

HELSTAF

by

WH CLARK

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - DAY

A ChinaPeace swift boat cruises the shoreline. JACKIE (24, Asian) studies a GPS navigation map on the dash.

JACKIE

We're far enough away now. They'll never figure out where we dropped off the package.

BRUCE

Still, we better not break radio silence yet.

BRUCE (35, Asian) steers through calm seas. They approach a remote island as the sun sets, putting the mountainous terrain in colorful silhouette.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Wait! What was that? A flash of light - did you see it?

Bruce points toward a tall, shiny object jutting above the island terrain. Jackie screws a zoom lens onto a video camera, stands up, steadies herself, and zooms in.

JACKIE

Looks like a water tower.

Jackie shows Bruce the video screen. Immediately, he punches the gas - full-throttle roar.

BRUCE

It's one of those damn long-range microwave surveillance towers!

GUNSHOTS sound. There's a flash to starboard.

A DESTROYER appears, heading for them at flank speed. The ship is painted black from stem to stern. Crew members scurrying into action wear all-black uniforms.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Send the video out. Hurry!

Frantic, Jackie works the controls at a communications console.

JACKIE

They're jamming all frequencies.

INT. ANTARCTICA - ICE STATION TERROR - LAB/OFFICE - NIGHT

WACO (35, strong, rugged, vague southern accent), watching the previous scenes on a large TV screen from an easy chair, has a bowl of popcorn in his lap.

Waco feeds bits of popcorn to a vague shape on the floor. Only its orange beak is visible. He switches channels.

ON TV SCREEN - NEWSCAST

Publicity clips show a graphic of the solar system, with a giant COMET OF PLASMA breaking off the sun and streaming directly for Earth.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

Science missions from the U.S. and China are converging on the South Pole to study a giant solar flare coming in a few days, the largest solar superstorm in history.

A video simulation shows the huge solar flare crashing into Earth, shorting out the International Space Station, the Hubble Telescope, and thousands of satellites.

BBC NEWS

The last solar superstorm to hit Earth was in 1859. There was a very close call in 2012. If this one hits square-on, it'll obliterate our electronic infrastructure. It'll take decades to recover.

Switch to a frazzled reporter on the White House lawn.

BBC REPORTER

Scientists are totally caught by surprise. There's no way to predict these major solar flare events. At most we get, like, three days notice. Max. They tell me only the paranoid lunatic fringe would prepare for an event like this.

Videos of hearings in Congress, President Trump, and large, violent protests on the streets in Kiev, Ukraine.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

Just in. Investigations in Ukraine following corruption allegations made in the impeachment trial of Donald Trump have uncovered two missing Soviet-era nuclear weapons.

Grainy black and white images of military personnel protecting a large stockpile of bombs, missiles, and armaments, all with nuclear hazard signals.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

Ukraine had almost two thousand nuclear warheads after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They were turned over to Russia in the Budapest Agreement, signed in 1994.

ON TV SCREEN - TONGA ISLAND

Clear images appear from the ChinaPeace swift boat. Firing constantly, the destroyer gains on them.

BRUCE

We shouldn't panic. If we run, they'll know for sure. Chill.

Jackie zooms in on the destroyer, flying a black flag.

JACKIE

It all depends who they are. Americans, we can bluff. Oh, God. Their flag - it's Godzilla!

BRUCE

It's the Black Dragons!

Artillery shells EXPLODE all around the swift boat.

BACK TO SCENE

Waco leans forward, tense, wrapped up in the action.

ON TV SCREEN - TONGA ISLAND

The destroyer comes into view. COL. JINN (40, thin, gaunt face, all-black Special Forces military fatigues, halting Chinese accent) stands on the bridge.

A flag, with a Dragon-esque icon, flutters behind him.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Every GPS satellite has an emergency frequency that lets you upload an S.O.S. Hack them!

In the distance, the ballistic missile ROARS to life and lifts off in a plume of fire and smoke. Bruce's bloody face appears on the screen.

BRUCE

They're onto you, Dr. Doom. Watch  
your six!

The screen is SPLATTERED with fresh, bright-red blood.

BACK TO SCENE

Apprehensive and tense, Waco stares at the screen, talking to the shadow of a pet nearby.

WACO

Relax, Zeppo. It's just Panda News  
Network, the underground in Red  
China. Fake blood. Nice sheen,  
though - excellent viscosity.

Holding his stomach, Waco stands up and hurries into a nearby bathroom and throws up. A small shadow of a pet paddles behind Waco.

Waco steps out of the bathroom and turns on overhead lights. The large space is illuminated with hanging pendants. It's partitioned into an apartment, lab/office, and shop spaces.

Waco punches a couple of buttons on the TV remote, and a block of text appears on the screen:

"BROADCAST FREQUENCY: . . . searching . . . "

The readout steadies on a single number. Waco pulls out a "RADIO FREQUENCY REFERENCE MANUAL" and flips through it.

WACO (CONT'D)

I so have a bad feeling about this.

The pet he's addressing and has been feeding is ZEPPPO, a Gentoo penguin. The animal sits in a deep pan of crushed ice, munching on popcorn right out of Waco's bowl.

Waco rushes over and grabs the bowl away from Zeppo.

WACO (CONT'D)

Stop! It wasn't a movie... Shoulda  
known it wasn't Hollywood blood.

Zeppo glares at him.

WACO (CONT'D)

Popcorn's bad for your digestion.

Zeppo acts flustered, climbs out of his big tub of ice, and heads toward an outside door. Waco follows him slowly.

WACO (CONT'D)

I wish I could just put all this  
behind me and go home, too.

A GUST of wind kicks the door open, which gives a glimpse of the harsh arctic landscape in the midst of a blizzard.

Zeppo bolts outside. Waco stares out the door. His scrawny beard quickly glazes over with ice and snow from the frigid air.

Seconds later, Zeppo hurries back inside, shaking the snow off his shivering wings. He runs over and dives into his pan of ice. Waco gets the door closed and THROWS the bolt.

WACO (CONT'D)

No warm comfort bath for me.

Waco goes to the lab/office and hustles to an electronic console.

WACO (CONT'D)

If that's their frequency...

A holograph of Antarctica around "ICE STATION TERROR" and the space above it fills the large room. Seven red arcs of light trace ballistic trajectories over the southern hemisphere.

The trajectories intercept over the South Pole and "Ross Ice Shelf." Zeppo makes small sounds. Waco talks quietly to him.

WACO (CONT'D)

We can't panic. Too late to blow it  
now. Act normal. Deep breath.  
(quietly)  
What would normal do?

Waco fires up a video console and keys in a password at a "NASA" secure online portal.

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - TONGA ISLAND - DAY

The destroyer comes into view, bearing down on the swift boat at flank speed. A round from the black destroyer EXPLODES square on the ChinaPeace swift boat.

The destroyer RAMS the swift boat, blowing it to smithereens.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - LAB/OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. BURKOWSKI (65, tall, thick Russian accent, gold rim glasses) appears on the video screen in front of Waco.

BURKOWSKI

What? It's zero dark thirty here.

Waco points to the holograph display behind him. He's very excited, full of animated body language.

WACO

Hey, Pops. I just intercepted a coded video from some eco-activists in Tonga. Then this warship went -

BURKOWSKI

Slow down. Blurt out one concept at the time, please.

(forced calm)

Tonga? Did you say Tonga?

WACO

Packaged delivered, they said. Then a black destroyer attacked. Boom! Boom!

BURKOWSKI

You've got to get the hell out of there before they -- solar flare hits. We've been -- burned!

WACO

Some kind of microwave surveillance net. See it there? I'm smack dab in the crosshairs. What do I do?

BURKOWSKI

Shut the F up. Idiot. You must evacuate. It is urgent!

Flustered, Waco throws his arms up - starts to object...

WACO

If you don't believe me, I'll send you the video clip. Then -

BURKOWSKI

OMG. What's that on the screen behind you. Waco? Look at -

A strong arm reaches in front of Burkowski and pulls him aside. The screen goes blank.

Waco keeps talking, too worked up to notice the blank screen.

WACO

They were ChinaPeace activists,  
they said, then -  
(loud, anxious)  
Dr. Z? Hello? Come back!

Behind Waco, the trajectory screen refreshes to a new graphic: a missile trajectory, converging on the Ice Station Terror.

WACO (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Zeppo?

The screen behind Waco flashes a warning, "INCOMING!" A raucous ALARM SOUNDS. Waco turns to stare at the holograph screen.

WACO (CONT'D)

What the damnation?

There's a CRASH to the rear of the station, and half the lights in the room go out. Zeppo comes running past Waco and dives into a big tub of ice. Only his little orange feet are visible.

WACO (CONT'D)

Zeppo! What have you done this time? Bad penguin!

Waco hurries to the rear of the station and disappears through a door that reads, "EXTREME DANGER: OFF LIMITS."

Scrawled underneath the block letters on the door: "That means you, Zeppo."

EXT. ROSS SEA - U.S. CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

A TOMCAT zooms off the flight deck, WRENCHED forward by a STEAM CATAPULT.

As the fighter jet ROARS away, STEAM rises from fittings, drifts across the deck, and condenses on exposed surfaces, freezing instantly.

INT. ROSS SEA - U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - DAY

ADMIRAL ASHRAY (65, stout, harsh New York City accent) strong-arms Dr. Burkowski away from a video terminal as another officer severs the video link.

Ashray hauls the old man over to the panoramic window at the head of the bridge. Outside the forward window, a threatening, angry sea rages.

Around Ashray are the STANDARD U.S. NAVY PERSONNEL (all in long-sleeve khaki uniforms over black long johns). They all wear "US SPACE COMMAND" shoulder patches.

In the distance, over the ROSS ICE SHELF, a cruise missile ARCS across the horizon, strikes a small cluster of buildings, and EXPLODES in a crescendo of flames.

DR. BURKOWSKI

He knows nothing. Didn't you hear him? He's a total idiot. Clueless!  
(quiet venom)  
You killed him!

Ashray motions to U.S. Marine Corps GENERAL VOLK (65, giant of a man, Texas drawl), in camouflage combat fatigues.

ADM. ASHRAY

Lock him in the brig.

GEN. VOLK

I'll do better than that.

ADM. ASHRAY

No, you won't.

General Volk grabs Burkowski and hauls him toward the exit hatch. The old man fights them every inch of the way.

DR. BURKOWSKI

You cannot do this. I am senior NASA research scientist. I have diplomatic immunity. I've had my shots! Why...

GEN. VOLK

I hate commie pinko bastards like you!

General Volk gives Burkowski a vicious SWAT and hauls him way.

Ashray steps up to "Big Eyes" (giant binoculars) and scans the debris from the missile strike. He steps away and picks up a microphone, staring out the forward window.

ADM. ASHRAY

Top Dog to Super Flight, come in.

SUPER FLIGHT (V.O)

This is Super, over.

ADM. ASHRAY  
Infrared sensors detect thermal  
images. Finish the job. Over.

SUPER FLIGHT  
Aye, aye. Sir. Super, out.

ADM. ASHRAY  
Blow him to kingdom come...  
(to himself)  
Some people get to have all the  
fun.

Out of the forward windows, the Tomcat arcs toward shore,  
levels off, and releases its payload of cruise missiles,  
targeted on the burning debris.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - COLD ROOM - NIGHT

Waco squints through a haze of smoke, into a room full of  
massively parallel computers: lights blinking, SPARKS  
EXPLODING everywhere from a major hit.

WACO  
They were both right. Chinapeace.  
Dr. Z. We've been found out!

There's a GIANT EXPLOSION as the main research station takes  
a DIRECT HIT - then ANOTHER HIT. ANOTHER!

WACO (CONT'D)  
Come on, dude. We've got to get  
that package out to the launch  
tower before they ruin everything!

Waco grabs Zeppo and rushes out of the mayhem with the little  
penguin cradled in his arms.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

The sun hovers on the horizon in an endless sunrise. There's  
a thick fog out to sea, obscuring the aircraft carrier.

SUPER: "ROSS ICE SHELF - ANTARCTICA"

Zeppo pops out of the ocean and slides to a stop near Waco,  
who's studying data at a remote weather station setup.

Behind them, the research station has been obliterated.

Zeppo watches Waco unpacks a small crate labeled "NASA  
WEATHER BALLOON." He pulls a ripcord, and the small balloon  
inflates from a "HELIUM" cannister.

Afraid, Zeppo steps back as the balloon inflates, then he just scurries away to hide.

WACO

I didn't mean to scream at you,  
Zeppo. Are we okay here?

Waco ties a wad of aluminum foil to the balloon, then releases it. He watches it drift slowly upward.

WACO (CONT'D)

I sure hope there's still somebody  
downrange at McMurdo to see this.

EXT. ROSS BAY - PIER - LATER

Waco, wrapped in a thick wool "EMERGENCY" blanket, steels himself against the bitter cold, huddled in the wreckage, out of the stiff wind. He cradles a satellite phone in his hands.

WACO

Nobody cares. Served me right for  
not making any friends down here.

STATIC comes out of the satellite phone, then a voice (New Orleans accent):

JAXX (V.O.)

This is McMurdo Sound, responding  
to your distress signal. Come in,  
please. Is this Ice Station Terror?

Waco stands up, pacing with extreme frustration.

JAXX (V.O.)

Waco? Can you hear me? This is me.  
Jaxx. Halloween party? Out.

Zeppo makes little CHIRPING sounds like he's talking back.

WACO

We can't send, Zeppo. Just receive.  
Phone's half broken.

Zeppo makes a rushed series of LOUD CLICKS, punctuated by animated body language.

WACO (CONT'D)

Hush, I need to hear this.

RADIO OPERATOR (V.O.)

I'm not going to risk my neck if there's nobody out here. I don't even know where there is. Can you do something? Do you have any signal flares? Some damn thing?

Waco pulls his gloves off and opens up the back of the satellite phone. He disconnects the leads to the keypad and touches them. There's a SQUAWK on the satellite phone.

JAXX (V.O.)

Yes. I receive. Is this Dr. Waco?  
One click, yes. Two clicks, no.

Waco does one SQUAWK. He turns his back to a stiff gust of wind. Zeppo hears the squawk and moves closer to listen.

JAXX (V.O.)

S.H.I.T. The explosion? Was that you?

Rolling his eyes, Waco does one SQUAWK.

JAXX (V.O.)

I saw the fireball from the explosion last night - the flames on the horizon. Fighter jet afterburners? What the hell's going on? Oh, crap. You can't answer.

Waco does two SQUAWKS. The wind's so strong now he has to brace himself against the twisted steel wreckage. There's a long pause before she responds.

JAXX (V.O.)

Waco? There's a major storm moving in. As in right now. Dig yourself into some shelter. Immediately. I'll get there as soon as I can.

Waco does one SQUAWK, then turns the phone off and tucks it away in his heavy arctic parka.

Zeppo has to fight against the BLUSTERY WIND now. He jumps into a dive and slides down an incline toward the shore, ending up at a small dock.

Zeppo waves his arms, afraid of the cold, and dives into the heavy surf.

Waco struggles down to the dock, grabs a small skiff there, and hauls it back to the wreckage. He props it up and fills around the edges with snow, then climbs inside.

Heavy snow starts falling, driven horizontal by the now GALE-FORCE WINDS. Waco's shelter disappears into a snowdrift almost immediately.

EXT. ROSS BAY - PIER - DAY

JAXX (25, dark, exotic features) appears on the horizon, driving a heavy-duty snowmobile, towing a small trailer on skids. The winter storm has burned itself out. There's no sign of the wreckage now.

Everything is covered in a heavy blanket of snow and ice. Thick fog obscures the ocean, so the shoreline is barely visible.

