from his seat)
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

ANGELINA

I know. It's me.
(she turns to him with tears in her eyes)
I - I wasn't a good person when the Corps recruited me. In fact, I was probably the least good person in the entire League. The Corp saved me. Fixed me. Gave me purpose.

JIM looks unimpressed with her opinion of INSKIPP's Special Corp.

ANGELINA

You may think they're the bad guys, the cops. But they're not. There are real bad guys out there, Jim. People out there now that used to be like me. (whispers) People who kill. Back there, at the tax building, it reminded me a little of how I used to be and how quickly and easily I slipped back into my old ways. We shouldn't have done it.

JIM

Nobody got hurt. The money's insured. The people of Cittanuvo won't suffer because their government lost a few million credits. I doubt word of the heist will reach even Inskipp in his asteroid.

JIM joins her at the window and puts an arm around her shoulder. He kisses her lightly on her head and they stare out of the window together for several seconds.

JIM

(shouts, making ANGELINA jump)
Asteroids! Shit!

He dashes back across to the holographic display.

JIM

Computer, display all the non-human colonies in this sector.

A star map replaces the ground atlas and a dozen red dots flash. JIM smiles.

JIM

See? All of these colonies are populated by non-humans, mostly Cittanuvans, as they were the original inhabitants of this system. But these three
(he points to a small cluster near the edge of the map)
are Jetani colonies, one on a planet and two on asteroids. The photo Inskipp showed me had the ship in a planetary drydock, so that leaves just one location
(he points to the outermost dot)
here. (pause) I wonder if we have enough money in those bags to buy a private ship?

ANGELINA smiles.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - JETANI COLONY PLANET

FADE IN:

A small spacecraft enters orbit around a barren, red world, pockmarked with craters and dominated by jagged mountain ranges.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM guides the ship down into the atmosphere. ANGELINA is sitting beside him, monitoring her console.

JIM

Any sign we've been detected?

ANGELINA

No. According to Inskipp, this is a new colony. They only started terraforming the planet five years ago. The atmosphere's thin, but breathable. They have no orbital defence platforms or anything like that. In fact, they're pretty much defenceless.

JIM

(smiling)

Apart from the kilometre-long battleship they've got stashed somewhere.

A light flashes on ANGELINA's console.

ANGELINA

(pointing out of the window)

I'm getting a strong reading over there.

CUT.

EXT. JETANI COLONY PLANET - DAY

The ship comes in to land on the outskirts of a small settlement. A ramp slides down and the airlock hisses open. JIM and ANGELINA exit the ship and make their way to the collection of prefabricated, single-storey structures.

A group of aliens gather in their path. They are about two metres tall, slightly reptilian, with sinister-looking faces and sharp, needle-like teeth. They speak English, but with a guttural, hissing accent.

JETANI #1

No here, hooman. Go. Go.

JIM

(smiling and producing an official-looking badge)

I'm from the League Office of Non-Human Affairs. We need to know you're doing okay out here. Need anything?

(he looks around)

School, hospital, friggin' anything! Just name it.

The JETANI look confused and begin speaking an alien language between themselves, the largest of them appearing particularly aggressive.

ANGELINA

Hey, HEY! Nobody gets eaten today, got that?

She shows them her pistol in its holster.

JIM

(quietly)

You speak Jetani?

ANGELINA

A little. I... once... dated one. Hey, you. C'mere.

ANGELINA walks across to the largest of the aliens and with a single blow, knocks him out. Then she walks back to the main group.

ANGELINA

Okay. Now we talk. Who is in charge here? Him?

(she points to the unconscious Jetani. They shake their heads in unison)

Who then?

They all point to her. She turns and smiles at JIM, who shakes his head, nonplussed.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is sitting with his feet up on his pilot's console. ANGELINA is arguing in Jetani with one of the aliens. She shows him the photo of the battlecruiser, but he shakes his head and pushes it away. She angrily shoos him away.

ANGELINA

This little bastard knows something, but he's too afraid to say.

She slumps down in the co-pilot's seat and the alien scurries from the ship.

JIM

Of course he knows something. They all do. But look at them. They're not building a battlecruiser. They can hardly build an outhouse.

ANGELINA

Jim, that's very racist.

JIM

What? I didn't mean... Okay, show me where they're hiding the ship. This is a big planet. It could be anywhere in this hemisphere. I did a scan of the immediate area. There's nothing here.

ANGELINA

Then how do you account for the readings I got as we approached?

There is a long pause as JIM thinks about it. Then realization dawns on his face. He begins firing up the ship's engines and the airlock hisses shut.

ANGELINA

What is it?

JIM

You were picking up residual readings from the upper atmosphere. Readings from the battlecruiser's engines. It's launched. It could be anywhere by now.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

FADE IN.

The SPECIAL CORPS HQ sits peacefully in the void of space. Beams of light suddenly criss-cross the screen and a squadron of SPACEFIGHTERS rockets into view. We follow the five of them and see that they bear the insignia of the Special Corps and they are attacking a massive, hulking BATTLECRUISER.

They swoop down and strafe the BATTLECRUISER with their energy cannons and fire missile down onto the huge craft. They barely make a mark. A particle beam erupts from the BATTLECRUISER and slices across the sky, vaporizing each fighter in turn.

As it approaches the SPECIAL CORP HEADQUARTERS, the base's defence systems open fire. The BATTLECRUISER fires a volley of missiles, each one surgically destroying the asteroid's weapons emplacements.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is sitting in the command chair on the BATTLECRUISER'S bridge. The room is dark and forboding with many flashing consoles, each operated by a JETANI WARRIOR in full combat armour. GAR-BAJ is Jetani, but completely unlike the inhabitants of the colony or, indeed, his own soldiers. He is wearing evil-looking battle armour and sports a huge scar that runs from the feathered crest on his head down to his jaw.

He watches the weapons of the Special Corps HQ fall silent and turns to his LIEUTENANT, RA-BISH. His voice is deep and guttural and he is speaking in Jetani.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Ra-Bish, take a squad and retrieve the Helix device.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

At once, my lord.

RA-BISH salutes and leaves the bridge. GAR-BAJ returns to the viewscreen and a guttural chuckle issues from his throat.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

RA-BISH and four Jetani WARRIORS materialize inside COYPU's laboratory. COYPU immediately crosses to a communicator on a wall.

COYPU

Security alert! Intruders have teleported into the lab section!

A clubbing blow from one of the WARRIORS sends him flying across the room.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

Cover the door as I prepare the Helix for teleportation.

The WARRIORS train their weapons on the lab's single set of double doors. RA-BISH crosses to a large, silver cylinder, covered in tubes and wires, and affixes a box to its side. He begins pressing buttons on the box.

