

AVALON

Episode 1

"The Way of Fate"

by

Joseph Burdette

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

A roaring battlefield. Soldiers shoot at each other from the ruins of what look like formerly beautiful buildings and from flying aircraft that occasionally dip low enough to snipe at the ground.

ROWE (V.O.)

Where do I begin? I guess I better start where you're wondering. The beginning of the Cult/Confederate war.

Our focus quickly pans over to a small group of soldiers in brown and gold uniforms. They're surrounded by Cult Acolytes in their bright red robed and shining armor, but the smaller platoon is holding their own. At its center is a tall man, barking orders and oozing confidence. This is KRISTOPHER ROWE.

ROWE (V.O.)

About a year and some months after that little ship... Avalon, right? Whatever, over a year after their little stink over Prime that embarrassed the Cultists something fierce, they decided it was time to not only lash out with their conversion squads, but their military. And, of course, the only group powerful enough to put up any kind of fight was my beloved Confederacy.

Rowe shouts a few more orders than dips down for a moment. When he stands again, he's holding a GIGANTIC chain gun! With a grimace borne only from action movies, Rowe opens fire on the charging acolytes. They fall down like wheat before a scythe.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFEDERATE COURT

Rowe stands in full dress uniform before a tribunal of judges of different species. Like before, we can't hear their words, but their sour faces tell enough.

ROWE (V.O.)

But then I committed the biggest sin. I saved a life my commander didn't order me to. A little cult boy hiding in the city we were fighting over. Being the paranoid bastards they are, they discharged me on charges of treason and planned on executing me as an example to others. But there was one thing they never counted on.

INT. CONFEDERATE PRISON

Rowe languishes in a small prison cell. There is an unheard commotion just outside his cell, and suddenly there is a woman standing before him. Her short hair is covered in sweat and her loose but fit clothing is covered with sweat and blood. A thick sheen of scales covers most of her exposed skin, giving her an exotic air. And in her hands is a massive SWORD dripping with blood. This is RAYNE.

ROWE (V.O.)

I had friends who still liked me.

(beat)

And a pretty hefty wallet from some of the plunder I was forced to do while in the service.

Rayne slashes her sword across the prison bars, cutting them like butter. Rowe salutes her and exits.

INT. CONFEDERATE HANGAR

Rowe, Rayne and two other men, VENESS and EDER, slowly sneak behind a row of shipping crates. On the other side is a small contingent of Confederate guards and a very odd looking but brand new ship about the size of Avalon. The markers where its name should be proudly displayed are empty.

ROWE (V.O.)

I don't know where the idea first came from, maybe inspired by that Avalon ship, maybe not, but we decided one day to steal the pride of some rich jackass's fleet. A brand new pleasure cruiser that could be modified to hell and back.

The foursome as one suddenly RUSH from the crates, guns firing and swords swinging. Most of the unsuspecting guards go down in seconds.

ROWE (V.O.)

But I'd forgotten one critical thing.

From behind the new ship appears a new group of soldiers! They open fire immediately. Veness and Eder go down in seconds. Rowe is hit in the shoulder and Rayne barely manages to deflect a bullet with her sword, bending it useless.

ROWE (V.O.)

I had this tendency to get overconfident. And it got some really close friends killed.

Rayne somehow avoids another hail of bullets and picks up a dropped gun, firing it wildly into the new soldier group. Rowe lands heavily on his feet, staring at the bodies of his friends. A close shot of his eyes reveal heavily welling tears.

Rayne fights like a demon, throwing her ruined sword into the smaller crowd of soldiers. She takes a bullet in her side but shrugs it off with a roar.

Slowly, Rowe snaps from his reverie and picks up his own gun. Through tears, he fires a bullet with every trigger squeeze. Every shot kills a soldier.

In seconds, it's over. Rowe is still kneeling in a pool of blood and Rayne staggers to her feet. She slowly grabs Rowe's shirt and drags him to the ship.

INT. NEW SHIP - CARGO HOLD

In the small cargo hold, Rayne and Rowe catch their breaths. Rowe's look is still dour, and he slowly reaches into his shirt, past his grievous looking wound, to reveal a small photograph. It's a picture of him, Rayne, Veness and Eder standing happily in front of a poster advertising the new ship.

ROWE (V.O.)

They died because I thought this would be an easy thing, that fate was on our side for the first time. I was wrong, and people died. I didn't think I could ever recover.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAHARA - SPACE

Now in open space, the new ship flies freely. It looks no different from the last time we saw it save the name markers. On each flat surface sits the name SAHARA.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SAHARA - ROWE'S BUNK

The room is very dark. It's clearly a bunk, a small living area for one. It consists of a bed embedded into the bulkhead, several monitors, a table with two chairs, and a bathroom through a connecting door. Sitting at the table is Rowe. He's alone in the dark, watching the stars go by at high speeds.

ROWE (V.O.)

A month later, not much happened for us. We had a total of maybe three jobs, but my status as a Confederate dissident limited what we could do. I was in a hole by that time, living like an empty shell in my room. I couldn't stop blaming myself for what happened to Eder and Veness.

The door to Rowe's bunk opens and light washes in. Rayne is standing in the threshold.

RAYNE

Rowe, we're almost there.

ROWE

Alright.

Silence.

Rayne still stands there. The sulking captain finally turns to the unyielding woman.

ROWE (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

ALRIGHT!

RAYNE

Will you leave the ship this time?
You didn't on Andoras.

ROWE

I know. I'll think about it.

RAYNE
(exasperated)
What kind of captain leaves the
commanding to someone else?

Silence from Rowe. Rayne moves in closer, circling around to the despondent man.

RAYNE (CONT'D)
You promised me, a month ago, that
if I helped you steal this ship
you're sulking in, you would lead
it and I would have a home. If you
can't even lead, this is my last stop.

Rowe perks up at this.

RAYNE (CONT'D)
You can find someone else to pilot
this little house of mourning.

ROWE
I'll think about it.

Rayne shakes her head, sighs and exits, closing the door behind her.

ROWE (V.O.)
It was my fault and I knew it. It
was my negligence that got them
killed, and at the time, I couldn't
just leave it behind. There was no
way I could adapt to being a
captain and just forget it ever
happened. But I also knew if we
were to keep what we had gained, I
had to get out of this muck I found
myself in.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - DAY

We see the Sahara, the oddly sleek yet unorthodox ship, as it bolts across the sky and towards a large city. Sky scraping towers and the ambient roar of city life invade our senses.

Spread out across the landscape is a city of distinct alien influence but has several familiar aesthetics. The first being many of the tall buildings bearing red and white flags. The avian looking symbol of the Cult of Those Who Walk In the Light adorn them; the city clearly under their influence.

There's also a singular large tower that stands out among all the others.

It is known as the People's Tower. This planet: Rosani. Among other attractions are large freeways held up by enormous pillars and lattice works. We focus downward to a relatively flat area of land with thousands of crates, cranes, and circular ports.

EXT. PORT

The Port is a busy hub of activity; ships landing and leaving, crew hauling cargo around each other, and people of all sorts milling around like a swarm of ants. The shining city is in the background, We go underneath the belly of the Sahara to see a modest looking ramp lower down. Out come Rowe and Rayne. They both take in being in the city, the decidedly loud city.