Jaxx stops at an odd ice peninsula, jutting into the ocean. She gets out, steps over - tests it with one careful foot.

She gets her footing, then brushes aside the snow to reveal the small pier. She steps over to turn off the snowmobile, then starts searching.

After a short recon, she pulls out her satellite phone and dials a number.

JAXX

Hey. It's me, Jaxx. Are you there?

There's one SQUAWK on her phone.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Can you enable GPS tracking? Does it still function?

There's one SQUAWK on her phone. She punches up a tracking map, zeros in on one spot and starts digging there. She pauses to catch her breath, talking into the phone.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Hey, stupid. Get your lazy ass up and start digging. I'm right above you. Dig, dog - dig!

She steps away to sit down on the snowmobile to rest. She grabs a thermos, pours herself a hot cup of coffee, and cradles it in her hands.

The snow implodes where she'd been digging, and a snowbound Waco climbs out. He shakes it off, then hurries over to the snowmobile. She hands him her coffee, but he brushes it aside.

WACO

Start the snowmobile. Please!

She does as he asks, watching as Waco's shaking hands unravel a cord from under his parka.

WACO (CONT'D)

You got a twelve-volts DC plug on this thing?

She points. Waco plugs his cord in, then curls up in a ball at her feet. He shows her a THIN LAYER OF FLAT BATTERIES.

WACO (CONT'D)

Never been so cold in all my born days. Batteries ran out hours ago.

She slips a hand into his parka and opens it up, following the ELECTRICAL CORD.

JAXX

Electric long johns?

WACO

Never step outside without them. Hey, I'm from south Texas. Cold is the mother of all my fears.

JAXX

I grew up in New Orleans. Doesn't bother me one little bit.

She digs into the trailer and gets a bag of crunchy trail mix, hands it to him. He gobbles it down by the fistful.

WACO

I thought they ordered everybody to evacuate, on account of the solar superstorm coming tomorrow.

JAXX

I was on my way out when we spotted your makeshift balloon rig from the MedEvac chopper. Clever.

Several penguins pop out of the surf and start rooting around in the debris for bits of food - popcorn, bread, dried produce. Jaxx watches them, smiling for the first time.

WACO

And you didn't come to get me yesterday?

JAXX

In gale-force winds? Besides, they had orders to get the hell out of dodge. Cowards. Been through hurricanes way worse than this.

Waco gets up and walks around to get the blood going in his legs.

WACO

It's a mega, major solar storm, lady. Aren't you afraid? We'll be crispy critters if we don't...

She pads along side him as they stroll along the shoreline, watching the penguins cavort in the surf. It's still very foggy, but sunlight is thinning out the heavy mist.

WACO (CONT'D)

So you stayed behind to rescue me. How romantic.

JAXX

In your dreams, mister.

Waco smiles, winding up for a witty response - then stops cold: looking out to sea.

WACO

Oh, God. Did you see that?

She turns to look where he points, squinting into the distance. Suddenly all the penguins freeze - then run for cover, diving into the snow or back into the surf.

WACO (CONT'D)

The penguins saw it. Why didn't you see it? Come on!

Waco grabs her arm and hauls her back toward the snowmobile, quickly - then practically running. She yanks her arm away.

JAXX

Stop that. I didn't see squat. What are you doing?

Waco grabs her again and forcefully hauls her to the snowmobile, sits her in the driver seat, and starts it up.

WACO

We've got to find cover. Go! Drive, girl! Get us behind that snowdrift.

There's a break in the fog, and suddenly the aircraft carrier is right there, front and center.

Frantic now, Jaxx puts the snowmobile in gear and RIPS through the light-packed snow, and behind a massive thirty-foot ice cliff. She stops and turns the motor off.

JAXX

Why are we running? We should be calling for them to rescue us.

She pulls out her satellite phone to make a call, but Waco yanks it away from her.

WACO

Stop! They're the ones who called in the strike yesterday.

JAXX

Don't be paranoid.

WACO

I saw it on my stratosphere overlay app. A Tomcat fighter jet, releasing a bundle of missiles. Boom. Boom!

Jaxx is numb, speechless.

JAXX

The holograph-ranging rig you told me about? You got it working?

(quietly)

I thought you were just bragging... Anything to get into her pants.

WACO

If I could charge up my satellite phone I'd show you.

(quietly)

Worked, didn't it?

She digs into a side compartment, pulls out a cord, and plugs his satellite phone into a DC outlet.

JAXX

Now, wait just one minute -

WACO

I've got twelve million penguins to save from that damn solar event. Suit yourself.

Waco moves away and starts digging in the snow, pulling out bits of debris as he goes. Jaxx steps over to give him a halfhearted hand.

JAXX

How's that going to -

Waco points toward a metal superstructure half a mile away.

WACO

The balloon and ozone rescue package are safe and sound over at the launch tower. I just need the launch-code module. Bright orange box. Can't miss it. Hurry!

JAXX

If they blew up your ice station, they'll sure as hell blow up your science balloon.

WACO

Not if they don't see it.

JAXX

Except. If you're trying to save us from the solar flare, then why -

WACO

They don't know we're still alive. They won't be looking for anything. Nobody on the bridge radar but one officer-of-the-watch after midnight, probably asleep at the helm. No bogeys at all down here to track much less detect.

There's a BEEP-BEEP sound from the snowmobile. They stop digging and step over there. His sat-phone is charged up.

Waco pulls up a holographic display and flips through the recorded video clips.

JAXX

So you really did go to Annapolis? That wasn't braggadocio, either?

WACO

Yes and no. I was there for two years.

She takes a dig into this shoulder playfully.

JAXX

You dropped out?

WACO

Hey, I was ranked near the top of my class. I - just got into some trouble, is all. Kicked me out.

JAXX

Hence the decorated Marine part?

WACO

Hey, the Marines love bad guys like me.

She stops him at a video of Zeppo dancing in the surf.

JAXX

I want one of these things. Where did you get it? Holographic!

WACO

It's one of a kind. I made it.

She stares at him, shocked, as he finds the video of the missile strike, and shows it to her.

WACO (CONT'D)

It's an artificial intelligence algorithm. Majestic, I call her.

JAXX

Jesus. What is that thing? The computing power to do that must be astronomical.

He turns off the sat-phone and plugs it back in to the charger. Waco steps back, thinking hard.

WACO

Great idea, girl. I'll send an overload signal to the orange control box, and we can find it from the feedback noise!

Waco pulls up an app, dials up the signal strength - a PIERCING SOUND comes from the wreckage. They run over and dig like mad until they find the orange box.

WACO (CONT'D)

Okay, we're all set until the graveyard shift.

Waco scoots over close to her, but she gets up and moves to root around in the snowmobile trailer.

JAXX

Come on, you can't have eaten for over a day now. Let's make a meal.

Waco helps her set up a small tent. They crawl inside, set up a field kitchen, and fix a hot meal.

WACO

Thanks, Jaxx. You're good people.

JAXX

I am not. I'm just an adrenalin junkie, and right now, you're the best show around.

EXT. ROSS BAY - BALLOON LAUNCH TOWER - NIGHT

Wearing snowshoes, Waco and Jaxx pad up to a structural steel tower under the light of a full moon. Snow flurries swirl around in light winds in the still night.

Waco carries the orange control box.

Waco motions for Jaxx to help him haul a tarp off of a "NASA OZONE RESCUE PACKAGE," a large crate sitting at the base of the tower.

He uses a jagged hunting knife to cut loose thick ropes binding the sides of the package. Jaxx turns on a flashlight to light his way, but Waco hurries to cover the light beam.

WACO

Turn that thing out!

Afraid, he stares out over the bay at the aircraft carrier, lit up brightly, with people scurrying all over the deck.

JAXX

You swore everybody would be sound asleep.

Waco muscles opened a second "NASA HIGH ALTITUDE BALLOON" crate, hooks it up to a "HELIUM" tank, and starts inflating it. As the balloon fills, he hustles to hook to the top to a guy wire.

With Jaxx's help, they pull hard on the guy wire, attached to the peak of the tower, so the balloon fills upward.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Any minute now. Zoom. Zoom! Comes the Tomcat to strafe us dead.

WACO

Their radar just sees the steel tower. We're safe. For now.

The balloon is full. Waco disconnects the tank and taps off the balloon with a steel screw cap.

Jaxx helps him hook up the "OZONE RESCUE PACKAGE" to a rig at the base of the balloon.

JAXX

How can they not see us? Look at all the commotion on the flight deck.

WACO

They must be rigging up for the solar flare to hit. We're at ground zero. Great place to gather data.

JAXX

Sure, if you're protected by six inches of case-hardened steel.

Angrily, Waco HITS a lever. They both step back and watch.

Slowly, very slowly, the balloon lifts the "NASA OZONE RESCUE PACKAGE" off the launch tower.

They step back to watch it rise, lit dramatically by the bright moon.

JAXX (CONT'D)

What, pray tell, are we rigging up here?

WACO

The ozone layer will block the solar flare's dangerous U.V. radiation everywhere else in the world.

JAXX

Except down here, we have no ozone, on account of the ozone hole up there. I get it. But -

WACO

All that high energy will hit the ground and kill all the plankton, the penguins' primary food source.

JAXX

Oh, God. They'll all starve to death? That's gruesome.

WACO

Our experiment is supposed to dump a bunch of ozone up there to plug up the ozone hole.

They snow-shoe back to the snowmobile, parked a short distance away, where Waco opens the orange controls package, and turns it on.

They stare at the control screen, their tense, worried faces reflected in the orange glow from the device.

INT. ROSS SEA - U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray stands on the bridge (dim accent lighting), staring out the bay window at a gaggle of people rigging up a complex machine out on the flight deck below. General Volk stands next to him, in combat fatigues (as always).

A small man, COLONEL JIN (55, tall, thin, Asian) in a three-piece suit, steps onto the bridge and goes to stand beside Ashray. The admiral talks over his shoulder to the WEAPONS OFFICER.

ADM. ASHRAY

Weapons, charge the LARS to maximum strength.

COL. JINN

Weapons? We're under attack?

Ashray and Volk glare at Col. Jinn.

GEN. VOLK

At least we're not still at the Pentagon, surrounded by wimpy bureaucrats, like that feller yonder.

The admiral glances sideways to the colonel, then rivets his attention on tube-shaped armament deploying on the flight deck.

ADM. ASHRAY

LARS. Laser Ranging System. It maintains a real-time link to all our military satellites over the southern hemisphere.

A deep, VIBRATING HUM begins as the LARS powers up.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

LARS will give us a 3-D view of the solar flare when it hits Earth.

GEN. VOLK

Should we be trying to stop it?

ADM. ASHRAY

No our job. Not a God damn thing we can do but sit on our behinds and collect data for the squints back home.

Several navy personnel man various consoles. The already dim bridge lights go out completely, and digital readouts on the bridge equipment switch to an orange night glow.

Col. Jinn thinks hard, scratching his head.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Okay, already. It's a hyper-fast anti-aircraft radar-ranging system designed to defend against a swarm of attack drones... Got that?

Vaguely at first, then in 3-D high-definition, a satellite drifts across the room.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

There's China's solar-analysis satellite. Hah!

(glaring at Jinn)

Your people won't get but a fraction of the data we'll get with the LARS system.

A balloon appears at floor level, drifting upward. Colonel Jinn panics, pointing at the display:

COL. JINN

No. The balloon! It is heading straight for our satellite!

ADM. ASHRAY

I thought we destroyed that God damn balloon experiment!

A BRIGHT LASER BEAM shots across the display. Ashray gets on the horn.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)  
Weapons! Target that effing bogey.

There's a BRIGHT FLASH in the holograph. Abruptly, the satellite and NASA balloon images disappear. The BRIGHT LASER BEAM fades away.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)  
Bull dog? Get that damn - civilian -  
off my bridge.

GEN. VOLK  
My pleasure, Sir. Effing pleasure.  
(to himself)  
Commies got no business on our  
bridge here anyway. What's this  
world coming to? Doh! Red Chinese?

ADM. ASHRAY  
I.D. that laser beam. Where'd it  
come from?

General Volk grabs Colonel Jinn and hauls him to the exit, just as an emergency KLAXON sounds.

EXT. ROSS ICE SHELF - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx exit the snowmobile to stretch their legs. The moon has slipped below the horizon, leaving a canopy of bright, colorful stars. They stare upward in wonder.

WACO  
How did us two southerners end up  
way down here in the coldest place  
on Earth?

JAXX  
Best place in the whole world to  
test your limits. Cold as hell,  
totally isolated, never more than a  
split second away from instant  
death.

WACO  
I just wanted to study the ozone  
layer, figure out who's making  
Freon eleven again, violating the  
Montreal Protocol. The Freon Ban.

JAXX

Got a day job at McMurdo Sound  
doing their tech analysis.

(quietly)

The Mars Society paid my way down  
here - testing survivability for a  
human mission to Mars.

A BRIGHT LASER BEAM arcs across the sky, then fades away in a  
rainbow of colors.

WACO

They hit on me, too. *Adios, amigos.*

JAXX

You don't seem the dreamer type.

(quietly)

Never figured how hard it would be.

WACO

Talk about isolated. There's a  
veritable crowd over at McMurdo.

JAXX

Look. A shooting star! ...Got no  
wishes left to make, me.

THICK CONTRAILS arc out of the black cloud mass.

WACO

We're not due for the Perseid  
Meteor shower for six weeks.

JAXX

Maybe the solar flare's getting  
closer? You're the big-ego  
scientist.

PROJECTILES impact the landscape. Clouds of steam erupt as  
more and objects crater into the snow.

WACO

Meteors, hell. That's debris from  
an atmospheric detonation. Run for  
cover!

Waco grabs Jaxx and hurries her back to the launch tower,  
where they huddle under a thick metal plate stabilizing the  
lower legs of the superstructure.

A sudden flurry of windblown snow whites out everything.

EXT. U.S. CARRIER - FLYING BRIDGE - DAY

Ashray stands on a balcony, one step outside the covered bridge, watching a vast thundercloud grow over Antarctica.

HELMSMAN (O.S.)  
Skipper? Looks like the mushroom  
cloud from an atom bomb.

Fighting heavy seas, Ashray lurches up to the "Big Eyes," giant binoculars affixed to the superstructure.

THROUGH THE BIG EYES

Breaking through clouds and ocean spray, there's a glimpse of sunlight reflecting off a giant, white geodesic dome a few miles inland from the wreckage of Waco's research station.

ADM. ASHRAY  
Oh, God. The explosion melted the  
snow cover off HELSTAF. Damn!

CHIEF ENGINEER  
Jesus H. Christ. Sure isn't what I  
expected. That place is gigantic.

There's something in the foreground: a building tsunami!

CHIEF ENGINEER (CONT'D)  
They'll see it from space. Google  
earth. All the -

CHIEF ENGINEER (CONT'D)  
White dome in snow? Stealth  
engineered to cast no shadows? Not  
enough contrast for their cameras.

ASHRAY  
Screw the solar flare. Our number  
one priority is keeping HELSTAF a  
secret. *Numero uno!*

A swell rolls toward the carrier, a wall of water, sweeping icebergs in its wake.

BACK TO SCENE

Ashray runs toward the bridge, yelling.

ADM. ASHRAY  
Left full rudder! Steady on bearing  
two two zero. Flank speed.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Ashray hurries onto the bridge. The HELMSMAN is frantic.

HELMSMAN

I can hardly steer. All those -

ADM. ASHRAY

Damn the icebergs. Full steam  
ahead.

The Helmsman makes a hard left turn, spinning the wheel, desperate. The carrier lurches, and the crew grabs on for dear life.

