

S T A R  T R E K
THE ATLANTIS CHRONICLES

“The Scout, Part III”

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. WEST FAMILY RESIDENCE -- LOUNGE

The large, oak-lined room, identical to what we saw of it on *'Part 1'*.

The handsome, nineteen-year old ALEXANDER M. WEST is slumped down in a leather chair, holding onto his family sword tightly with one hand. In his other, he holds a glass of whiskey. In one swig, he downs the entire glass. Slowly, he begins to prod the floor with the scabbard-covered sword.

NATHAN (O.S.)
(frustrated)
Where is he? Is he in here?

The young West looks up briefly. The door to the corridor is pulled open by a HOUSE ATTENDANT. She nods, indicating into the lounge. A man storms past him: NATHAN WEST, Alex's slightly younger brother. Everything is happening just as we saw in *'Part 1'*.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
You! What the hell do you think
you're doing?

He grabs the glass from Alex and throws it against a wall. It shatters. Alex looks up at him, shocked.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
This isn't the time to be
drowning your sorrows. The crew
needs you and for once in your
life you're going to be there for
them.

ALEX
Like Dad-
(catching)
Wait...what?

NATHAN
You're the captain. Step up to
the plate, for god's sake!

ALEX
I'm the...Nathan, what are you
talking about?

NATHAN

The Atlantis has always been important to me. You'll know that.

FLASH CUT TO:

WEST'S EYES

The lids snap open. A heart shape is briefly reflected. He blinks once. Twice. We pull out to:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As we saw it at the end of 'Part 2'. Commander Alexander West is lying on the deck with his head propped up against one of the railing posts just between the communications and science stations. He glances around, rubbing his head.

LIEUTENANT KRISS RURA steps into frame, offering her hand.

RURA

Are you alright, Captain?

WEST

Uh...yes. Yes, I think so.

RURA

Then may I suggest you get up off the deck? It won't do to let the crew see you in such an undignified position. Morale, and all that.

West smiles, clasping her arm. She helps him up. He straightens out his uniform.

WEST

All sections, report.

The rest of the crew are in a similar state, either clambering back to their feet or pushing themselves off of their consoles, having apparently slumped over them.

West moves over to LT. COMMANDER TAYRAH KAYLE, helping her to stand. She nods her thanks. At the science station, COMMODORE MARCUS B. MCCARTHY is on the deck, slouched against the console. He groans. LT. COMMANDER ROTH is at his side. Gently, he checks his vitals.

ROTH

Commodore? Commodore?

He shakes McCarthy's shoulder.

ROTH (CONT'D)

Comm-?

McCarthy snaps to.

MCCARTHY

Ragh...I'm awake, blast it!

He quickly realises where he is. His features soften at the sight of Roth.

ROTH

Are you uninjured?

MCCARTHY

Yeah. Nasty bump on the noggin, but otherwise peachy. Thanks.

Roth nods, moving to check the status of his controls. McCarthy dabs the back of his head with his hand. Blood matts his hair.

We pan across the room. ENSIGN WILLIAM PARK at navigation and LIEUTENANT SIMON HAYES at the helm are already on their feet, checking their boards and readouts as they shake off whatever force sent them to sleep.

HAYES

RCS thrusters online. Impulse engines...active. Warp drive functioning.

PARK

Navigation-

(holds head)

Aaaahhhh. Christ, it feels like the morning after my Academy graduation ball.

(rubs temples)

No, worse than that. It feels like the morning following my engineering finals.

WEST

Where are we, Mr Park?

PARK

Just gimme a sec, skip.

LIEUTENANT J.G. JAMELIA SCOTT MARINO climbs back into her chair.

MARINO

Weapons all look fine, Captain.

RURA

Nothing on subspace. All the frequencies are empty.

LT. COMMANDER THOMAS WILLS gives assistance to CHIEF PETTY OFFICER REBECCA HART.

WILLS
(helping her off deck)
Come on. I got you.

HART
(a little embarrassed)
Sorry. I haven't found my space
legs yet.

WILLS
What, this is your first starship
assignment?

HART
Uh-huh. Is it like this all the
time? Weird things happening?

WILLS
Pretty much, yeah.

He glances over his multiple readouts.

WILLS (CONT'D)
Engine room reporting in, Alex.
No visible damage to any ship
system, major or minor.

WEST
One bit of good news at least.

Kayle moves to assist Park at the navigation board.

KAYLE
How's it coming, Will?

PARK
I don't know...I think there
might be something wrong with the
sensors.

WILLS
(checking readout)
Nope. They're working fine.

KAYLE
It's not the sensors that are at
fault here. We don't know where
we are because there's not a
single detectable point of
reference outside.

WEST
That can't be...

West moves over to navigation and checks the readings for
himself.

WEST (CONT'D)
No stars, no planets...

He flicks a switch. The viewscreen activates, displaying nothing but white cloud.

WEST (CONT'D)
No nothing.

HART
(worried)
We're lost?

WEST
I didn't say that, Yeoman. We
just don't know where we are yet.

He smiles reassuringly, but few of the crew take comfort from it. We cut back to the whiteness displayed on the viewscreen. From this, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The Starfleet destroyer maintains her position in the midst of the white cloud. As we watch, the two torpedo launchers just beneath the bridge fire out a steady salvo of Class One probes; six in all, which individually shoot off in the direction of each major axis (port, starboard, fore, aft, positive Z, negative Z).

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As in teaser. Roth is looking down his scanning device.

ROTH

Torpedo deck reports all probes
away.

WEST

Put a sensor readout up on the
main viewer.

Roth flicks a switch, feeding the data into a graphical representation that appears on the viewscreen. It is a three-dimensional map with a symbol in the centre representing the Atlantis. From this, six smaller symbols denoting the probes move away with great rapidity. Faint wireframe spheres encircle each one, likely showing their scanning range.

Several moments pass. The probes keep on going.

KAYLE

There's nothing out there.

WEST

Mr Roth?

ROTH

I'm not reading anything. Simply
gas.

McCarthy leans over Roth's shoulder to check the displays. Roth shoots him a brief glance.

MCCARTHY

The composition of the gas out there is identical to the stuff that made up the giant cloud entity that was at the Starbase before.

RURA

And the same one that attacked the Igumi outpost?

MCCARTHY

Exactly.

MARINO

Not to sound unscientific, but wasn't that cloud blue in colour? This gas is white.

ROTH

The density of the gas around us appears to be much lower than that recorded by the Igumi outpost's scanners. It's possible that the blue we saw before was a significantly denser membrane of sorts surrounding the outside, while the white material here is contained within.

WILLS

You're saying we're *inside* the cloud?

ROTH

I was not presenting any such hypothesis as fact, Commander, but the evidence that we have at hand does support such a conclusion.

WILLS

Wow. You talk just like a Vulcan.

ROTH

Please, Commander. I cannot be held responsible for the fact that your vocabulary range peaks little above that of an amoeba.

WILLS

Ha! You insult like one, too.

WEST

Alright. What is the last thing everyone remembers?

HAYES

The cloud. I recall the cloud
approaching the Starbase.

PARK

Yeah. Then there was...I don't
know...lightning? I remember
lightning.

MARINO

So do I. It was everywhere,
lashing at the station, then...

HART

Nothing. It all went black.

(beat)

No! No, not black...

WEST

White. Pure white.

A beat.

RURA

A noise. I remember a noise.

KAYLE

Yes. Some kind of beating. Like
a drum.

She starts to clap her hands to the steady rhythm of 'clap,
clap, clap'.

ROTH

I heard that also. But it was not
as you describe.

Kayle stops.

ROTH (CONT'D)

It was...heavier. With more bass.

He bangs on the railing with his open palm. 'Bang, bang,
bang'.

MCCARTHY

Yes, like that! But faster.

McCarthy takes hold of Roth's wrist. He starts to beat it
faster onto the railing. 'Bang-bang, bang-bang, bang-bang'.
The crew all react: they've heard it before.

At that moment, one of the probe symbols on the viewscreen
winks out. It takes Roth a second to pull himself from
McCarthy's grasp and turn to his station.

ROTH
One of the probes has ceased
transmitting. Cause unknown.

WEST
Re-route one of the others to
compensate.

Another probe disappears from the screen. Then another.
And another. Within seconds, they have all dropped off the
scanner display.

ROTH
All probes have stopped
transmitting.

We look at the sensor readout on the screen. All of a
sudden, a blip appears at the edge of the wireframe sphere
around the Atlantis symbol.

PARK
Contact! Bearing, Zero-Mark-Zero.

KAYLE
Dead ahead and closing fast.

As the blip moves towards the centre, it starts to stretch
out into a long, snake-like shape.

WEST
Lateral thrusters; move us three-
hundred metres to port.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

All of the starboard thrusters fire at once. The ship
moves 'sideways' under the power of the half-dozen blue
flames.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Hayes manipulates his controls.

HAYES
Three-hundred metres and holding.

PARK
The blip has changed direction.
It's still heading for us.

ROTH

Captain, the blip appears to be a form of energy. Very powerful. Composition unknown, but it seems to be in the shape of a tendril.

HART

A tendril? You mean, like, from a jellyfish?

ROTH

In essence, yes.

West glances from Roth to the chart on the screen. He then quickly thumbs a button on his armrest.

WEST

(into intercom)
Yellow Alert. Yellow Alert. All decks to combat readiness.

The upper wall screens beside the viewscreen activate, displaying a 'Condition: Yellow' symbol.

WEST

Mr Hayes, back us away. Full thrusters.

HAYES

Full thrusters, aye.

The Atlantis symbol on the main viewer starts to move back from the fuzzy tendril shape. They appear to be accelerating away, but then the tendril starts to catch up.

KAYLE

The damn thing's increased its speed. It's still gaining.

WEST

Impulse power, maximum speed.

HAYES

Switching to impulse.

There is a small judder as the mighty impulse drive kicks in. On the screen, the Atlantis symbol swiftly begins to zoom away from the chasing tendril shape. So fast, in fact, that the tendril falls out of the wireframe sphere and disappears off the map.

WILLS

Aye, that's done it.

WEST

I wouldn't be so sure. Mr Hayes, alter our heading to One-Nine-Five-Mark-One-Nine-Zero.

HAYES
Altering course, aye.

The symbol on the map shifts vectors.

KAYLE
Shouldn't we come about?

WEST
No. I want our main battery
facing that thing if it shows up
again.

HART
Do you think it will? We're going
pretty fas-

Bleep! The tendril shape reappears on the edge of the
sensor sphere, moving at a rapid rate.

PARK
It's still heading for us, and
has increased in speed too!

WEST
Thank you, Ensign. I *can* read the
screen.

ROTH
It appears to have tracked us.
Their sensor range must vastly
outrate our own.

West leans forward in his seat, subconsciously placing a
hand on the hilt of his family sword that is propped up
at his side.

WEST
Mr Marino, set the torpedoes for
proximity blast. Prepare a full
salvo.

MARINO
(working controls)
Torpedoes set. Full salvo loaded
and ready.

She pulls back on a stick, arming the warheads.

WEST
Target that thing out there.

Marino presses a few keys. Targeting reticules fix around
the tip of the tendril shape on her weapon display.

MARINO
Target locked.

WEST

Fire one!

Marino's thumb depresses a red button on top of the arming stick.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

A close-up on the two launchers. The portside tube opens fire, ejecting out a line of three blue photon torpedoes.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

On West:

WEST

Fire two.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The starboard tube unleashes another three torpedoes. They streak off into the white cloud ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

All eyes watch the sensor readout on the main viewer. Six little dots travel from the Atlantis symbol towards the tendril shape. McCarthy steps down beside West.

MCCARTHY

(lowered tone)

You realise, we know nothing about what that thing is out there. It could just be trying to say hello.

WEST

It could have done that without destroying our probes, sir.

The dots reach the tendril shape...and disappear. West reacts.

WEST (CONT'D)

Mr Marino?

MARINO

I...*think* it was a hit, sir.

ROTH
Reading no detonations on sensors.

A beat.

WEST
Mr Roth, could we-

Bleep-bleep-bleep! Bleep-bleep-bleep! The six torpedo dots reappear in the sensor sphere...right *behind* Atlantis!

KAYLE
Captain!

WEST
Emergency port!

Hayes stabs at the thruster control keys with his fingers.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The ship changes her vector, narrowly avoiding all of the six photon torpedoes. But they were set on proximity charges, so three of them detonate close to the saucer underside.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

The ship jolts violently. Our shot tilts harshly to the left as the crew are thrown out of their seats at the impact. The electronics flicker slightly as the systems take the strain. Red Alert is activated: the emergency lights pulse, the klaxons blare three times and the upper wall screens change from 'Condition: Yellow' to 'Condition: Red'.

WEST
Report!

The crew recover, quickly scrambling back to their stations.

ROTH
Minimal damage, sir. Three torpedoes detonated two hundred metres off our starboard hull. The deflectors absorbed the blast.

PARK
Skipper, the tendril!

The tip of the tendril shape has almost reached the Atlantis symbol.

WEST

External image.

The viewscreen flicks over to once again display the whiteness outside.

KAYLE

Captain, there!

She points to a corner of the shot, where the tendril is just fading into view through the thick stellar fog. It is blue in colour; exactly the same brightness as the outside of the Cloud was.

WEST

Magnify.

The viewscreen zooms towards it. The tendril is made up of an almost liquid-like energy that holds its shape yet seems to cast ripples across its surface.

ROTH

The tendril is made up of pure matter energy. Power output: off the scale.

WILLS

Alex, the deflector shields are weak. The Starbase quartermaster could only give me some temporary second-hand parts to repair the system with until a new shipment of components arrives later in the week.