The double doors burst open and Special Corps GUARDS flood in. They are immediately cut down by the energy bolts from the JETANI rifles. Another wave of GUARDS appears and one of the WARRIORS is hit by an energy bolt and slumps to the deck. This continues until only one WARRIOR remains.

RA-BISH

(into hand-held communicator -
subtitled)

Teleport! Leave the fallen!

RA-BISH, the lone WARRIOR and the SILVER CYLINDER shimmer and vanish in a flash of light.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

The BATTLECRUISER turns slowly in space and lumbers away from the asteroid base. Another squadron of FIGHTERS gives chase, but there is a bright flash from the huge vessel's engines and it disappears into hyperspace.

FADE OUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ - COYPU'S LAB

FADE IN:

PROFESSOR COYPU is sporting a large bandage on his head. INSKIPP, JIM and ANGELINA are inspecting the void where the silver cylinder once stood.

JIM

What the hell's a Helix?

COYPU

The Time Helix is a device that enables the operator to open a portal in hyperspace that leads backwards in our space/time continuum.

JIM

A time machine? You're joking, right?

COYPU

I never joke about my work, Agent diGriz.

(he mops his brow with a handkerchief)

We found it inside an ancient, derelict spacecraft in the outer systems about a year ago. Amazing technology, completely non-human and dating from long before the days of the Colonial Expansion. This is terrible.

JIM crosses to COYPU, leaving ANGELINA and INSKIPP in a silent discussion.

JIM

Terrible? How? So they can look back through time. What good will it do them?

COYPU

You misunderstand, my boy. If the Helix is correctly installed into a ship with a hyperdrive engine, it will be able to send that vessel back to any point in the past.

JIM

Ah... Imagine if they traveled back to the days before the Expansion and prevented humans from going on to dominate the galaxy. A Jetani Empire instead of a League? Gives me the willies just thinking about it.

INSKIPP and ANGELINA walk over to them, looking determined.

INSKIPP

One of the Jetani warriors survived. We've got him in a holding cell now. I think we should ask him about the intentions of his masters, don't you?

JIM

If he's willing to talk.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/PRISON CELL

The JETANI WARRIOR is stalking his cage and occasionally pounding his clawed fists into the bars. JIM and ANGELINA enter and approach the angry alien. It roars and rushes at them, flinging its arms through the bars, its yellow eyes sparkling viciously. JIM and ANGELINA stop at a safe distance.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

Release me, hooman!

JIM

I don't think so, bright eyes. Now, my friend, why did your people steal the Time Helix?

JETANI WARRIOR #1

No speak. Kill or release.

ANGELINA

(pulling out her gun and speaking in Jetani - subtitled)

That can be arranged. But you won't die quickly. You will suffer terribly and the dishonour to your brood will be great.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

(subtitled)

The human female knows our ways. How is this possible?

ANGELINA

(subtitled)

Never mind how I know. Tell us what we need and I will kill you quickly. A warrior's death. What are your people planning to do?

The JETANI WARRIOR begins to laugh, the sound throaty and filled with malice.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

No matter. Soon hoomans no more. Gar-Baj will rule. Jetani will be top species.
(long pause) Kill now, hooman! You said.

ANGELINA raises her pistol and aims it at the alien. After several seconds, she slips it back into its holster.

ANGELINA

I lied. Come on, Jim.

ANGELINA and JIM leave the Prison Section.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/INSKIPP'S OFFICE

JIM, ANGELINA and COYPU are sitting in front of INSKIPP's desk. INSKIPP is staring at them intently, his fingers arched in front of his face.

ANGELINA

I did some research on this Gar-Baj character. It seems he was an extremely wealthy, highly-placed aristocrat and top general in the Jetani military before their surrender after the Deneb Skirmishes. He never forgave his government for surrendering to 'inferior humans', as he put it. Did I mention he was rich?

JIM

The Deneb Skirmishes? They were over two hundred years ago!

ANGELINA

The Jetani have very a long lifespan. Gar-Baj is three hundred and twenty-seven years old and that's only equivalent to middle age for humans.

JIM

(smiling)

I did not know that.

ANGELINA

According to the Jetani Ruling Council, Gar-Baj resigned his commission and disappeared eighty years ago. I suggest he used that time to slowly, very slowly, construct the battlecruiser from plans he found in the League Archive, available to all citizens.

JIM

Can't knock his tenacity. So, he has a grudge against the League, has the financial resources to build his doomsday machine and now a means to execute his chilling plan. Did I miss anything?

INSKIPP

I'm not sure I should believe the testimony of a Jetani warrior, particularly one that has nothing to gain.

JIM

But it was your idea for us to question it!

INSKIPP

Yes... and that may have been a mistake on my part.

(he leans back in his chair)

No, I think it is more likely that this Gar-Baj is going to launch an attack against the League naval spacedock on Cetus Gamma III. That was his last known heading.

JIM

When did you turn from Inskipp the Uncatchable into Inskipp the Deluded Asshole?

INSKIPP

(shouting)

How dare you! I should have you...

JIM

Killed? Fine. Go ahead. Because if I'm right and that warrior was telling the truth, it won't mater anyway. Pretty soon, we'll all wink out of existence when that battlecruiser turns the birthplace of humanity into a pile of smouldering ash!

All falls quiet in the room. It last for several long seconds.

COYPU

(nervously)

If I may add?

(he pulls out a small holographic emitter and sets it on INSKIPP's desk. A stellar map appears in front of them)

If we project Gar-Baj's course beyond the Cetus Gamma system, it will bring them here.

(a red dot begins flashing)

This is a dead system now, but historians believe the third planet was once the original birthplace of humanity.

INSKIPP

Another one? What's it called?

JIM

Dirt or Earth or something. (pause) I'm not totally convinced either, but think about it. What other use could Gar-Baj have for the Time Helix? Why destroy a naval shipyard now, when he can destroy his enemies before they achieved stellar travel?

ANGELINA

Sir, the battlecruiser is big, but it's slow. It will take it several days to reach the planet Dirt.

JIM

Or Earth.

ANGELINA

Whatever. Jim and I could use our ship, get there before them, slip aboard and destroy the Helix.

INSKIPP

It's that simple, is it?

JIM

Well, sort of. What other choice do we have?

INSKIPP

How do you intend to 'slip aboard'? You saw what that ship did to our defences. It would destroy you before you even got close.

JIM smiles and looks to COYPU.

JIM

That's where the professor comes in.

FADE OUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

FADE IN:

GAR-BAJ is sitting in his command chair, watching the swirling vortices of hyperspace on the viewscreen. RA-BISH approaches and salutes.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

My lord, the Time Helix was retrieved undamaged and our scientists are working to integrate it into the ship's hyperdrive. (pause) Unfortunately, that means we will have to exit hyperspace.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

No. We cannot give the humans time to reach Earth before us. We shall remain in hyperspace.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

But, sire, the danger...