HELMSMAN

Engine room answers four bells,  
skipper. Steady on two two zero.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - LAUNCH TOWER - DAY

Raging blizzard underway, Waco and Jaxx huddle under the launch tower canopy. Jaxx pulls debris out of the snow. Waco steps over to examine it.

WACO

This isn't ours. Chinese writing.  
Must be from their solar-flare  
satellite.

A large metal fragment falls nearby. Waco squats down beside the curved, metal construction and examines it carefully.

WACO (CONT'D)

This is from the package we sent  
up, all right. Damn it to hell.  
(staring upward)  
You were right. They shot it down.  
Didn't get high enough, not even  
close.

Staring at Waco, Jaxx is horrified.

JAXX

It's like, an atom bomb went off up  
there just now.  
(quietly)  
Did you see the laser beam right  
before?

Waco turns the fragment over, revealing a radiation warning symbol. Jaxx stares at it, horrified.

JAXX (CONT'D)

That was your experiment? Please.  
Tell me China's satellite was  
nuclear powered.

Waco shrugs it off.

WACO

How else are you going to disperse a  
load of ozone inside the entire  
arctic circle in a split second?

(sheepish)

Hey, all the computer simulations  
worked. DARPA signed off on it.

Jaxx grabs him by the collar, shaking him like a rag doll.

JAXX

You said your penguin rescue  
experiment was funded by the  
Audubon Society.

WACO

They did contribute. Some. A little  
bit. Very little. Pocket change.

JAXX

And the NASA logo? Was that just  
for fun?

WACO

DARPA had to do that to get it  
through customs.

Jaxx shakes Waco so hard his teeth rattle.

JAXX

Customs? You checked a nuclear  
weapon through customs? Who's  
customs? Who made that damn thing?

WACO

Russia. Russia made it.

(very small voice)

U - Ukraine?

JAXX

The Ukraine heist? You!

(horrified)

The whole damn world is looking for  
that nuke. Everybody! Everywhere!

Jaxx SCREAMS and runs away, arms flailing, fists flinging.  
Waco yells after her.

WACO

Hey! It was for a good cause. And -  
and, they don't have to look no  
more, do they? Boom! Boom! Problem  
solved!

EXT. U.S. CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

An angry sea pitches and rolls the aircraft carrier.

Ashray chews out a ground crew member for a frozen fuel line.

ADM. ASHRAY

Fire up every ounce of steam we can  
generate. Steam! I need more steam.  
I need fuel, here - full capacity!  
(to himself)  
God I love action. Give me action!  
Ooorrrraahhhh.

The admiral paces in front of two dozen pilots, roaring  
orders at them with the force of a bazooka.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Get your asses up there. Keep your  
stations. Nobody is to enter air  
space inside the entire arctic  
circle. No planes. No boats. No  
bird, no whales, no goats!

General Volk watches from nearby. Ashray grabs him.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Get ashore and clean up this mess.  
No witnesses. No evidence. Nothing!  
HELSTAF is the best-kept secret in  
the Universe. Understood?

GEN. VOLK

(to himself)  
Damn good thing I brung along my  
battalion and their heavy armor.

General Volk motions to a couple of Marines, and they hustle  
toward a USMC chopper, climb aboard, and start the engine.  
The chopper lifts off, toting a giant snowmobile underneath.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - OFFICER'S MESS - DAY

The place is empty but for two cooks behind the counter.  
Tables are full of dishes and meals abandoned in a hurry.

Burkowski eats, conscious of the two MPs hovering behind  
them. He talks quietly in their direction.

BURKOWSKI

Forgot what I was missing in the states, burgers, and fries.

A JET TAKES OFF above decks, and they pipe down. The two MPs turn their backs, watching a big-screen TV.

Burkowski jumps up and spirits away, disappearing into the entrails of the kitchen.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - DAY

Ashray huddles with his officers around a video table.

ADM. ASHRAY

Remember the Khafi assault on Saddam Hussein's troops in the first Iraq war?

(angry, very)

Air ops 24/7. Yes! Fire in the sky!

CHIEF ENGINEER

Sir? We hacked this video on the old man's cell phone.

The Chief Engineer rolls a found-footage video of the Tomcat missile strikes on Ice Station Terror.

ADM. ASHRAY

Turn him over to that special representative from the White House. Colonel Jinn.

(quietly)

Chinese diplomatic passport. Solar flare liaison. What's that mean?

CHIEF ENGINEER

He's in lockup now, Sir. Can't do no more harm.

Everybody reels back as Ashray YELLS an answer:

ADM. ASHRAY

Do I look like a pasty diplomat? Am I tactful? Tolerant?

CHIEF ENGINEER

Colonel Jinn it is. Sir.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - CREW'S LIBRARY - DAY

The library is empty but for one clerk at the front desk. Two MPs wrestle Burkowski in and sit him down. The MPs sit nearby, eyes peeled on the old man.

LATER

Two NAVY OFFICERS (40's, one bald and one fat) stride into the library. The Navy officers spot Burkowski. They confront the MPs.

FAT NAVY OFFICER  
(to the MPs)  
He's supposed to be in the brig.

MP #1  
Stop! We belong. Our orders.

FAT NAVY OFFICER  
New orders.

The fat navy officer draws his weapon.

MP #2  
Put that weapon away.

The bald navy officer draws his weapon. The two MPs back away, hands held out, wary.

MP #1  
Relax, podunk. We're leaving now.  
Just you go and watch us.

All eyes in the library to an URGENT NEWS BULLETIN on a giant TV screen, as the sound turns way up.

ON TV SCREEN - NEWSCAST

NASA images of an explosion over the Ross Ice Shelf show the repercussions expanding the size of the Ozone Hole.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)  
A giant explosion over Antarctica has doubled the size of the Ozone Hole. NASA scientists say the huge solar superstorm coming could melt the whole polar ice cap, with no ozone layer to stop it. Low-lying areas are already being evacuated throughout the Pacific Basin.

Burkowski sneaks into the shadows and out of the room while everybody is distracted by the newscast.

MP #1  
China doesn't make nuclear-powered satellites anymore. Oh. My. God.

MP #2

The LARS can identify the energy signature of the bomb. Come on!

The MPs hurry away. The two navy officers look around, then draw their weapons and bolt out of the compartment.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - SIDE CORRIDORS - DAY

Burkowski bolts down a narrow hallway.

MP #1

Halt! You're under arrest.

Just then, a seaman opens a HATCH at the far end of the corridor. Burkowski runs right through the open hatch - into the arms of the two navy officers, who wrestle him into handcuffs.

INT. U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray, the Chief Engineer, and the two Navy officers study a 3-D color graphic of the satellite explosion projected by the LARS system.

FAT NAVY OFFICER

Can you tell from the energy signature what exploded?

CHIEF ENGINEER

It was a nuke. Russian, we think.  
(quietly)  
Old style. Soviet. As in the missing Budapest Agreement nukes.

ADM. ASHRAY

Send an Eyes Only flash to the Pentagon. Now. We've got to recover the second nuclear warhead. Now!

The officers clear the decks, leaving behind a pensive Ashray.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Haven't done clandestine search and destroy missions since swift boating in the Mekong Delta. Scary. Damn scary... Gimme more scary!

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - NIGHT

A helicopter sets down near what's left of Waco's research station. The new temporary buildings are a total wreck like they were hit by a tornado.

Colonel Jinn and his MiB (MEN IN BLACK, special forces commando types dressed in black fatigues) exit the helicopter and fan out. There's just enough light out from an endless arctic dawn for them to get around without flashlights.

Colonel Jinn yells at his men.

COL. JINN

Fools. Find every last fragment of -  
our spy satellite.

Penguins watch from a ridge nearby.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Damn. My baby girl Elbys would love  
to see penguins in the wild. Love  
to.

LATER

Two MiB hold up a giant printout of Waco's cruise missile trajectories. Colonel Jinn rips the map from their hands in a fit of rage.

COL. JINN

The scientists wouldn't have been  
here but for those stupid - birds.

Colonel Jinn grabs a machine gun from an MiB and FIRES at the penguins on the ridge.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Kill! Kill 'em all - every last  
one... They will die soon anyway.

The bullets miss the penguins, but they still EXPLODE a fuel tank nearby.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Extinct. Gone the way of the Dodo  
birds. Elbys will never forgive me.

EXT. ROSS SEA - SHORELINE - DAY

Waco and Jaxx root through the debris from the nuclear explosion. They find what's left of a snowmobile, turn it over, and try to get it started.

WACO

It's my old wheels, from before the  
first cruise missile strike.  
Doesn't look good. Not one bit.

Waco pops the hood, and they try to find out what's wrong.

MACHINE GUN FIRE sounds from over a ridge, from near the research station. A fuel tank nearby EXPLODES. Waco and Jaxx run for cover.

EXT. ROSS PLATEAU - ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Jinn and his men look up at the sound of a giant armored military-grade snowmobile approaching. The half-track stops in front of Colonel Jin.

General Volk, wearing Arctic fatigues with a white-black-gray pattern, steps out of the snowmobile.

GEN. VOLK

Get your backsides out of here.  
This is American soil.

COL. JINN

We're standing on ice - general. So technically, it's ocean, and belongs to no - damn body.

Colonel Jinn pulls out the ID card Ashray gave him.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

I have full access by order of -  
(glancing at his papers)  
- the President's new U.S. Space  
Command - Office. My - ID.

GEN. VOLK

Don't move, Chinatown. I need to  
check out your plastic.

Gen. Volk pulls out a satellite phone and hits the speed dial. He scans Colonel Jin, head to toe.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Same arrogance. Different uniform.  
(into the phone)  
Sparky? Get Admiral Ashray on the  
horn. Heave ho, swaby!

A U.S. NAVY CARGO HELICOPTER rips overhead, a hundred feet above the ground, drowning out the conversation. The chopper carries a monster snowmobile in a rope sling underneath.

While Volk is on his satellite phone, Jinn and his men move away to their helicopter.

Briefly, Dr. Burkowski, bound and gagged, can be seen inside Colonel Jin's chopper as it lifts off.

Volk hangs up the phone and turns to stare at the MiB chopper.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Never trust anybody with that kind of access.

(to himself)

The kids razz me about that all the time. Never trust the Big Brains, Daddy... Huh.

EXT. U.S. CARRIER - FLYING BRIDGE - DAY

Ashray, talking into the shortwave, stares out over the ocean toward Ice Station Terror. Snow kicks up a small storm as Jinn's chopper lifts off and heads toward the big white dome.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)

Somebody definitely survived the explosion, sir. No trace of their current whereabouts.

ADM. ASHRAY

Search the coastline for signs. Tracks, wreckage, trail sign. Find them! Then - just find them. Soon!

The noise of a chopper taking off nearby blots out Volk's reply and Ashray hangs up the radio phone.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Waco and Jaxx peer out from a ridge as Jinn's helicopter lifts off and disappears in a whiteout of blowing snow.

They hunker down and watch as Volk gets off the phone, climbs into his monster snowmobile, and moves slowly down the shoreline.

As soon as Volk slips out of view, Waco and Jaxx make a mad dash for the wreckage. Waco roots around, desperate.

WACO

Food. Anything we can eat - dried produce, canned, boxed, you name it - vermin, even!

JAXX

Who are you to give me orders?

WACO

Nobody. I'm nobody. Go ahead and freeze your chromosomes off out here, far as I care.

JAXX

I'll be damned if I share any of my  
body heat with you, mister.

WACO

Who says I need it? I got my James  
Bond long johns on!

They both smile for the first time.

WACO (CONT'D)

Come on, girl. Let's get a move on.  
They'll be coming for us.

Jaxx stands her ground, arms cross, fuming.

JAXX

Can't go back. Doh! They'll arrest  
me as an eco-terrorist. Can't go  
with you either. Then I really will  
be an eco-terrorist. Can't -

WACO

Wait here for her to decide.

Waco turns on heel and gets back to work on the snowmobile.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Two MiB and Colonel Jinn, all three wearing night-vision  
goggles, muscle Dr. Burkowski down metal stairs.

COL. JINN

Tell us what you know, and you'll  
live to see your - babushkas.

As seen through the goggles, everything is yellow-red.

BURKOWSKI

I am Ukrainian patriot. I know the  
evil men do. You will kill myself  
anyway, me.

COL. JINN

Where? You have hidden second  
Russia nuclear bomb?

BURKOWSKI

Blame it on the Russians. Doesn't  
that get a little cliché' after a  
while?

They've reached the bottom of the stairwell.

COL. JINN

Where? We know you have been to this place before. Yes? We saw it on giant microwave surveillance - ground-satellite network. Where!

Colonel Jinn grabs Burkowski's scarf and tosses it toward a massive steel bank-vault door. The scarf is instantly VAPORIZED by a high-voltage electric charge.

BURKOWSKI

I am not Russian. Ukrainian!  
(sotto voice)  
What you did - was my lucky scarf.

COL. JINN

Please. Must I say please? Open the vault door.

BURKOWSKI

Hah! Authorized personnel only!

COL. JINN

Die. Open. Open or die.

Burkowski grins, chin high, proud, obstinate. Colonel Jinn motions toward his men. The MiB throw Burkowski toward the bank-vault door.

Burkowski screams bloody hell as the bank-vault door EXPLODES with a massive electric charge - blinding, piercing BRIGHTNESS.

The MiB rip their night-vision goggles off, screaming with pain.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Babies. Cry babies. Get to work!

Colonel Jinn and his MiBs root around in a thick, impenetrable cloud of smoke and ashes.

COL. JINN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Search. Sift the ashes. He must have had the vault access codes on him.

(quietly)

Fire. Pray fire did not burn up codes to entrance.

MIB #1

Sir. I have something! Something inscribed on the glasses frame.

He hands Colonel Jinn Burkowski's glasses. The colonel holds them up to the light. Frustrated, he throws them down.

COL. JINN

Damnation. He scratched the codes off.

(quietly)

Now. We die with Elbys's penguins.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Waco studies the sky while Jaxx continues milling around for food.

WACO

No way to tell if my balloon got high enough to work.

JAXX

Screw your precious penguins, we -

WACO

(aghast)

Say what? How dare you!

JAXX

Oh, wait. I didn't mean that. It's just. We'll freeze to death!

They hear Volk's snowmobile returning from its recon mission.

WACO

Hurry! Follow me! Keep your feet in my footsteps.

They shoulder their backpacks and head out, as Waco follows the footsteps of Jinn and his people, careful to tread only in their path.

Jaxx has to make giant, awkward strides to follow him.

EXT. ROSS ICE SHELF - DAY

Jaxx and Waco trudge along, making steady progress in fresh snow.

Waco pauses occasionally to get his bearings with a compass. Jaxx follows him, step for careful step.

JAXX

We should just turn ourselves in. Really we should.

WACO

Didn't you hear me? My experiment failed! Effing failed!  
 (terrible determination)  
 If they arrest me, I'll never get 'er done. Not gonna happen!

Suddenly a penguin POPS out of the water onto the shoreline. He spots Waco and Jaxx. Everybody stops cold.

WACO (CONT'D)

Zeppo? Is that you, little buddy?

The penguin stares at Waco. Stares at Jaxx. Stares at Waco again - then flaps his arms like crazy.

WACO (CONT'D)

Zeppo!

Waco runs toward Zeppo.

WACO (CONT'D)

You're okay. Thank God.  
 (quietly to Zeppo)  
 We'll fix this. I promise.

Waco squats down beside Zeppo and scratches the top of his head playfully.

JAXX

Look. He's so cute.

Zeppo falls on his back and lets Waco scratch his belly.

JAXX (CONT'D)

What's wrong with his eyes? Why is he squinting like that?

WACO

Decades without any ozone to block out the sun's U.V. rays are making them go blind. Zeppo couldn't even see to fish when I found him.