(beat)

I don't know if she can take much more.

The tendril maintains its approach, meandering ever so slightly as it moves.

WEST

Phaser banks, fire!

Marino swiftly selects a bank on her controls, then presses the red fire key. We hear the sound of phasers firing. On the main viewer, two blue beams of energy lance out and strike the tendril hard. It wavers a little, but takes no damage.

ROTH

No effect. The phaser energy was absorbed into the form.

HART

It didn't even slow down...

WEST
 (into intercom)
 All decks, collision alert. Brace
 for impact!

ROTH
 It is closing on the bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The energy tendrils slows down, 'slithering' its way
 towards the bridge dome atop the Atlantis.

SHZZZT! A dozen or so metres away from the hull, the
 tendril tip collides with the invisible shield bubble.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

A blinding flash of blue light. The crew all cover their
 eyes...

Then nothing. The viewscreen is clear, displaying only the
 white cloud around them. A warning light flashes on the
 engineering console.

WILLS
 Well, that's that. The deflector
 grid has overloaded and fried
 several of the temporary
 components. No hope of repair.

HART
 What happened to the tendril?

West looks at the viewscreen again.

WEST
 Mr Roth, anything?

ROTH
 (from scanner)
 Negative, sir. There is nothing
 on sensors.

KAYLE
 Our shields might have destroyed
 it. Both the deflectors and the
 tendril were forces of solid
 energy. Contact between them
 could have...I don't know,
 shorted each other out?

ROTH
 An excellent theory, Commander.

Kayle grins. At the same time, the science console bleeps. McCarthy steps over and checks one of the monitors.

MCCARTHY

Sensors are reading a...field of
sorts forming ahead.

ROTH

(looking down viewer)
Yes, I see it. On main viewer now.

He presses a white button. The viewscreen locks onto a new part of the cloud. Something is different here, though: the gas is shimmering, turning and mixing together.

HART

Uh, I don't want to be your
stereotypical frightened blonde
Yeoman or anything, but shouldn't
we run away?

WILLS

I'm with her. We're no match for
any kind of weird voodoo energy
crap right now, not with our
shields gone.

MCCARTHY

We don't know what this is. It
could be a way out.

WEST

I'm not willing to risk it. Mr
Hayes, get us out of here. Warp
speed, factor one.

MCCARTHY

Commander, just wait a second.
Let's see what it is before we
leave.

WEST

It's too risky. That tendril was
belligerent enough. I don't want
to be around when this energy
field fully forms.

MCCARTHY

Dammit, sir! Disobeying an order
from a superior officer is a
serious offense! You could loose
your command-

WEST

I could loose it anyway if we stay here, Commodore!

(beat)

Protect the lives of the crew, no matter what. Isn't that what you told me? Isn't that what you said?

McCarthy stares back, glancing away slightly as he recalls his own words from 'Part 2'.

HAYES

Course laid in, sir.

WEST

Execute, Mr Hayes.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The starship swings around, away from the morphing clouds. The strip on the underside of her nacelle flares blue as the engine spins up for warp speed...but she does not move. The nacelle keeps glowing blue for several seconds, then the whole pod shuts down.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before.

WEST

Tom?

Wills looks over his readouts. They are all flashing out various alert colours.

WILLS

Bear with me...

(opens intercom)

Engine room. T'Pan, you there?

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- ENGINEERING

As we saw it in 'Part 2'. LIEUTENANT T'PAN is inspecting the master circuit display.

T'PAN

No obstructions, no faults.

(to a technician)

Tell Mr Gannek to manually scan the power transfer conduit. I want a visual check for damage.

The technician nods and walks away. T'Pan moves over to the main control table (in an unhurried manner) and presses the intercom button.

T'PAN (CONT'D)
Engine room. Go ahead, Commander.

WILLS (OVER COMM.)
I'm getting a red line on the warp drive. What's going on?

T'Pan glances over the large screen in the centre of the table. It is showing a schematic of the ship. The whole of the warp drive system, from the engine room to the warp nacelle, is flashing red.

T'PAN
I do not know. The entire warp drive has...frozen up, yet we cannot see any particular fault anywhere in the system.

An alarm goes off. On the schematic, the impulse deck flashes red.

T'PAN (CONT'D)
Commander-

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

On the engineering station:

WILLS
I see it, T'Pan.
(to West)
Alex, we've just lost the impulse engines as well.

WEST
What could be causing this?

WILLS
Frankly, I have no idea. Maybe that thing out there.

On the viewscreen, the shimmering area of gas has started to take form. A silver shape is emerging. McCarthy is watching in awe.

ROTH
(looking down viewer)
The gas molecules are coalescing into a solid state. Bonds are forming between-

MCCARTHY

Roth, let the scanners run. Just
look at this.

Roth pauses for a second, then turns away from his station. Everyone is watching the simple transformation of gas into solid as if it were something that science has never before encountered.

The shape is formed: a cold, silver, metallic Heart. It pulses: dub-dub, dub-dub, dub-dub...

WEST'S EYES

The Heart reflects in his pupils, as it did in the teaser. Dub-dub, dub-dub, dub-dub...

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

West bolts up from his chair.

WEST

Target all weapons. Prepare to
fire, everything we have.

McCarthy turns, stunned.

MCCARTHY

Belay that order, Lieutenant!
(to West)
You can't just fire on it. It
hasn't done anything to us.

WEST

We have to destroy it.

MCCARTHY

Why? What's your reason?

WEST

It's part of the cloud; the same
cloud that attacked the Igumi
outpost.

MCCARTHY

We don't know that for certain.
We could be anywhere.
(to Rura)
Kriss, open hailing frequencies.
All channels. Broadcast greetings
in linguacode.

Rura reaches for her controls...

WEST

Don't do it, Lieutenant. That's
an order.

Rura stops. She glances at West, then at McCarthy.

MCCARTHY

Open the channels, Kriss. You know it's the right thing to do.

WEST

Keep them closed.
(over shoulder)
Mr Marino, lock all weapons.

MARINO

Weapons locked, Captain.

MCCARTHY

Mr Marino, you will ignore Commander West's orders to fire. Kriss, open the communications channels now.

(beat)

I'm giving you a direct order as an officer of flag rank.

WEST

On my personal authority as captain of the Atlantis, you will not open those channels, Mr Rura.

Rura sighs, nods, then turns away from her station.

RURA

Channels closed, Captain.
(to McCarthy)
I'm so sorry, Mark. But he *is* my captain now.

A beat. McCarthy stiffens. Roth jumps to his former captain's defence:

ROTH

Mr Rura, the Commodore gave you a-

McCarthy puts a calming hand on Roth's shoulder. He stops.

MCCARTHY

Very well, Kriss. I understand.

RURA

(turning to West)

However, for the record, I would like it to be known that I agree with Commodore McCarthy. We're scientists. Explorers. We're out here to learn. To seek out new lifeforms and new alien civilizations. If we have to risk our lives in pursuit of that goal, so be it.

A quiet moment passes as West contemplates. He turns to the viewscreen again.

WEST
What's the status of the...heart?

KAYLE
It's just sitting there, five-thousand and fifteen metres off the forward bow.

The image on the viewscreen shows this. West stares at it for several seconds.

WEST
(sighing)
Mr Rura, open the channels.
Dispatch linguacode alongside my following transmission.

Rura happily does so. West glances briefly at McCarthy, who tilts his head down ever so slightly as if to say 'thank you'.

RURA
All channels open, Captain.

WEST
This is Commander Alexander West, captain of the Atlantis.

Silence.

WEST (CONT'D)
We mean you no harm. Please, return this ship to where you found it.

Again, silence.

KAYLE
Captain...

She points at the Heart. There is movement around the pulmonary arteries; a group of silver limbs emerge out of the holes. These are tentacles: about a dozen in total, made out of a metallic substance that moves like skin. Veins of blue pulse in strange patterns along their lengths.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD

The tentacles lash out at the Atlantis with furious speed, wrapping themselves quickly around the starship's saucer section.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As last scene. The crew look around them as the ship creaks and groans.

ROTH

The tentacles have entwined themselves around the Atlantis, exerting extreme pressure onto the hull.

(beat)

Structural integrity is dropping.

WEST

I guess it doesn't want to talk...

(sits down)

Mr Marino, can we still fire?

MARINO

Negative, Captain. The tendrils are covering all of our banks and launchers.

KAYLE

Use the thrusters. Try to shake them loose.

ROTH

Not advisable. We would likely tear ourselves apart.

WILLS

I could try electrifying the hull. See how they like couple of hundred gigawatts down their tentacles. Might cause that heart out there to go into shock.

WEST

No. It might just soak up the power as the energy tendril did to our phaser fire before. Tom, is the deflector grid still linked up to the warp core?

WILLS

Yeah, but as I said, the system's fried. It can't channel power anymore into a defensive shield.

WEST

What about an *offensive* shield?

WILLS

(catching on)

Aye, I think so. Just one burst, mind.

WEST
Then rig the ship for a matter
charge.

Wills turns to his controls, pressing a few keys.

WILLS
(into intercom)
Engine room. T'Pan, prep the
deflector grid for an energy
matter charge.

There is a particularly loud screech of twisting metal.

ROTH
The outer hull is beginning to
buckle.

WILLS
Charge ready!

WEST
Fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

Entwined within the grappling tentacles, pulses of energy expand outwards from the ship. As each wave hits the tentacles, they loose their grip and are pushed back away from the hull.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Tight on Roth:

ROTH
The tendrils are retreating.

WEST
Now's our chance. All weapons, fire!

Marino manipulates her controls. We hear a plethora of offensive armament open fire. On the viewscreen, the Heart is struck by Atlantis' phaser blasts and photon torpedo salvos.

KAYLE
We've hurt it. Look!

Wounds have been inflicted on the Heart. The pulses become slow and irregular. A strange, silver liquid spews forth out of a gash in the side. The tentacles float limply.

WEST

Cease fire.

ROTH

That silver substance is a form of metallic liquid, though I do not recognise most of its base elements.

WEST

Alright, open hailing freq-

BOOM! The Heart explodes violently like a balloon, leaving only a cloud of silvery blood. The Atlantis even shudders in the shockwave. The crew are a little surprised.

HAYES

I...guess we inflicted more damage than we thought we would...

HART

Look at the clouds!

Indeed, as we watch the white gas outside, little pockets of stars begin to appear.

ROTH

The gas...is dissipating.

PARK

We killed it?

MCCARTHY

(not happy)
It would seem so.

RURA

Sir, I'm picking up subspace comm chatter again!

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- THE ATLANTIS

The last of the white cloud disappears. The Starfleet ship is left hanging in space.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Everyone is examining the image on the main viewer with relieved eyes.

WILLS

And we're back.

The viewscreen displays the slowly spinning form of Starbase 39 not far ahead. Off the crew's exuberant reactions, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

From a traditional *Original Series* 'over the shoulder' shot, we watch the Atlantis slowly approach Starbase 39 ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As last act.

KAYLE

That was...weird.

West turns to Rura.

WEST

Hail Starbase Control.

Rura hits a few keys and presses her earpiece in closer.

RURA

Starbase Control, Starbase
Control, this is Atlantis.

(beat)

Do you read, Starbase Control?
This is Atlantis. Come in, Control.

West, McCarthy and Kayle exchange concerned looks.

MARINO

Their communication systems could
have been damaged. Remember those
lightning strikes?

ROTH

I'm not reading any damage to the
station.

(concerned)

None at all, in fact...

MCCARTHY

What is it, Roth?

ROTH

There is no damage whatsoever to
the superstructure or the hull,
not even from usual wear and tear.

KAYLE

(to Roth)

Those men, outside of our quarters-

Roth shifts uncomfortably.

MCCARTHY

Your quarters?

ROTH

On the base.

(long beat)

Commander Kayle and I...

(beat)

Maintenance technicians were replacing a major EPS coupling outside the habitat section. There is no sign of such work. The entire base seems to be in perfect condition. Factory accurate to the tiniest detail.

WILLS

I might have an explanation, guys: our sensor palettes are partially clogged.

WEST

Clogged? With what?

WILLS

The residue off of that fog stuff. It's gumming up the scanners something fierce.

ROTH

Confirmed, sir. Sensor reliability is down to seventy-two percent.

A beat. West paces a little.

WEST

Are you reading any lifesigns on the station?

ROTH

Yes, Captain. Over twenty-two thousand, corresponding exactly to the amount of visitors, civilians and station personnel who were aboard at the time of the...attack.

HART

At least we know they're okay.

WILLS

I don't like this at all, Alex.
Twenty-two thousand people, and
not one of them knows we're here?
And where are all the other ships?
The civilian vessels? The
merchant traders?

KAYLE

I'd advise caution. We have no
idea what the cloud's attack did
to the base.

WEST

Agreed.

(beat)

Main viewer, magnify some of the
station's viewports.

The viewscreen zooms in towards a cluster of windows on
the station. They are personnel quarters. The lights are
on, but there is no sign of activity. However, we can just
about make out some strange, dark shapes standing about.

WILLS

The hell...?

HART

What are those things?

KAYLE

Try the Starlight Lounge.

The screen focuses onto a particularly large singular
viewport that spans several decks. There is a bar-come-
restaurant inside. Again, the power is active but there
is no-one to be seen. About a dozen dark shapes are placed
around the room.

WILLS

Alright, this is getting creepy.

The viewscreen zooms in on more and more viewports, all
with the same result: active power, no people, only the
dark figures.

HART

Where is everybody?

WEST

Speculate; what are those dark
shapes?

Everyone is silent.