ROWE

I forgot what this felt like, being planetside.

RAYNE

Thought so. Now, if I may ask, why are we coming to THIS planet of all places?

ROWE

Work. I used to work here back when I was a Confederate operative. The local crime lords used me as a freelancer. They'd pay me, and I'd give a percentage to the Confederate charger.

(beat, looks at banners)

Don't ask me about the Cult thing, though, that's kinda new.

RAYNE

I don't like the Cult-men, Rowe. They make me--

ROWE

What? Nervous?

RAYNE

Violent.

Rowe seems to crack a bit of a smile.

ROWE

That's the attitude that got you hired. But for right now, we can't afford any trouble. Don't go killing any Cult-men or otherwise gettin' us thrown in jail.

Rayne looks surprised.

RAYNE

Are you actually captaining?

ROWE

If you want, you can consider it an order.

Suddenly, half a dozen Cult guards approach them.

CULT GUARD

Arrest those two, right now!

Rowe raises his hands at these approaching, militaristic looking Cultists.

RAYNE

Well ordered, captain.

These Cultists are not covered in Red robes and reflective armor anymore, rather they have dark black body armor and very large weapons strapped to their persons.

CULT GUARD

What kind of people do you think you are?

ROWE

I hope the kind that gets to live for another 40 or 50 years, but from the tone of your voice I could be wrong about that.

CULT GUARD

You docked at this port with no authorization! Do you really think you can just land your ship here and no one would notice?

ROWE

Wait, we had authorization! Who was that we talked to telling us landing port so-and-so was open?

CULT GUARD

Are you calling me a liar?!

ROWE
I'm just saying, one of us may be
misinformed.

Rowe eyes Rayne.

 CULT GUARD
Take them!

Several of the cultists wrangle the two up and put heavy
looking shackles on their hands.

 RAYNE
Maybe you should have stayed in
your bunk.

From behind the Cultists, three men approach. They are all
in black suits and closely cut hair.

 BLACKSUIT
Wait! We gave them authorization.

The Cult guard turns.

 CULT GUARD
You people? Why did you not go
through our channels to let..

 BLACKSUIT
We own this port. Just because the
Cult are allowed to have a presence
here doesn't mean you run this place.

The Cultist sneers and palms his weapon angrily.

 CULT GUARD
That could change soon enough.

 BLACKSUIT
Maybe. But for right now, let them
go. Deberzi wants them.

The cultist looks angry that he's been ordered like this. He
turns to his men.

 CULT GUARD
Do it. Let's go.

The Cultists unshackle Rowe and Rayne and depart. On their
way out, the guard shoots an intense glare at the blacksuit.
Rowe is left slightly bewildered.

ROWE

I don't know if I should be thankful or scared, but I have the snaking suspicion those Cultists will go easier on me.

BLACKSUIT

Good, so you remember the fact that you stole from us and ran away.

ROWE

I honestly thought your kind had been run off Rosani since the Cult took over.

BLACKSUIT

(almost angry)

They will never run this city. Not while we're still here.

ROWE

I'm surprised Deberzi is still alive.

BLACKSUIT

Alive and still angry over what you did seven years ago.

Rayne looks at Rowe angrily.

RAYNE

You committed crimes here!? And just came back?

ROWE

(sheepish)

I thought they were gone! Guess I was wrong.

BLACKSUIT

Quite. Let's go.

Roan and Rayne look defeated, and reluctantly follow.

CUT TO:

INT. PEOPLE'S TOWER - DEBERZI'S SUITE

As expected, Deberzi's suite is lavish. It's mostly polished wood and gold, with exotic plants, paintings, and sculptures giving the room a wash of sophistication. DEBERZI stands next to a large screen with his aide. He's an overweight man with white hair and an indigent expression that doesn't ever seem to change. The aide is a younger man with black hair and glasses.

Both are very professional looking while overlooking the screen, which displays an overhead view of the city with various dots and lines. Rowe and Rayne are brought in.

RAYNE

Rowe, who are these people?

ROWE

The local charity it seems. But when I knew them, I just called them the mob.

The heavy set Deberzi shambles toward the two.

ROWE (CONT'D)

(insincere, dark)

Deberzi, it's great to see your beautiful frown again.

DEBERZI

(raspy)

Kristopher Rowe. I don't know your friend.

ROWE

Her name's Rayne. Don't bother asking what her species is, she won't tell me.

DEBERZI

And your ship?

ROWE

My ship?

DEBERZI

It's name.

ROWE

Sahara.

DEBERZI

(almost bored)

What does that mean?

ROWE

Just thought it sounded nice, doesn't mean anything.

Deberzi turns to his aide.

DEBERZI

Tell the men to search those blocks
for him and keep me updated. I'm
sick of this manhunt.

His aide nods and exits.

Deberzi walks over to Rowe and Rayne, hands folded behind
his back.

ROWE

You haven't changed much.

DEBERZI

I don't like your hair. It's too long.

ROWE

Space barbers have really jacked up
their prices since the war.

DEBERZI

Speaking of which, what's a
Confederate like you doing on a Red
planet like this? Ever since their
little war tore this galaxy a new
black hole, they've been bitter
enemies.

ROWE

I'm not a Confederate anymore.

DEBERZI

Now I know you're lying to me, and
I despise being lied to.

ROWE

Right. A Confederate can't leave
with his life. But I've worked my
way around it.

Deberzi walks to one of his walls. On it, he presses a
button. The wall slides back, to reveal a trophy case. A
trophy case full of severed heads preserved behind a
forcefield. At this gruesome sight, Rowe has to look away.

DEBERZI

As I said, I don't like your hair.
I'll send you to get it cut so you
don't clutter up my collection.

ROWE

You're still a sick old man.

We get closer to Rayne... She's reaching for her back. Hidden, we are just barely able to make out the handle of some kind of blade. She isn't quick enough. The blacksuit gropes her from behind and twists her arms upward. Deberzi laughs.

DEBERZI

At least it's kept me alive. At least it's kept this planet alive. See this man?

He points to an old man's head.

DEBERZI (CONT'D)

It's a Cult general. He was the man Penultimate Sovari sent to conquer Rosani. The people loyal to me keep the people of Rosani free from the terror of the Cult as their soldiers march through the streets and they fly their banners off our memorials.

(beat)

If I'm a sick old man, at least it's for the good of the people.

ROWE

I'm sure the late Regent Tel would be proud of you and your severed head collection.

DEBERZI

I suppose I'm not above vanity. Take them away.

The blacksuit pulls them back, but Rowe resists.

ROWE

I have something for you Deberzi!

DEBERZI

You don't have--

ROWE

You're not all powerful and you know it! You're on a manhunt and it looks like you've been for some time.

The overhead scan of the city becomes the center

DEBERZI

Are you offering your services to help find this man? In return for what, your lives? You think I'll just forgive and forget if you succeed in this one case?

ROWE

Spare out lives if we find this man you're looking for. We'll remain in your debt, though, and continue to work for you until it's paid.

Deberzi thinks about this.

DEBERZI

That's a tempting offer. For you more than me, though.

ROWE

You obviously want this man desperately. You never handle manhunts personally, so this guy must really be important. Even after I swindled you, you didn't go looking for me.