Waco feeds a hungry Zeppo with snacks from his backpack.

A couple of other penguins show up, slide down the snowbank, and deftly maneuver to get some food. They approach Jaxx, too. She shoos them away.

JAXX

No food from me. I don't even know you people.

WACO  
 Hey. That might be their last meal  
 on Earth.

Jaxx looks like she's about to cry - feeds the penguins.

JAXX  
 (quietly)  
 You do things to me. Nobody does  
 things to me.

Zeppo pauses to stare at Waco in the eyes.

WACO  
 I'll make this right, Kiddo.

Zeppo stiffens up - backs away - staring at the sky. Zeppo  
 scurries away and dives into the ocean, seconds before a  
 helicopter ROARS overhead, heading out to sea from inland.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 (checking his compass)  
 Awesome. A bearing to follow.

They huddle out of sight.

JAXX  
 Follow? No way?

WACO  
 It's not very far away. Ice didn't  
 even melt off their engine  
 fairings.

The helicopter disappears over the horizon, and they get back  
 on their trek across the winter wasteland.

JAXX  
 Is that your job down here? To save  
 the penguins?

WACO  
 Officially I'm here to police the  
 Freon Ban. To enforce it. I'm the  
 law down here.  
 (quietly)  
 One word to N.S.A. and I can...  
 hell, whatever it takes to save the  
 ozone layer. Whatever!

JAXX  
 Alias Dr. Doom. I get it now.

WACO

The Chinese are manufacturing bootleg Freon. NASA sent me down here to study the ozone hole to verify their violation of the Freon Ban. Once their funds ran out, the N.S.A. picked up the slack.

Waco spots something in the snow and goes to investigate.

WACO (CONT'D)

OMG. Something blown away by the blast. Come on!

Jaxx helps him set a badly damaged snowmobile upright on its skids. Waco checks the gas, cranks it up, then quickly turns it off.

JAXX

It's my snowmobile.  
(looking around)  
No sign of the trailer - all my emergency supplies! We're so screwed.

They strap their backpacks on the snowmobile, then Waco makes Jaxx sit in the driver's seat. He hands her the compass.

WACO

Steady on seventy degrees. Or whatever other bearing you damn well please.

JAXX

Are you - trusting me?

WACO

You won't get another chance.

She cranks up the snowmobile and moves out, slow enough so that Waco can follow close behind in the snowmobile tracks. They talk quietly, above the dull GROWLING of the engine.

WACO (CONT'D)

When I found Zeppo, he was skinny as a rail. They were all like that. No ozone. The UV rays are killing the plankton, their main food source. Now, look at them. That giant solar flare is fixing to obliterate their whole world.

She slows down so Waco can watch a group of penguins cavorting in the surf.

WACO (CONT'D)

I didn't have a chance to get enough data to prove the UV rays were starving the penguin population down here. Then came news of the big solar flare coming.

JAXX

So you scrambled around, got money and equipment - nukes! - where you could, to save your penguin friends from certain extinction.

(quietly)

I forgive you.

Jaxx stares at a small group of penguins nearby, gathered around their young to keep them warm. She slows down again.

JAXX (CONT'D)

You're one man against the world, and suddenly the world butts in.

(quietly)

We need more people like you.

Suddenly, the penguins BOLT for the ocean and DIVE in.

Frantic, Waco grabs the snowmobile wheel, steers toward a ridge, and crashes it into a snowbank, covering it in powdery snow. Then he grabs armfuls of snow and covers everything up - the snowmobile, Jaxx, himself.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Is a storm coming? A big storm?

WACO

They're terrified by anything big.

JAXX

Oh, God. A polar bear? An abominable yeti snowman...

Abruptly, a black helicopter ROARS overhead and streaks toward the dome. Jaxx yanks out the compass and takes a bearing on the chopper's line of flight.

LATER

Driving now, Waco steers the snowmobile toward a large crater and pulls to a stop near the rim. He gets out and heads toward the crater, Jaxx right behind.

WACO

Got to get the circulation going in our legs, cold as it is. Otherwise, frostbite will set in. Fast!

JAXX

What about my arms? Fingers?

WACO

Seen those damn craters all over the place today. Gotta see if they're what I think.

JAXX

Melting snow? Isn't it obvious?

WACO

Sister, down here nothing is obvious.

They hurry to investigate the mystery crater.

EXT. ROSS ICE SHELF - DAY - LATER

A hundred yards from a wall of ice, Jaxx runs out of gas. She dismounts, and they hurry toward a ten-foot ice wall.

JAXX

We shouldn't have stopped for your meteor-crater detour.

Distraught, Waco hurries ahead, muttering to himself.

WACO

Get a move on, lady. Temps will drop fifty degrees after sunset. Frozen solid in no time at all.

JAXX

You're very good at evading.

They arrive at the wall of ice. Waco pulls a flare out of his backpack, ignites it, and burns a hole in the ice, breaking through after a foot or two.

WACO

They're sink holes, Jaxx. The ice pack is melting. Big-time melting.

JAXX

No way. We never even get above zero Fahrenheit. How?

WACO

The nuclear detonation. All that  
high-energy ultraviolet radiation.  
(quietly)  
Damn. I didn't anticipate that.

Waco carves out a shape in the ice wall big enough to crawl through, then pushes the cutout to the inside of the wall.

EXT. FATHERLAND - DAY

Waco and Jaxx stand inside the ice wall, gawking at a small city spread out before them. Everything is built like igloos and rugged geodesic domes, blending in perfectly with the landscape.

A TORRENT OF STEAM shoots upward in a mini-tornado, freezing into a terrifying ice sculpture.

JAXX

(to herself)  
You wanted to live on desperation's  
sharp edge, girl.

Waco and Jaxx disappear into a cloud of water vapor from the VENTING steam.

JAXX (CONT'D)

The Mars Society tried an  
experiment down here, years ago -  
around the turn of the millennium.

Shards of ice fall all around them and SHATTER on the ground.

EXT. FATHERLAND - DAY

Jaxx and Waco head toward a cluster of buildings.

JAXX

Jesus. This is a whole lot more  
than a simple experiment.  
(gently)  
Refurbished an old World War Two  
science facility, they said.

Cranes are frozen in mid-action, hoisting giant Lego-type blocks of ice spit out by a huge machine, assembling them into a vaulted igloo over an intersection of two streets.

(CONT'D)

JAXX

Look how they built giant igloo structures out of ice blocks. Giant igloos - every shape you can imagine. Using surface tension as glue - brilliant.

EXT. FATHERLAND - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Waco and Jaxx exit an ice tunnel, right into the path of a second giant machine that eats ice and snow on the front end and spits out a nice, smooth tunnel on the other end.

JAXX

And a boss machine to make ice tunnels. How cool is that?

WACO

Frequent, violent lava flows plus ice galore make for some kinda strange rock formations. Lava tubes all over this wretched plateau.

JAXX

Volcanoes? Active volcanoes?

Waco grabs his stomach, bending over in pain.

WACO

You never asked why I have bleeding stomach ulcers. Just assumed.

Waco and Jaxx head toward an open area in the middle of the compound.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

Jaxx points toward the big geodesic dome looming nearby.

WACO

Head for the big dome over there. It's some kind of central hub. We can get shelter there.

Jaxx stops abruptly, looking all around.

JAXX

Where's the U.S. Navy? Marines?

WACO

Look, an albatross perched on the top of the dome, sunning its wings - see it, right up there?

Waco points toward the top of the big dome. Jaxx is more interested in A SIMILAR WINGED STRUCTURE across the yard: an entire building adjacent to the HELSTAF dome.

JAXX

It looks like a laser cannon to me.  
With radar wings.

WACO

There are five species of albatrosses down here. Awesome creatures. Ten-foot wingspan. Eat fish to survive. Tough buggers.

They hear VEHICLES APPROACHING and run to hide in a narrow alleyway.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

General Volk exits his giant snowmobile and ambles through the frozen city, an AIDE (35, short, bald) at his side, studying the buildings with a practiced eye.

GEN. VOLK

Looks like young Jason's lego-toy town. Time warp!

A HELICOPTER LANDS nearby. Admiral Ashray gets out of the chopper and hurries toward Volk.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Our fugitives abandoned their vehicle just outside the city limits. Drifting snow covered up their tracks after that.

ADM. ASHRAY

We've got to find them. Whatever it takes. Get your infrared scanners here. Search building to building. Every square inch.

Waco and Jaxx, hiding in a nearby cluster of buildings, observe them from afar.

GEN. VOLK

The Pentagon tells me he got a bad conduct discharge from the Marine Corps. Passing on Project Blue Book secrets to WikiLeaks.

ADM. ASHRAY

They'd probably make him a hero these days. Ah. The good 'ol days.

GEN. VOLK

Nobody ever figured out how he even got hold of the secret docs. The N.S.A. was so impressed, they gave him a job.

Ashray stops dead in his tracks, suddenly afraid.

ADM. ASHRAY

We're gonna need a lot more than an infrared scanner to find them.

GEN. VOLK

The female accomplice is a total nobody. No trace anywhere.

The admiral stops, stunned - flabbergasted.

ADM. ASHRAY

Who hired her? She had to have a job to get down here. Find out!

GEN. VOLK

Forget the terrorists. Forget the nuke. You're obsessing worse than my teenager and his stupid video games.

A black CHOPPER LANDS across the plaza. Colonel Jinn and his MiB dismount. They head toward Volk and Ashray. Waco spots Colonel Jinn.

WACO

That's the man who killed the ChinaPeace activists. Run!

Waco and Jaxx scurry away. In the corner of his eye, Ashray spots motion: Waco and Jaxx just as they disappear. Ashray yanks out his service revolver.

ADM. ASHRAY

It's them. Go! Shoot to kill!

The MiB run after Waco and Jaxx, weapons drawn. Ashray and Colonel Jinn speed-walk after them, talking urgently in hushed tones.

COL. JINN

Bad news. The old scientist did not have what we seek, the - access codes.

ADM. ASHRAY

The young scientist, he was the old man's protege. He must have the codes!

Ashray sees Volk eyeballing them, expectant.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Find those two! Alive!

Ashray pushes Colonel Jinn away so hard he stumbles and falls to his knees. Looking terrified of Ashray's wrath, Colonel Jinn gets up and hurries after his men.

COL. JINN

Warning. If that nuclear weapon destroys this High Energy Laser Facility - it will be World War Three between our nations.

Arms crossed, Volk studies their actions, pensive. He takes a sat-phone from his aide and makes an urgent call.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

Fists clenched in rage at his sides, General Volk watches Ashray and Colonel Jinn leave. Volk grumbles to his aide standing nearby.

GEN. VOLK

Ashray's up to something. Get me the Pentagon on the horn...  
Something I recollect about him being investigated for conspiring with the enemy...

The aide pulls out a satellite phone and dials. He gets someone on the line and hands the phone over. They chat as the phone establishes a connection.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Have the Inviticus send the rest of my Marines. ASAP.

(quietly)

Your old lady have fits of intuition? Used to drive me nuts. Just plain nuts. Then...

The general hands the phone back to his aide, who steps away to talk on the sat-phone.

EXT. FATHERLAND - REFINERY COMPLEX - DAY

Waco and Jaxx climb over a fence and disappear into a small refinery of tanks, pipes, and towers at the base of the white geodesic dome.

JAXX

That small refinery is to cook up all the chemicals to make a laser.

WACO

Is it true? What they said - you have no records anywhere?

JAXX

It's not a crime to live in the dark web.

(ominous)

Both political parties back home have three thousand data points on every voter - not me!

WACO

(to himself)

She seemed so innocent yesterday.

JAXX

I knew it! I saw a laser beam last night when you crashed after supper. That's where it came from!

WACO

Huh. I coulda sworn I saw a beam like that right before my experiment exploded.

Waco points toward a metal statue on the top of the dome.

WACO (CONT'D)

The big bird on the dome. Nazis loved eagles like that.

They head for a steel-vaulted entrance door, marked with a giant swastika and "HELSTAF." Waco SLAMS his shoulder into the door, hits - and falls right on through. It wasn't even secured.

WACO (CONT'D)

Did you hear that - not one squeak when it opened. Still smooth as glass. Nazi, indeed.

EXT. FATHERLAND - MAIN GATE - DAY

A MARINE SERGEANT (30's) appears at the main entrance gate for the compound. He spots Waco and Jaxx just as they disappear into the dome through a side door - then he pulls a sat-phone out to make an urgent call.

INT. FATHERLAND - LASER LAB - DAY

Waco and Jaxx walk through a vast space with towering mirrors, concave lenses, and giant, simplistic computers.

WACO

I'll be damned. You were right.  
Huh. It's an antique laser lab.

Waco hits a big red "ACHTUNG" plunger/button by the doorway. Nothing happens, so he pries open an access panel beside it and fiddles with circuit wires.

JAXX

The Nazis built the first jet fighter aircraft. The first ballistic missiles. The V-2 rockets were the first cruise missiles.

WACO

Why build their laser lab way down here?

JAXX

Ex-Nazi scientists built the U.S. and Soviet space programs after the war. Werner von Braun and company. Some of my professors back at the university were their grad students.

WACO

You seem well versed in all things Nazi.

JAXX

I'm an aerospace engineer. They were the greatest!  
(quietly)  
Well, in rocket science, at least.

Waco closes the access panel and hits the RED BUTTON again. Up pops a display with an evacuation plan of the building. Waco scans the metal placard.

WACO

Projekt Hollen Stab. Hell Staff.

Jaxx studies the building plan.

JAXX

There are six levels below us. Will  
it be warmer down there? As in,  
volcano warming the ground up?

They hurry toward a door with a stairwell icon.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDORS - DAY

Waco and Jaxx hustle through skeletons (wearing Nazi uniforms) collapsed by boxes and moving crates.

JAXX

They were trying to evacuate.  
(quietly)  
They said you really are a  
terrorist.

WACO

Everybody says that about spooks.

JAXX

I don't see you trying to prove me  
wrong, here.

She holds up her empty backpack. Waco holds up his empty backpack.

WACO

I've nibbled my stash all gone.  
(quietly)  
Sorry.

JAXX

Those soldiers. They all used sat-  
phones. Did you see that?

Waco pulls out his sat-phone, extends a small antenna, and hands it over to her.

WACO

Dial 666 for an outside line.

Jaxx falls back, dialing, listening.

JAXX

Military quarantine...  
Communication blackout... I heard  
them. I saw them! They're blocking  
your signal. Can't you see?

Jaxx stuffs the sat-phone into her parka and disappears into a "CHEMIE LABOR" doorway. Waco doesn't notice; he's stepping into another door farther along.

EXT. - HELSTAF - DAY

A winterized Humvee heads into the refinery complex. A SQUAD OF MARINES exits the Humvee and hustles inside. The Marine Sergeant, carrying a military-grade tablet, directs his men.

MARINE SERGEANT

Short-range infrared scan says  
they're on the move - fast!

They hustle into a "LASER LABOR" doorway.

INT. LASER LAB - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The room is empty. The Marine Sergeant paces through the room as his men fan out, searching everywhere.

MARINE SERGEANT

Steady signal now - come on, it's  
getting stronger. We're close!

The Marines head for the interior hallways.

INT. HELSTAF - CHEMISTRY LAB - DAY

Jaxx moves around a vintage chemical engineering lab. She accidentally knocks over a glass beaker. It CRASHES to the floor. She jumps a mile, scared to death.

She looks around, studying the room. There's a skylight, and from one angle, you can see speckles of snowflakes drifting down from moisture condensing on the ceiling.

JAXX

Heat from the blast melted some of  
the ice up there. Huh. I guess it  
really was a nuclear blast.