ROTH

They...may be the crew. As Mr
 Kayle has stated, we have no clue
 as to what affect the cloud had
 on the station.

MCCARTHY

Anyone here believe in ghosts?

A pause. The crew look at each other with varied degrees
 of response.

WEST

Mr Hayes, engine status?

HAYES

Thrusters only, Captain. Warp and
 impulse are still offline.

WEST

Take us in toward one of the
 empty docks...maybe number four,
 since we've only recently vacated
 it.

HAYES

Dock four, aye.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

The magnificent structure spins slowly as the Atlantis
 approaches spherical Spacedock number 4.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Tight on the helm/navigation controls:

PARK

Hold up, Si. I'm not getting a
 lock-on from the guidance beacon.

The closed dock doors are approaching fast on the main
 viewer.

HAYES

Captain...?

WEST

Communicate to the dock access
 systems. Request opening of space
 doors, emergency procedure alpha.
 Transmit our ship identification
 codes.

Rura types a few things into her control board, shaking her head.

RURA

No response.

The doors are getting closer...

WEST

Veer off.

Hayes works his controls. The image of the doors slides to the right as the Atlantis makes a turn to port.

KAYLE

What now? Blast our way though?

WEST

Prepare a landing party. Take security and scientific personnel. Find out just what the hell is going on over there.

KAYLE

Aye sir.

(to Rura)

Get me Lieutenants Plax and Illetschko, plus two other guards and another scientist. Whoever is top of the duty roster.

Kayle heads towards one of the turbolifts. Roth stands, moving to follow.

WEST

Not you, Mr Roth.

ROTH

Sir?

WEST

I need you here.

ROTH

(abrupt)

What for?

West is taken aback by his sharpness. Kayle looks at the scene for a moment, but the lift doors close before she can say anything.

WEST

I don't like your tone, mister.

ROTH

No offence meant. Sir.

WEST

(dubious)

Of course.

(beat)

I need you to help clean up the sensors and run some deep scans on the station. According to your record, you're a dab hand at computer science and system architecture.

ROTH

It was not my specialty-

WEST

(firm)

Nevertheless, you are the Chief Science Officer and I need you at your post.

A beat.

ROTH

Very well, Captain.

He returns to his station.

MCCARTHY

I think I'll go along with the away team. My skills could be useful there-

WEST

I can't let you do that, sir.

McCarthy stops cold. He turns slowly and stares at West.

MCCARTHY

Excuse me?

WEST

I said that I can't let you beam over to the station. At least not yet, anyway.

McCarthy steps down to where West is standing.

MCCARTHY

Son, do you see this thick braided stripe on my sleeve? That means I'm a Commodore. An officer of the flag. You may be able to ignore my command orders, but you can't stop me leaving the ship.

WEST

Yes I can, sir. General Order Fifteen states that no flag officer can enter a potentially hazardous area without a sufficiently armed escort.

MCCARTHY

You ordered security guards on the away mission. That's an armed escort.

WEST

But not sufficiently so.

McCarthy takes a step closer, standing on the step that leads up to the command chair. This gives him a clean height advantage over West.

MCCARTHY

Who are you to decide what is safe for me and what isn't?

WILLS

The captain of Atlantis, that's who.

All eyes turn to Wills.

WILLS (CONT'D)

Well. He is.

(beat)

And with all given respect, Commodore, that patch on your breast isn't from this ship. You're just a passenger now. So unless you want to assume command yourself, Alex there has the right to tell you what you can and can't do while under his protection.

McCarthy holds his stare on Wills for a second, before turning back to West. Reluctantly, he steps down again into the shallower part of the deck.

WEST

Mr Roth, please accompany Commodore McCarthy to the sickbay. He suffered a head injury before, when we were knocked unconscious. I want to make sure that no permanent damage has been done.

McCarthy slowly moves over to one of the turbolift alcoves, stepping into the cart alongside Roth.

MCCARTHY
 (to West)
 So. You *do* have balls.

The doors close. Immediately, the tension is lifted.

WEST
 Put us into a standard orbit
 around the station, Mr Hayes.

HAYES
 Standard orbit, aye.

West takes his seat. His hand proudly moves down to the hilt of his family sword.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- TRANSPORTER ROOM

Somewhat surprisingly, the room is slightly larger than the ones aboard the Constitution-class due to the fact that it is the sole transporter room on the Atlantis. Our focus is attracted to the control console, where WARRANT OFFICER LAURA ANDERSON is standing. She has her short, jet-black hair tied back into a ponytail so it just touches the collar of her red technician's coveralls. Beside her is a male Vulcan, similarly clad.

ANDERSON
 Transporter set, Commander. I've
 locked in to the main gardens
 near the central core
 administration offices.

Kayle stands opposite.

KAYLE
 Thank you, Laura.

Behind her, the rest of the six-man landing party is tooling up with tricorders and Type-II phasers from the storage bins built into the side of the room. LIEUTENANT J.G. PLAX is arming himself with no less than three phaser pistols (one for each hand).

There are two other security guards present: ENSIGN TIYR, a dark-furred male Caitian, and ENSIGN ANTHONY CONNORS, a dark-skinned human from the planet Terra Nova.

In addition to this, two scientists are checking their tricorders. LIEUTENANT WANDA ILLETSCHKO, of German-African descent, is the first to step up onto the pad. Following her is CREWMAN FIRST CLASS CAYLO, a female Vissian.

KAYLE (CONT'D)

Alright, people. Listen up. We don't know what's over there, or what has happened to the crew. We *have* seen some...strange...things in the viewports, but we have no idea what they are.

PLAX

Set phasers to light stun.

The party does so. Everyone takes their places on the pad.

KAYLE

Energise.

Anderson works the control toggles. The landing party dematerialise in a shimmer of gold.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- CORRIDOR

A deserted corridor, save for McCarthy and Roth who are wandering along it.

ROTH

West was out of line.

MCCARTHY

It's his ship now. He can be.

ROTH

He had no reason to dismiss you to the sickbay.

MCCARTHY

Actually...

McCarthy dabs the back of his head, showing Roth the blood. He reacts, as one would to an injured friend, but says nothing.

MCCARTHY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's not as bad as it looks.

ROTH

May I ask, sir, why you did not assume command back there?

MCCARTHY

I had no grounds to.

ROTH

This is an emergency situation.

MCCARTHY

Yes, but...

(sighs)

But Commander West hasn't done anything wrong. He's protected the ship to the best of his abilities. I can't fault him for that, and no review board would either.

McCarthy moves to continue on, but stops again when he notices that Roth is not following.

ROTH

Sir...

(beat)

Why are you leaving?

McCarthy lets out a long sigh.

MCCARTHY

There comes a time in everyone's life when they know they've just done enough. I joined Starfleet as a researcher, but I've spent the last two decades aboard ships like Atlantis, running patrols and visiting colonies.

(beat)

I want to be a scientist again, Roth, just for a while before I retire. I want to be able to...discover a new bioform or change the way in which we perceive life as we know it. I think the Science Directorate on Vulcan will let me do that.

(grins)

Although knowing my luck I'll get reassigned within a month and end up commanding some patrol squadron in the core or a starbase in the middle of nowhere.

ROTH

I...know how you feel. I too wish I served on a science vessel or an explorer.

MCCARTHY

You've never put in for transfer?

ROTH

I almost did, shortly after Captain Goodwin died.

MCCARTHY
 Almost? Why did you change your
 mind?

A beat.

ROTH
 You took command.

McCarthy smiles, patting Roth on the shoulder.

MCCARTHY
 You are the finest scientist I
 have ever worked with.

With that, he turns and walks off. Roth is about to say something, but thinks better of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

We pan across from the orbiting Atlantis to the silent station.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- GARDENS -- TURBOLIFT SHAFT

Exactly as we saw it in the first act of *'Part 1'*. Kayle's landing party materialises near the turbolift shaft that West and Admiral Rowley used to reach Command Ops. They immediately look around. Illetschko and Caylo start to scan with their tricorders.

ILLETSCHKO
 Life readings, Commander. Several
 dozen of them, in fact.
 (points)
 Forty metres in that direction.

KAYLE
 Move out.

She leads them off in the direction Illetschko indicated.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- GARDENS

The party step out onto a path near a small lake that runs between the foliage they just left and a large lawn. Immediately, they stop, shocked.

The lawn is littered with several dozen dark silver shapes, exactly the same as the ones the crew saw through the viewports earlier.

The figures are very roughly humanoid in shape, many with identifiable limbs, but are overall blank and twisted, as if they are made out of clay.

They stand in poses. Some are walking, others are are lying on the grass, and some others even appear to be 'frozen' in the middle of a soccer game.

KAYLE

Gods...

PLAX

They look almost...peaceful.

Illetschko takes a step towards one of them, scanning it.

TIYR

Caution, Lieutenant! We know not what they are.

ILLETSCHKO

Actually, I know something. They are alive.

PLAX

Alive?

ILLETSCHKO

These are the lifesigns Commander Roth detected.

Kayle walks up to one. Slowly, she presses it with the point of her phaser.

KAYLE

It's like rock.

Plax touches one, as does Tiy. Connors carefully approaches the edge of the lake and looks into the depths.

CONNORS

Here! See this.

The party gather around the water's edge. Connors points.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

The water-dwellers.

Indeed, near the edge of the lake, several dark silver, roughly fish-shaped objects sit still beneath the surface. Illetschko scans.

ILLETSCHKO

Made out of the same material as those figures, and emitting lifesigns also. Lifesigns of Halo fish.

KAYLE

This is weird.

Illetschko turns to one of the larger figures in the field.

ILLETSCHKO

That one is registering as
K'normian.

(to other figures)

Those two, human. Arcadian. A
Chelon. Necton. Two Ardanans.
Xell. A Hydran...all known races.

Meanwhile, Caylo is stood a little away from the group,
scanning with her tricorder. It bleeps.

CAYLO

Commander!

KAYLE

What is it, Crewman?

CAYLO

Lifeforms approaching, from the
way we just came.

KAYLE

Everyone, take cover. Stay hidden.

With haste, the party break up and dive behind cover.
Caylo, Kayle and Illetschko make it to a bush. Connors
scrambles behind a part of the lake bank and lies down.
Plax carefully slides into the water and moves into some
reeds. He is gentle enough not to cause too many ripples.
Tiyr, however, simply hides behind one of the larger dark
figures.

Bootsteps approach. At least a dozen of them.

Tiyr and Connors move their phasers into ready positions.
Plax points the barrels of his pistols through the reeds.

Like an army marching, the sounds of boots on gravel get
closer.

Caylo looks tense. Kayle rests a reassuring arm on her
shoulder.

From the path through the foliage, a squad of twelve
soldiers marches out into the field. Their uniforms are
black with metallic coverings. They are Klingons.

The Starfleet officers exchange confused glances at each
other from their hiding spots.

The soldiers are being led by a familiar female officer:
COMMANDER D'TREYAH, from 'Part 1'. She marches out across
the field towards the other side.

But half-way past, she raises her hand. The squad stops.

D'Treyah places her hands on the two disruptors she has holstered, sniffing the air. The landing party tense up.

D'TREYAH
(in Klingonese, growling)
Enemies!

The soldiers all draw out their weapons.

KAYLE
Hell with it...
(shouting)
Atlantians, open fire!

The six Starfleet officers all let rip with their phasers. The beams flash across the field and stun three of the twelve Klingons. The others dive behind some of the dark silver figures.

D'TREYAH
(in Klingonese)
Fireteam two, flank right. Team
three, left. Team one,
suppressive fire.

Three of the Klingons, including D'Treyah, remain where they are and take pot shots at the Starfleet party. The other six warriors break off into two teams, one going around left and one going around right. They dart from cover to cover, advancing on the landing party's entrenched positions.

Connors takes a shot from his position, narrowly missing a warrior. The man fires back. His shots slam into the grass ridge in front of Connors' eyes, forcing the Novan back down into cover.

Plax is acting like a sniper from his concealed position in the reeds. He carefully watches one of the flanking teams as they rush between cover. He fires, catching one warrior in between the dark figures with all three phaser beams. The force is powerful enough to send the Klingon flying back through the air, landing with a splash in a river that feeds the lake.

The second flanking team approach where Tiyir is hiding, clearly oblivious to the Caitian's position. Tiyir stays quiet, allowing the three warriors to pass. With blinding speed and an almighty roar, he snares two of the Klingons in his mighty claws, smashing their heads together like melons.

The third Klingon of that squad spins, firing at the fearsome feline. The disruptor bolt tears out a chunk of Tiyir's chest, but that only seems to make him angrier.

He rips the Klingon a few new airholes with his claws, then turns to face D'Treyah and her pistol-slinging warriors. Growling, he charges.

D'TREYAH
(in Klingonese)
Target the feline!

Her squad complies. Dozens of disruptor shots rip into Tiyr. He struggles through the onslaught for a few paces, but is soon overcome. He drops to the grass, dead.

Kayle flips open her communicator, all the while snapping off the odd shot at the approaching Klingons.

KAYLE
Atlantis, landing party! We're
under heavy-

A lucky disruptor bolt smashes the communicator out of her hand, incinerating it.

KAYLE (CONT'D)
Whoa-jeez! Did you see that!?
(shouting)
Play fair, will you!?
(to Illetschko)
Give me your communicator.

Illetschko fumbles around for it. We cut to D'Treyah.

D'TREYAH
(in Klingonese)
We have them pinned! Charge for
the kill!

Roaring with bloodlust, the warriors leap out of cover, running and gunning their way towards the Starfleet positions. Their constant shooting keeps the Starfleet officers down in cover, unable to fire off any counter-shots.