(beat, desperate)

Not to mention we've picked up an asset that will greatly increase our chances of finding him in a reasonable amount of time. This offer is as tempting for you as me.

DEBERZI

What's this asset you have?

ROWE

A member of my crew. He's been with us for a couple of weeks and he'll help us get this job done.

Finally, the mob boss looks intrigued.

DEBERZI

You fail me on this, you won't be in this trophy case. Your head will be with the Cultists, and they do with it is much worse than decapitation.

ROWE

I'm well aware.

DEBERZI

Get them some trackers.

The blacksuit follows his orders.

ROWE

What are trackers? Something to help us find your fugitive?

The blacksuit comes back and clamps two large rings around their legs.

DEBERZI

On the contrary, they are to help us find you. To keep track of you. You see that red light?

On each of their trackers are giant red lights.

DEBERZI (CONT'D)

You leave my city, or go past the boundaries of the superhighways out there, and these will explode and sever your legs. We'll come find you and give you a fate worse than death. You think you can avoid that fate?

ROWE

I hope so, Deberzi. Even if fate has a way of screwing me over at all the wrong times.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - STREET

Outside the office, Rowe and Rayne pace away on the strangely devoid street.

ROWE

Okay, Rayne, I need you to--

Rowe isn't able to finish his sentence as Rayne lands her fist straight into Rowe's mouth!

ROWE (CONT'D)

(furious)

What the HELL?!

RAYNE

You slimy bitch.

ROWE
I'm the bitch?!

RAYNE
You know that man has no intention
of giving us our freedom once we do
his bidding!

ROWE
Well, if you'd let me talk instead
of HITTING ME, I would get to that!

Rayne relents.

ROWE (CONT'D)
Jesus...

RAYNE
"Jesus"?

ROWE
Never mind, just come here.

Rowe, stewing, leads her away from Deberzi's skyscraper.

ROWE (CONT'D)
I need you to get back to the ship
and find Syd. If he's still around,
explain the situation and tell him
about these damn trackers. We'll
need to find this guy quickly
because we're gonna have to find
someone to get these shackles off.

RAYNE
And how do you think we'll manage
to do that? Isn't this entire
planet loyal to that man?

ROWE
No, that man is just in charge.
There's always an underground when
someone's in charge. We just have
to find it.

They continue down the street.

RAYNE
You shouldn't have brought us here.

ROWE

Technically, I didn't, you did, Ms. Pilot. I just said this might be a good place to go because there wouldn't be any confederates here. I was right about that at least.

Suddenly, Rayne's attention is stolen towards a break between two buildings. In the distance is the port they landed at. But sitting there, looming over all other ships, is a massive sky fortress. It easily takes up a dozen landing ports and is extremely difficult to miss. On it are several circular markings: the markings of the Confederates.

RAYNE

No, Rowe, you weren't "right about that at least."

ROWE

God in hell, what are they doing here? On a Cult base planet?

RAYNE

Maybe it's fate, screwing you over at the worst time again.

ROWE

Cute, Rayne. If they find us, they'll kill you too for helping me break Sahara out.

(beat)

Shit, the Sahara is parked less than a kilometer away from that thing.

A bit of desperation seeps into his voice.

RAYNE

Ever since the Cult and the Confederates finished their war two years ago, they've been out of contact with each other. If that is a real Confederate ship, it seem they're obviously too busy dealing with the Cult to go and find us. If you want my advice, we should find this man, the underground, and just leave.

Rowe ponders, staring at the ground as he walks.

RAYNE (CONT'D)

Does fate not owe you one by now?

ROWE
 Since when do you believe in fate?

RAYNE
 No more than you. It's just my way
 of telling you to square up and
 start acting like a captain.

ROWE
 I prefer your candor. Let's go here.

We see a small building. Written across it says "INFORMATION".

ROWE (CONT'D)
 It's as good a place as any to start.

INT. CITY INFORMATION

Inside, it's very neat and tidy. Several desks are positioned near the entrance with white shirt-wearing employees manning them. Above them is a sign: "Representatives". Rowe and Rayne enter, looking around.

RAYNE
 What are we going to get here?

ROWE
 Over here.

They approach a desk. The clerk at the desk greets them. The clerk is a Trill, with longish, dark brown hair and brown eyes.

His name tag is clearly visible: RIDEK.

RIDEK
 How can I help you two?

ROWE
 Hey, uh, we need to know if you
 have any freelancer work available?
 Specifically regarding engineers
 and underground reclamation.

RIDEK
 I'll check.

Ridek taps on his computer while Rayne looks puzzled.

RAYNE
 Rowe, we don't have time for side jobs!

Rowe pulls her away from the desk and whispers.

ROWE

(quietly)

It's code. Pleaces like these are interfaces to the common people. "Underground reclamation" is a job no one wants, so the underground use it to recruit mass amounts of people. We need to get in touch with them if we want to get free of these trackers.

Rayne understands, and they return to the desk.

RIDEK

I don't have anything for engineers or underground reclamation. I have some job listings for waste management, though.

ROWE

No, that's no good.

RIDEK

Aren't they the same thing?

ROWE

(annoyed, faking)

You see, this is where common joes like yourself get it wrong. You think it's all the same. Are Regents and Bosses the same thing?

RIDEK

On Roaani, they are.

ROWE

Not where I'm from.

RIDEK

Where's that?

ROWE

Never mind. I guess that didn't work as well as I had hoped.

RAYNE

Good work, captain.

Ridek perks up as she says this.

ROWE

Enough with the sarcasm.

RIDEK
(interested)
Are you a ship captain?

ROWE
Yeah, well, trying to be.

RIDEK
You have a crew and everything?

ROWE
There's there of us. Why, you
looking for a job?

RIDEK
Actually, if I'm not being too
forward, I hate this damn place and
would give just about anything to
move off world.

ROWE
Huh. So you'd be willing to sail
with us?

RIDEK
Absolutely!

ROWE
You ever work on a space faring
ship before?

RIDEK
No. But I'm a REALLY fast learner
and I already know a ton about
computer systems.

Rowe is intrigued. He glances at Rayne.

ROWE
What do you think?

RAYNE
I think we should focus on the task
at hand before we pull a crew together.

ROWE
Right. I guess that sounds about
right. Sorry, Mr. Ridek. Not right
now. But we're parked over yonder
if you're interested later.

Ridek looks slightly let down as they exit the center.

INT. CITY - STREET

ROWE

Okay, Rayne, let's do this. You think Syd's still at the ship?

RAYNE

Knowing that old crow, he's probably in some flower garden mingling with the other intellectuals.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP JOINT

A large bottle of alcohol is popped open. It foams over the top and we focus back towards the stripping runway, where a luxurious looking female is removing her apparel for several shouting men. We pan around to see a similar sight on several other runways. The joint is dark and lively.

Our focus goes towards the back of the bar, where a table of cards is going on under a dirty yellow lamp. Sitting around it are five men with hands full of cards. Two of these men are Cult guards, helmets removed but still in their armor. Two others are seedier looking men, with large beards and beer drenched clothes. The fifth man is dressed in sophistication, clearly not belonging here. He's an "old crow", with white hair and sharp, bright eyes. He's clearly tall, despite sitting, and wears attire that almost looks Victorian.

This man is SYD.