She spots a pool of moisture at the base of a large wall mirror. She splashes her boot in the puddle.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Liquid water?

She pulls off her glove and feels the wall.

JAXX (CONT'D)

It's warm! Hell Staff, indeed!

Gently she pushes the mirror in -- A HIDDEN DOOR opens behind the mirror.

Jaxx stares at the dark corridor beyond the doorway. She gets a flashlight out of her backpack and disappears into the darkness. Waco paces into the room, jabbering.

WACO

Cold? Try reaching Maine in the middle of frigid winter after starting the Appalachian Trail in Georgia, packing nothing but summer shorts and tie-dye T-shirts.

Waco stops. He looks around. No Jaxx.

WACO (CONT'D)

Jaxx?

Waco stops in his tracks. He sees the skylight, the snowflakes in the air - kneels down. There's a light dusting of snow on the floor.

He turns on his flashlight and shines it at floor level, highlighting Jaxx's footprints into the snow. He follows them to a dead-end at the big wall mirror.

He feels around the mirror, presses it gently - and it eases inward. He slips into the space and slides the mirror shut.

Seconds later, the Marines enter the lab and fan out, searching, weapons drawn.

There's a dozen of them, and they quickly destroy all traces of Waco's and Jaxx's footprints on the floor.

MARINE SERGEANT

(studying his tablet)

Where'd they go? The infrared scan says they're right here.

INT. HELSTAF - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Waco and Jaxx hustle down dark corridors. Waco studies the texture and cracks in the walls.

JAXX

These walls have been subjected to significant stress. I measured some spurious tremors last week. Then, that nuclear blast.

WACO

We better get in and out before  
this place blows sky high.

Waco fingers deep scratch marks in the wall.

WACO (CONT'D)

Once that volcano wakes up, this  
place will be history.

Jaxx holds back a silent scream.

JAXX

Is that where the heat's coming  
from?

Waco fidgets uncontrollably.

WACO

Nobody ever figured on a ball of  
fire from a nuke melting all the  
ice.

She scurries on ahead, searching every nook and cranny with  
her flashlight.

INT. HELSTAF - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - EXIT DOOR - DAY

Waco and Jaxx stop at a yellow "ACHTUNG" door.

WACO

Looks like a nuclear blast door,  
like they have on our underground  
missile silos in North Dakota.

Waco muscles the door open.

JAXX

Excuse me, but how is this getting  
us closer to saving the penguins?

WACO

Dr. Z disappeared right after the  
ChinaPeace kids dropped off the  
nukes. He headed inland, directly  
for this place... I trailed him, as  
long as I could - blizzard hit...

JAXX

The second nuke? It's down -

Waco grabs his stomach, convulsing.

WACO  
Ulcers kicking in. No food...

Waco pushes her through the door, grabbing his stomach.

JAXX  
I could have saved some tidbits for  
you. The penguins we fed!

WACO  
Got a Plan B. And the means to  
implement it, too.  
(louder)  
I can do this!

Jaxx stares him down. Waco hurries on ahead.

JAXX  
Don't tell me your Plan B involves  
the second nuclear weapon? Please?  
(quietly)  
Something on the news, about how  
only a paranoid lunatic fringe...

Waco takes a sharp left at an intersection. Waco and Jaxx  
move into a neon green hallway.

WACO  
This corridor leads to some kind of  
central nexus.

JAXX  
Is your work that stressful?  
I mean, ulcers - at your tender  
age? Like, maybe you're schizo...

WACO  
Hey, lady, I live in the kill zone  
of a dozen active volcanoes.  
(grabbing his stomach)  
Then, boom - along came Godzilla.

JAXX  
I got a right to know what's going  
on here, don't I? I mean, if you  
die here, so do I.

Waco lags behind, studying more scratch marks on the wall,  
reading the markings out loud.

WACO  
Z. O. Z. Zbiria. Russian S.O.S.

JAXX

Isn't there some secret spy-code regulation that lets you tell me all?

WACO

Not if I don't know what I'm gonna do myself. Okay? Back off!

Jaxx's flashlight traces shiny new electrical conduits along the top of a side wall.

WACO (CONT'D)

New electrical service? In this crummy old building? Now we're getting somewhere.

JAXX

The military goons up there knew about this place all along, didn't they? Mars Society, indeed... If you know it, they sure as hell do.

The conduit leads past a massive metal wall. They inspect the hinges and seams with their flashlights.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Suddenly I was a lot lonelier than I ever knew.

EXT. FATHERLAND - DAY

Volk and Ashray are in a heated discussion just outside the HELSTAF dome.

An aide hands the general a tablet. Volk scans the tablet screen.

GEN. VOLK

Eyes Only message from the Pentagon. Can't they just leave well enough alone?

(quietly)

Now I'm sounding just like my kids.

Volk shows Ashray the tablet.

ADM. ASHRAY

They want us to evacuate ASAP. Who are they kidding? Doh! Just let them keep the nuke? Like we did with Saddam Hussein at the end of the First Iraq War? Not me. Not again. No, sir!

GEN. VOLK

I know obsessing when I see it.  
Teenage kids gulping down energy  
drinks like grape sodas, up for  
days on end video gaming?

INT. U.S. CARRIER - BRIDGE - DAY

All eyes are on a

GIANT TV SCREEN - NEWSCAST

A 3-D computer simulation shows a giant solar flare exploding  
in a pillar of fire, engulfing Mercury on "Day 1," Venus on  
"Day 2," and then heading directly for Earth on "Day 3."

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

The solar flare is just past the  
orbit of Venus, coming in...  
fast... On Wall Street, the markets  
are in free fall... losing a  
trillion dollars in valuation per  
hour. It's fiscal Armageddon!

The background switches to a view of the South Pole, showing  
the ozone hole over Antarctica.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

The South Pole, under the ozone  
hole, will... the entire polar cap  
will melt, flooding...

The video feed breaks up.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

... raising ocean levels by a  
hundred feet or more. Martial law  
has been declared throughout the  
Pacific Basin. All  
communications... taken over by the  
military... for emergency use only.

Abruptly, the screen is full of static. The OFFICER OF THE  
DECK is unable to get the TV signal back.

OFFICER OF THE DECK

All long-range communications are  
out. It's the solar flare!

EXT. FATHERLAND - DAY

Volk runs after Ashray across the central compound toward a  
command tent being set up by Marines. Volk gets in Ashray's  
face and points toward the dark, chaotic sky.

GEN. VOLK

We need to get the frack out of here, Ashray. This whole continent is gonna melt when the flare hits.

Ashray stiff-arms Volk backward.

ADM. ASHRAY

Not until I find the two terrorists. The second nuke!

Volk digs in and stands his ground.

GEN. VOLK

Our orders are to evacuate. Didn't you get the priority flash? Screw the nukes. Orders are orders. We effing evacuate!

ADM. ASHRAY

Get the damnation out of my way.

Volk gets right into Ashray's face, angry and direct.

GEN. VOLK

Shut up and color! Gin up, mister. This ain't no kindergarten game!

ADM. ASHRAY

I'm not obeying no unlawful order.

Ashray stiff-arms Volk aside and hurries on by. Colonel Jinn joins Ashray, and they head into the HELSTAF dome. Volk yells after them.

GEN. VOLK

Who cares about recovering the second nuke? It'll blow sky high anyway when the solar storm hits.

(turning to his aide)

Where are the rest of my Marines? I ordered the entire battalion ashore.

INT. HELSTAF - STAIRWAY - DAY

Jaxx finds a hidden latch, throws it - Waco pushes the heavy metal door open. They enter another corridor. This one angles down at a steep incline.

WACO

Another silent door? Nazi engineering extraordinaire?

JAXX

Perfectly silent hinges? Laser  
mirror rooms? Geodesic domes!

WACO

Your Mars Society was pretty damn  
busy down here, girl. Alias the  
U.S. Space Command!

The corridor dead-ends in a stairwell. Waco hurries by her  
and starts down the stairs.

WACO (CONT'D)

Some kind of Black Ops Pentagon  
operation off the books, before  
Trump made the Space Corps  
official.

JAXX

Perfect place to build weapons  
banned by international treaty.

A BAT zips by them, exiting the stairwell - then another and  
another! Jaxx cringes, terrified of bats.

JAXX (CONT'D)

They sure sucked me in.  
(afraid)  
You're insane, going down there.

WACO

Those Men in Black had Dr. Z in  
that chopper. I swear I saw his  
face. Forced him to lead them to  
the second nuke!

A flurry of bats jets past them. JAXX SCREAMS. Waco stares up  
at her. She shines her flashlight into her frightened face.

JAXX

You're leaving me? Up here? All  
alone? Wait...

WACO

It has to be warm down there,  
tropical warm. A whole ecosystem  
with bugs, vermin - bat food.

Waco disappears down the stairs, waving off the occasional  
bat.

INT. HELSTAF - STAIRWAY - BOTTOM LANDING - DAY

Waco takes the last few steps, his flashlight following the shiny electrical conduit to the bottom landing.

JAXX (O.S.)  
 (small voice)  
 Waco? You found something? Waco?

Waco reaches a massive, steel-reinforced door with a bank vault locking wheel.

JAXX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I felt a small tremor up here.  
 Waco? Is the volcano - waking up?

Waco shines his flashlight on the walls, revealing thick, black soot from intense flames.

JAXX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 How the F did you trap me up here?  
 (afraid)  
 Please. Don't leave me. Alone.

Waco sifts a pile of ashes in front of the vault door. He finds a gold wedding band and reads the inscription.

WACO  
 Cyrillic text. Oh, God.

Waco pulls Burkowski's metal glasses from the pile of ashes. He stares sadly at the glasses, gently cleaning the lenses.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 The good news is they didn't get  
 the codes.

Waco reaches out to open the vault door. The hair on his arm stands up, as if from static electricity.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 The bad news is how the hell do I  
 get inside now?

Gently, he taps the door. ELECTRICITY leaps up Waco's arm. He staggers back, bending over, grabbing his midsection in great pain.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 Yowzer. High voltage. Very high.

Waco collapses on the floor, drained. He stares at the electrified vault door, talking to Burkowski's glasses.

WACO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, old man. But what can I even do now?

TREMORS shake the stairwell, violently.

JAXX (O.S.)

We've got to go. Hurry.

(brief silence)

Waco? Get your sorry ass up here, and make that pronto!

Waco gathers himself together and stumbles up the stairs.

EXT./INT. FATHERLAND - ASHRAY'S HUMVEE - DAY

The sun is low on the horizon. Thick storm clouds make it seem even darker. Ashray and Colonel Jinn drive toward the HELSTAF dome.

COL. JINN

Admiral? Does your Marine Corps general know what is going on - here?

ADM. ASHRAY

He thinks we're here to observe the solar flare. Routine scientific mission.

Ashray makes a hard left and runs right into an ice tunnel.

COL. JINN (V.O.)

He. He seems very - uncouth.

ADM. ASHRAY

Let us hope.

COL. JINN

The misses. She gets uncouth at times. Our tradition for women is subservience. But I can see the rage boiling her veins. Rage.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ICE TUNNEL - DAY

A military convoy of winterized Humvees turns into the tunnel dead ahead and races toward Ashray's vehicle. Ashray hits the brakes and turns the wheel hard right, hugging the outside wall, scraping it with a riotous SCREECH.

The convoy ROARS past them, inches from a head-on collision, leaving a whirlwind of blowing snow and ice in its wake. Ashray eases to a stop.

ADM. ASHRAY

(quietly)

Who are we kidding here? We'll be post toasties when all this comes down. We're the sacrificial pawns.

COL. JINN

Yet. We die with - honor.

ADM. ASHRAY

Honor? Screw honor. I'm a die for a cause person. Sacrifice!

COL. JINN

You. You so don't get it.

Ashray gets the vehicle in gear and moves on into the light.

INT. HELSTAF - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Waco reaches the top of the stairs.

JAXX

What happened down there?

WACO

I found Burkowski. A pile of ashes. His wedding hand. I mean, band.

Waco hands her the old man's glasses.

JAXX

Does this mean, he's - dead! Oh, God. They killed him? The Men-in-Black commandos?

They both stare at Burkowski's glasses.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Why kill your Dr. Z? What the sam hell is going on?

WACO

I - I'm sorry. I'm still stuck on the dead grandfather type.

JAXX

Save the drama for later, mister.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx slink down a hallway.

JAXX

Focus. Focus on saving the penguins. Waco? Penguins!

Outside a wall of windows, they spot bright lights in the assembly area. A platoon of MiB, led by Colonel Jinn and Ashray, runs toward the building.

WACO

Oh, right. I forgot about them.

Waco and Jaxx run down the corridor, glancing out the windows as they go. Colonel Jinn gets a clear view of Waco.

EXT. HELSTAF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Colonel Jinn grabs a grenade launcher, shoulders the weapon, and takes aim on Waco's retreating figure.

COL. JINN

(quietly, to himself)

Boom. Up blows the - scientist.

Ashray struggles to wrestle the weapon away.

ADM. ASHRAY

Wait - we need him. He has the access codes... If General Volk hears it - finds out!

Colonel Jinn breaks free and FIRES. The rocket hits wide.

COL. JINN

Enough. Enough already. Screw patience. I am not female. I don't like being Christian either. Turn other cheek? Hah! I hate patience.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDOR - DUSK

Waco and Jaxx hurry down a hallway, illuminated only by snowed-over skylights above. Waco searches every nook and cranny, frantic, erratic.

WACO

Explosives! Look for anything that goes boom.

Footsteps of a mob sound at a dead run behind them.

JAXX

Too late now.

Waco and Jaxx disappear into a side corridor.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ashray and the MiBs stalk down the corridors, searching every room. Colonel Jinn un-shoulders a machine gun and FIRES A FEW ROUNDS into every large crate as they pass it.

COL. JINN

If any such crate bleeds red blood -  
we investigate for body. Hah!

ADM. ASHRAY

What was that you were saying about  
suppressed rage? Game on!

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

General Volk and his aide watch a platoon of Marines setting up camp in heavy snow.

The aide fires off a SIGNAL FLARE, and the Marines grab their weapons and form up on the general in platoon order. The general gives the orders:

GEN. VOLK

Arrest Admiral Ashray on sight. I  
got questions. A boatload of 'em.

The Marines break formation and run for their vehicles. The general grabs his aide and shouts at him.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Where are my tanks and heavy armor?  
I want every ounce of steel we  
have, right here - yesterday!

The aide scurries toward a communications truck.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Gotta make my kids proud, here.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDORS/WORK AREAS - NIGHT

Waco hurries Jaxx forward through a series of dark hallways, lobbies, and work spaces.

WACO

No records? No nothing? You don't  
exist, lady.

JAXX

I risked my neck to stay down here.  
Doesn't that mean anything?

Waco muscles open an outside door.

WACO

Like maybe I feel like I was set up from the get-go. You showing up, facilitating my mission.

JAXX

To find the nuclear weapons? Do I look that smart? Doh! Halloween!

They stand in the doorway, acclimating to the frigid cold.

WACO

Clever ruse to get me to lead you to the second nuke. Waco's no dummy.

They stare at the winter weather a while longer, then they both turn and step back inside.

INT. HELSTAF - NEON GREEN CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx sneak down the same neon green corridor as before, each with a powerful flashlight in their hands.

WACO

I just want to know more about you. Is that too much to ask?

They arrive at what used to be the "ACHTUNG" door. The heavy bank-vault door is now a solid wall of case-hardened steel.

WACO (CONT'D)

Suddenly I remember why I needed the explosives.

JAXX

I grew up in New Orleans. My folks were heavy into the drug trade. They were great parents, but the violence, the death. The fear!