Illetschko hands Kayle her communicator.

KAYLE
Atlantis, come in. This is the
landing party. We're under fire!
Requesting emergency beam out now!

The Klingons are almost upon them. Flipping the communicator shut in frustration, Kayle raises her phaser.

KAYLE (CONT'D)
Atlantians, charge!

The Starfleet party burst out of cover, phasers ablaze. Instantly, Caylo is shot in the head. The rest of the officers charge towards the Klingons, exchanging phaser fire for disruptor bolts.

Just as both forces are about to clash in close combat, half a dozen phaser beams lance out of nowhere, striking D'Treyah and her warriors in the back. Within a mere second, all of the Klingons have been stunned.

A little way across the field stand West, Marino, Roth and three security guards. They lower their Type-III phaser rifles as they walk cautiously towards the scene of battle.

WEST
Commander, are you alright?

KAYLE
(still pumped up)
You took your sweet time!

WEST
Sorry?

KAYLE
And I asked for a beam out, not backup!

WEST
We didn't get any message from you. Mr Roth detected the weapon fire, so we transported over with reinforcements.

ROTH
Are you uninjured, Mr Kayle?

Kayle throws her arms around his neck and kisses him on the lips. He looks a little uncomfortable.

KAYLE
Roth...yeah, I'm fine. We have two men down, though.

One of the guards, a female Andorian named JAYDAS (Chief Petty Officer) is checking Tiy'r's vitals.

JAYDAS
Dead, sir.

Another guard, a human woman named DAYA'KAUFMAN (Petty Officer First Class), is attending to Caylo's body with Connors.

DAYA'KAUFMAN
Also dead.

West sighs, regretfully.

WEST

Have their bodies beamed back to the ship.

(looks at Klingons)

Where did this lot come from?

KAYLE

No clue. They just appeared from down that path.

MARINO

Is it possible that we have been unconscious for longer than we imagined? That the Klingons have made good on their threats and have invaded Federation space?

KAYLE

These dark shapes could be the aftermath of some new kind of Klingon weapon.

ROTH

(shaking his head)

Ship's chronometers say that we were out for only twenty-three minutes. It's unlikely that the base was attacked and completely overrun in that time.

WEST

It just doesn't make sense. How did these Klingons get here? Where is their ship? And if they are in control of the station, why did they let us get close and beam over?

West's communicator chirps. He flicks it open.

WEST (CONT'D)

West here.

RURA (OVER COMM.)

Rura here, Captain.

WEST

Lieutenant. What do you have for me?

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Close-up on Rura at her station.

RURA

Sir, I've been trying to hail nearby planets and other Starfleet installations.

WEST (OVER COMM.)

Any luck?

RURA

None. I've tried various outposts and colonies...even Lili Okuda's office at Starbase 36. No one responded.

WEST (OVER COMM.)

Go further afield. Send a dispatch to Admiral Corman at Starbase 13. He's the commander of all sectors bordering the Klingon Empire. If you get nothing from that, try Headquarters.

RURA

Aye sir. I've also been listening in to the subspace comm network, and there's something very odd about it.

(beat)

It's too...generic. Random statements and conversations. There's nothing-

Wills, leaning over the helm/navigation console, activates the communications speaker.

WILLS

Sorry to cut in here, Alex, but we've just picked up nine blips approaching on scanners.

Park stands up and moves over to the science station. He activates the sensor viewer and peers down it.

WEST (OVER COMM.)

What are they? Starships?

Wills turns to face Park.

PARK

Looks like it, skip.

(beat)

Nine Klingon battlecruisers. By configuration, D7-class.

The crew tense up.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- GARDENS

As before. West is very worried, but he tries not to let it show.

PARK (OVER COMM.)
They're on a direct approach vector, and should arrive in three minutes time.

WILLS (OVER COMM.)
Alex, you should beam back. We couldn't take on that many ships even at full combat strength, but with the deflectors out...

WEST
I know.
(beat)
I have an idea. Get the Atlantis behind the station relative to the incoming ships and await my orders.

WILLS (OVER COMM.)
Understood.

WEST
West out.

He closes his communicator. Kayle walks over.

KAYLE
The bodies have been sent back to the ship. What do you want to do with the Klingons?

WEST
Leave them.

He flips open his communicator once more.

WEST (CONT'D)
West to transporter room.

ANDERSON (OVER COMM.)
Transporter room. Anderson here.

WEST
Lock onto the landing party. Beam us directly to station Operations.

ROTH
What is your plan, sir?

WEST
We're going to give the Atlantis some extra firepower.

ANDERSON (OVER COMM.)
Co-ordinates set.

WEST
Everyone ready?

The party nod, shifting into combat stances with phasers raised.

WEST (CONT'D)
Energise.

Gold transporter beams envelop the Starfleet officers, disassembling their bodies and transporting them away. The unconscious Klingons are left lying on the grass amongst the dark silver figures. On this, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. ATLANTIS -- SICKBAY

We pan across the room. It is roughly rectangular, with a foot-pump bed on the right wall for physicals and a slightly larger diagnostics bed in the centre near the back. There is a door in the right wall (right of the physical bed) with a window looking into an office.

In the far wall, there is an exit leading off to the right and an exit leading off to the left (one each side of the diagnostics bed). The left wall is mostly a table and a large wall monitor for medical readouts. To the immediate left is an entrance to the ward area containing four biobeds. Several nurses walk to and fro, going about their business.

McCarthy is sat on the diagnostics bed. Attending to him is DOCTOR PAULINE WEIR (Lieutenant Commander by rank), a thirty-something blonde that could be described as having the look of a businesswoman. She wears a blue overcoat on top of her regular tunic-and-trousers combo. Carefully, she runs a protoplaser over the wound on McCarthy's head.

MCCARTHY
(flinching)

Owww!

WEIR
Ah, don't be such a baby. I'm not even touching you.

MCCARTHY
It still hurts.

Weir fixes him a stare. After a moment, McCarthy grins. Weir smiles back, putting down the tool.

WEIR
Alright, Commodore. That's you done.

MCCARTHY
Great.

He goes to hop of the bed, but Weir places a firm hand on his shoulder.

WEIR
However, I want to keep you here for observation.

MCCARTHY

What? Why?

WEIR

That bump caused a piece of your skull to break off. I've injected the area with a triostymiline compound that should expedite the growth of new bone, but the drug can make you drowsy.

MCCARTHY

If you haven't noticed, the ship is in danger.

WEIR

And you can go help with that in an hour or so. Do you want to fall asleep on the bridge?

MCCARTHY

Please, Pauline, I'm fine. I don't feel tired at all.

WEIR

That's your medical opinion, is it?

MCCARTHY

It's my common sense opinion. I *feel* fine.

WEIR

I think we'll be taking my word over that. No offence, but your common sense is not really worth much. Remember the trouble you got us into with the Squire on Lychannis XIII, hmmm?

MCCARTHY

(chuckles)

Alright, Doc. I'll behave.

(beat)

Jeez. You make Commodore and everyone starts ordering you about!

WEIR

Yes, I overheard you talking with Roth.

(beat)

Alex can get like that sometimes. He doesn't like people being in his way.

MCCARTHY

You know Commander West?

WEIR

Yeah, you could say that. We, uh...we met at the Academy. He's going to be quite surprised to find me on board.

MCCARTHY

He doesn't know?

WEIR

Well, he hasn't visited sickbay yet. And since I'm transferring vessels...officially, Doc Murdock is listed as the Chief Surgeon in the ship's register.

(sighs)

To be honest, I don't think he'd-

The bosun's whistle rings out.

WILLS (OVER COMM.)

All decks, this is the bridge. Combat alert. Repeat, combat alert. Uh, so...yeah, do your thing. Bridge out.

McCarthy looks at Weir, almost pleading. She sighs.

WEIR

Alright, go. But if you collapse, call a different doctor.

McCarthy smiles, hops off the bed and moves swiftly out into the corridor. Weir turns to the various nurses.

WEIR (CONT'D)

Let's move, people. Prep the beds for surgery. Stacy, you'll be assisting me. Copley, you're in charge of the medikits. Distribute them as you see fit. Kaeto, get Murdock in here.

(adding)

And make sure he's sober.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

The large operations centre, as we saw on both previous episodes. Like everywhere else on the station, the strange dark-silver figures stand about. Some are even 'sat' in chairs.

Several Klingons are present; about ten. Three of them are gathered around the command table on the island in the centre. The others are at various consoles on the main deck and the third tier above.

We focus in on the ones at the table. They are trying to operate the computer.

The sound of transporter beams can be heard. The Klingons turn around to see West's ten-man landing party materialising in.

The Starfleet crew are fast: four Klingons have been stunned before they can even draw out their weapons. A few warriors get the odd shot off, but none hit. Plax shoots one Klingon on the upper level. He spectacularly falls over the railing and down into the lower tier.

PLAX

Clear.

MARINO

All clear.

Marino, Plax and the security guards fan out, walking around the whole deck. Meanwhile, West, Kayle, Roth and Illetschko move over to the central command table.

WEST

Anyone here worked on a Headquarters-class station before?

Head shakes all round.

WEST (CONT'D)

Mr Roth, can we control the defence grid from here?

ROTH

It would likely need to be switched over from the weapons station first.

WEST

(shouting)
People, quickly! We need to find the weapon controls!

The rest of the team spring into action, checking all of the consoles around the room. It's a very large area, however.

KAYLE

It'll definitely be on this deck.

We follow Marino as she moves from station to station.

MARINO

No. No. No. No...

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before. McCarthy mans the science station and Park is back at navigation.

PARK
 Enemy closing in. Deflectors are snapping on...
 (beat)
 Or rather...they would be...if we had any.

MCCARTHY
 Stow it, Will.
 (looking down viewer)
 In visual range now.

WILLS
 Let's see them.

The main viewer flicks over to show us the approach of nine D7-class cruisers in a 'wall of battle' formation.

HART
 Okay. We're screwed.

MCCARTHY
 Huh. Would you look at that...

WILLS
 Commodore?

MCCARTHY
 I'm, uh...I can see the hull markings on those ships. They're all the same.

WILLS
 So?

MCCARTHY
 Hang on, running it through the translator now...

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

Focus on West at the command table. He is watching the nine Klingon ships approach on the large wall screen.

WEST
 (to himself)
 Come on...

Roth is accessing the computer memory banks. His monitor screen is displaying a schematic of the base. Quickly, he zooms in towards the command tower, then Operations.

ROTH
 The weapon controls are located...
 (points)
 Over there.

WEST
 Marino, quickly!
 (to Roth)
 You've just earned your pay for
 the week.

Marino dashes around a good third of the deck to reach the station. Plax joins her.

PLAX
 You should probably target those
 Klingon vessels.

Marino gives him a 'Really? You think?' look as she quickly familiarises herself with the layout.

WEST
 Mr Marino...

MARINO
 Just a sec...right. Got it!

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39 (MONTAGE)

A series of close-up hull shots as various weapon arrays deploy. Phaser batteries roll around to face outwards, torpedo turrets rise up into position, and planetary-grade 'heavy phaser' banks slide into place out of hatches on the spacedock spheres.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

McCarthy is reading off one of his science monitors. Wills has joined him.

WILLS
 Whoa.

MCCARTHY
 It can't be a coincidence, and
 they don't do that in the
 Imperial Fleet.
 (into intercom)
 Atlantis to Commander West.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

West reacts:

WEST

Commodore? You're in command?

MCCARTHY (OVER COMM.)

No. I just think there is something you should know. See those ships out there? They're the I.K.S. Kitumba.

A beat.

WEST

Sorry...they're *all* the Kitumba?
The missing Klingon ship?

MCCARTHY (OVER COMM.)

They have the same markings, same warp signature, same deflector frequency...they are the same vessel, no doubt about it.

West, Roth and Kayle look puzzled. We cut to Marino, who has taken a seat proper at the weapon controls.

MARINO

All batteries online. Raising shields.

WEST

Target the cruisers, but hold fire.

MARINO

Holding fire.

West leans on the table, mimicking Admiral Rowley's poses from the previous episodes.

KAYLE

Captain?

At the same time, Kayle's foot nudges one of the stunned Klingons on the deck at her feet. She looks down.

WEST

Nine Kitumbas. Nine. How is that possible?

ROTH

I have theories, but none of them are concrete.

MARINO

Sir, the ships are entering weapon's range.

Quizzical, Kayle squats down. She starts to turn over the Klingon body.

MARINO (CONT'D)

Their disruptors are locking on...

Kayle gasps. The unconscious Klingon is D'Treyah. Another Commander D'Treyah.

KAYLE

Impossible...

WEST

Ready odd-numbered torpedo launchers. Target gunports and engines as best you can, but don't get gentle. If you have to destroy them, destroy them.

A light flashes on part of the table. Roth checks it.

ROTH

We're being hailed. It is the lead vessel.

WEST

On viewer.

The viewscreen switches to display the stern visage of CAPTAIN BORAL, much as we saw him on *'Part 1'*.

BORAL

I am Captain Boral of the Imperial Battlecruiser Kitumba. Your station has been claimed by the Klingon Empire, and all Federation personnel aboard are to consider themselves prisoners of the Chancellor.

(beat)

Stand down, kneel before our flag and I shall spare your lives. If not, you will be punished by the tip of my bat'leth.

WEST

Tell me, Captain; why is your fleet made up of identical starships?

BORAL

Will you surrender, Starfleet?

WEST

Answer my question.

BORAL

You answer mine.

A beat.

WEST
No. I won't surrender.

BORAL
Very well, then.

Boral signals to someone off-screen. The channel abruptly closes.