SEEDY MAN 1

C'mon, gramps, we haven't got all day. What's your move?

SYD

You should learn some patience from this "gramps", boy.

SEEDY MAN 1

"Boy"?!

SYD

Boy! I know I'm playing with juveniles when looking at this measly pot.

In the center of the table, there are only a few coins and at best a tiny gun.

CULT GUARD 1

That was my last partner's side arm.
He died quelling those Confederate
jackasses.

SYD

Spare me your tales of heartache
and tragic loyalties. Many cultists
were killed while killing whatever
you call the latest jackass. Same
can be said for the other side.
That gun represents nothing of
value, nothing of peculiarity.

Syd whips out a knife. It's stained with dried red blood and
bears the Cult symbol.

SYD (CONT'D)

Now this is unique.

SEEDY MAN 2

A bloody knife?

CULT GUARD 1

A Cult knife! A Penultimate knife!

Both Cultist push all their coins in.

CULT GUARD 1

We're all in.

Syd smiles. The other two are intrigued.

SYD

This knife was used to kill
Penultimate Jaced.

SEEDY MAN 1

Didn't that one commit suicide?

SYD

Well, it also belonged to him. His
blood is still on it. The Reds have
their antiquity in, I have mine.
What about you two?

The two look at each other with curious glances. The first
seedy man reaches into this pocket.

SEEDY MAN 2

No! No, don't do it.

SEEDY MAN 1

I'm not just going to walk away.

SEEDY MAN 2
 We spent weeks tracking it down and
 stealing it. If we lose it in a
 game of cards--

SEEDY MAN 1
 But if we went to the mob with this...

The man pulls out a long, smooth crystal cylinder. It's striking.

SEEDY MAN 1 (CONT'D)
 And Cult relics like these, we'd be
 made men!

The second seedy man doesn't look completely convinced but the crystal is put in the pile.

SYD
 (excited)
 Now this is a pot worth betting on.

CULT GUARD 1
 Then let's do this. What are your
 calls?

They all eye their cards. We pan around to see them all. Without fail, they are all looking at their hand. Except Syd. He's simply watching the others with a simple smirk.

CULT GUARD 1
 I'm in all the way.

He lays down his alien cards.

CULT GUARD 2
 So am I.

He does as well. The first seedy man looks slightly nervous.

SEEDY MAN 1
 I'm out.

He retracts his hand.

SEEDY MAN 2
 (happy)
 Not me, I've got you all beat down
 like dogs!

He lays his hand down. It's much more colorful than the others. Only Syd is left.

CULT GUARD 1

As I said before, gramps, what's your move? You got the cards to trump this worm?

Syd is still smiling. He sighs and lays down his hand. The cards look very minimal.

SYD

Mistress Fortune was not with me today.

He clearly lost. The two seedy men erupt with joy.

SEEDY MAN 1

GODS YEAH!

SEEDY MAN 2

We got them! We're RICH! RICH!

They are all laughs and giggles as they retract their winnings. The Cultists are slumped over now, Syd is still grinning slightly.

Syd gets up and moves around. We finally see how tall he really is, which is very. He pats them on the shoulders and smiles.

SYD

You two earned it. My congratulations.

SEEDY MAN 1

Get your hands off us old man!

SEEDY MAN 2

Yeah, we don't want the likes of you touching us now that we're ABOVE you!

The two seedy men stand tall but are still not taller than Syd. They go back to their winnings and put the stuff in a bag. Suddenly, a couple dozen decks of cards FALL out from the seedy men's coats and sleeves and litter onto the ground.

Both pause and their expressions darken. Both Cultists stand up.

CULT GUARD 2

(dire)

You two cheated.

The anger steaming from both guards is palpable. The seedy men are at a loss for words.

SEEDY MAN 1

(stuttering)

Oh... god... That's not... not ours.
I swear!

SEEDY MAN 2

Where did these come from!? These
aren't ours! We didn't cheat!

SYD

Of course they did. We all cheat
from time to time. It's how we
survive, how we thrive.

The Cultists stand and put on their helmets. They lumber towards the two. The seedy men back away, dropping their bag of winnings. They are terrified. They back into another pair of Cult guards. They are surrounded by massive, angry Red.

Clearly, violence is about to ensue.

Behind the commotion, Syd manages to slink by, take the bag of earnings, and slip out of the doors just as the first punches are being thrown.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - ALLEY

Syd walks out. The sun is going down as he straightens his suit. He smiles and hums as he walks.

SYD

Kristopher and Rayne will be happy
to hear about this.

Syd is stopped short, as a man appears before him. It's a black man, with long hair and an unshaven beard. He wears ratty clothes and looks completely unclean.

BEGGAR

Do you have a coin or two I could
have, sir? I'm starving and cold.

SYD

I'm sure you are. Mu\y most humble
apologies, but I seemed to have let
my under carriage manage my
spending whilst in the gentleman's
bar. And if that doesn't work for
you, I'm fresh out 'cause the women
are more seductive than an aging
magician can resist. Here...

He reaches into his bag and pulls out the Cult knife.

SYD (CONT'D)

You might get some money out of that. I made it out of a rusty piece of ship and carved a bird into it.

Syd walks on.

SYD (CONT'D)

If you do the right convincing, you might be able to convince the people you sell it to it's Penultimate Jaced's suicide instrument.

The beggar can only accept. He walks toward an alley wall to his personal belongings. He takes a quick glance at the knife and throws it on a pile of clothing. The piece of clothing it lands on is a military uniform, just as ratty as his others. However, this one has his name right on it. Private Sarola.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SAHARA - OBSERVATION ROOM

Rowe and Rayne sit in the very open room alone. There's a long desk and several chairs around it, like a meeting area. A panoramic window lets white sunlight in as the commotion of the busy port occupies the minds of our two heroes. In the distance, the massive Confederate ship looms.

Rowe has his legs up on the desk, holding a picture.

RAYNE

Don't make me say it again, Rowe.

ROWE

At least I'm getting some sun now.
One step at a time.

ROWE (V.O.)

It was around this time that my fears of what could happen started trickling into my head. That tracker on my leg felt tighter by the second, almost like it would start pulling me into some oblivion. It's wasn't just Rayne who depended on my ability to find a way out of the mess we were in, but what honor I had left.

Rayne stands up.

RAYNE

What are we going to do?

Rowe slips a piece of yellow paper out from a back pocket.

ROWE

Deberzi was gentleman enough to send us this.

Rayne takes it and reads it.

ROWE (V.O.)

Last known information as to his whereabouts.

Rayne's eyes widen as she reads further.

RAYNE

They're looking for a treasure?

Rowe nods and looks at the picture again.

ROWE

Old timey, eh? Back in the days of hunting each other down for a treasure map. Whoever this guy is, he's got a location to something very important. Probably some kind of weapon.

RAYNE

How do you figure?

ROWE

That's how all of these things go. Besides, what would be more tempting than a weapon that could drive the Cult away? Leave Deberzi in complete control. All powers are just looking for more.

Suddenly, Syd comes up from behind, not making a sound.

SYD

And peons like us keep them in power by striving for freedom.

ROWE

About time you got back.

SYD

About time you emerged from your cabin. Worse for the wear?

ROWE

I hope not. I hope this doesn't end with us sans legs and Cultified drones.