(quietly)

I turned them in to the feds. They put me into witness protection. I ended up joining the U.S. Marshals myself. They needed somebody at McMurdo Sound who could double as security and tech engineer. Couldn't pay for two people.

WACO

U.S. Marshals? You're the law! I knew it! You're just here to squeeze a confession out of me. To shoot me at dawn for high treason.

Waco steps back, terrified - crashes into a glass door, gashes his arm badly. Jaxx rushes to help him. He pushes her away.

JAXX

You idiot. What have you done! We can't afford any injuries like that right now.

WACO

Wait. Look!

Bats show up and zoom around the ensuing pool of Waco's blood. Waco follows the bats to a "MECHANIK" door.

WACO (CONT'D)

That stairwell we were in earlier was filthy with bats. The scent of blood will make them anxious to get home. Home is heat! Home is Hell Staff! The secret lab behind the vault door. All we need to do is follow them to the source.

Waco kicks the door down and disappears inside, kneading his arm to keep the blood flowing. Jaxx is a few steps behind.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Ashray, Colonel Jinn, and their MiB split up and begin searching the building.

INT. HELSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Waco grabs a ratty old broom handle and KNOCKS the handle end on the floor, listening to the ECHO. Jaxx steps into the room, closing the door behind her - locking it.

BATS are everywhere for the rest of this sequence, fleeting shadows wherever they shine their flashlights.

WACO

Sorry about your folks.

JAXX

Your face is blue. Nose. Eyes glazing over. Latent paranoia...

She rips a swath of cloth out of her blouse and bandages his arm.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Your body can't heal the wound and  
fight this righteous cold at the  
same time. We need food! And now!

WACO

What we need is heat. And heat is  
down there, below us.

JAXX

Volcano heat. Volcano! As in  
flowing magma, liquid fire!

Waco's broomstick hits a HOLLOW ECHO in the floor.

JAXX (CONT'D)

Wait. Stop. That's a new sound!

Waco RIPS a layer of carpet aside: A large, square seam shows  
in the floor. Waco gets down on his knees to inspect the  
square seam.

WACO

This is an emergency access panel.  
(quietly)  
I'm not worried. Got nothing to  
hide, anyway. Well, almost nothing.  
Just the one little thing...

Waco pries at the edges with his pocketknife. The floor  
crumbles away to reveal rusty hinges.

WACO (CONT'D)

That secret lab, behind that  
electrified door - deep in that  
stairwell. I figure we're right  
above it.

(quietly)

That's where the second nuke is. I  
know it. Gotta get there!

The building RUMBLES, as if from a small earthquake. They  
grab onto each other for dear life.

WACO (CONT'D)

I remember - engraved in the steel  
vault door. Projekt Vulkan Labor.  
It's a volcano lab!

The tremors subside. Jaxx peels his arms off her.

WACO (CONT'D)

You have no idea how cold I am here. I can't even feel my extremities anymore. Vision is going...

JAXX

Your body is shutting down blood flow to your extremities. Preserving heat in the core. Bad. Very bad!

Waco climbs up a few shelves of a metal storage rack, then maneuvers around to face Jaxx. He grabs his stomach, in pain.

WACO

Stomach. Killing me. Ulcers! Bad.

JAXX

You're suicidal. Stop this. Break through that floor, and you might just fall into the maws of a volcano!

Another tremor, stronger, rattles the room. The metal shelf BUCKLES. Jaxx rushes to brace the shelf with her arms. Waco doubles over from the stomach pain.

WACO

Bloody - er, ulcers. If I could explode this place the way they're exploding my stomach right now.

JAXX

We could have saved some food for your ulcer pains. Why didn't you say something?

Waco points toward the rectangle in the floor.

WACO

We don't need a full-blown volcanic blast, just enough of one to make some ash, so that the ash cloud blocks out the solar flare.

Jaxx moves down toward the floor.

WACO (CONT'D)

Wait! Don't let go of that shelf -

But Jaxx has already let go of the shelf, which BUCKLES.

Waco falls off the shelf and crashes onto the middle of the rectangle. The floor crumbles away. Waco FALLS through the opening.

EXT. FATHERLAND - NIGHT

Volk's convoy has to veer off the road to avoid a giant crevasse, gushing STEAM and SUPERHEATED GAS. Volk stares into the chasm as they move by.

GEN. VOLK

Christ Almighty. Did you see that?  
Down in the abyss - lava flowing,  
angry - furious!

Volk's aide, driving the vehicle, peels out.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Finally understand the fatal  
attraction of video games.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Ashray and Colonel Jinn, both with a group of MiB, approach from opposite directions. They meet and huddle close.

ADM. ASHRAY

Damn. We'd be long gone from here,  
but for those two kids.

COL. JINN

They are cunning bastards. Eco-  
terrorists always cut the - leading  
edge.

The ground rumbles. GEYSERS erupt from deep cracks in the frozen ground nearby.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Terrorists. I have rooted out  
dissidents all my China career.  
Spent whole years undercover,  
living their treasons... And yet.  
They always surprise. Excel!

Ashray points toward a vent shaft shooting out hot, humid air, forming a TORNADO BLIZZARD when it mixes with the frigid, hyper-dry arctic air.

ADM. ASHRAY

That's not what's driving you,  
Jinn. What's going on here? What  
aren't you telling me?

COL. JINN

(quietly)

Just. Perhaps because they have a cause, a reason to die for.

ADM. ASHRAY

Cause? Us? We're just pawns in a giant chess game. China and the U.S. - using this whole natural disaster thing to ring in the New World Order from out of the chaos? Didn't they even brief you?

COL. JINN

Yes. Of course they did. There's more to it, however - much more!

INT. HELSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Waco hangs on by his fingertips above the gorge. Jaxx stands above him, hands on hips, foot tapping impatiently.

Frigid air billows out from the hole in the floor. Their breath forms snowflakes.

WACO

A little help here?

JAXX

Not until you come clean. Are you sane? Can I even trust you?

WACO

Of course, I'm sane. That's the whole problem.

Jaxx plants a foot near his hand.

JAXX

Your turn to fess up, buddy. What's burning up your insides? Huh? I got a right to know, too.

WACO

The heat in the laser lab. From the nuclear explosion, it was too close to the surface. The explosion wasn't high enough. Proof positive that my ozone experiment failed.

JAXX

So all this frantic searching for this volcano lab has a purpose?

He grabs her ankle and hauls himself up and out. Waco finds some sturdy rope and loops it around a ceiling beam.

WACO

I've got to get down there, and soon. Blow up this volcano, use the volcanic ash cloud to block the solar flare.

He drops the other end of the rope down into the jagged hole in the floor, then ZIPS on down the rope into the black void.

Jaxx stares down after him. A dim light sweeps an arc in the darkness below.

WACO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's warm down here. Hot even!  
(long silence)  
Get down here, girl.

An updraft sucks the air out of the opening in the floor.

JAXX

I still say we should be going up, not down.

WACO

We can't go up. It's filthy with bad guys. If we go down, we might find a lava tube to get us topside.

EXT. FATHERLAND - NIGHT

Volk and his convoy get stranded in the middle of a large, thick black ice flow. STEAM GUSHES out of the ground, then spreads out into a shallow lake, freezing instantly.

GEN. VOLK

We're dead meat if we can't get out of this mother-loving ice field.

The Marines get out of their vehicles, jack up the rear wheels, and hurry to install heavy-duty snow chains on the back tires of their vehicles.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Ashray told us to come this way. He knew we'd get bogged down. Maybe even die in the lava.

(quietly)

Lost half a battalion in Afghanistan once. Navy couldn't send in air ops. Too dangerous, they said. Dangerous?

The chains circle two sets of double tires each, making the rear of each vehicle look like a half-track.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)  
Five-star bastard. Arrogance  
without limits. Just like the  
Nazis...  
(quietly)  
And I wonder why the Taliban never  
give up in Afghanistan?

INT. HELSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Solid as an alley cat, Jaxx lands on her feet near Waco.

She shines her light up at the vaulted ceiling and a mass of bats swarming, hanging, chirping.

JAXX  
You could have told me to look out  
for the huge swarm of bats!

WACO  
Heat from the volcano creates a  
whole separate ecosystem, just like  
the probiotics in your own stomach.

Waco gives the rope a sharp yank. The rope falls down into a heap at their feet.

Jaxx stares at the rope, the hole - Waco! He shrugs.

WACO (CONT'D)  
We can't let them follow us. Not  
down here, too!

Suddenly, he shivers convulsively, so much that she has to reach out to grab his arms to steady him, gently hugging him. He shivers into her embrace.

WACO (CONT'D)  
Freezing. Cold! So cold!

JAXX  
(quietly)  
Didn't plan for that, did you?  
Like, maybe I can be useful?

Waco breaks away from her, on shaky feet. They look around:

They're in a vast cavern, full of very modern lenses, mirrors, and other laser apparatus.

JAXX (CONT'D)

That's a gigantic steam-powered generator. It's huge!

WACO

Hence the power source for said electrified vault door. Laser, too!  
(thinking out loud)  
The laser lab upstairs was just a dummy mock-up. A decoy! This here is the real McCoy.

His knees buckle again, and he grabs onto her shoulder.

JAXX

Where's the nuke? What's it look like? Same as that NASA package we sent up yesterday?

Jaxx cradles him in her arms, rubbing his arms and back.

WACO

No food. Damn cold sucking all your energy out of me. Sure-fire R.X. for disaster.

JAXX

No food? You mean -

WACO

My backpack was empty all along. Just enough for Zeppo... Y'all needed it more than me. I'm accustomed to the cold. Thought so.

All the strength drains from him. Jaxx props him up against a wall, stripping off his parka, then hers. She pulls him into her and wraps their parkas around them both.

JAXX

Dammit, Waco! Focus! We've got to find that nuke - hello!

He keeps shivering, so vigorously he shakes her to the bone. His words are slurred, confused.

WACO

Don't rightly know if it's the damn cold or the stark terror.  
(weak smile)  
A little of both, I'm thinking.

She eases them down into a sitting position on the floor.

JAXX  
 I've been afraid all my life.  
 (quietly)  
 Not so much lately, now than I  
 think on it.

Gently, she brushes the hair off his forehead.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
 You're freezing cold. Come on...

He cuddles into her bosom.

WACO  
 Toasty.

She takes her gloves off and feels his wrist for a pulse.

JAXX  
 Weak pulse. Confused thinking!  
 You're getting hypothermia!

Waco maneuvers up onto wobbly legs and reaches toward an electrical panel, his hand shaking.

WACO  
 Makes me think of home. Back on the  
 bayou. Summer, cuddling with my  
 girl...

Waco touches the breaker. SPARKS FLY. Waco gets blown backward. Jaxx catches him in her arms. He's smoking from the electric charge, hair all frazzled.

INT. HELSTAF - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Ashray, Colonel Jin, and the MiB double-time down the corridors, searching every possible hiding place.

Ashray stops at a "Mechanismus" room and kicks the door in.

INT. HELSTAF - MECHANISMUS ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Ashray steps in, and yanks open a pneumatic control panel, full of mechanical levers. One of the levers is red.

Ashray pumps the lever, opening up a giant floor vent. A maelstrom of hot, humid air PURGES OUT through the vent.

COL. JINN  
 Heat is venting from the building.  
 We have little time - the volcano!

Colonel Jinn grabs Ashray, and they hurry out.

ADM. ASHRAY  
I know you're Chinese. I know I  
should hate your guts. Still...

INT. HELSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx sit, huddled close for warmth. He's dozed off.  
She studies his face.

JAXX  
(quietly)  
You're getting some color back.  
Maybe we got you warm in time. God,  
I hope so.

THUNDER ripples above them. She shies her flashlight into the  
cavern above: Clouds of steam, glowing with static  
electricity.

LIGHTNING strikes nearby, from the ground up. She jumps!  
STEAM rises from where the lightning hit. Jaxx shakes him  
awake. He's very drowsy.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
Waco? Look. What's going on? Do I  
need to get us out of here?

WACO  
It's ground lightning.

LIGHTNING strikes in the distance, then a steady stream of  
strikes, with gentle rumbles of THUNDER echoing.

WACO (CONT'D)  
The volcano. It's waking up.

JAXX  
Waking up? It looks more like an  
orgasm to me.  
(breathless)  
But how? I've never seen anything  
so enchanting.

WACO  
Ice particles, rocks, and volcanic  
ash collide to generate an enormous  
amount of static electricity that  
has to go somewhere.

Waco struggles to stand up, pulling his parka on.

WACO (CONT'D)

The U.V radiation from the baby nuke. It penetrated the ground. The volcano is going active. Hurry, Jaxx!

That gets her moving. She's on her feet, wrapped in her parka, and back to her old assertive self in no time.

JAXX

From heaven to hell in one fell swoop.

WACO

An active volcano? I can work with that. Yes! We can do this.

BATS SWARM around their flashlights and the space grows dark.

JAXX (V.O.)

The bats are terrified. Me, too!

EXT. FATHERLAND - NIGHT

Jaxx and his men, in winterized Humvees, head toward the thunder dome.

GEN. VOLK

The chicken-hawks in the Pentagon code-named this fiasco Operation Icarus? Come on down, y'all.

The vehicles are tossed around by random EXPLOSIONS OF STEAM from the ground underneath them.

INT. HELSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx study a vast array of barrels neatly arranged in racks. All the barrels have Freon stencils. Waco is still out of it, his eyes unfocused and his words slurred.

WACO

You're really an aerospace engineer? Always wanted to be an engineer. Couldn't hack the math.

JAXX

Look at all the Freon. They need it to mask the infra-red energy signature of their non-dissipating laser from our spy satellites.

WACO  
(quietly)  
I must admit it's kind of fun,  
having a co-conspirator.

JAXX  
I'm gonna go out on a limb here and  
assume there's no nuke after all.  
What do we do now?

Jaxx moves away, exploring, fighting the swarming bats.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
If we could get one of these Freon  
barrels open. We could start a  
chain reaction. Freezing cold plus  
extremely hot - boom! Would that  
help?

A steady stream of lightning illuminates the cavern now.  
Waco's still out in left field.

WACO  
A brave and beautiful co-  
conspirator, to boot. Hot!

JAXX  
If we make a controlled volcano  
eruption and blow a ton of ash into  
the atmosphere, it will block the  
solar flare.

Waco scrapes frost built up off one Freon barrel.

WACO  
What we need is to fracture one  
barrel first, to get the chain  
reaction started.

Jaxx yells from across the room.

JAXX  
Massive steel door over here.

Waco runs over to Jaxx. She points toward a vault door. Waco  
clamps his hands on the vault door and gets the JUICE SHOCKED  
OUT OF HIM.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
Our escape route. Good thinking.

Jaxx yanks Waco away from the door. Charge grounds from Waco  
onto Jaxx. Her hair goes wild with static electricity.

WACO  
(smiling big)  
I can't believe you just did that.

JAXX  
I can't believe you just smiled.

They look up at a sudden SOUND. A face stares down from the hole that Waco made in the floor above. A bright, piercing light shines from the opening around the face.

COL. JINN  
Kudos. You found our secret Mars  
Society - laboratory.

Waco and Jaxx whisper to each other.

WACO  
We have to make him fire his weapon  
at us. It's the only way to  
puncture a Freon barrel.

JAXX  
Make him angry, really angry?  
Engineers do that all the time. Let  
me take this one. Please?

Jaxx pushes Waco out of her way.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
China's in cahoots with the U.S.  
Space Command?

COL. JINN  
Ha! Says the rat in the - trap.

JAXX  
The ozone hole is right above us.  
There's nothing to stop the solar  
flare coming. It will melt the  
whole polar ice cap.