ROTH
They're opening fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

The nine Klingon cruisers spit out a volley of angry-looking torpedoes. They slam into the shield bubble around the Starbase.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

As above.

KAYLE
All direct hits. No damage to hull. Deflectors down by zero-point-six percent.

ROTH
I fail to understand what he's doing. His force is no match for this station.

Roth is watching the display in the middle of the table, where the sensor screen is currently shown. Blips begin to appear on the edge of the sensor sphere: first a few, then dozens.

WEST
Oh. How convenient. More Klingon vessels. And I bet you good Credits that they'll all be Kitumbas too.

KAYLE
What do you think is going on here? Total disappearance of the base's crew, no contact with the rest of the galaxy, two identical Klingon women, dozens of copies of the same Imperial cruiser...

WEST
One thing at a time, Commander.

ROTH
(off screen)
Boral's squadron is bombarding
us with disruptor fire. The new
blips are closing in fast.

WEST
Odd-numbered launchers, fire.

MARINO
Firing.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

Dozens of torpedo turrets open fire, each one sending out a salvo of six photon warheads. Over half of them find their marks, inflicting severe damage on the Klingon fleet. Five of the nine cruisers are blown up instantly, including the command ship. Two others are badly damaged and begin to drift.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

The viewscreen here shows the same Klingon vessels exploding.

WILLS
That showed 'em!

MCCARTHY
I wouldn't celebrate just yet.
Sensors are picking up more
battlecruisers inbound; at least
two dozen.

WILLS
Simon, move the ship. Keep us
away from those new arrivals.

HAYES
That's going to be tricky, sir.
They're vectoring in from all sides!

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

Nine more Kitumbas bear down on the station, diving in from the positive Z galactic axis ('above' the base). They bombard the massive shield bubble as the two remaining cruisers of the original squadron make another attack run.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

The station shakes gently.

MARINO

(concerned)

I can't target ships from too many vectors at once, Captain, and it's going to get busy out there very soon.

WEST

Mr Plax, give her a hand.

(beat)

Ensign Connors, you'll have had tactical training too, I take it? Man the third position.

Plax takes a seat, operating his targeting sights with mighty proficiency (his third hand helps a great deal, too). Connors sits at a third seat along the weapon station. He is a little slower than the other two officers in getting a handle on the controls.

MARINO

You okay, Ensign?

CONNORS

Yes sir. It is just...I did not perform well in this particular Academy course.

PLAX

Point and shoot, Anthony. It is no more difficult than that.

MARINO

I have a lock on that attack wing, sir. They're maneuvering out for another pass.

WEST

Even-numbered launchers, fire!

We hear the sound of dozens of launchers firing at once. West, Kayle, Roth and Illetschko watch the viewscreen as swarms of torpedoes slam into the aft quarters of the Klingon ships as they move away. These salvos aren't as clean; a higher percentage of warheads miss their targets, but three ships are destroyed and four are left burning.

WEST (CONT'D)

Phaser batteries, capital-grade only. Fire.

The pin-point accurate phaser beams strike the remaining Klingon ships as they try to turn about.

Although only one vessel is destroyed, the rest are all badly damaged and set adrift.

MARINO
Squadron eliminated.

ROTH
Another wave is closing in from the same direction.

MARINO
Our launchers on that side haven't reloaded yet!

WEST
Target phasers, planetary-grade.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

A large phaser bank mounted on one of the drydock spheres opens fire. The beam is thick and powerful. It strikes the command vessel of the incoming Klingon squadron with enough force to knock it right off its vector!

The cruiser's shields collapse within seconds, but the beam continues on, burning right through the hull and out the other side. The ship is cut in half, with each section careening into the two flanking vessels. They both sustain terrific amounts of damage from the collisions.

And the beam continues to fire, sweeping on to the next ship in line. This cruiser's shields are also blown away, but the phaser stops firing before any real damage can be done to the hull beneath.

BOOM! The cruiser explodes anyway. Seconds later, the Atlantis screams through the wreckage, phasers ablaze!

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Hayes is looking through his viewing hood at the helm.

HAYES
Initiating strafing run.

Ahead on the viewer, we can see that the ship is flying over the line of Klingon cruisers, hitting each one with a burst of phaser fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

The last two ships in the Klingon formation return the Atlantis' fire with their aft disruptor emitters, scoring a couple of hits onto her exposed hull.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

The ship rocks.

MCCARTHY

Minor hull damage, decks seven and eight.

WILLS

Swing us around. Take us back into cover behind the station.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

Focus on the weapon station:

MARINO

Odd-numbered launchers re-loaded.

WEST

Open fire. Cover Atlantis' retreat.

We hear the batteries firing.

ROTH

Another two waves are approaching, each twelve ships strong.

WEST

Launch combat drones. Have them harass the nearest squadron.

(beat)

Mr Plax, have your batteries target the other attack force. Give them everything we have.

PLAX

With pleasure, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- STARBASE 39

A wing of two-dozen Starfleet combat drones moves away from the base in 'wall' formation. The drones are similar in concept to the Mars Defence Perimeter craft we saw on TNG *'The Best of Both Worlds, Part 2'*, though don't share the same design.

The 'wall' of drones opens fire, sending two-dozen phaser beams right at the collective forward shields of another Klingon cruiser squadron. The shots do little in the way of damage, but the cruisers are distracted. The drones move in close, using their superior maneuverability to avoid any retaliatory attacks.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

West and his senior officers watch the large viewscreen as the battle rages. The station jolts.

WEST

All batteries, fire at will.

(to Roth)

What's the status of the Atlantis?

ROTH

She has moved in close to our lower hull, but she won't be safe there for long. Several more waves are inbound.

West rubs his eyes in frustration.

WEST

This...can't be happening...it can't be real!

NATHAN (O.S.)

You're right. It's not.

Startled, West turns around. Walking across one of the bridges towards the island is Nathan, his brother, looking exactly as he did in the teaser. He has not aged even a day.

WEST

Nathan?

ROTH

Sir?

NATHAN

No, I'm not your brother. Just as those Klingons on the deck are not the crew of the Kitumba either.

West walks towards his brother, meeting him half-way. Roth, Kayle and Illetschko look on, curious.

KAYLE

Sir...who are you talking to?

WEST

My...my brother. Right there!

He points at Nathan.

ILLETSCHKO

Captain, there's nobody there.

NATHAN

They can't see me, Alex. I'm currently only able to appear to you.

(beat)

It is very important that you listen to me.

WEST

Who are you?

NATHAN

That's not a concern right now-

WEST

I think it is. If you want me to listen, I need to know who's talking.

The base rocks again, harder this time.

NATHAN

Very well.

(beat)

You'll come to know me as The Time Man. I'll meet you again in person not long after we get all this mess sorted out.

WEST

The...Time Man?

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

Yes. But for now, you may as well call me Nathan. I've taken the image of your brother from your memories to use as an avatar, since I'm unable to project my real form into your conscious while you're ensnared like this.

WEST

Ensnared?

The station jolts. Sparks fly out of a console across the room. Kayle checks her readouts.

KAYLE

More waves coming in! Shields are down to forty-seven percent. We've lost half of the combat drones.

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

You're still inside the cloud, Alex. The Scout plucked the Atlantis from the Starbase dock. Remember that energy tentacle that struck your shields then disappeared? In reality, it penetrated your ship. Got inside your heads.

(indicates around him)

This is all an illusion. A snapshot of the Starbase, unfortunately failing to get the organic parts quite right.

(touches one of the dark figures)

The technical details were taken from the Kitumba's computer when it absorbed her, hence the factory-perfect condition of the station and why there are multiple copies of the ship and the crew being thrown at you as adversaries. It's testing you. Learning from you.

WEST

Why? How-

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

We don't have time for why's and how's, I'm afraid. The program is almost complete. This station is about to be destroyed, proving to The Scout that you are unable to withstand the might of its creators in a military engagement.

(beat)

You have to break free. Now.

A quick beat.

WEST

Alright-

KAYLE

Captain...is something wrong?

WEST

Take command, Mr Kayle.

KAYLE

But why-

WEST

Just do it!

Kayle nods, concerned but without the time to act on it. She, Roth and Illetschko turn back to the command table.

WEST

Alright. Tell me how.

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

I'm sending a multi-spatial signal through an energy stream directly into your brain. The neurons that guide your motor functions have been freed from The Scout's grasp and should now be under your control.

(beat)

There is a tendril stuck through your forehead. You need to remove it.

WEST

What? There's nothing-

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

No, sticking out of the *real* you. The you that's still sitting in the command chair on the bridge of your starship.

Roth is watching his display.

ROTH

The Atlantis is under attack. She is taking heavy damage.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Smashed and smoky. Several crewmembers, including Park and Hart, are lying still on the floor after being hit by debris. Hayes, bleeding from a cut above his left eye, is valiantly trying to avoid the attacking Klingon ships.

The auxiliary systems station is on fire. A damage control party, dressed in flame-retardant gear, is attempting to tackle the blaze with hand-held extinguishers.

MCCARTHY

Hull breaches on decks two through twelve! Emergency bulkheads are insufficient; we're loosing atmosph-!

The large screen above his head EXPLODES outwards, killing him instantly. Rura dashes over from her own station, immediately taking over the sensor viewer. She is clearly the most experienced person on deck, only affording McCarthy's body a cursory glance.

RURA
 Enemy ships moving in from all
 angles. Weapons are gone. Impulse
 engines are offline.

T'PAN (OVER COMM.)
 Engine room to the bridge.
 Structural integrity has fallen
 beyond safety limits.

Wills quickly thumbs his intercom button. A bosun's
 whistle blares out through the ship.

WILLS
 All hands to the escape pods. I
 repeat, all hands to the escape
 pods. Abandon ship! Abandon ship!

HAYES
 Commander!

All eyes look to the viewscreen. A Klingon torpedo is
 heading right for the camera...

Wills closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE -- THE ATLANTIS

The torpedo smashes into the bridge dome, blowing the
 entire conn tower apart. The rest of the ship lists over
 and drifts. Chunks have been blown out all over. Fires
 burn. Klingon disruptor shots still slam into the hulk.

Above, the Starbase continues to fire at various targets.
 The space around it is littered with debris and burning
 wrecks.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

The death of the Atlantis is displayed on the viewscreen.
 The officers stare up at it in silent shock. Roth briefly
 utters something under his breath in his native tongue,
 but we can't make out what.

WEST
 No...

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN
 Forget that. It's not real!
 (beat)
 Try moving your hand. Concentrate.

West moves his hand up.

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN (CONT'D)

No, it's not working. I'm
boosting the gain of my signal.

He closes his eyes. West suddenly reacts.

WEST

I...I...

WEST'S P.O.V.

The Starbase Command Ops begins to morph away, being replaced by the Atlantis bridge as if seen from someone sat in the command chair.

WEST (O.S.)

I can...see...the bridge...
(beat)

I feel...two...like being in two
places...

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

Good! Good, that's it! Now focus.
(beat)

Move your right hand up to your
forehead.

West does so, but it is slow and tense, as if he is having to fight some invisible force that is trying to hold his arm down.

WEST

I feel something...

He starts to 'touch' an object apparently in front of his forehead. We can't see anything, of course, but it must be there.

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

That's it. It's stuck into your
head. You have to pull it out.

West attempts to, but this invisible object won't move. Around us, the Starbase shakes violently. Time is running out.

WEST

(yanking object)
It's stuck. I...can't...move it!
(beat)

Wait...you said this was a tendril?

NATHAN/THE TIME MAN

Yes.

West begins to move his hand back down to his side. Again, it is slow and challenging. He makes it, then starts to grope around for something...

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Extreme close-up on the side of the command chair:

WEST'S HAND

Shaking, the arm makes its way down the side of the seat. Slowly, its fingers grab hold of something gold and shiny.

A flash of silver:

CUT TO:

INT. STARBASE 39 -- COMMAND OPS

As before. West, holding onto an invisible handle of some kind, makes a sudden sweeping gesture across his face.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Exactly as we saw it in the *first* act. West swishes his family sword in front of his face, slicing through some large object. Looking around, we notice that everyone is back at their posts...

...all stock still and rigid, with their mouths hanging open and their eyes wide in horror. Drool runs down their chins. They do not blink.

The blue energy tendrils, the one that attacked the ship in Act One, has pierced the bridge dome, passing right through the metal as if it were a ghost. The main body of the rippling surface carries on and goes right through the deck just behind the command chair.

Smaller sub-tendrils, however, have branched off and are stuck into the foreheads of everyone on the bridge. They pulsate slowly, as if they are literally sucking something out of the crew's heads.

WEST

NEEEYARGH!

West drops his sword to the deck with a clatter. He falls onto his hands and knees, rubbing his bloodshot eyes. The remains of the sub-tendrils in his forehead seems to dissolve and disappear, leaving no mark.

The remains of the sub-tendrils, the part still attached to the main trunk, flaps around wildly in the air.

On this, we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Continuous from last act. Slowly, West looks up at the flailing tendril he cut.

WEST (CONT'D)
You son of a bitch...

He grabs his sword again, rising up into a heroic pose.

WEST (CONT'D)
Mess with my crew, will you!?

He hacks at the already wounded sub-tendrils some more. It retreats back into the main trunk, which undulates at the reaction. Two fresh sub-tendrils then shoot out at West, but he parries with his sword, slicing them apart. He wields the blade like an expert. The trunk shudders each time he cuts off a sub-tendrils.

WEST (CONT'D)
What's the matter? That sting a little?