SYD

That's why you're in command. To lead us out of this horrible mess.

Rowe's eyes still can't leave the picture.

SYD (CONT'D)

I heard mention of a treasure hunt. May I inquire?

ROWE

You don't have to, Syd.

Rowe points to his head.

SYD
Are you giving me permission?

ROWE
Does it matter? You're always in there. I'm pretty much giving you permission to talk freely about it.
(subtly)
I won't be upset.

Syd waits a moment, staring at Rowe...

SYD
Who is this man we're looking for?

Rowe stands up.

ROWE
Wish I knew. Could be a woman for all we know. A eunuch. Maybe a chick with a--

RAYNE
(loudly)
Where do we start, Rowe? That's what we need to know right now. In the low lands?

SYD
Funny... I was in the Low Lands just last night. Had a spot of fun in a bar.

ROWE
Bet you did. A psychic magician peddling his assets to the weak minded.

SYD
Queerer still, I got the impression of... urgency while there. A sense of panic when the card game concluded.

Rowe looks slightly shocked.

ROWE
(digressing)
That's just low, Syd. If a magician is good at anything, it's cards. Even worse, a psychic...

SYD
 (keeping to his subject)
 I think your man is closer than you
 think. The Low Lands would indeed
 be a good start.

Rayne has a sense of pride about her.

RAYNE
 Rowe promised that glutton that
 you'd help find this man in a
 reasonable time. For once, Rowe
 made a decision that worked.

She leaves. Rowe puts his picture down and looks out at the window.

ROWE
 (darker)
 Are you lying, Syd? Did you really
 sense this man in that bar?

SYD
 (vaguely)
 I sensed him.

ROWE
 It really gets me, you know. You're
 able to tell full well when any of
 us are lying, from the smallest
 little fib to life changing secrets.
 You have that power over us, a
 power any man can be tempted by.
 How can we trust you?

Syd joins him at the window with a consoling smile.

SYD
 You can't Kristopher. You'll just
 have to find out you fate when it
 comes time. Find it and deal with it.

Syd glances back at the picture.

SYD (CONT'D)
 And don't linger on fate past.

Rowe can only nod.

SYD (CONT'D)
 Why do you think they're here?

ROWE

The Confederates? I hope they aren't. But if they are here, they could be here for us or to start another war. I really don't know.

SYD

Maybe we should contact... him?

Rowe shakes his head.

ROWE

It's too soon since the last time. I'm not bothering him over this. Besides, it's high time I started deciding our fate.

Syd pats Rowe on the shoulder and departs.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - STREET - NIGHT

Outside the "City Information" building, the night is rising and the city is going very quiet. We see the lights go out in the building.

The door opens and Ridek walks out. He turns and locks the glass door.

A faint noise is heard in the distance, a clacking sound.

Ridek take notice for a moment, but finishes closing.

He turns around and walks toward the street. He is then met with the full force of person running straight into him!

He is knocked clear on his butt, along with his contact. They are both on the hard looking pavement, a feminine grunt is heard. Indeed, it is a woman that collided with him. She looks like she had innocently run into him.

RIDEK

What the hell?

WOMAN

I'm so sorry!

The woman, with blonde hair and clearly an alien, collects her dropped purse. We can't make out her face just yet.

RIDEK

In a rush, lady?

WOMAN

Yes! I need to make it to the damn post office... but I can't find it.

She sounds defeated. Ridek, looking sympathetic, picks up an item dropped from the purse and hands it to her.

RIDEK

You're a little late. All city businesses are closed.

WOMAN

You all close at the same time?!

RIDEK

Crazy enough. You're too late.

The woman huffs. Ridek gets to his feet and offers his hand to help the lady up. She accepts.

RIDEK (CONT'D)

What's your name?

We finally PAN around to see the woman.

WOMAN

My name's Shera.

We see she is a humanoid Xindi. She's attractive but in a mess.

RIDEK

Shera, huh? You...

His face almost lights up; a hint of recognition.

RIDEK

You seem familiar. My name's Ridek.

SHERA

Hey.

RIDEK

If I were you, I'd get home. This close to Deberzi's compound, you won't run into many hoodlums, but you're still not safe.

She seems to be lost for words.

SHERA

That's the thing... I don't have a home.

RIDEK

What?

SHERA

I was trying to make it to the post office because I had to pick up some mail. A friend of mine left me some money to pay for a hotel. My flight here was delayed though. I'm not sure where to go now.

She turns around, almost starting to shed some tears. Ridek looks uncomfortable.

RIDEK

Oh boy.

SHERA

I should get going.

She begins to walk in the other direction, her clacking shoes echo against the stone skyscrapers around her. Ridek, defeated, begins walking the other direction. We focus on him, with the departing Shera in the background. Ridek relents to his obviously nagging conscious. He turns and runs back to her.

RIDEK

Okay fine! Come on, I'll show you a decent hotel.

SHERA

I don't have...

RIDEK

Yeah yeah, I know the whole song and dance. You don't have any money, you sucker some poor guy into buying you a safe harbor for the night, say you'll pay him back the next day and run off before he can find you. I know how it goes, but I'll play along for this one time.

SHERA

You have me all wrong, Mr. Ridek! You think I'd be wearing these shoes if I were homeless?

She does have some nice shoes on.

SHERA (CONT'D)

I'm not asking for your charity.

RIDEK

You have it nonetheless.

SHERA

I don't want to be a bother.

RIDEK

You were when you ran into me.
Besides, you look extremely
familiar, so I'm going to help you.
I'm a bit of a sap like that.

At this, Shera doesn't know whether to be offended or grateful. However confused, she offers a smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - MARKET STREET - NIGHT

A giant sign: "City Post". Outside, a man has just walked out and another man, clad in blue, has ushered him out. The POSTMAN sends the other man a wave.

POSTMAN

Don't worry, Mr. Azel, I'll make
sure your lady friend gets the package.

We see the other man. He is also Xindi, sporting a dark jacket and very nice clothes.

AZEL reaches into his pocket and hands the postman a bill of money.

AZEL

I appreciate you staying open. She
really needs that package by
tonight or else she won't have a
place to stay.

The postman takes the money and smiles.

POSTMAN

I thank ya. Have a good night, sir!
Be safe.

AZEL

Same to you.

We slowly pan back. Peeking out from an alley, a man lingers. It's the beggar that Syd encountered. SAROLA.

INT. POST OFFICE

Inside, the man twists the open sign around to signify he is closed.

He smiles and pockets the cash. He methodically makes his way behind the counter and hits a switch, which deactivates all lights in the room. He's humming.

POSTMAN

Mr. Azel, never leave a package
full of money with someone like me.

He moves over to a large brown package. He cuts it open with a knife.

POSTMAN (CONT'D)

Let's see what I've earned tonight.

He flips the flaps open and looks inside. His smug smile descends and is washed away by worry. Whatever he sees in the box left for Shera, it isn't money.

EXT. CITY - MARKET STREET - NIGHT

Outside, Azel is lighting up a cigarette. He takes a puff and starts walking... toward where Sarola is hiding.

As Azel passes by, Sarola ambushes him and grips him by the neck! Azel's cigarette falls from his mouth as he tries to break free.

AZEL

What in god's name...?!