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

You have your orders, lieutenant.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

Yes, my lord.

RA-BISH leaves the bridge and we focus on GAR-BAJ's yellow eyes.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

We DISSOLVE to a pair of yellow, Jetani eyes. We pull back to reveal a Jetani lying on a bed in COYPU's laboratory. COYPU is examining the creature's eyes and teeth with a small flashlight. ANGELINA and INSKIPP are standing close by.

COYPU

Excellent! Better than I expected. Show me your teeth.

JIM

(muffled and displaying a set of sharp, Jetani teeth)
Better than you expected? I can hardly breathe and my eyes are in agony with these damn contact lenses.

COYPU

But you look like a Jetani, my boy. In particular, you are identical in appearance to the warrior in the prison section. That's all that matters. The servomotors in the snout are translating your lip movements perfectly. Now where have I put my probe?

JIM sits upright in bed and stretches out his new, reptilian arms. He picks up a small mirror from a tray beside the bed and looks at his reptilian facial features.

JIM

I look like shit.
(he presses his new skin with a clawed finger)
What is this crap, anyway?

ANGELINA

It's Synthetic Non-allergic Organic Tissue. Coypu invented it.

JIM

S.N.O.T., eh? And I wouldn't push the 'non-allergic' aspect either. I'm itching like hell. (to ANGELINA) How did I let you talk me into this?

JIM begins scratching his neck and COYPU swots his hand sharply.

COYPU

Don't scratch. The itching will subside in time.
(he jabs a needle into JIM's arm, making him yelp in pain)
This will temporarily alter your blood chemistry to mimic that of the Jetani warrior. In case they decide to perform a blood test on you.

JIM

(panicking)
Alter my blood chemistry? What the hell?

COYPU pats JIM on the shoulder gently.

COYPU

It will only last a week or so and then your blood will return to normal. (long pause) It may be painful when you urinate.

JIM

Aww, doc!

COYPU ignores him and attaches a small device to JIM's temple. Lights flash on it and JIM convulses, causing ANGELINA to step forward with concern. Then JIM relaxes and the lights stop flashing.

JIM

(in Jetani - subtitled)
What the hell was that?

ANGELINA grins at COYPU.

COYPU

I have implanted the Jetani language patterns from our friend downstairs into your cortex. You should now be fluent in the standard Jetani tongue.

ANGELINA

(subtitled)
Can you understand me?

JIM

(in English)
Perfectly, but I think you should have been coated in the green stuff. You speak the language already.

COYPU

The Jetani culture is male-dominated. Females are not allowed to serve in the military or even leave the family brood nest.

JIM

Figures. (pause) Do we know this joker's name? What if I'm asked for it?

ANGELINA

(smiling)
I'm sure you can work around that, Slippery Jim.

COYPU points to a screen across the room.

COYPU

The warrior's armour is behind that screen. I think we should see how you look in it.

JIM climbs off the bed and staggers across to the screen

JIM

Hells bells, doc, what now?

COYPU

The dizziness will pass. It's the chemical changes in your blood affecting your inner ear.

JIM

If you say so. (to ANGELINA) No peeking!

ANGELINA smiles wickedly and then affects an innocent expression, as if to say, 'As if I would.'

INSKIPP

Angelina, are you sure you want to go through with this? It all seems a little too risky.

ANGELINA

'Risk is part of the game.' You told me that when I was recruited. Besides, we have no choice.

JIM steps out from behind the screen, looking resplendent in the ornate Jetani armour. He does a twirl and ANGELINA giggles and applauds.

JIM

Well?

ANGELINA

Amazing. (she kisses COYPU on the cheek) You're a genius, professor.

COYPU

Unfortunately, I am painfully aware of that fact, my dear.

CUT.

EXT. HYPERSPACE

A HUGE EXPLOSION rocks the BATTLECRUISER as it rockets through hyperspace. Huge chunks of the ship's hull are flung in all directions and the swirling clouds of hyperspace dissipate as the ship returns to sub-light speeds.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is furious. He leaps from his command chair and grabs RA-BISH by the throat.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

What have your fools done? Go down and
kill the one responsible for this!

He flings RA-BISH across the bridge and the lieutenant
scurries from the room through a sliding door. Another
officer wheels up and salutes.

JETANI OFFICER

(subtitled)

We have entered normal space near the
Cetus Gamma system, my lord.

GAR-BAJ crosses to a flickering console and examines the
data flashing across the screen

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Good, the League Naval Dockyard has not
detected us. Hold this position for now.
If any League ships approach, destroy
them. (he jabs a button) Ra-Bish, get
that hyperdrive operational or your mate
will lay no more eggs!

CUT.

EXT. HYPERSPACE

JIM'S SPACESHIP glides serenely through the whirling
vortices of hyperspace. Its hull is pitted with holes and
streaked with scorch marks.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is piloting the ship. ANGELINA is sitting in the co-
pilot's chair, admiring his reptilian disguise.

ANGELINA

It's a good look for you. Particularly
the eyes. Very sexy. I've always had a
thing for Jetani eyes.

JIM

(looking up from the controls)

You know, you worry me sometimes.

ANGELINA laughs and gets from her chair. She crosses the
cabin, opens a cupboard and pulls out two plastic beakers.
She then crosses to a cabinet and extracts a large bottle of
something green. She pours a generous amount into each
beaker, replaces the bottle and hands one beaker to JIM.

JIM puts the cup to his mouth and immediately spills the liquid down his chin.

JIM

Oh, for crying out loud. I'll never get used to this!

ANGELINA coolly slips a straw into the beaker and JIM slurps merrily.

ANGELINA

You know, Jim. Inskipp was right about one thing.

JIM

(still slurping)
Hmm?

ANGELINA

This mission has a very low chance of success.

JIM

That's why he's contacted Admiral Lewis and had the League Navy start searching for Gar-Baj. If they drop out of hyperspace at any time, they'll get a heck of a shock.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

Three (3) LEAGUE FRIGATES roar into view, heading towards the BATTLECRUISER, which is still in normal space.

CUT.

INT. FRIGATE BRIDGE

The bridge of the lead FRIGATE is dark and somber. Human officers go about their duties with quiet efficiency. The captain is pacing nervously, though.

CAPTAIN

Hail them again.

An officer presses some buttons on his console.

OFFICER #1

No response, sir. Scans indicate they are charging weapons and screens.

The CAPTAIN stops pacing and sits in his command chair.

CAPTAIN

Activate defence systems.

OFFICER #1

Yes, sir. Systems ready. (pause) Sir,
the battlecruiser is in weapons range.

CAPTAIN

Very well, have the flotilla open fire.
Don't stop until that ship is in pieces.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

The NAVY SHIPS begin bombarding the BATTLECRUISER with energy beams and missiles. The massive vessel's defensive screens are not dented by the onslaught and three powerful particle beams stretch out into space, slicing each FRIGATE in two.