West dashes over to Roth and McCarthy at the science station. He cuts the tendrils attached to their foreheads, severing their connection to the illusionary world. As with what happened to West, the sub-tendrils end dissolves away from their heads. They both collapse to the deck, groaning.

Making haste, West moves swiftly around the bridge, slicing all of the sub-tendrils from each and every person. In turn, they all start to come round.

MCCARTHY
Wha-what's...ohhhh, my eyes...

ROTH
Sir...

Roth crawls over, taking the Commodore by the hand. McCarthy looks at him with dawning realisation. Realisation, or perhaps acceptance?

ROTH (CONT'D)
Marcus.
(beat)
Let me see your eyes.

He holds McCarthy's head up with both his hands.

ROTH (CONT'D)

Your pupils are dilated. There doesn't seem...doesn't seem to be any damage.

Wills pulls himself up from the deck using one of the railings.

WILLS

Ahhh...aren't I supposed to be dead?

West looks at the remaining main trunk of the tendril.

WEST

Now you.

He brings his sword down hard into the trunk, hacking out a notch. The tendril vibrates, emitting a weird electronic noise that fills the bridge. The ripples on the water-like surface begin to increase in intensity. The bright blue colour starts to darken.

West hacks again and again, cutting the notch deeper and deeper until the tendril trunk is over half-way severed in two.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- ENGINEERING

As on the bridge, the entire engine room staff are stood in place staring emptily at nothing as a plethora of sub-tendrils stick out of their foreheads. Suddenly, as the dark blue main trunk becomes a purple, the sub-tendrils yank themselves out of their target hosts.

T'Pan is the least affected by the sudden shock, quickly regaining her composure. She visually checks the status of her team.

T'PAN

Report. Is anybody injured?

Lots of confused 'No, sir's' and 'I don't think so's'.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- CORRIDOR (ENGINEERING DECKS)

The many sub-tendrils have already left the people here, absorbing themselves back into the main trunk. The whole thing has now morphed from a purple colour to a pinkish lilac. As we watch, the trunk starts to retreat back through the ship.

Ensign Tiyr blinks his eyes. With none of the confusion displayed by the rest of the crew, he carefully pats himself down and grins. Chief Jaydas bumps into him.

JAYDAS

Oh, I...where...sorry, sir. What happened? I was...in the phaser control room...how...?

(beat)

Are you alright, sir? Weren't you-?

TIYR

I am well, Chief.

(smiling)

I guess it is true what the humans say; felines do indeed have nine lives.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- CORRIDOR (SCIENCE LABS)

The sub-tendrils here are turning from a lilac colour to a deep red. As they all pull out of the heads of the crew, the sub-tendrils retreat down the deck into the main trunk that passes through the bulkheads some several metres away.

One of the scientists here is Crewman Caylo. She snaps too, disorientated, rubbing her eyes and blinking rapidly. Her clothing indicates that she is currently employed within a damage control party: her job during a general quarters such as Red Alert.

She starts to pat her forehead where the disruptor shot in the illusion blew a section of her skull out. She is confused. Frightened. Relieved.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- SICKBAY

Doctor Weir is helping some of her nurses recover. The trunk of the tendril runs straight through the room. Ensign Connors and Petty Officer Daya'Kaufman are also present, apparently being posted here at battle stations.

CONNORS

Ugh...my mind...

The tendril tip appears through the far bulkhead as the whole tentacle entity seems to be pulling back through the ship. Connors quickly pulls out his phaser. Daya'Kaufman does the same.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Intruder alert! Open fire!

They do so. As was the case with the main phaser batteries in the first act, the tendril simply absorbs the power of the energy beams. Its colour begins to change from red back to lilac.

WEIR

Stop firing!

The guards comply.

WEIR (CONT'D)

Look, it's absorbing the phaser power.

CONNORS

We can't just let it-

Weir has already rushed over to a locked safe set into one wall. She enters a passcode, opens that door and starts scrabbling around for something inside.

DAYA'KAUFMAN

(eyeing the tendril)

Doctor...

WEIR

Where did I put...ah ha!

She holds up a small, orb-shaped container that has the words 'DANGER: NEGATIVE MATTER' written across it. With the other hand, she fishes a large hypospray out of the same storage safe and begins to fill it with whatever substance is inside the orb.

The tendril intruder has almost left sickbay...

Setting the orb container aside, Weir quickly advances on the tendril.

WEIR

Stand clear!

She jabs the hypospray into the intruder's side. A white substance diffuses out from the tip of the hypo into the rest of the tendril, as if a coloured dye had been dropped into a pool of water.

There is an instant reaction. The tendril starts to flail, screaming out its electronic cry. Weir takes several long steps back.

CONNORS

What's happening?

WEIR

That hypospray contains a form of negative matter that can attract and absorb large amounts of power on the positive spectrum.

CONNORS

Well worked, Doctor.

WEIR

(smile)

I'm a woman of action.

The tendril quickly retreats through the bulkhead. As it does so, the 'infected' tip drops off into the deck. Weir, Connors and Daya'Kaufman gather around the thing as it starts to dissolve away into nothing, leaving only a pool of the white negative matter on the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- TRANSPORTER ROOM

Anderson and her Vulcan assistant are shaking off the effects.

ANDERSON

Watch out!

She knocks the Vulcan to the floor just as the head of the main tendril trunk passes through one wall, still flailing from side to side. A new pointed tip has formed to replace the one it detached in the sickbay.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

The crew move aside as the waving tendril retreats far enough back towards where it came from so as to allow the very tip of it to be the only remaining part inside the ship. The deep red colour turns darker, almost to black.

KAYLE

Get back! Everybody, back!

RURA

(into intercom)

Security to the bridge, on the double!

West walks around to the front of the thing. He points his blade at it.

WEST

Why are you here? What do you want with us?

The tendril 'looks' at him momentarily, softening its electronic scream down to a gentle hum. It slowly shifts its tip towards Wills. Then Hart. Marino. Hayes. Park. Kayle. Roth...finally settling on McCarthy. He takes a step forward, raising a diplomatic hand.

MCCARTHY

I am McCarthy. That is the name of this entity.

(beat)

What is your name? Your designation?

WEST

The Scout.

The tendril reacts, suddenly shifting its 'view' to West.

WEST (CONT'D)

I'm correct, aren't I? You're The Scout.

(beat, aggressive)

But a scout for what? What are you scouting? Why were you testing us in that illusionary world? What is your purpose here?

MCCARTHY

(firm)

Careful, Commander.

Again, the tendril moves its 'gaze' back to McCarthy. It begins to reel up, like a snake readying to pounce.

KAYLE

Marcus!

The tendril turns towards Kayle and strikes. Kayle is ready, bracing herself for the impact...

...But Roth dives at her, knocking her aside at the last possible moment. Both he and Kayle fall in a heap on the deck.

As the tendril swings around for another attack, it accidentally smashes into McCarthy as he pulls aside the Ensign manning the master systems console. He instinctively grabs a hold of it, which clearly causes the thing some discomfort.

McCarthy is lifted up off the deck and smashed into the dome high above with a painful CRUNCH. He hollers out in pain, and is thrown clear of the tentacle as he loses his grip. He crashes into the wall display set into the bulkhead above the engineering station, then drops to the deck like a stone.

West slices at the tendril again, but this time the thing is too quick for him, and parries his attack.

West is knocked back into part of the bridge railing. Hart moves to her captain's aid, throwing her writing stylus at the intruder. This distracts it long enough for Hart and Wills to haul West out of the way.

Hayes, Park and Marino pick up their chairs and start trying to fend the tendril off, as if it were a giant snake.

Clearly very angry now, the tendril begins to undulate once more. The hum increases in intensity, rising up into a full scream...a *deafening* scream! A scream so piercing that it seems to deflect away any other noise.

The crew cover their ears, but it does no good. Some stumble about helpless. Others just cower on the deck, trying to ward off the noise with their hands or block it out by banging their fists into their skulls. The shrilling sound grows in intensity. Even the computers are affected: all of the monitor screens around the bridge start flicking; flashing up data from all corners of the ship's memory banks.

The lights and illuminated controls join in, flashing at random. The room is awash with the technicoloured glow.

CUT TO:

FACES OF THE CREW (MONTAGE)

Rapid cuts of the bridge crew's faces, each bathed in a different coloured light or schematic projecting from their station. They are all in pain...but not just physical pain.

[The following are SUPER-IMPOSED over the top of the relevant character's face:]

CUT TO:

INT. FUTURE STARFLEET ENGINE ROOM (HART)

Red Alert lights pulse. The warp core throbs blue. Dressed in a red Starfleet tunic of the 2290s and sporting a Commander pin, a fifty-something Hart moves between exploding consoles, barking out orders at her technicians. She is experienced. Confident. Commanding.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- TORPEDO ROOM (PARK)

Park, only a few years older than he is now and sporting Lieutenant Junior Grade stripes, stands beside an open torpedo casing that has a Federation flag draped over the lower half. He wears his dress uniform. Gently and with teary eyes, he places a hand into the casket.

A woman's body lies inside, though we don't get a clear look at the face.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARFLEET HEADQUARTERS (MARINO)

Marino mans a barricade outside of Starfleet Headquarters. Alongside her are a rag-tag group of Starfleet Marines, security guards and some civilians. Notably, Nathan West is present. They are aiming their weapons out towards the gardens in front as several other Starfleet soldiers move towards them. The characters are no more than six or seven years older.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE (RURA)

Trees as tall as skyscrapers dominate the background as Rura, dressed in non-Federation attire, looks out from a balcony attached to one of these great oaks. In the distance, a mighty city that was suspended over a chasm by four colossal chains crumbles into the darkness below.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET BRIDGE (HAYES)

A small Starfleet bridge of the TOS-era, yet the crew are wearing uniforms from *'Star Trek: The Motion Picture'*. Hayes, about two decades older, stands up from the command chair and faces the doors. He wears Commander insignia. He smiles as Alexander West enters from the corridor, sporting Commodore stripes.

CUT TO:

INT. MATERNITY WARD (WILLS)

Wearing a smile that only a father could, Wills (about a decade or so older) is handed a baby girl by a civilian nurse.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE (ROTH)

Roth drifts slowly through space. His skin is quickly freezing and the blood capillaries in his eyes have burst. This can be no more than two years in the future.

CUT TO:

INT. STARFLEET ROOM (KAYLE)

Looking no older than they are at present, Kayle points a phaser at Roth. She has been crying.

It is unclear what kind of room they are in specifically.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NEXICON (WEST)

Flying through a gigantic machine construct. The metal is living. It is like something out of an H.R. Giger painting.

CUT TO:

FACES OF THE CREW (MONTAGE)

Another montage, more rapidly this time.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before, with the crew all in a state of disability.

The starboard turbolift doors slide open. Plax steps out onto the deck, holding a crossbow-like weapon. He aims it at the tendril intruder and fires. A projectile bolt is unleashed, piercing into the side of the tentacle.

The bolt seems to inject a tremendous amount of the white negative matter from sickbay before. It spreads throughout the liquid-like interior of the tendril with fantastic rapidity. The intruder lashes around, whipping itself in all directions, before finally pulling out of the bridge altogether.

Instantly, the shrilling ceases.

Plax lowers his weapon. Connors, Daya'Kaufman and Doctor Weir join him from the lift, looking a little stunned. They regain their composure quickly, though, noticing the state of their fellow officers.

WEIR

Check their vitals.

(calling)

Stacey, M't'zim, tricorders.

Two nurses exit from the turbolift also. All six new arrivals move around the room, helping out the recovering bridge officers. Weir is at West's side, running her tricorder scanner over his temple. Beside them, Wills comes to. He notices Weir.

WILLS

Pauline?

WEIR

Hey Tom. How do you feel?

WILLS

My head's a little sore...wha-
what are you doing here?

WEIR

I'm your doctor. You need my help.
Now just relax. I'll be with you
in just a second...

West regains his senses. He looks up at Weir. His face
turns cold. Stone cold.

WEST

You.

WEIR

Alex.

(off tricorder)
I can't detect any damage.
Whatever that thing was doing to
you, it's left no trace.

WEST

You. What are you doing on my ship?

WEIR

Nice to see *you* again too.

Weir moves over to Hart and scans her as well. West and
Wills pull each other to their feet, surveying the bridge
as they do.

WEST

All sections, report.

With the aid of the guards and medics, the crew slowly
return to their posts. All that is, except for McCarthy.
He lies unconscious where he fell during the battle with
the tendril. Connors is at his side.

CONNORS

Here, Doctor!

Weir hurries over, quickly passing the tricorder over
McCarthy's still form.

WEIR

He's unconscious. His spine is
broken in three places, a rib has
punctured his right lung and
there is severe internal bleeding
around the heart.

(to Rura)

Kriss, I need a holding stretcher
up here asap.

RURA

On it.

Rura ad libs the above request into the intercom system.
At the same time, reports start to come in from the officers:

HAYES

Help reporting ready, Captain.
All propulsion systems online.

KAYLE

Navigation ten-by-ten, sir.

MARINO

Weapons online, ready to fire.

WILLS

Ship's status is the same as it
was before we entered that funky
illusion world, Alex. Pretty a-
okay, except for the shields.
They're still gone, and you won't
be getting them back without a
day or two in drydock.

RURA

Internal communications online.
External channels open, but
there's nothing on subspace.

HART

Just like before...

RURA

Yeah, and I'm pleased about it.
What I was hearing inside the
illusion... 'weird' doesn't even
come close.

West turns to Roth, who has his attention focused entirely
onto McCarthy's body.

WEST

Mr Roth...

No change.

WEST (CONT'D)

Mr Roth!

Roth snaps to. Realising, he hastily glances over his
controls.