SAROLA

QUIET! Just be quiet and do what I
want! Give me your cash, Xindi!

AZEL

I gave the last of my...

SAROLA

Don't start with that bullshit.
Give it to me now.

AZEL

I'm telling you!

Suddenly, a voice is heard. From the moon drenched street, we see a uniformed police officer.

OFFICER
 (calling)
 Hello? Someone there?

At this, Sarola panics slightly. He puts his hand on Azel's mouth, but Azel's muffled shouts cry out.

SAROLA
 (hushed)
 Quiet!

Azel doesn't relent. He still tries to make noise.

Sarola then brings out a knife... the same false-Cult knife Syd had given him, and holds it to Azel's throat. At this, Azel quiets.

OFFICER
 Anyone there?

Sarola backs Azel further into the alley as the officer steps ever closer to the two. Looking around, Sarola drags them both behind a large dumpster. The officer looks in the alley, seeing nothing. Shrugging, he walks away.

A tense moment passes.

Azel is quiet, so is Sarola, but the confrontation remains.

SAROLA
 Just give it to me, and I'll let
 you go.

Azel nods. He reaches for his pocket.

SAROLA (CONT'D)
 Slowly!

Azel brings forth a very small wad of cash, perhaps only a few bills. Sarola is displeased but accepts it. Sarola then unleashes Azel.

But quickly, Azel BOLTS toward the street, shouting...

AZEL
 POLICE!

Sarola is quick though, not failing to run with Azel.

Sarola grabs Azel's neck and slams him backward, onto his back. The move is quick and brutal as Sarola sends his rusty blade into Azel's head. We don't see it, but the act is clear. The body of the Xindi falls motionless.

The sound of the policeman approaching is heard. At this, Sarola runs, leaving his knife implanted in his victim.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP JOINT

We are back at the bar, and the scene is nowhere near as hectic as it previously was. It is quiet as a man strolls around and removes chairs from the tops of tables.

Suddenly, the door opens and in walk Rowe, Rayne, and Syd. The BARKEEP smiles and nods.

BARKEEP

Y'all are a bit early. If you want something to drink, I can oblige, but no girls for another hour.

ROWE

We aren't here for girls.

BARKEEP

Don't got men.

ROWE

(serious)

We need information.

The barkeep's smile relents quickly.

BARKEEP

You Deberzi's goons? I don't owe him nothing no more.

ROWE

No, we don't work for him.

BARKEEP

Those trackers on y'all's legs tell different.

ROWE

Unrelated misunderstanding. Did you see anyone suspicious last night?

BARKEEP

I see suspicious people every night, just look at the part of town I work in. If you want to know about someone who really stands out, it'll cost you a credit or two.

Rowe nods to Syd. Syd comes from behind Rowe and approaches the barkeep.

BARKEEP (CONT'D)

Oh, speaking of suspicious, I remember you! A man dressed in that getup doesn't belong here. In fact, didn't you incite that scuffle?

SYD

How much?

BARKEEP

How much you got? I'll tell you about this guy I saw for a hundred creds.

SYD

So be it.

Syd reaches into his pocket and pulls out... nothing. At this "nothing", the barkeep smiles.

He seemingly picks up that "nothing" and pockets it himself. Syd smiles back.

BARKEEP

Usually people just come in for a drink and move on to where they come from. I'm a co-proprietor of a little hotel in the High Lands-- I'm working my way up, you see-- and I don't ever see someone from up there down here... But this guy, he bought a room and was in here last night. At my rates, he could'a drunk at a much more fancy place than this. He just sat in the corner and... waited.

ROWE

"Waited"? For what?

BARKEEP

I ain't got a dog's idea on life. He just came, waited for most of the day, and left about the time the scuffle started.

Rayne leans in to Rowe.

RAYNE

(whispered)

This sounds like a good lead. If he was waiting for a contact, he would've likely left if their contact spot was disturbed.

ROWE

One step at a time.

BARKEEP

He's still there, at my hotel. Corner of Moonride and Tillen road. For an extra thousand, I'll give you his room number.

ROWE

No need. Syd, let's go.

BARKEEP

Maybe you'd like to know about the Confederates? Surely you saw their ship parked?

All three perk up at this statement. Syd slams down a huge pile of "nothing" onto the bar. The barkeep seems to quiver with excitement but the others are looking dead serious.

BARKEEP (CONT'D)

There were three of 'em, like you. They didn't announce themselves as Confeds, but I knew they were. They were undercover like, probably because of the big Cult presence here on Rosani. They asked about him.

ROWE

(slightly angry)

Did you tell them what you told us?

BARKEEP

I told them that he was here and that he's at a hotel I help run, but they was cheap. Didn't tell them where my hotel was. As I said, his room number for more creds.

They quickly turn and depart, the doors slamming shut behind them. The barkeep is left alone, but he smiles and turns to his supposed pile of money to see... nothing. He frowns and checks his pockets. Nothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - STREET - NIGHT

Out on the street, they start walking. The sense of urgency is extreme.

ROWE

Dammit, Confederates are here. And looking for the same thing as us!

SYD

I kept him in check. He was not lying to us. That's of assurance.

ROWE

We need to get to his hotel before the Confederates. They'll find out where the hotel is eventually, but we still may be able to make it before them.

RAYNE

Wait! This doesn't make any sense. The man said they were undercover, didn't want to make it known they were here. But if they did in fact come from that ship up there, then the Cult knows full well they're here.

ROWE

There's an explanation for all this, but I don't want to dwell on it right now. Let's just get there ASAP.

RAYNE AND SYD

"ASAP"?

ROWE

NEVER MIND!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Through the moon soaked air, we hear a few giggles and moans. We pan around the dark room to see bits of clothes strewn about the place. We see the bed, and two people under the covers: Ridek and Shera. They appear happy, to say the least.

SHERA
(seductively)
Well Mr. Ridek, still think I'm
trying to con you?

RIDEK
Actually, more so now than before.

She only smiles and runs her hands through his hair.

SHERA
I have every intention of paying
you with money, not just this. This
is just...

She seems to be at a loss for words.

RIDEK
A perk?

SHERA
Sure. For you and me.

RIDEK
Hell of a perk. I'm sure whoever
left you your money would be
interested to here this story...
provided he isn't...

At this, Shera isn't so happy.

SHERA
I'm not like that.

RIDEK
I'm not saying you are. You really
do seem like a genuine girl. I just
can't seem to shake the feeling that...

38. He trails off again.

SHERA
If you must know, he was my fiance.

Ridek stares at her for a moment. He then rolls away and grabs his shirt.

SHERA (CONT'D)

Ridek, no. I'm sorry I didn't mention it before.

RIDEK

(calmly)

No, no. I'm the one who's sorry. I should've just left when you got the room, I'm the one who's intruding.

SHERA

I'm not a whore. I don't just go sleeping around with people. If you still must know, I was calling it off.

Ridek turns back to her.

RIDEK

Calling what off?

SHERA

The marriage.

Shera huffs and lays back.

SHERA (CONT'D)

I met Azel four years ago on a moon called Maidon. I never really loved him though. He loved me, I could tell. But he was... wealthy. And I wasn't.

Ridek is silent.