One of the Navy ships explodes, the remaining two drifting helplessly, leaving ship fragments, atmosphere and bodies in their wake.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

A JETANI OFFICER runs up to GAR-BAJ and salutes.

JETANI OFFICER

(subtitled)

Hyperdrive restored, sir. Helix fully
installed and operational.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Excellent. Resume course for Earth.
Maximum velocity.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

The battlecruiser glides through the remains of the Navy frigates and zips off into hyperspace, leaving death and destruction behind it.

FADE OUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is sleeping in the bunk area that adjoins the cockpit. He has a blanket over him and murmurs quietly. ANGELINA is at the flight controls. Hyperspace whirls outside the windows, casting ANGELINA's beautiful face in an eerie, purple glow.

She sets the controls to AUTOPILOT and rises from the pilot's seat. She stretches and crosses to the sleeping area. She watches JIM snoring slightly through his reptilian nose and smiles.

She sits on the bunk, waits a few seconds, then slides under the blanket beside JIM. His eyes flicker open and he looks startled at ANGELINA.

ANGELINA

(grinning)

How much of this green stuff did Coypu cover you with?

(we see her hand moving under the blanket and JIM catches his breath)

Not everything?

ANGELINA giggles and pulls the blanket over both of them.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The planet below us is not the EARTH we know. It is a barren, dead rock, pockmarked with craters and only retaining a tenuous, poisoned atmosphere.

The BATTLECRUISER looms into view, its engines booming. We fly around the massive, heavily-armed vessel, taking in its menacing bulk. Then we glide away to focus on a small spacecraft. This is JIM'S SPACESHIP, waiting patiently for the Jetani to arrive.

We swoop in to the cockpit and see JIM in his Jetani disguise and ANGELINA through the cockpit window. We pass through the glass and come to a rest behind JIM and ANGELINA, looking over their shoulders.

ANGELINA

They're charging weapons.

JIM presses a button on his console.

JIM

(subtitled and somewhat theatrical)

Mighty Gar-Baj, I bring a prisoner from the human enemy. I captured her and escaped from their fortress. Allow me to dock and I shall convey this gift to thee.

ANGELINA

(mouthing)

Thee?

JIM shrugs and flicks off the communicator panel. They WAIT patiently for several seconds, the only noise in the cockpit that of the sensors pinging quietly and the low throbbing of the engines.

GAR-BAJ

(O.S. subtitled)

Bring the human aboard.

JIM smiles and grabs the flight controls.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

JIM'S SPACESHIP manoeuvres around the huge warship. A set of massive doors slide open and the small ship glides into the BATTLECRUISER'S docking bay. The bay's huge doors then slide shut with a loud bang.

FADE OUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER ENGINE ROOM

RA-BISH is overseeing several JETANI SCIENTISTS as they make final checks on the TIME HELIX, now attached to the BATTLECRUISER'S hyperdrive engine.

He nods to one of the SCIENTISTS and crosses to a comms panel, pressing a button on its surface.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

My lord, the Helix is ready. Temporal coordinates are set and stable. The human security scan has been converted for Jetani DNA. We can jump on your order.

GAR-BAJ

(O.S. subtitled)

Good work, lieutenant. You may proceed.

RA-BISH turns to a console. A screen has the text (in English - it's an old, human battlecruiser, remember): DNA IDENT REQUIRED. Below this is an icon of a human hand. RA-BISH presses his scaly hand against the screen and the text changes to: DNA IDENT RECOGNIZED - TEMPORAL JUMP INITIATING.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER shimmers in space, then collapses in on itself, leaving nothing to suggest it had ever been there.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER DOCKING BAY

JIM and ANGELINA are walking away from JIM'S SPACESHIP when the SCREEN SHIMMERS and they stagger for a moment. They look to each other, shocked.

JIM

Shit. They've used the Helix.

ANGELINA

We're out of time. Literally.

They DASH out of the DOCKING BAY only to be met by a squad of heavily-armed JETANI WARRIORS. Their weapons are aimed directly at JIM and ANGELINA.

JETANI WARRIOR #2

(in broken English)

Surrender, hooman.

JIM

(subtitled)

Have no fear, thee. Thy hooman ist thou prisoner. I am to take her to our lord, Gar-Baj.

ANGELINA stares at JIM with a bemused look. JETANI WARRIOR #2 also seems puzzled. He glares at JIM for several seconds then strikes JIM across the temple with the butt of his plasma rifle, sending him reeling. He grunts an order and the remaining WARRIORS grab JIM and ANGELINA and drag them away.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

EARTH hangs in space, a beautiful, blue-green orb. We zoom in slowly to reveal the International Space Station. We continue to move in to a small, round window and an astronaut peering out.

CUT.

INT. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

An UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT floats, in zero gravity, over to his UNNAMED AMERICAN colleague looking out of the ISS observation window. The interior of the station is brightly-lit and they are wearing light clothing.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT

(with a thick, Russian accent)

What is it? Do you see something out there?

UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT

I'm not sure. It was like the stars twinkled.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT

(smiling and patting his colleague on the shoulder)

The stars don't twinkle up here, my friend. Maybe it was moisture on the glass...

There is a brilliant flash and the BATTLECRUISER shimmers into existence, filling the window's field of view.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT

(in Russian)

Shit! What in God's name is that?

They both reel back from the window, the UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT pulling on a headset. The UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT does likewise.

UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT

Houston! Houston , do you read me?

A burst of static has him tearing the headset off. It floats away in zero gravity. He looks to his colleague.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT

Korolyov? Are you receiving? An unidentified spacecraft has appeared.

A similar burst of static makes him wince and he, too, removes his headset.

They look to each other, unable to comprehend what is happening. They float back to the window and gawp at the massive BATTLECRUISER.

UNNAMED AMERICAN COSMONAUT

Maybe they're friendly?

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

JIM and ANGELINA are shoved onto their knees in front of GAR-BAJ. He growls at them menacingly. RA-BISH enters the bridge and appears surprised at the presence of the humans. He recovers quickly and assumes his station.

JIM

(subtitled)

My lord, I beseech thee. I am but a humble servant of thou divine might.

ANGELINA

(whispering in English)
What the hell are you doing, Jim? What's
with all the thees and thous?

JIM

(whispering in English)
I'm speaking like a Jetani.

ANGELINA

(whispering in English)
You're speaking like a Jetani retard!

GAR-BAJ

(in perfect English)
He is attempting to make me look like a
fool, Special Corp agent, Angelina,
(beat) isn't it? I suspect your
Professor Coypu tried to imprint the
Jetani language into your friend's
cortex. He should know better.

ANGELINA

How do you know who I am?

GAR-BAJ simply smiles at ANGELINA, his needle-like teeth
glinting in the semi-darkness between his reptilian lips.