COL. JINN  
Who's afraid? Haha. In China, we do  
not think of - doom. We think only  
of - possibilities. We will control  
the world from - chaos. China  
rules! Get your self used to it!

ORANGE TRACERS fire from above Jaxx and Waco. ROUNDS RICOCHET through the Freon canisters. The barrels of refrigerant EXPLODE and pour Freon out onto the floor. More barrels freeze, then SHATTER.

INT. HELSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Ashray wrestles Colonel Jinn back from the opening, takes his weapon away, and throws it aside.

COL. JINN

I swear to God. We did not - fire.

ADM. ASHRAY

Balls! We built a space laser down here. You and me both. China and the United States.

COL. JINN

Fools. You trusted us. Big mistake.

Livid with fury, Ashray HITS Colonel Jinn square in the face, drawing blood from a deep gash. Calmly, Colonel Jinn pulls out a white handkerchief and wipes the blood off his face.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)

Hah. Now we can blame Noah's Flood two point oh on America.

ADM. ASHRAY

The whole world will hate us.

COL. JINN

Not hate. Abhor. You make Nazis look like angels from heaven.

ADM. ASHRAY

China and the U.S. were in this together! We signed a treaty. A God damned treaty!

Ashray rushes Colonel Jinn and PUMMELS him with his fists. They trade BLOW FOR BLOW... until they're both hurt badly and bleeding. They pause to get their breath, circling each other, wary.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

I'll turn you in to the authorities. They'll charge you with treason - shoot you dead!

Ashray grabs Colonel Jinn and throws him to the wall.

COL. JINN

You blew up all the damning evidence.

(quietly)

Check mate. China wins. Hurray.

ADM. ASHRAY  
I'll kill you first!

Jinn gets Ashray in a nelson lock, ready to snap his spine.

Beat.

COL. JINN  
Elbys. For my Elbys.

Colonel Jinn throws Ashray against a wall and darts away.  
Ashray braces himself against the wall, bone tired.

Ashray pulls out his SATELLITE PHONE, puts a RED FLASH DRIVE in, and downloads some files. Then he sets the sat-phone in BEACON MODE (blinking red light), stuffs it into his parka, and moves out.

INT. HELSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx stand on a desk, surrounded by a sea of neon blue Freon. A Freon barrel falls into a distant lava flow, EXPLODING - sealing the lava flow with a flurry of cold.

WACO  
Lava flows out the tubes, while all  
the smoke and ashes go straight up -  
perfect!  
(quietly)  
Huh. Maybe the heat from the nuke  
detonation was a good thing after  
all.

All around them, the floor of the cavern slowly collapses into a thick cloud of wind-blown volcanic ash.

JAXX  
Waco, I can't breathe.

Waco grabs Jaxx, hoists her over one shoulder, and wades into the viscous Freon.

WACO  
It's the sulfur in the fumes. It'll  
burn your lungs out! Take one good  
breath and hold it. Now!

Waco heads toward the heavy steel-vault exit door.

JAXX  
What about your lungs?

WACO  
Stop breathing, dammit!

Waco reaches out to the door, eyes closed, wincing. There's no electric charge. He muscles the door open.

A deluge of bats SWARMS around them and through the open door, desperate to escape.

INT. HELSTAF - BOTTOM OF STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Waco lowers Jaxx, then rubs his feet and ankles to warm them up.

WACO

Both my feet are frozen solid. Come to think of it; I can't feel squat from my knees on down.

JAXX

Think, Waco. We need think.

WACO

Huh. Pain seems to mitigate the fear. Anxiety. Fascinating.

Jaxx scoots aside, right into a pile of ashes at the base of the doorway. She pulls a man's wedding band out of the ashes and reads the inscription.

JAXX

Cyrillic. Dr. Z!

Frantic, Waco searches the stairwell area. He finds a door behind the stairwell.

WACO

It's a lava tunnel made into a service corridor. We can get out that way. I'm sure of it.

Waco grabs Jaxx and hauls her into an "ACHTUNG" door.

EXT./INT FATHERLAND - JAXX'S HUMVEE - NIGHT

Volk and his Marines are just outside the HELSTAF dome. An EXPLOSION lights up the night sky.

GEN. VOLK

Christ, every time the lava explodes, I think the solar flare has arrived.

(to himself)

Trust in the Lord. When my time comes, it comes. Can't do squat about it but to die well.

INT. HELSTAF - MAIN CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Jaxx and Waco bolt out of an "ACHTUNG" door, then hurry down empty hallways.

WACO  
The top of the dome.

Waco's frozen feet make an odd sound as he walks.

WACO (CONT'D)  
We have to blow the top off the  
thunder dome.

The corridor pressurizes, pushing them toward the outside of the dome like they're in a WIND TUNNEL.

WACO (CONT'D)  
With a hole at the top, the dome  
will behave just like a volcano and  
shoot a giant cloud of ash upward.  
Just what we need to block the  
solar flare.

Arms locked together, they struggle toward a nearby doorway. Jaxx kicks the door in.

INT. HELSTAF - MECHANICS ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Waco and Jaxx struggle into a small "MECHANICS" room. It's full of wall-to-wall mechanical levers.

JAXX  
Start flipping levers. See if they  
do anything.

WACO  
That's not very scientific.

They talk quietly as they FLIP one lever after another, waiting for a split second after each to see if anything happens.

WACO (CONT'D)  
Well, I - I think I'm actually  
gonna miss you.  
(bashful)  
Can't rightfully explain why.

JAXX  
Talk. Babble. Just stay conscious.  
We need your know-how to get the  
hell out of here.

They look toward a loud mechanical sound out in the hallway.

WACO  
 Been so alone for so long.  
 (sudden melancholy)  
 Never figured to escape the abyss.

A distant THUD reverberates through the structure.

JAXX (V.O.)  
 That sound! Did you hear it? One of  
 the levers did something.

WACO  
 (quietly)  
 I'm ready to die, now....

Waco throws a lever. The THUD happens again!

WACO (CONT'D)  
 Wow! It's a pneumatic pump lever,  
 for when the power goes out.

Waco works the lever back and forth, frantic.

An outside door slowly opens on the far side of the space,  
 letting the elements rush in as Waco and Jaxx rush out.

EXT. HELSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Air vents from cracks in the HELSTAF dome with a high-pitched  
 whistle. Ashray bolts out of the building. He stops. Colonel  
 Jinn's helicopter is nearby.

The admiral huddles in the shadows, waiting.

The admiral yanks the pin from a grenade, runs to the  
 chopper, tosses the grenade inside, and runs for all he's  
 got.

The helicopter EXPLODES in a fireball of reverberating  
 explosions of ordinance and jet fuel. The explosion throws  
 Ashray through the air in a cloud of steel and shrapnel.

Ashray falls to the tarmac, wounded severely in the head, one  
 eye a gruesome mess of raw flesh.

WACO AND JAXX bolt out of an exit nearby. MiB blast them with  
 a flurry of three-round bursts. Waco points toward the bird-  
 esque figure on top of the dome.

WACO  
 We've got to shoot the big bird.  
 Open the top of the dome!

JAXX

Big bird? What's that mean?

A ROUND clips Waco's shoulder, and he falls down. Jaxx drags Waco to shelter.

EXT. HELSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Jaxx jams a cloth into Waco's hand and makes him hold it over his shoulder wound. Waco stares at his feet.

WACO

My feet are frozen, ankles too. I can feel bones crunching. Brain's numb. Bad news bears.

Tears streak down Jaxx's cheeks, freezing into icicles.

JAXX

Don't quit on me. Please?

WACO

I'm sorry, Zeppo. I tried. I really did.

Jaxx SLAPS him, drawing blood.

JAXX

Then try some more, Marine. Get your lazy ass in gear, mister!

WACO

K.P. duty? Again? Peeling potatoes?

JAXX

The graveyard shift, plebe. Marching it off in front of Headquarters Company. Hop to it, greaser.

Waco musters his last ounce of energy to whisper.

WACO

Shoot the goddamn albatross. The volcanic ash cloud needs to vent from the cavern... Puncture the balloon! Varrrooom!

JAXX

Albatross? What the hell are you talking about?

WACO

I'm not delusion-ing. Shoot the -

Waco collapses, spent.

An MiB jumps Jaxx from behind. She decks him with a quick, brutal kick to the stomach.

Jaxx slips and falls flat on her back. She ends up staring up at the big bird on top of the dome.

JAXX

Oh - that albatross.

Jaxx gets up, grabs the MiB's weapon, and fires off the whole magazine. She can't hit the albatross.

More MiB are coming. Jaxx hurries away. A sudden wall of snow obscures her escape.

EXT. FATHERLAND - MAIN GATE - NIGHT

A convoy of Marine vehicles barrels through the main gate. Volk stands at the passenger door of the lead Humvee, his aide driving.

Marines jump/roll out of their vehicles, then streak across the tarmac like avenging angels.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

The geodesic HELSTAF dome shudders. WRENCHING SOUNDS, of metal under extreme stress, pierce the still night air, as the superstructure expands into a distorted pear shape.

GEN. VOLK

This is what happens when children play with fire. Grown children!

Jaxx runs back toward Waco, dragging an M-60 machine gun, a bandoleer of ammo draped across her torso. She scoots down beside Waco.

JAXX

Do you know how to work this monster?

WACO

A Ma Deuce? And how. Oorah!

Waco grabs the weapon. Jaxx feeds the bandoleer of ammo into the magazine.

WACO (CONT'D)

We need to brace my back against that wall. Fifty caliber rounds have one hell of a kick.

Sliding on his butt, Jaxx helps Waco scoot back a few feet to steady his back against a brick wall.

WACO (CONT'D)

Sit down in front of me and support  
this monster on your shoulder.  
Let's dance, girl.

Waco hunkers down and takes aim, adjusting the sights. HOT BRASS FLIES all around, sizzling as it hits the snow.

The base of the laser cannon works loose. The extreme pressure inside HELSTAF blows the albatross off, wrenching a hole at the peak of the dome.

Waco spots Colonel Jinn running toward the perimeter wall. He swings the M-60 around, draws a bead on Colonel Jinn, and fires away - Jinn gets hit in the shoulder, but escapes.

WACO (CONT'D)

That's for my ChinaPeace friends.  
You betrayed us all!

Waco collapses, spent.

WACO (CONT'D)

Doomed anyway. Ulcers are bleeding  
through the stomach wall. Hurts  
like all get-out.  
(struggling, fading fast)  
The penguins, save the...

Waco's expression fades, and his body goes limp. Jaxx hauls the M-60 over and wraps his body around it. She whispers by his ear, with a parting kiss on the lips.

JAXX

Hot steel will keep you warm until  
I come back.

Jaxx runs away into the night. Two Marines are almost on top of Waco when...

A TORNADO of volcanic ash shoots out of the broken tip of the dome, up into the night sky.

The tornado rips through the low clouds, far into the upper atmosphere.

General Volk yells at a group of Marines, pointing toward Jaxx.

GEN. VOLK  
 After her. Shoot to kill.  
 (to himself)  
 Then we can get the hell out of  
 here. Home. Blessed home.

The Marines jump into a Humvee and speed away, hot on Jaxx's tail.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

The shaft of volcanic energy from the thunder dome gets more intense as the mass and momentum increase.

HURRICANE-FORCE WINDS whistle through the refinery complex, sandblasting paint off vehicles and storage tanks.

SUPERHEATED STEAM shoots from the HELSTAF dome and strengthens the storm into a blizzard. General Volk runs through the chaos to Marines gathered around the admiral. Ashray's eye is a gruesome mess, oozing gray matter.

GEN. VOLK  
 This is what happens when you  
 disobey the chain of command.

ADM. ASHRAY  
 No! The Chinese set me up to take  
 the fall.

Volk puts a heel in Ashray's wounded eye. The admiral screams.

GEN. VOLK  
 You've been in cahoots with them  
 commies since day one! I know it!

Volk pulls out his pistol and aims it at Ashray's head.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)  
 Tell me the truth, Ashray. Or so  
 help me God I'll blow your brains  
 to hell and back again.

ADM. ASHRAY  
 We suspected the Chinese were  
 manufacturing banned Freon eleven  
 down here.

Hands shaking, Volk cocks his revolver.

GEN. VOLK  
 Then your explosion exposed it?  
 That was no freaking coincidence!

Ashray won't make eye contact. He's evasive, stuttering.

ADM. ASHRAY

The Freon stockpile. You've got to destroy it. I command you!

GEN. VOLK

That's just your cover story. Look me in the eyes - the truth!

Ashray raises a bloody fist just shy of Volk's face.

ADM. ASHRAY

How else was I going to find the location of their bootleg lab? Map on flash drive. GPS tracking app. Bully for me.

GEN. VOLK

Level with me, or so help me God I'll tell the Pentagon you're a commie pinko traitor!

Volk pulls the trigger, but it falls on an empty chamber.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Damnation.  
(grim determination)  
Where's my ammo?

Volk's aide steps out of the storm and hands the general a fresh magazine. General Volk locks and loads, aims.

ADM. ASHRAY

China and the U.S. signed a treaty. When the solar flare hit. The chaos. We would take control. Rule the world! Together! The whole trade negotiations - a front!

GEN. VOLK

Peace on Earth! Good will to all men? You idiots believed them?

ADM. ASHRAY

Shoot me! I order you. Fire!

The general's hand shakes.

Beat.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Tell my family I died a hero, will you? That's all I ask.

Lightning fast, the admiral dives a hand and goes to pull out a weapon! The general empties the magazine into the admiral.

Volk he kneels down and yanks Ashray's arm out of his parka. He only has a clenched fist. The general peels his dead fingers back, and pulls a RED FLASH DRIVE out of the admiral's clenched fist.

GEN. VOLK

This better lead me to the Freon stockpile.

(to himself)

The things we do for God and country.

Pocketing the RED FLASH DRIVE, Volk looks toward the sound of a helicopter lifting off in the distance.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Blow them out of the sky.

Volk grabs a Rocket-Propelled Grenade launcher (RPG), takes aim, and fires at the helicopter. The RPG ZOOMS away. It explodes near the chopper, spraying it with a cloud of shrapnel.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

I'm in command now. Yes! Finally got my own damned command.

The helicopter loses power and struggles to maintain altitude. It disappears from view, over the perimeter wall, belching fire and smoke - CRASHING in a mushroom cloud of fire and steel.

EXT. FATHERLAND - NIGHT

Racing downrange, Volk plugs the flash drive into a laptop computer, pulls up a map, and points directions for his driver.

GEN. VOLK

Ashray found a new way into the Volcano Lab. We don't need the access codes. Onward!

A marine in Volk's vehicle aims his RPG at the darting silhouettes of running MiB. One MiB runs out into the headlights. General Volk hollers at the driver, his aide.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Road kill!

The general's aide with a righteous grin runs over the MiB.

EXT. FATHERLAND - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

The tarmac is empty but for driving snow and sleet. The MUTED THROBBING of a MedEvac helicopter approaches and lands. The chopper bay doors open, and the female medic from the Antarctica rescue jumps out with a medical bag.

MEDIC

Search all the bodies. Hurry.

Two HELPERS with Red Cross armbands are with her.

HELPER #1

Found the satellite phone with the GPS tag we've been tracking.

Helper #1 finds Ashray and turns him over, searches his parka, and pulls out his sat-phone, still in blinking BEACON MODE.

HELPER #1 (CONT'D)

It was the Admiral tracking signal, all right. Excepting he's stone, cold dead.

The medics hustle around, turning bodies over and checking their vital signs.

HELPER #2

Got fresh blood coming from the mouth and ears. Over here!

The medic hurries over. It's Waco. She feels his neck.

MEDIC

No pulse. Give me a hand here. We might be able to save this one.