ROTH

Science section reports ready,
Captain.

West nods, his features softening.

WEST
 (sympathetic)
 Thank you, Commander.

Two medics arrive on deck from the port turbolift, carrying two pole-like devices (one each). Crossing over to where McCarthy lies, Weir instructs them to take up positions on each side of the body. They do so, carefully placing the poles down onto the deck, one on each side and both parallel to McCarthy's form.

PARK
 What are we going to do now?

HART
 With the warp drive online, we can leave!

KAYLE
 And go where? We're still in the same boat as before. We have no idea which way is which.

Weir presses a button on each pole, activating them. They illuminate, and McCarthy's body begins to lift up off of the deck a few inches. He is suspended suspended in mid-air, retaining his awkward shape.

HART
 We could pick a random direction. The cloud only has a finite mass. We'll reach a boundary eventually.

WEST
 We can't leave.
 (beat)
 McCarthy was right before. We have to get to the source of this...creature. This...Scout. What is its purpose? What does it want with us? With the Igumi Outpost? The I.K.S. Kitumba? Whatever else it has consumed along the way?
 (beat)
 The fact that it is called 'The Scout' seems to denote that it is...scouting for something. If just one of these things can disable the crew of an entire starship, what would become of the Alpha Quadrant if more appear?

(MORE)

WEST (CONT'D)

(beat)

No. No, we must go on, if not to stop it in its tracks, then only to learn what it is and why it is doing what it's doing.

(long beat)

Now, I can't order you to-

RURA

Captain.

She smiles reassuringly. West looks around at the rest of the officers. They all share the same look: that of loyalty.

WEST

(pleased)

Alright, then. Mr Hayes, Mr Kayle, look back through the sensor records. That tendril came from a specific direction. I want you to find out which and plot a course.

KAYLE

Aye, Captain.

WEST

Mr Park, full spectral analysis of the tendril's attack patterns. I want to know what we're dealing with in case it decides to try again.

PARK

Aye skip.

WEST

Mr Marino, vigilant watch. If you see anything suspicious move out there, you have my permission to fire on it.

MARINO

Yes sir.

WEST

Tom, get back down to engineering. See if you can't rig up some kind of defensive shielding. A force screen, a magnetic field...hell, I'd even settle for some extra armour on the hull.

WILLS

I'll get out my blowtorch, Alex.

WEST
Failing that, just get me a
better scanning range. I like to
see where I'm going.

(beat)

Mr Hart-

HART
Yes sir!

WEST
Coffee. Black. Two sugars.

HART
Right away, sir!

WEST
Mr Roth...

Roth is still watching Weir as she tends to McCarthy.

WEST (CONT'D)
Mr Roth, I think that
Pauline...that Doctor Weir could
use some assistance with the
Commodore.

Roth is momentarily surprised at the order, but quickly nods.

ROTH
Understood sir.
(beat)
Thank you.

The crew set to their tasks. Hart and Wills leave the bridge via the starboard turbolift. Roth goes over to McCarthy as the two medics pick up the stretcher and carry it into the waiting port elevator. Because of the way the holding stretcher works, McCarthy can be moved around in any direction in order to fit into the lift vertically, as the tractor beams keep him in the same shape as he was on the ground.

Roth and Weir go to follow them in, but West blocks Weir's path. He lowers his voice.

WEST
(quietly)
How long have you known that I
was going to be your new CO?

WEIR
A week.

WEST
And you didn't say anything?

WEIR

What's there to say? We're not on speaking terms anymore, remember?

WEST

You could have sent a message. You could have warned me. I'd never have accepted the commission if...

(beat)

I didn't know. You're not listed as the Chief Surgeon. Someone named Murdock is.

WEIR

That's because I'm leaving. So you won't have to put up with me for very long. Happy?

She sidesteps him and continues into the lift. The doors close, and she disappears. Kayle moves over to his side.

KAYLE

Everything...alright, Captain?

WEST

Yes. Yes, everything's fine.

KAYLE

Right. Well, we've found a trail of particles ahead that could be the path of the tendril. Simon's laid in a course.

WEST

Good work. Mr Hayes, ahead one-quarter impulse.

HAYES

One-quarter impulse, aye.

West walks back over to his central chair. He picks up his family sword and sheathes it in a fancy manner. Taking up a very nautical pose beside the chair, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The fog-like cloud. First, her running lights appear. Then the illumination from her viewports. Finally, the form of the destroyer takes shape. She passes by at impulse speed.

WILLS (V.O.)

Sit down, will you? I don't have enough spare parts to replace the hole you're wearing in the deck.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- OFFICER'S LOUNGE

The room contains a few very comfortable-looking seats and a longish table for meals. There are two view ports, and two food synthesisers in the walls. The room is finely decorated, with many items of memorabilia and paintings of the ship (one is even of the pre-refit Atlantis with 'The Cage'-style layout). An old dedication plaque is fixed to the wall: 'ATLANTIS, SPACECRAFT NUMBER NX-05, FIONA L. CONWAY, COMMANDER'.

West is pacing about. Sat on couches watching him are Wills and Kayle, both drinking some Saurian brandy. One glass has been poured for West, but he hasn't touched it.

WEST

How long has it been?

KAYLE

Seven hours.

WILLS

Our sensors picked up that the cloud was two AU's in diameter before it took us from the Starbase. At impulse speed, we should have traversed that distance ages ago.

WEST

Which means that either we aren't moving, or we're not inside the cloud any longer.

KAYLE

It's...possible that we are inside the cloud, but that its interior dimensions are not equal to that of its exterior shape.

WILLS

What? Bigger on the inside than on the outside? Bit science fiction-ish to me.

KAYLE

You live on a spaceship. Three centuries ago, that was science fiction to human kind.

West pauses at one rounded viewport, staring out with his hands behind his back.

WEST
(to himself)
Where are you?

Wills turns to Kayle.

WILLS
How's the Commodore?

KAYLE
Stable.

WILLS
I, uh...I hear that Roth hasn't left his side.

Kayle looks away, taking a sip of her drink.

WEST
And where are *you*? The Time Man?
(beat)
What is your role in all of this?

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- SICKBAY -- WARD

The ward area, not too dissimilar to the one we saw aboard the Enterprise NCC-1701. Commodore McCarthy is resting in one bed with his eyes closed. There is a special machine placed over him, enclosing his abdomen. Roth is sitting on a stool not too far away.

WEIR (O.S.)
Thirsty?

Roth glances up. Weir is standing in the doorway, holding a cup of an orange liquid. Roth nods. Weir moves over and hands him the drink.

WEIR (CONT'D)
It's a herbal tea from Planet Q.
It always helps me when I'm feeling low.

ROTH
Thank you, Pauline.

WEIR
(surprised)
Calling me by my given name while on duty. Now there's something to note in the log.
(MORE)

WEIR (CONT'D)

(beat)

I've made him stable, and as soon as we get back to the Starbase, the hospital there can fix up his spinal injury. He's going to be alright, you know.

ROTH

Indeed. But I don't know if I will be...

(beat)

There is something I...something I've needed to tell him for a long time. During recent events, I thought that I may not get that chance.

(beat)

But I'm afraid of what will happen if I do say it. He has been a close friend to me. A mentor. I don't want to lose that.

Weir hops onto the adjacent biobed.

WEIR

You shouldn't keep secrets from the people you care about. I know. I did, and it lost me my soul mate.

A pause, then we hear the intercom's bosun's whistle.

RURA (OVER COMM.)

Now hear this, now hear this: all command officers to the bridge please. I repeat, command officers to the bridge.

Roth hands his drink back to Weir, stands, takes another look at the unconscious McCarthy, then heads out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

West, Wills and Kayle are just settling into their stations as Roth enters from one of the turbolifts. Hayes was manning the command chair, and is now returning to the helm. The rest of the bridge crew are the same as before, except that Plax and his guards have gone. However, two other security ratings stand watch beside the entrances.

WEST

Report, Lieutenant.

HAYES

Something ahead on scanners, sir. Something big.

WEST
Mr Kayle? Mr Park?

PARK
It's on the board now. Almost
dead ahead.

KAYLE
I see it. Bearing, Zero-Zero-
Five-Mark-Zero-One-Zero.

West spins his chair to face the science station.

WEST
Mr Roth, focus your beams. What
is that out there?

Roth is already hunched over the science viewing hood.

ROTH
Readings coming in momentarily...
(long beat)
It is...a planet, Captain.

A beat.

WEST
(surprised)
A...planet?

ROTH
That is my best guess.

KAYLE
We're closing fast...

WEST
Slow us down, Mr Hayes. Helm's
discretion.

HAYES
Aye sir.

WEST
(to Roth)
What makes you sure it's a planet?

ROTH
From what I can see on sensors,
it has many of the characteristics
that a planet does. Roughly
spherical in shape, it has a
gravity pull factor and, going
on the little information I can
gather from this distance, an
atmosphere of sorts.

(MORE)

ROTH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Interestingly, however, the gravity field appears to only extend three point two kilometres above the surface of the sphere. We are not being affected by it at this distance, nor would we should we enter a standard orbit above.

A beat as West digests the information and forms a decision.

WEST

People, I have a feeling that this could be what we've been looking for. Helm, take us in. Standard approach vector.

HAYES

Standard approach, aye.

His fingers skillfully manipulate his control toggles. All eyes are on the viewscreen, however, watching and waiting...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The ship travels diligently onwards. As she makes progress, the surrounding cloud begins to thin a little.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Tight on Roth:

ROTH

Density of the cloud material is dropping.

On the viewscreen, something begins to show through the clouds ahead. Something large. Something...pink.

HART

Oh my...

The clouds thin out almost completely. Dead ahead is a rocky, barren world; much like the Earth's moon. It is pink in colour, and shall therefore be known as The Pink Planet.

WEST

Life readings, Mr Roth?

ROTH

None, Captain. It is a dead world.

WEST

Put us into a standard orbit, Mr Hayes.

HAYES

Aye sir.

WEST

Mr Roth, surface scan. Find a nice beam-down location.

(beat)

Mr Kayle, you have the bridge. I'm assembling a landing party.

KAYLE

Captain-

WEST

I'm leading this one, Commander.

KAYLE

As you wish, sir.

HART

It's kinda pretty.

(beat)

Kinda.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE PINK PLANET

The Atlantis makes her approach, settling into orbit above the strangely-coloured world.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- TRANSPORTER ROOM

West, Illetschko, Caylo, Plax, Tiy and Connors are tooling up for beam-down, putting on landing party jackets, tricorders and phasers. The three security men are armed with Type-III phaser rifles (the type we saw on TOS *'Where No Man Has Gone Before'*). Kayle stands aside, near to Warrant Officer Anderson at the controls.

KAYLE

Can I ask; why this mission?

WEST

I have to get to the bottom of this mystery, Commander, and I think that the planet down there will allow me to do that.

Kayle shrugs, not entirely agreeing but not wanting to disagree either. Ready, the landing party step up onto the transporter pad.

At the same time, the doors to the corridor part as Roth walks in. He is dressed in the field jacket too. He marches over to the pad.

ROTH
Lieutenant Illetschko, you are relieved.

ILLETSCHKO
(glancing at West)
Sir?

WEST
Mr Roth?

ROTH
I am the Chief Science Officer. The discovery of a rouge planet seemingly existing within a giant gaseous lifeform is an event that should be documented by me first-hand.

(beat)
And I am not needed up here, Captain. Illetschko is my deputy, and can adequately take my place on the bridge.

A beat as West considers.

WEST
Alright. Mr Illetschko, stand down.

Illetschko does so, passing her tricorder and phaser over to Roth. He steps up onto the pad between West and Plax.

WEST
(to Plax)
You don't have any more of those negative energy rounds, do you?

PLAX
Unfortunately not, sir. I used up all of the Doctor's supply in fighting the energy tendril.

WEST
Damn.

TIYR
Expecting company, Captain?

WEST
Yes, actually. I don't believe that this creature revealed this planet to us by accident.

ROTH

I have chosen a location near to a large mountain range. The coordinates have already been fed into the transporter controls.

WEST

(to Kayle)
The ship is yours, Commander.
(to party)
Everybody ready?

Acknowledgement from the team.

WEST (CONT'D)

(to Anderson)
Energise.

Anderson manipulates the toggles, dematerialising the landing party in a haze of gold.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SURFACE

A barren pink desert. The soft, heady atmosphere is visible by looking into the distance, as it glows only for a mile or so off of the planet surface. Pointy, withered mountains spike the horizon, and craters pock the bare ground all across the landscape. Pink is the dominant colour, though the atmosphere gives the edges of the taller structures a copperish glow.

Most notable is the ambient sound; a gentle, low humming. It gives the whole place a sense of uneasiness, and of perhaps not being quite as empty as first looks may suggest...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- THERMAL VENTS

A field of thermal vents. Steam rises from small cracks in the ground, settling in the air like a thin layer of damp mist. It is impossible to see for more than ten or twelve metres in any direction. As we watch, the landing party shimmers into existence amidst the lingering water vapour.

They orientate themselves. Roth and Caylo activate their tricorders.

CONNORS

Out of one cloud, into another...

PLAX

I don't like this. Visibility is too low.

WEST

Where are we, Mr Roth?

ROTH

Where we should be, Captain, though this field of thermal vents did not register on the ship's sensors before we beamed down.

West pulls out his communicator, flipping it open.

WEST

Atlantis, landing party. West here.

KAYLE (OVER COMM.)

Landing party, Atlantis. Go ahead, Captain.

WEST

We've materialised in the middle of a thermal vent field. Visibility is low, but we're going to look around for a bit. See what we can find.