GAR-BAJ

If he was the genius he claims, Coypu
would have known that language imprints
tend to degrade quickly, resulting in
garbled nonsense.

ANGELINA

The Corps have been using the technology
for years.

GAR-BAJ

But not on the Jetani. Our language is
(pause) bothersome. (he smiles again)

GAR-BAJ looks down at JIM, grips the feathered crest on the
top of JIM'S head and pulls with force. The fake skin tears
at the neck and peels away, leaving JIM looking very human,
save for his yellow, Jetani contact lenses.

JIM

(sarcastically in English)
No blood test, then?

GAR-BAJ ignores him and points to the viewscreen and barks
an order in Jetani. An image of the ISS in low Earth orbit
appears.

GAR-BAJ

See, Agent diGriz. The planet Earth.
Ancestral home of humankind. Birthplace
of the most insidious plague in galactic
history.

JIM

You mean the planet Dirt?

GAR-BAJ

(screaming and sticking his face
close to JIM'S)
EARTH, you stupid hooman!

JIM

Your accent's slipping, Garby.
(he gets to his feet)
Okay. You've made your point. I'm sure
that, under the circumstances, the
League will listen to any of your
demands...

GAR-BAJ smacks JIM with a heavily-armoured forearm and JIM is sent flying across the bridge. JIM shakes his head, blood seeps from his lower lip. He wipes it with the back of his still-reptilian hand, realizes this and rips off the synthetic skin and plucks out the contact lenses.

JIM blinks several times, gets up and casually walks back to GAR-BAJ.

JIM

So, you destroy mankind before they
reach the stars. Change history. I've
read about this in science-fiction
books. Never works out for the bad guys.

GAR-BAJ

We will see, diGriz.
(turns to RA-BISH)
Destroy that station.

RA-BISH hesitates and GAR-BAJ casts him a simmering glare.
RA-BISH barks an order to an underling in Jetani.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION is dwarfed by the hulking mass of the BATTLECRUISER. A searing particle beam lances out, slicing through the station. Oxygen and fuel tanks explode as the beam continues cutting. Within seconds, nothing is left of the ISS but spinning debris and a severed arm with an American flag patch on its sleeve.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

JIM is seething. He tries to rush GAR-BAJ, but two WARRIORS grab his arms. He struggles, but their grip on him is too tight. ANGELINA looks on, seemingly maintaining her cool composure.

JIM

You murdering bastard!

GAR-BAJ watches the remains of the ISS for several seconds, then turns to his human captives.

GAR-BAJ

Murderer? How many innocent Jetani were murdered in our war with the League?

JIM

You started that war, Gar-Baj! Your leader's lust for power almost destroyed your race. He used civilians as shields, placed them in harm's way. You were there! You saw what happened!

GAR-BAJ

Yes, I was there. I saw my great race humbled and defeated by a screeching tribe of primates. Before you humans, we were the only power in the galaxy. Our technology was centuries beyond yours.

(he smiles grimly)

Who do you think constructed the Time Helix?

JIM looks shocked. He shrugs off the WARRIORS, but remains in his position. GAR-BAJ signals for them to retreat and they take a single step back.

JIM

The derelict that the Corps found was Jetani?

GAR-BAJ

Your race is not the only one with a long history, human! It was the *Black Sword*, our flagship,
(he raises his arms, indicating the BATTLECRUISER around them)
twice the size of this crude, human vessel and five times more powerful.

DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

We are looking at a huge WARSHIP being constructed on a large ASTEROID. The inky-black sky is filled with many more chunks of rock. GAR-BAJ provides a voice-over for this segment.

GAR-BAJ

(V.O.)

The *Black Sword* would have been our killer stroke against your empire over two-thousand years before you were born. If completed, her captain would have used the Helix and taken her back in time to your past and destroyed your world, thus ensuring our domination of the stars.

A FLEET OF WARLORD CLASS BATTLECRUISERS drops of out hyperspace above the ASTEROID and immediately begins pummeling the JETANI WARSHIP. Huge explosions rip across the ASTEROID and the WARSHIP is dislodged from its construction moorings, crashing down onto the rocky surface below. Their mission successful, the BATTLECRUISERS vanish back into hyperspace.

GAR-BAJ

(V.O.)

Developing the Time Helix had consumed our resources to breaking point. It was our last hope for victory. Our fleets were decimated by your human numbers and the story of the *Black Sword* passed into myth.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. BATTLECRUISER BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ stares out at Earth.

GAR-BAJ

Soon the human germ will be gone. (turns to RA-BISH) Begin targeting the major population centres.

RA-BISH

My lord, scans show that the larger cities are several kilometres in size. The particle beams will require time to fully charge.

GAR-BAJ

Time is something we have plenty of, lieutenant. Proceed.

RA-BISH casts a glance at JIM and ANGELINA. JIM notices the look in RA-BISH'S eyes and steps forward.

JIM

Gar-Baj, the humans of this time number in the billions. They are spread over the entire planet. How can you possibly hope to destroy them all?

GAR-BAJ turns from the viewscreen, his yellow eyes glinting.

GAR-BAJ

Oh, I don't intend committing genocide. I think a billion or so deaths will be enough.

RA-BISH

Weapons charging, my lord. If you permit, I need to check on the status of the Helix.

GAR-BAJ nods and RA-BISH exits the bridge.

ANGELINA

What about us? Why don't you just kill us now and get it over with.

GAR-BAJ smiles menacingly.

GAR-BAJ

I have no intention of killing you. Yet.

GAR-BAJ gestures with a hand and two of the WARRIORS grab JIM and ANGELINA and drag them from the bridge.

GAR-BAJ turns his attention back to the viewscreen. In the distance, several small points of light appear.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - CORRIDOR

The WARRIORS frog march JIM and ANGELINA down a long, dark corridor. They are side-by-side with the WARRIORS behind them.

JIM

(whispering)

Did you notice Gar-Baj's lieutenant?

ANGELINA nods.

ANGELINA

He didn't seem to like the orders he was given. We need to get down to the engine room.

JIM winks at her and they continue walking. Suddenly, JIM trips and sprawls on the floor. One of the WARRIORS stands over him, aiming his weapon at JIM. He grunts something in Jetani, but before he can finish, JIM has kicked the rifle away and taken the WARRIORS legs out from under him.

ANGELINA also acts quickly in the confusion, grabbing the other WARRIOR'S head and twisting it violently. There is a sickening crack and the alien slumps to the deck.

JIM, in the meantime, is rolling about with the first WARRIOR. The stronger alien soon gets the upper hand and clasps his sharp claws around JIM'S throat.

JIM begins to change a shade of purple when an energy blast rings out and the WARRIOR slumps forward. JIM rolls the dead alien off him, puffing and panting. He sees ANGELINA standing with a Jetani rifle.