The medic rips Waco's shirt open and listens to his chest with a stethoscope.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

He's bad off, real bad.

Helper #2 pulls out electroshock paddles and a voltage charger.

HELPER #1

Hurry. The solar flare's coming.

The medic jolts Waco with the electroshock paddles. ZAP. Waco startles awake. The medic pulls out a pre-filled syringe.

MEDIC  
Antibiotics. Say ouch.

She plunges the needle into his arm. Waco musters a smile.

MEDIC (CONT'D)  
You're on borrowed time, Semper Fi.  
Make the most of it.

They help Waco to his feet and toward the MedEvac chopper.

EXT. ROSS SEA - COASTLINE - DAY

It's dawn now, but still very dark because of an overcast from the ash cloud.

Jaxx huddles under cover, staring out across the ocean at the aircraft carrier, full of lights and sundry aircraft shuttling survivors from the mainland.

EXT. ROSS SEA - COASTLINE - DAY - LATER

A chopper lifts off from Fatherland and heads toward the U.S.S. Inviticus. Jaxx FIRES a flare pistol. The chopper lands nearby.

Heavy snow falls, except it's not snow. It's gray volcanic ash that turns black when it hits the ground and gets wet. Crew members help Jaxx into the chopper.

INT. MEDEVAC HELICOPTER - DAY

Throughout this scene, medics shuttle a steady stream of wounded into the chopper bay. As Jaxx steps back into the crew's cabin, Waco's there, looking half dead. Jaxx rushes to his side.

JAXX  
We need to get you to a hospital.

WACO  
Ain't no hospital gonna fix me up,  
not no more.

Waco wrestles away from Jaxx and hobbles toward the pilot's cabin.

WACO (CONT'D)  
A shark dies if it stops swimming.  
Stand aside. I have to - call home,  
E.T.

Waco pats his pockets - checks his backpack.

WACO (CONT'D)

Did I give you my sat-phone? I - I  
need to download some data to H.Q.

She takes the sat-phone out of her park and hands it over.  
Waco secures the hatch behind him as he steps into the  
pilot's cabin.

INT. MEDEVAC HELICOPTER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Waving for the pilot to ignore him, Waco sits in the  
copilot's seat. He turns the sat-phone on, speaking quietly  
into it.

WACO

Majestic? Are you there?

MAJESTIC TWELVE

(lusty female voice)

By your command, master.

WACO

Did you arm the baby nuke when we  
were in the Volcano Lab?

MAJESTIC

Armed, yes. Timer, no. There was  
insufficient time. After. Those men  
showed up.

Majestic Twelve projects a graphic matrix of numbers.

WACO

All the launch codes were unlocked?

MAJESTIC

Affirmative. You still need to give  
the verbal command to start the  
countdown timer. Only your voice  
will work. Saying the magic words.

WACO

(quietly, afraid)

Anything else to report? Anything  
suspicious?

Majestic Twelve plays back a recording of a Fox News  
broadcast.

MAJESTIC

Our nuclear explosion doubled the  
size of the ozone hole. When the  
solar flare hits, it will melt the  
polar ice cap.

WACO

Did you run the simulation?

The sat-phone projects a 3D map of Antarctica.

MAJESTIC

Affirmative. Ninety percent probability ocean levels will rise a minimum of one hundred feet overnight... Calculations... Severe drain on batteries... Loss of power... shutting down...

The 3D projection fades to black. Waco turns the device off, staring blankly into space as he mulls over this new information.

INT. MEDEVAC HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Waco, white as a sheet, struggles out of the forward cabin and steps out of the helicopter onto terra firma.

EXT. ROSS SEA COASTLINE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Jaxx steps out right behind Waco. They huddle against the fierce wind.

JAXX

What did NASA tell you?

WACO

(quiet, afraid)

It's the end of the world.

JAXX

What's wrong? Tell me!

Waco avoids her eyes, looking every which way but at her.

WACO

Back home, on Lake Travis, a 'possum had babies in the tool shed one spring. Adorable little rug rats hanging by their tails all over the garage, beady little mouse eyes.

JAXX

The cold - the wounds - are you in the throes of death-bed flashbacks?

Waco registers her face and shakes his head violently.

WACO  
 (vicious fury)  
 I've destroyed the world!

JAXX  
 What? You're making no sense.

WACO  
 The penguins will be destroyed.

Beat.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 Humanity.

JAXX  
 W - what - explain!

Jaxx shines a powerful beam into their environs: There's a long line of penguins watching from a ridge nearby. Zeppo is way out in front of the others, fat and happy, flapping his wings when he sees Waco.

JAXX (CONT'D)  
 Relax. Deep breath. Your penguin friends are out there. Happy. Healthy! Fine.

WACO  
 The solar flare hasn't even gotten here yet.

Waco chokes up, tears gushing down his cheeks, as he waves goodbye to Zeppo and all his penguin friends.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 Doesn't look good, little buddy.  
 (to Jaxx)  
 We have one last chance.

The sky ERUPTS with a spectacular display of the Aurora Australis.

WACO (CONT'D)  
 That's U.V. energy grounding on the Aurora Australis, the Southern Lights. The solar flare is close. Probably only a few minutes away.

Upset, Jaxx pushes away from him.

JAXX  
 No way. Your ozone experiment stopped all that. Sure it did!

WACO

Pain. Extreme pain - clears the head every time. For a while.

Waco stares at the Aurora Australis.

WACO (CONT'D)

The jet stream is sucking up the ash and spreading it around the South Pole in a great, big vortex.

Smoke purging from the thunder dome spreads out into swirling patterns when it reaches the stratosphere.

WACO (CONT'D)

Look! They know what's coming!

The penguins slip, slide, and dive into the ocean.

JAXX

The solar flare? Where? Where the hell is it? Where? This is maddening.

WACO

Run, Jaxx. Run!

Urgently, Waco pulls Jaxx into the MedEvac chopper. The chopper powers up and flies away at top speed as chunks of burning lava stones reign down.

INT. MEDEVAC HELICOPTER - COCKPIT - DAY

The chopper flies a few feet above the ocean surface, fighting heavy winds and ocean spray.

The chopper PILOT stares out the window at the volcanic fireworks, looking very grim. The pilot's communication display lights up, and she puts it on speakerphone.

PILOT

General Volk? We read you loud and clear. Do you have a status report?

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)

We're at the entrance to the volcano lab now... inside. Ashray gave me a map to get there. Oh. My. God. Look at all the Freon canisters!

WACO

You got inside. Awesome!

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)

Ashray's map. Then he ordered me to evacuate all the Freon. No effing way! There are hundreds of barrels - thousands!

Waco and Jaxx see the ground crater around the dome, leaving Fatherland as an island in a lake of burning lava.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)

That much Freon will obliterate the ozone layer up there above us.

SCREAMS and sounds of terror come through the phone. Waco grabs the microphone.

WACO

Blow up the Freon, General. Blow it up. Now!

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)

That's unconscionable. I can't just... destroy the ozone layer. My kids will skin me alive!

JAXX

Freon is four times heavier than air, General. Release the Freon, and it'll stay right there. The volcano will burn it all up before it damages the ozone layer.

The line breaks off, dead. Waco keeps talking into the static.

WACO

Find the wooden crate, general. Now! NASA markings. Hurry!

GEN. VOLK

I'm by the crate. Now what?

WACO

Hold your phone by the crate, sound turned up maximum.

Beat.

GEN. VOLK

Roger, that.

WACO

(screaming)

Trump! Burisma! Biden!

The connection breaks off.

WACO (CONT'D)

Now we just wait to see if it went  
into countdown.

EXT. U.S. CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

There's a broken rim of brightness on the horizon now, what's  
left of daytime.

Waco, Jaxx, and a few Navy personnel watch as MOUNT TERROR  
smokes at first, then bubbles lava, then blows its top with a  
massive expulsion of lava and fire.

WACO

It's not going to be enough. We  
need that Freon.

JAXX

What's the Freon going to do?  
There's not even that much of it,  
in the grand scale of things.

WACO

Ice cold Freon plus boiling hot  
lava equals major weather event,  
what with all the moisture in the  
air right now. Think giant  
thunderstorm, maybe even a tornado.  
Exactly what we need to pump the  
atmosphere full of ashes.

What used to be the HELSTAF dome is now a giant lake of  
boiling, molten lava.

FAT SCIENTIST

The volcano's erupting, but the ice  
and water are cooling the lava,  
preventing it from escalating into  
a full-blown eruption. S.H.I.T.

JAXX

He's right. The thunder dome is  
still there. Not the least bit  
damaged.

(to herself)

Not even the Nazis were that good.

## SHORT SCIENTIST

It's blocking the caldera. The volcano can't throw enough ash into the atmosphere to cover up the south pole from all satellite observations.

## JAXX

Cover up? What? From who? What the hell is going on here?

Suddenly a gigantic plume of smoke and fire a mile across ERUPTS into the sky then spreads out from horizon-to-horizon in a giant MUSHROOM CLOUD.

A colossal vortex forms, gains mass, and grows. The thrashing arms of wind plug holes in the sides, building up weak spots, like a giant fire monster building a nest of stone and magma.

## JAXX (CONT'D)

This is way beyond fake news. This is fake science. How dare you!

The HELSTAF caldera is now a full-blown volcano, belching an enormous plume of thick smoke and suspended ash clear up to the stratosphere, covering the sky from horizon to horizon.

The brightness on the horizon fades into an ominous black, but for the radiant red from the furious magma exploding in great plumes ten thousand feet high.

Flashes of fire and flames, lava, and jetting fire from the new volcano caldera light up the dark sky.

## LADY SCIENTIST

Look at all that ash. The south pole will be covered up in no time. We're saved. Thank God we're saved.

BOLTS OF ENERGY rip through the sky cover in furious lightning strikes.

FLAMING BALLS OF LIGHT AND LIGHTNING strike all around Waco and Jaxx, leaving pools of burning metal on the flight deck. Everybody runs for cover.

## JAXX

Run, Waco. Try, at least.

Waco hobbles along on his crutches. Jaxx wraps one of Waco's arms around her shoulder and helps him toward the conning tower.

WACO

The solar flare just got here.

Waco and Jaxx zigzag through the lightning strikes. Waco gets weaker by the second, eyes fluttering.

JAXX

It did not. Where's the scathing heat? The blinding light?

Waco loses his balance. Jaxx catches him, awkwardly and tries to steady him. He yells to her, hoarse.

WACO

My ozone experiment worked. It blocked all the high-energy U.V. radiation.

JAXX

OMG. And the ash cloud blocked out all the long-wavelength energy! We did it. Hallelujah.

She gives him a bear hug - smothers him with kisses. He tries to push her away, then gives in and takes it.

A massive ball of LIGHTNING HITS the conning tower, shorting out all lights on the aircraft carrier.

The night is dark except for random blips of light in the sky, pinheads of color washing across the heavens in waves of sporadic Aurora Australis.

THE LIGHTNING STORM moves out to sea, away from the aircraft carrier. Figures with powerful flashlights hustle out onto the flight deck, searching.

They spot Waco and Jaxx: He's numb to her embraces now, arms limp and lifeless. Horrified, she lowers his lifeless form to the flight deck.

The flashlights approach Jaxx. Sailors gather around, hoist Waco up, and hurry him away in a fireman's carry.

NAVY OFFICER #2

Jesus, he hardly has a pulse.

The last vestiges of the cosmic lightning storm disappear over the horizon. Suddenly there's a ROAR overhead. All hands hold on as the MedEvac chopper lands nearby.

NAVY OFFICER #1

It's no use. He's gone.

They lower Waco to the deck, as the Lady Medic jumps out of the chopper and rushes forward, doctor's bag in hand. She kneels beside Waco and gives him a quick evaluation.

JAXX

Is he - dead?

(quietly)

We just got over all that science crap, starting to get down to business. Dammit!

LADY MEDIC

We've got to get him to the medical facilities at McMurdo Sound.

(grim smile)

Relax, Agent Jackson. Nobody ever died of stomach ulcers.

The sailors help the Lady Medic get Waco (still babbling like a madman) onto a stretcher, and they hurry him toward the MedEvac chopper.

Everybody else on the flight deck stares at the mainland: FATHERLAND is still there, unaffected by the volcanic eruption.

An announcement blares over the shipwide comm system, a radio announcement, loud and clear now.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

NASA has announced the danger from the solar flare has passed. Martial law has been suspended worldwide. All ground and GPS satellite communications will soon be back to normal.

Suddenly a MUFFLED EXPLOSION happens inside HELSTAF, and torrents of STEAM vent from a ring of volcano tubes around the entire FATHERLAND complex of buildings.

The steam hits the icy air and condenses into a terrific BLIZZARD, covering the area with heavy, thick snow.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

In other news, China reports its satellite was destroyed by the solar flare before it became operational.

Soon HELSTAF disappears under a mountain of snow, then every last trace of FATHERLAND. The vents shut down. All is quiet. A feeble winter sun breaks through the overcast.

BBC NEWS (V.O.)

The U.S. Space Command's ground-based laser-ranging system, however, gathered a great deal of information on the extreme solar event. The Pentagon announced today that all their raw data would be available soon for scientists to analyze as soon as they process it.

Jaxx watches as they load Waco's stretcher into the MedEvac helicopter. She turns away, fighting a wave of indecision. The chopper powers up, the rotor slowly spinning up to speed.

JAXX

Then who fired the HELSTAF laser in the beginning?

(beat)

Oh, God. That orange control box was a remote control!

Jaxx kicks up her heels and runs to board the MedEvac flight. The crew members wave her off. Jaxx flashes her ID.

JAXX (CONT'D)

I'm the law down here!

An MP shows up to block her from boarding.

Jaxx decks him with a quick judo move.

She grabs his service revolver, cocks it, aims - and, finally, they allow her to board.

INT. MEDEVAC CHOPPER/EXT. CARRIER DECK - DAY

Jaxx climbs into the chopper - looks around - Waco's not there! She turns to leave, but it's too late - the chopper has already lifted off.

She stares out the cargo bay door, as aircraft carrier recedes from view: Waco's there, hobbling along on crutches.

JAXX

He's up and walking now? OMG. The James Bond long johns!

Beat.

JAXX (CONT'D)

(quietly)

He wasn't afraid of that electric voltage. That's how he put a new charge on his precious pajamas.

Waco stops at an APACHE HELICOPTER covered in gray ashes and black soot, fallout from the volcanic eruption. The crew helps him into the cargo bay.

The chopper lifts off immediately, banks, and skims just above the water, heading into a heavy fog bank.

EXT. ROSS BAY - DAY

As the chopper scoots over the ocean, barely above the ocean spray - the fog and water spray wash the gray ashes and black soot off. Underneath the helicopter is all black.

In very thick fog, the black chopper hovers over a BLACK DESTROYER and sets down on a helicopter pad.

EXT. ROSS BAY - BLACK DRAGON WARSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The warship immediately goes to FLANK SPEED, heading past an outcropping and out of visual range.

Two crew members rush to help Waco out of the chopper. Jackie and Bruce give Waco a sharp salute as they help him onto his crutches. Waco gives Jackie a wry smile.

WACO

Who wears lipstick on a secret mission to the South Pacific?

JACKIE

Who noticed? Hey! She didn't?

Waco is evasive, avoiding eye contact.

BRUCE

Why didn't you bring her along?  
Does she even know who we are?

WACO

She's the law. We got no business inviting the law here.  
(urgent, loud)  
Full steam ahead. Let's get the hell out of here!

They hustle toward the bridge. Right before he disappears, Waco pauses to stare at the BLACK DRAGONS flag flying above the conning tower. He renders a lazy salute and disappears.

FADE OUT.

THE END