SHERA (CONT'D)

He has this thing about him that I just can't place. He's a Xindi too, but I never met him before. He seemed so familiar though, like I've spent a lifetime with him. We knew each other so well, but something just kept telling me that I can't love this man. I don't know, maybe I just thought he'd betray me for another girl or something, I don't have a clue. The point is is that I'm not in love with him. He doesn't make me...

She eyes Ridek.

SHERA (CONT'D)

Feel happy.

He looks around. He slowly lies back down with her.

RIDEK

I misjudged. I didn't mean to upset you.

SHERA

It's fine. I'm actually glad I've been able to find someone to take me from happy to upset.

Ridek smiles. They kiss.

RIDEK

You probably don't wanna hear this, but I feel about you the way you felt about this Azel. Except, some thing's telling me that this is right.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

A door number. 19.

We pan away to see the antiseptic hall, one with doors galore. Our three come down it. Rayne has her large blade in hand.

ROWE

Anything yet, Syd?

SYD

We're getting close. Anxiety. Worry. It's the same man, I can sense him very clearly.

RAYNE

Is he armed?

SYD

I'm afraid I can't make out his mind from the dozens of dreaming guests. Hearing all their dreams and thoughts, he could be mounting a giant flying reptile or having romantic interludes with his cousin. It's garbled gibberish.

Row scoffs.

ROWE
 Sometimes I don't nevy not being a
 psychic.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

The lobby to the very same hotel is remarkably small, but
 adequate. It's neither broken down nor lavish.

In walks the beggar, Sarola. He carries his bag of
 possessions and approaches the desk.

SAROLA
 A room?

The clerk only nods as Sarola hands down a handful of money.

Suddenly, the doors FLY open aggressively! Several armed
 Cultists enter, brandishing shining armor and large guns.
 Sarola takes notice, but steers clear as they make their way
 up the stairs.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Syd raises his hand.

SYD
 We're close.

He looks around, then points do door 31.

SYD (CONT'D)
 He's dripping with fear. I think he
 knows he's being pursued.

RAYNE
 (with force)
 He is armed?

SYD
 (unsure)
 I-- No. I don't believe so.

Rowe takes position next to the door and pulls out an
 interesting looking pistol. It's a very simple looking
 revolver, straight out of the Old West. Rayne grips her
 large blade tighter and stands in front of the door.

Rowe points to her, giving her permission to kick it down.

And time seems to SLOW.

We focus on Syd. The world around him is psychically slowed
 but we hear the voices of dozens of people.

It's chaotic but we are making out the voice of one man.

INT. HOTEL ROOM 2

The inside of this hotel room is identical to the other, dark. Time is still crawling.

We pan over to see the man. He's crouched in the shadows, so we're unable to make out his face; only the whites of his eyes, the shine of sweat, and the silhouette of a very large shotgun in his hands.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Rayne KICKS the door open!

Syd looks up with shock and fear.

SYD
(shouting)
HE'S ARMED!

At this, Rayne reacts quickly and her entire body turns a deep black!

From inside the room, the man pops out of the shadows and fires the shotgun! Rayne is hit squarely in the chest by the blow and is knocked backward, breaking through the hall's wall!

Rowe is quick to go to Rayne's side.

ROWE
Rayne! Shit! SHIT! Are you hurt?!

RAYNE
I was just shot in the gut with a
shotgun! What do you think?

However, we look to see her gut. Her skin is now returning from it's black color and her thin scales seem to ease. The rounds of the shotgun have hit her hard, but have not penetrated her reinforced exoskeleton. With all her might, she gets up with Rowe's help.

RAYNE (CONT'D)
I'll be okay.

From the man's room, glass shatters. Rowe looks in. The man has broken the window and is climbing out.

The man looks back, and his and Rowe's eyes meet. The man then LEAPS out!

SYD

Rowe. Rayne.

Syd's calling voice points out immediate danger. Indeed, he is pointing out the regiment of Cult guards that have made their way up from the lobby to the hall, no doubt drawn there by the shotgun sound. And they are menacingly marching towards them!

ROWE

We need that man! Rayne, Syd, draw them away!

SYD

(frightened)

Perhaps I should sit this one out...

Rowe slaps a second gun into Syd's hand and runs off into the man's room!

INT. HOTEL ROOM 2

Rowe pokes his head out the shattered window. He looks down to see the fire escape scaffolding and the man rushing down it. Rowe turns back to his two partners.

RAYNE

Go! We'll divert them! Syd, let's go!

Syd hides behind Rayne like a shy child, wearing a mask of pure fear.

Rayne turns to the Cultists, cries out loudly, and rushes them. Rowe tears himself away and heads out.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Rayne charges the armored Cultists. They train their weapon at her and fire!

However, Rayne uses her sword to cut through the wall and breaks through it with ease, dodging the barrage of shells.

She breaks back out from the wall, but right into the front line of Reds and knocks them all down! She sends her sword flailing, mowing the acolytes down left and right.

Further down, Syd runs away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Back in Shera and Ridek's room, they hear the commotion of men yelling and gunshots. They both look frightened, but Ridek musters up the strength to get up and go to the door.

He looks to Shera, still naked and in bed.

RIDEK

Stay there!

Ridek is cautious as the sound of chaos rumbles on the other side of his door. He opens it.

Without any warning, Rayne's sword cuts through as Ridek opens the door and slices him directly across the chest! The unintentional attack sends him to the ground in a bloody mess.

Shera screams as the mayhem continues, Rayne moves on to murder the final Cultists. She runs to her bed mate.

SHERA

Oh my gods! RIDEK!

Ridek tries to touch his very large wound, but can't because of the pain.

SHERA (CONT'D)

We have to get you to a hospital!

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

This street is very busy. Hover and wheeled cars traverse up the street and the occasional pedestrian walks on the sidewalks. The buildings are not as tall here but the whole scene is still very cramped.

We see the man, clad in a dark trench coat, hood up, running with all he has. Behind him, Rowe is in heavy pursuit. He still wears the tracker, which appears to hinder his steps.

Rowe takes out his revolver but doesn't fire. The man pushes past pedestrians, who shout their disapproval.

And without warning, the man veers off into traffic! He manages to make it past the first three lanes of oncoming cars with ease, but pauses at the median.

Rowe isn't so daring to jump into traffic, but he follows. He is as cautious as a cat though, and now the man has crossed the next three lanes! Rowe continues on.

EXT. CITY STREET - INTERSECTION

The man makes it to an intersection. His flow of cars is stopped, so he takes a right with another flow of traffic. Rowe is barely hanging on.

He now decides to take aim with his revolver. His shaky hand points and shoots! He misses the man but the weapon sends several people scrambling.

Suddenly, a man hops from the side and tackles Rowe! It's a POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN

You're under arrest!

ROWE

I'm sorry, Officer!

Rowe fires his gun again, this time at the policeman's leg. He also sends the butt of the gun into his face, knocking the law enforcer out cold. He returns to his pursuit.

EXT. CITY STREET - BRIDGE

At the beginning of a bridge, under which is an expansive river, the man has run out of sidewalk. He stops and looks around... Rowe's revolver sends a bullet ricocheting off the steel beams.