JIM

(panting)

Thanks.

ANGELINA

(smiling)

No problem.

ANGELINA helps JIM to his feet and they set off down the corridor.

JIM

Now, where the hell is the engine room?

ANGELINA

The schematics I memorised said it was at the back of the ship. We can use the teleporter to get there quickly. There's a station this way.

They duck down another corridor and enter a small, dimly-lit chamber. At the centre is a square, glowing pad and beside that, on the wall, is a control panel.

JIM

And you memorised how to work this, I hope?

ANGELINA

Mostly.

JIM

Oh, what the hell.

They step onto the pad and ANGELINA presses a single button, marked 'ENGINE ROOM'. JIM rolls his eyes and prepares for teleportation.

They begin to shimmer and fade, but the room rocks violently and sparks fly from the control panel. Then they are gone.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is laughing out loud as fantastically brilliant explosions overload the viewscreen.

GAR-BAJ

Look at them. They fling arrows at us.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My Lord, they are firing small nuclear missiles. Our shields are holding, but we have some minor systems being affected.

The explosions die down and the viewscreen returns to normal, displaying Earth once more.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

My lord, the weapons are charged and the city they call Tokyo has been targeted.
(pause) However, I think...

GAR-BAJ

Fire!

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER slowly turns in space, its main, forward guns trained on the planet below. Four searing green particle beams reach out from the ship and slice through the atmosphere. The beams are constant for several seconds.

Far below, the city of TOKYO ceases to exist.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ watches the destruction of Tokyo with satisfaction.

GAR-BAJ

(not turning from the viewscreen)
Set course for the next largest city.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Yes, my lord. We will be in firing position in seventeen minutes.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)
My lord, the weapons require several minutes to refresh after a sustained discharge.

GAR-BAJ

Very well, lieutenant. (turns to the JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER) Are the humans settled in the brig?

The OFFICER checks his console and his eyes widen. He looks up at GAR-BAJ nervously.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, they have escaped.

CUT.

EXT. RACHEL, NEVADA - STATE ROUTE 375 - DAY

The sun is blazing down on the Nevada desert. A highway stretches into the distance in both directions, its black surface dusty with blown sand. A green road sign declares that it is 'EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY 375'. Not far from the road is a small collection of white, one-storey buildings. This is the town of Rachel.

Beside the road sign, a small dust devil begins to form. It whirls and eddies. Then electrical fire reaches out, sparking against the sign. There is an audible pop and JIM and ANGELINA appear, coughing and wheezing.

JIM

(doubled over)
What the hell happened?

He looks up, scanning the area with his eyes.

JIM

Er, this isn't the engine room. Which button did you push again?

ANGELINA

Ohhhhh dear.

She pulls a small data pad out of her pocket and begins tapping the screen.

JIM

That's all you have to say? 'Ohhhhh dear'? (he looks around, sees the road sign) Were they expecting us?

ANGELINA

(reading from her data pad)
Crap. There was an explosion on the ship just as we teleported. We really should be dead. How did we end up here?

JIM

Where's here?

ANGELINA

(looking around)
At a guess, I'd say we're on the planet Dirt.

JIM

Earth.

ANGELINA gives him a sarcastic smile. She sees Rachel in the near distance and points it out to JIM.

ANGELINA

Well, I guess we head over there and talk to the locals. See if we can find a way back on to the battlecruiser.

As they begin walking towards Rachel, a huge truck roars past, blaring its horn and startling them.

JIM

What the hell?

ANGELINA

(her nose wrinkling)
Oh, that stinks. What are they using for fuel?

JIM

Probably some form of simple fusion engine.

They watch the truck pull to a halt outside a nearby building.

They continue walking and Rachel grows larger in front of them. They see a building with a sign outside identifying it as 'The Little A'Le'Inn'. Several automobiles and a truck are parked in the lot in front of the building.

JIM and ANGELINA approach the building and a man exits, holding a burger and a bottle of Coke. He looks at JIM, who is in his Jetani armour, and ANGELINA, in her slinky, black catsuit, and shakes his head. He climbs into the truck and begins eating his lunch as JIM and ANGELINA stare at him through his open window.

After several seconds, he sighs and looks down at them.

TRUCK DRIVER

Look, I get it. Your costumes are very good. Now can I eat in peace?

JIM

Sir, I apologise for staring. (he looks down at his armour) And for my frankly ridiculous get-up, but there is a rational explanation. You see, we were on the Jetani battlecruiser and accidentally teleported..

The TRUCK DRIVER shakes his head and fires up the truck's engine.

TRUCK DRIVER

(to himself as he drives away)
Unbelievable. Every damn place I go...

JIM and ANGELINA watch as the truck disappears into the distance, dust plumes in its wake.

ANGELINA

What an asshole.

JIM

Yeah, he was very rude.

ANGELINA

Not him, you idiot. You! This is Earth before they made contact with off-world non-humans.

JIM

(pointing to the sign up the road)
But the sign?

ANGELINA rolls her eyes and heads off to the building from where the TRUCK DRIVER emerged. JIM follows her, scratching the remains of the fake skin on his neck.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER reorients itself again, its weapons now pointing down to a new location on the planet's surface. The particle beams reach out once more.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is seated in his command chair. His satisfaction with destroying another city is tempered by the loss of his human prisoners.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Mexico City is destroyed, my lord.
Another wave of missiles are
approaching.

Explosions rock the ship, once again overloading the viewscreen. A bank of consoles at the rear of the bridge erupts in a shower of sparks.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

My lord, the cumulative effects of the nuclear explosions is having an effect. Our shields are down to ninety-three percent. Weapons will take longer to recharge by a factor of thirty percent.

GAR-BAJ

Very well, Ra-Bish. (to JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER) Target the next wave of missiles when they appear. Ensure that they do not detonate close to the ship.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, our defensive batteries are inoperable due to the energy requirements of the main guns.

GAR-BAJ

Move us to a higher orbit, out of range of their missiles.

CUT.

INT. RACHAEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN - DAY

ANGELINA pulls open the door and steps inside the cool interior of the Little A'Le'Inn. JIM follows her, his armour clanking in the quiet of the inn. It is surprisingly light inside. At the far end of a long counter are shelves with various types of 'alien and UFO' merchandise and clothing.

There are only three (3) people inside, two (2) customers, both male (JOHN and RICH), seated together on stools by the counter and a woman (PAT) behind the counter. PAT sees JIM and ANGELINA and smiles knowingly.

A television is quietly playing a sporting event in the background.

PAT

Come on in, sweethearts. Have a seat.
(she points to some tables away from the counter) What can I getcha?

JIM and ANGELINA cautiously move to the tables and sit down, facing the door. PAT waddles over with a notepad and pen. As she does so, JOHN ducks around the counter and increases the volume on the TV so he can hear the game.