KAYLE (OVER COMM.)

Affirmative, landing party.

WEST

West out.

He shuts his communicator, returning it to his belt.

WEST (CONT'D)

We'll need to get to higher ground in order to get our bearings. You said there was a mountain range near here?

ROTH

Yes. The terrain begins to sharply rise just three hundred metres in that direction.

He points.

WEST

Alright, let's move out. Phasers at the ready. Set to heavy stun.

Everyone draws out their phaser pistol or readies their rifle. The party set off in one direction.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before, only Kayle is now in the command chair and Illetschko is manning the science station.

KAYLE

Do you have them on sensors, Wanda?

ILLETSCHKO

Yes Commander.

KAYLE

Keep a close watch. We're their eyes in the sky.

ILLETSCHKO

Understood.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- THERMAL VENTS

The landing party make their way through the steam. Plax has point.

CAYLO

Hey, do you hear that?

WEST

Hear what, Crewman?

CAYLO

That...that humming noise.

WEST

Oh, that. You get that from time to time.

CAYLO

I've never heard it before.

WEST

Have you ever been to Altair IV?

CAYLO

No sir.

WEST

They have it there, too. I once stayed for a few days with a friend in Bellerophon City. I couldn't sleep at all for the first few nights. The noise-

Plax holds up his hand, silencing West and stopping the party in their tracks. West moves up to the front. Roth joins them.

WEST (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 What is it, Lieutenant?

PLAX
 I saw something move up ahead. A
 silhouette of someone. Or *something*.

They all peer into the mist. Nothing is visible. Roth checks the display on his tricorder.

ROTH
 No movement detected, Captain,
 save for ourselves.

CAYLO
 Captain!

West and Roth move back to Caylo. She looks a little spooked.

CAYLO (CONT'D)
 Something moved, sir. Back there.

Again, Roth scans. He shakes his head.

WEST
 What did it look like, Crewman?

CAYLO
 I don't know, a...a shape. Just
 a shape.

WEST
 What kind of shape? Humanoid?

CAYLO
 Not really-

TIYR
 Sir, over there!

Tiyr points in another direction. West looks, but can see only mist. Roth scans.

ROTH
 Nothing, sir.

TIYR
 (defiant)
 I saw something.

A little frustrated, West flips out his communicator.

WEST
 West to Atlantis.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before. Focus on Kayle.

KAYLE
Go ahead, Captain.

WEST (OVER COMM.)
Commander, are you detecting any
lifesigns around our location at
all?

Kayle looks to Illetschko, who shakes her head.

KAYLE
No, sir. Why?

WEST (OVER COMM.)
Some of the party claim to have
seen...shapes moving in the mist.
Can you run a visual scan?

KAYLE
Standby.

Kayle nods to Illetschko, who presses a few keys on her console. The viewscreen zooms in towards a section of the planet surface, piercing the atmosphere and magnifying the area where the landing party are currently located (see ENT '*Civilization*' for reference). Naturally, all that is displayed is the steam from the vents.

KAYLE (CONT'D)
Filter through the spectrums.

Illetschko presses more keys. The viewscreen starts to switch through different types of spectrums (visual, thermal, radiological etc). It flicks to a green-hued filter...

...Revealing that the landing party are surrounded by misshapen figures walking towards them from every direction.

KAYLE (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Captain, get out of there! You're
surrounded!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- THERMAL VENTS

As before.

KAYLE (OVER COMM.)
Get out of there now! Move!
They're everywhere!

West's eyes widen. Before he can react:

CONNORS

Sir!

Connors points. Through the mist shambles a twisted and horrific-looking creature. Vaguely humanoid, though with disproportioned parts, the thing is ghostly and partly transparent. It has a large mouth in its chest area, which opens and closes with each step.

PLAX

Open fire! Aim for the legs.

The three security guards let rip with their rifles, but the beams just pass straight through the creature.

TIYR

There, to the left!

Another shambler, this one with six legs and in a roughly arachnid shape, crawls slowly towards the party from another direction. Tiyr, West and Roth all fire on this new target, but again the phaser blasts just pass harmlessly through the spirit-like body.

CAYLO

Two more from behind!

Caylo fires at two more (another humanoid and a horse-like creature), to the same undamaging effect.

Plax pulls a stun grenade from his belt, aiming it at the arachnid creature.

PLAX

Grenade going in!

He throws it at the shambler. The grenade passes through the membrane into the body of the thing, sinking for a second as if it were in jelly. Then BOOM!

No damage. The spider-like shambler is unharmed.

WEST

Fall back! Follow me!

He leads the landing party off in one direction. Plax and Tiyr take the rear, firing off a few more useless shots at the approaching monsters.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before. Kayle bolts up from her chair, watching the firefight on the viewscreen.

KAYLE

Jamie, can we fire on that area without hitting the landing party?

MARINO

Sure. I can make the beams as fine as you want, but I might not hit all the targets.

KAYLE

They're approaching that steep incline there. Make your beam width cover the whole vent area, making sure that the edge does not pass beyond that point.

MARINO

On it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- THERMAL VENTS

The team are running, firing off shots at more shamblers that seem to be appearing from the mist all around them. While snapping off a few shots behind him, West almost runs right into a bear-like one that looms out of the steam ahead.

ROTH

Ahead, Captain!

West spots the bear-thing just in time, managing to barrel roll between its legs and continue running.

ROTH (CONT'D)

Here!

Roth is standing at the base of a sharp incline in the ground. He waves to the others, who spot his signal and move in his direction.

Caylo trips over a rock. Plax stops firing and helps her back to her feet.

CAYLO

Thanks-

PLAX

Move!

Caylo nods and begins running again...

...Right into one of the creatures as it rises up out of the ground. She smashes straight into its fat, bulbous body, falling through the membrane and into the gooey water within.

CONNORS

Caylo!

It is too late. Her form begins to twist and change, deforming and melting away. She screams out, but it is muffled by whatever horrible substance she is encased in. Connors is about to dash to her aid, but Roth stops him. He says nothing.

Plax and Tiyр reach the incline too, still providing the ineffectual covering fire. With the five remaining members together, the party begins to climb up the steep slope.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before. Kayle is watching the viewscreen still.

KAYLE

Now, Jamie!

Marino hits her fire trigger.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ATLANTIS

A close-up of the ventral hull as the twin forward phaser banks fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

A steep-yet-walkable slope rising up out of the thermal vents. The landing party clamber up the side, out of the layer of steam.

ROTH

Interesting. Captain, the type of terrain surface has changed dramatically. This is no longer rock that we are standing on-

WEST

Not now, Roth!

Out of the sky, two blue phaser banks lance down and strike the planet surface only a few dozen metres behind them. The resulting blast of collateral dirt and rocks plumes outwards, covering the climbers like a wave.

A great moaning sound is heard. All of a sudden, the ground begins to ripple. Not shake, but ripple beneath the climbers. The beams stop, but the movement doesn't.

TIYR

What is this!?

The dust begins to settle. Slowly, the rippling ceases.

WEST

(coughing)

Is everybody alright?

Ad libs of 'I'm fine' from everyone. Roth points back down the way they came.

ROTH

Captain...

The party members all follow his indication. Where the phasers hit is now a cut in the planet surface. But it is no ordinary phaser mark: the edges of the hole seem to be bleeding a silvery substance.

WEST

Mr Roth, care to explain?

ROTH

I can only stipulate, Captain, but from what I can see, the patch of rock that we were walking on has been completely obliterated, as have the creatures.

(beat)

But the type of surface surrounding the rock seems to have been cut away as well.

PLAX

Strange. It looks almost...alive.

Roth kneels down and touches the surface beside his feet.

ROTH

Indeed, Lieutenant, it may very well be so.

Suddenly, a mighty thunder crash is heard.

CONNORS

Over there!

He points at a series of three tall, spiky mountains not far down the range from them. Electricity is rippling around them, like lightning being collected around a metal pole.

TIYR

A storm?

WEST

I don't know...

Without warning, the electrical arcs join together and leap upwards towards the sky. The resulting bolt is somewhat like a tentacle, still anchored to the mountains below though much freer and less sophisticated-looking than the tendril that attacked Atlantis earlier.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLOUD -- THE ATLANTIS

The lightning arc lashes out from the planet surface, smashing into the Atlantis. But instead of doing any damage or disabling the power systems, the electric feeler runs itself around the Starfleet ship, like a sheet of writhing energy (it is the same effect as what happened to the I.K.S. Kitumba in '*Part 1*').

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

The ship rocks and jolts under the strain.

PARK

Another tendril! It has us caught fast!

The Red Alert lights snap on. Alarms start to blare. On the viewscreen, the ship is turned towards the planet surface. The energy arc stretches out in front of them, back down to its origin point.

HAYES

It's pulling us...pulling us down!

KAYLE

Reverse engines, maximum thrust!

Hayes presses a key or two. We hear the impulse engines flare up. After a few seconds, the ship begins to jerk.

HAYES

It's not enough. We're still being pulled down!

WILLS

And been torn apart too! Cut the engines!

Hayes does so. This only serves to increase the rate at which they are being pulled in.

RURA
By the Bird, we'll be smashed to
pieces!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

The landing party watch on, helpless. They are looking up
into the sky.

ROTH
I think it has grabbed a hold of
Atlantis.

WEST
How do you know?

ROTH
Because tricorder is showing that
the ship is approaching the
planet surface at an increasingly
rapid speed.

West looks shocked.

WEST
No...NO!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- UPPER ATMOSPHERE

The Atlantis careens down towards the surface, being
yanked to its doom by the relentless energy arc.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before. More alarms have joined in the cacophony now.

COMPUTER
Warning: collision alert. Warning:
collision alert. Warning:
collision alert.

Everyone is grabbing hold of something tightly, whether
it be a console, a chair or a railing.

HART
(suddenly)
Torpedoes!

RURA
What?

HART
Torpedoes! Torpedo the base of
the tendrils!

Marino's eyes light up, but she looks to Kayle for confirmation. She happily gives it. Within seconds, Marino has the target locked and the torpedoes armed to fire.

MARINO
Firing!

She presses the launch button.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- TORPEDO POV

Two photon torpedoes are fired out of Atlantis' launchers. Our view is from the second one as it charges down towards the surface below, following the line of the electricity arc all the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

From the view of the landing party, we watch as the two torpedoes slam into the base of the three spike-shaped mountains. The spires are blown apart, the explosion sending chunks of the pink surface scattering all over the visible area. Amongst these chunks are globules of the silver liquid.

Some of it even splatters onto the slope where the landing party is stood. However, the electric arc has disappeared. The great moaning sound returns as the ground starts to ripple again.

WEST
Hold on!

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before.

PARK
We're free!

KAYLE
Full power to thrusters! Pull up!

Hayes jabs several buttons on his console. On the viewscreen, we can see that the Atlantis is having some difficulty in veering off.

HAYES

We've entered the atmosphere now...thruster controls are sluggish at this velocity.

ILLETSCHKO

We won't make it!

KAYLE

Then all power to the engines. Full reverse thrust! If we're going to crash, let's make it a soft landing!

HAYES

Aye, sir! All engines, full aback.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- UPPER ATMOSPHERE

The Atlantis' thruster assemblies fire out their forward-facing blue jets. As they do, the hull of the ship begins to glow from the atmospheric friction.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

Tight on Kayle:

KAYLE

Mr Wills...

WILLS

Yeah?

KAYLE

Jettison the nacelle!

WILLS

I'll try...

PARK

Impact in fifteen seconds!

Kayle thumbs open the intercom. The bosun's whistle rings out across the ship.

KAYLE

(into intercom)

All decks, brace for impact!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

The rippling has stopped, and the groaning has disappeared. The landing party are all looking up at the sky as the Atlantis, visible as a burning object, streaks towards the surface.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- ATMOSPHERE

A close-up on the underside of the Atlantis, where the warp pylon joins the saucer section. As we watch, dozens of bolts blow away around the adjoining area.

The warp nacelle drops clear of the primary hull.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

The burning object has seemingly split into two. One drops much shorter than the other, whereas the larger one still carries on towards the surface nearby.

CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTIS -- BRIDGE

As before.

WILLS

The nacelle is clear!

HAYES

That's done it; we're really slowing down now!

The surface looms up horrendously close now on the forward viewer.

PARK

Impact in five, four, three...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PINK PLANET -- SLOPE

The landing party watch the saucer section dive down behind the mountains, disappearing from view. A split second later, there is an almighty BOOM as the ship presumably makes contact with the ground.

A huge surface ripple follows, knocking the party clean off their feet. At the same time, the warp nacelle impacts further down the valley, sending another shockwave in the opposite direction.

We pull out to a wide shot of the scene: the landing party recovering from the dual shockwaves, the blasted apart and apparently bleeding mountains, and the distant warp nacelle impact site.

Hold for several seconds, then:

SMASH CUT TO:

THE WHITE

Dub-dub...dub-dub...dub-dub...

THE TIME MAN (V.O.)
(echoing)
Nikkon? Nikkon, can you hear me?

Dub-dub...dub-dub...dub-dub...

Metal clashes against metal.

THE TIME MAN (V.O.)
Nikkon, help has just arrived.
Starfleet help. You'll be safe
soon. But you have to do
something for me first.
(beat)
Wake up, Nikkon. Wake up!

SMASH CUT TO:

NIKKON'S EYES

They snap open. Hold for a second, then:

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

END OF PART III

TO BE CONTINUED...

S T A R ★ T R E K
THE ATLANTIS CHRONICLES

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Star Trek: The Atlantis Chronicles was created by Adam Murray Briggs.
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