PAT

John, don't go behind the counter! (she looks to JIM) Men! (smiling genuinely) I recommend the 'Alien Burger' and a beer. Are you drivin'? (they shake their heads). Beer it is then.

PAT looks JIM up and down, the smile never leaving her face.

PAT

Sweetheart, I've seen some great costumes over the years, but yours is surely the best yet. You folks over from the convention in Laughlin?

JIM

No, ma'am. (he spies the clothing racks at the back of the inn) Actually, this stuff is making me itch. How much for some native dress?

PAT

Native dress? My, you are taking it seriously, aincha? Well, you've come to the right place. We see all sorts of weird stuff in the sky round here. Spacecraft and such. Mostly from the base, we reckon. (she looks JIM up and down again) Shirt, pants and cap. Forty-five dollars for cash. Fifty if you're payin' by credit card.

ANGELINA pulls out a wad of League credits and shows them to PAT, who laughs without malice.

PAT

I'm sorry, hun. It's gotta be US dollars.

JIM

I'm afraid we don't have any local currency yet, ma'am.

PAT

Oh, just flown in from abroad, huh? I thought your accents were not from around these parts. (thinks for a moment) Tell you what, sweetheart. If you're done with your costume, I'll trade you for the clothes straight up and I'll throw in the burgers and beer too.

JIM smiles broadly and stands up.

JIM

You have a deal, ma'am.

PAT

(winks at JIM)

You can call me Pat, honey. Just go and select something you like. There's a changing room in the back. I'll be right back with your food.

PAT ambles away to the kitchen and JIM and ANGELINA cross to the racks of clothing.

JIM

I have no idea what to choose.

ANGELINA

Something inconspicuous.

JIM ogles at ANGELINA in her sleek, black catsuit and grins.

JIM

Maybe you should grab something while you're here.

ANGELINA

(whispering)

I will not be seen in native clothing. I would rather walk around naked.

JIM

Hell, yeah. (he grabs a denim shirt, jeans and a baseball cap with 'AREA 51' stencilled on the front) When on Gallinia Prime...

JIM slips into the changing room, leaving ANGELINA to peruse the various alien and UFO merchandise. JOHN sidles up beside her. He is wearing dirty work clothes and has grease on his face. He is obviously a mechanic of some sort.

JOHN

Looking at you, darlin', I'd say your one of them yoofoe nuts from Laughlin.

ANGELINA turns to him, her nose wrinkling.

ANGELINA

I'm sorry, a what nut?

JOHN

You know? U-F-O. Unidentified Flying Objects. Little green men?

JOHN points to the merchandise, most of which depicts the classic 'Grey' alien, with large, bulbous head and oversized, black eyes.

ANGELINA

Oh, those? I think they were called the Prellini. They were pretty much wiped out during the first Imperial Expansion.

JOHN eyes her suspiciously.

JOHN

Huh?

ANGELINA

Oh, I'm sorry. That has happened for you yet. Temporal mechanics wasn't my strong suit at the Special Corps training academy.

JOHN

Corps? You military? (turns to RICH)
Hey, Rich, I think this gal's from the base. Haven't you been wantin' to talk to one of them? Rich here runs a website dedicated to (waggles his fingers in the air) Area 51.

RICH puts down his beer and slides from his stool. He is blond with blue eyes and quite handsome. He is wearing almost identical clothes to the ones that JIM has just chosen.

RICH

What's that, John?

JOHN

I think the lady and her beau are from Groom Lake.

RICH

(to ANGELINA)

You from the base? You sure don't look Air Force.

JIM emerges from the changing room and approaches the trio. He looks RICH up and down and then checks out his own clothes.

JIM

(extending a hand)
Jim diGriz. This is my partner,
Angelina.

RICH accepts JIM'S hand and shakes it firmly. JOHN looks on.

RICH

We were just asking your partner if you
were from the base.

JIM

I'm afraid I can't answer that.
Planetary Security.

RICH

You mean National Security.

JIM

(smiling)
That too.

They continue to stare at each other, mirror images of one another.

ANGELINA

Oh, for Pete's sake. Rich, is it? Rich,
Pat, mentioned spacecraft from the base.
Can you show us how to reach it?

RICH looks nervous for a moment. JOHN begins sidling towards the counter, where a telephone sits.

RICH

Wait a minute. Who are you guys? If
you're not from the base...

A news report suddenly flashes onto the television in the background, interrupting the game. They all turn in unison to watch.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

This is a breaking news flash. The
cities of Tokyo and Mexico City have
been destroyed. Reports are sketchy, but
survivors are speaking of green beams of
light coming out of the sky and reducing
the cities to ash.

JIM and ANGELINA look at each other in horror.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

The quickly-formed emergency governments of both Japan and Mexico are meeting in session, but we understand from the State Department that terrorism has not been ruled out at this stage.

JOHN picks up the phone and dials. He speaks quietly and we cannot hear his words.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

We can now bring you these exclusive images of the attack on Tokyo. The shots were taken from an airliner on approach to Narita National Airport. We must caution our viewers that what they are about to see may be disturbing.

The TV image flickers and we CUT TO fullscreen, shaky, uneven footage through an airliner window. It was shot using a cellphone. Far below, Tokyo is in darkness, the city's lights stretching to the horizon.

Suddenly, four (4) intense, green energy beams appear, striking the ground and creating a huge wave of destruction across the night-time cityscape. We hear screams of horror from inside the plane and the footage shakes more wildly.

We hear the jet's engines strain as the pilot veers away from one of the particle beams. The beam passes very close, almost filling the window, and then the plane is safely by.

The NEWSREADER reappears, also FULLSCREEN

NEWSREADER

All flights into Tokyo and Mexico City have been rerouted to alternative airports. (he touches his ear) We... we are now going over to the White House, where a statement is about to be made.

We CUT TO to the WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM. We see the podium with the presidential seal. A man walks from the left and takes position behind the lectern. A caption on the Tv reads: 'JAMES MCDONALD - US SECRETARY OF STATE'

JAMES MCDONALD

Ladies and gentlemen. Please be seated. I shall make a short statement. There will be no questions. (he waits for the low murmuring to cease) At 12:05, Eastern Time, the International Space Station was destroyed by an unknown force. All personnel on board were killed. Our deep space radar detected a huge, alien vessel in orbit. (the room erupts and MCDONALD waits for calm) In conjunction with our allies around the world, including Russia and China, we launched ICBMs, but the alien ship was not, I repeat not destroyed. At 12:17, Eastern Time, Tokyo was destroyed by some kind of energy beams from the alien spacecraft. Seventeen minutes later, Mexico City was destroyed. Our analysts have determined that our attackers are targeting the largest urban centres, making Mumbai, India, and New York City the next targets. Steps have been taken to evacuate these locations. We urge that people remain calm. If you are in one of the larger cities, make your way safely out of the danger areas. Military personnel are being deployed to assist you. The president has been in discussions with our allies and the United Nations Secretary-General and a global state of martial law has been declared. Unless you live in the larger conurbations, please remain indoors. That is all.

CUT.

INT. RACHAEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA stare at each other. JOHN replaces the phone's handset. RICH has sat back down on his stool, still staring at JIM and ANGELINA.

JOHN

Sheriff's on the way. I think he might want to talk to you two.

JIM

(to RICH)

We don't have time for this! You have to get us to that base.

RICH

I don't think I can. It's a long drive and there's security all round. If we go too far, they'll shoot on sight.

ANGELINA

(angry)

You stupid, backward ape! Don't you get it? Can't you see what's going on? We have to get to a spacecraft and get aboard that battlecruiser so we can stop more cities being destroyed!

RICH looks to JOHN, who shakes his head. RICH ponders for a long moment.

RICH

Okay, I'll get you as far as I can.

JOHN

No, Rich! The sherrif...

RICH

The sherrif can kiss my ass. (to JIM and ANGELINA) Come on.

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH hurry out of the inn, just as PAT appears from the kitchen with two plates filled with burgers and fries.

PAT

Here you go, sweethearts. (looks to see only JOHN) Where'd they go?

JOHN

To get themselves killed. (eyes food)
Those paid for?

CUT.

EXT. RACHEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN PARKING LOT - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA follow RICH to a dusty, terracotta Ford Escort, parked close to the inn's doors. The car's windows are rolled down. He pulls open the driver's door and climbs in. JIM and ANGELINA stand outside, looking in at the back seat, which is filled with UFO magazines and all manner of papers, CDs and cassette tapes.

RICH

Oh, just shove all that to the side.
(when they don't move) Get in. The door
handle. There.

JIM pulls at the scratched, plastic handle and the door
creaks open. He and ANGELINA climb in and, after shoving
some RICH'S stuff to one side, sit down.

RICH starts the engine and begins backing out of the parking
space. As he does so, the sheriff's car pulls in front of
the inn and a large-bellied man, with a sheriff's badge and
a large, wide-brimmed hat, climbs out. He enters the inn.

RICH

We'd better go before John tells the
sheriff we just left.

RICH casually, but quickly, drives away, heading roughly
south from the inn.

CUT.

INT. RICH'S CAR - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA seem uncomfortable in the backseat of
RICH'S Escort.

RICH

(keeping his eyes on the road)
Sorry about the transport. As you might
guess, researching secret bases doesn't
pay too good.

ANGELINA

(moving a sticky burger wrapper
with thumb and forefinger)
Indeed. (whispering to JIM) Can we trust
this person?

JIM

(smiling - whispering)
Sure. He has great taste in clothing.
What's not to trust? (to RICH - speaking
normally) How far is it to the base?

RICH

About two miles to the Black Mailbox and
then another twenty-five miles or so to
the base itself. Not that we'll get that
far.

ANGELINA

(whispering)
What's a mile?

JIM shrugs.

JIM

How long will it take?

RICH

In this thing? If we don't get picked up, maybe an hour. If we do get arrested and they don't shoot us, it might be a whole lot quicker!

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY - DAY

RICH steers the Ford past a white mailbox and onto a dirt road that leads into the distance.

RICH

As you know, the black mailbox is actually white now. The owners thought it would confuse the ufologists.

JIM

The whatologists?

RICH

(speaking normally without fear)
You're aliens, aren't you? (pause) Don't worry, I won't wig out or anything. Are you Nordics? Or genetically-engineered human-Grey hybrids?

ANGELINA

I have no idea what you're saying.

RICH

(smiling)
Sure.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

The Ford Escort zooms away, leaving a trail of billowing dust behind it.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER assumes its new position over Mumbai, India. We CLOSE UP on the huge particle cannons at the front of the ship and hear them cycling up. Suddenly an explosion rips through a section of the ship and one of the cannons shatters, huge sections of twisted metal drifting away into space.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINE ROOM

The engine room is a scene of panic. Fires blaze in several places and RA-BISH runs to an intercom, his face grimy and scratched. He presses the button on the intercom.

RA-BISH

My lord, there has been an accident. One of the cooling ducts ruptured as the main guns cycled. We have many dead down here. I also think one of the forward cannons has been damaged.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is furious. He leaps from his command chair and stalks across to an engineering console. We see a diagram of the ship with several red areas highlighting critical damage.

GAR-BAJ

What happened, Ra-Bish? How could those puny human missiles cause this kind of damage?

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

I do not know, sire. We are effecting repairs, but it will be several hours before we can fire again.

GAR-BAJ thumps the console, cracking the clear covering.

GAR-BAJ

Work quickly, Ra-Bish, or your mate will never lay eggs again.

The JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER appears at GAR-BAJ'S side, holding a data tablet.

GAR-BAJ

What is it?

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

(handing GAR-BAJ the tablet)

I don't think it was the humans that caused the damage, my lord.

GAR-BAJ looks at the tablet. His yellow eyes narrow and he hisses between his needle-like teeth.

GAR-BAJ

Sabotage! We have a traitor on board!

He slams his fist down on the console again, this time smashing right through the covering and causing flashing sparks to erupt.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

RICH'S car zips by a sign, stating that they are entering a restricted area.

CUT.

INT. RICH'S CAR - DAY

RICH points to a white, SUV parked on a hillside.

RICH

See that? Camo-dudes. They'll have informed their superiors that we're here. Expect us to get stopped any minute.

As if on cue, the SUV begins rolling down the hill straight towards them.

RICH

Oh crap. Here they come. I'd better turn around.

JIM

No! Keep going. We have to get to that base one way or another.

RICH sighs and stomps his foot on the gas.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

RICH'S car speeds along, kicking up dust. The white SUV careers down the hill towards it. It pulls in behind the Escort and begins to chase it. A pair of blue lights, under the front grille of the SUV, begins to flash and a chirruping siren is heard.

We CUT TO a shot of RICH driving hard, his face terrified. Then we CUT TO the car screeching round a bend, the SUV in hot pursuit. We CUT TO JIM and ANGELINA, seemingly unperplexed by the high-speed chase.

We CUT TO a shot of the speedometer reaching '100'.

We CUT TO EXT. Suddenly, a heavily-armed Apache helicopter descends in front of RICH'S car and THE CAR skids sideways, coming to a halt a short distance from the chopper.

The SUV screeches to a halt behind the Ford and two camouflage-garbed security men climb out. We follow them to RICH'S car, their handguns drawn. As they near the vehicle, RICH rolls down the window.

RICH
(smiling weakly)
Is there a problem, officers?

CUT.

TO BE CONTINUED...