Panicking, the man looks over the edge of the bridge. A large latticework of steel beams is holding the superhighway up from the river. Not only that, but another highway is beneath his current one. The beams are far enough apart to keep someone from jumping from one to another. However, the man takes his chances. He hops over the edge of the highway and grabs a nearby support beam! He slowly descends, holding on for dear life.

Up above, Rowe looks down and sighs angrily.

ROWE

You've got to be kidding me!

The man is still scooting his way down the poll to the underpassing highway. Rowe aims down and trains his sight on the man.

Looking up, the man sees Rowe and the gun aimed at him. In desperation, and after looking below and behind him to another beam, he lets go. Rowe fires, but the bullet only hits steel. The man falls directly onto the cylindrical beams in a loud THWANK, and he cries out in extreme pain.

Rowe can only watch as the man makes his death defying leap. Rowe then holsters his gun and follows the man's path down the support latticework.

ROWE
I'm gonna be so pissed if this guy
is just avoiding taxes.

EXT. HIGHWAY LATTICEWORK

Rowe lowers himself down. The pain of the drop has crippled the fleeing man, so Kristopher is able to catch up slowly. Below the man, the traffic rages on and his drop to it is potentially fatal.

We close up on his eyes, looking up at the approaching Rowe and the road beneath him, his only escape. Rowe is gaining, not leaping like the man did but taking the easier route.

Again, desperation sets in. Rowe can see the man is about the drop again.

ROWE
DON'T DO IT!

The man is still eyeing the plunge beneath him.

ROWE (CONT'D)
NO!!!

The man leaps into the traffic below! Rowe is given no choice whatsoever. He jumps in pursuit.

EXT. CITY STREET - UNDERPASS

Both men are saved by a large cargo truck, but the impact and velocity of the vehicle sends them rolling backwards! The man holds onto anything he can on the smooth surface, eventually grabbing a loop meant for tying down cargo. Rowe grabs the man's leg.

Finally, Rowe takes out his gun and puts it to his man.

ROWE
Who the fuck do you think you are?!
Superman?! You stupid idiot!

At this, the man in pursuit is left speechless.

MAN
What did you say?!

The noise of the traffic they ride atop is deafening.

ROWE
WHO ARE YOU?

MAN

NO! What did you say? Did you say
Superman?

Rowe himself is shocked that this question was asked. He gets closer, tightening his grip on the man's coat.

ROWE

WHO. ARE. YOU?

MAN

My name's Thomas Hatch.

The man takes off his coat's hood. This man, THOMAS HATCH, is raggedy with long hair and an unshaven beard.

HATCH

Whoever you are, you don't belong
here either, do you? The future?

The question seems to hit Rowe like a ton of bricks. Also, Rowe's tracker starts to beep! The red light on it starts flashing a warning: the truck they ride atop is leaving the bounds of the city. Fear flushes his face. This causes Rowe to lapse in attention and Hatch is able to punch Rowe in the jaw!

Hatch gets loose and hops off the truck, continuing his super heroism. He hits the side of the streets with the hardest impact of them all. He rolls and rolls, and we hear bones cracking in the midst of Hatch's cries. He comes to a stop.

He lies in pain for a moment, holding his arms and chest with his face in a grimace. He's weak but picks himself up and starts to walk. However, a gun blast knocks him back down. Rowe also jumped, and shot Hatch in the leg.

Rowe shambles toward Hatch and peers above him.

ROWE

No wonder Deberzi couldn't get you.

HATCH

He may have sent you but you aren't
going to take me to him.

ROWE

Wanna bet on it, daredevil?

HATCH

You're not in pursuit of another paycheck. Not anymore. You're chasing home. You're chasing your past. A past fate has torn away from you.

ROWE

You shut your god damned mouth.

HATCH

The treasure. It's home. I just want to go home!

Rowe sends his gun into Hatch's mouth. He's knocked out cold.

Rowe presides over him with bitterness.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL WARD

The ward is as we'd expect, clean and white. Several patients are seen with nurses and doctors, but we hover to two in particular. Shera and Ridek. They are with a nurse who is sewing Ridek up.

RIDEK
Thanks for all this.

SHERA
Yeesh, it's the least I can do.

RIDEK
Yeah. I guess now I don't believe
you're conning me.

Shera can only break a smile. She touches his weary face.
The nurse finishes up.

RIDEK (CONT'D)
(to the nurse)
Thanks.

She nods and walks off.

SHERA
It's almost time for the post
office to open. When I get the
money, I'm reimbursing you with
interest.

RIDEK
Interest, eh? As in extra money or
something else?

SHERA
Whatever you're interested in having.

They kiss again, but someone interrupts them.

OFFICER
Excuse me. May I have a moment?

It's a police officer. In fact, it's the same officer seen previously at the post office.

RIDEK
Questioning time?

OFFICER
Afraid so. Did either one of you
see what caused that fight?

SHERA
No. We were in bed. He just got up
to see what the commotion was and
got cut up. That's all that happened.

OFFICER
That's all?

They both nod.

RIDEK
I'm afraid that's all we can offer.
We're just bystanders.

The officer can only nod.

OFFICER
Alright, I understand. You have my
condolences over your injury.

RIDEK
Thanks.

SHERA
Azal left me enough money to help
pay for all this too. I'll go ahead
and...

OFFICER
(butting in)
Excuse me. Did you say Azel?

Shera is slightly confused, but nods.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
He left you... money? at the post
office?

Shera's face turns red. She starts to look nervous.

SHERA
Yeah...

The officer reaches for his hand cuffs.

OFFICER

You're under arrest. Put your hands behind your back!

RIDEK

What the hell? What for?

OFFICER

You too! Your friend, Azel, was found murdered outside the post office and we found what was inside that package he left for you. Money, the makings of a bomb and orders to use it against Deberzi's men. You people are Underground...

At this, Shera grabs a scalpel and rams it into the officer's chest! She flips him around and cracks his neck silently. It is fluid, as if she had been trained to do it many times before.

Ridek is left in pure shock.

SHERA

Come on, let's go.

RIDEK

What?!

SHERA

LET'S GO!!

Ridek, still in shock, complies.

CUT TO:

INT. SAHARA - MEDICAL BAY

The medical bay of the Sahara is like the rest of the ship, sleek yet empty. There are a row of medical beds, the center one occupied by Hatch.

Rowe and Rayne stand before him, with Rayne attending to Rowe's shirtless torso. She's patching him up.

ROWE

OW! What are you doing to me?

RAYNE

You have a broken rib and I don't know how to fix it. You were stupid, Rowe.

ROWE

You're welcome for me doing what we said we'd do and SAVE OUR LIVES.

She is silent.

ROWE (CONT'D)

We're gonna hold off on giving him to Deberzi until we figure out what to do.

RAYNE

What's to figure out? We find...

ROWE

He has information. This treasure he has, it's information. Whatever it is, I want it too.

RAYNE

Don't go putting your feelings in front of our lives again, Rowe!

ROWE

(angry)

This man knows what I've been looking for my whole life! I'm not passing that up!

At this, Hatch laughs. He's awake. Rowe puts his hands at his sides.

HATCH

I was right. Clark Kent needs a source.

ROWE

Where is it? This treasure of yours?

HATCH

My friend, I don't have it.

ROWE

LIAR!

HATCH

Naw, man, I'm serious. These two thugs and I have been cat-and-mousing each other for months. It would fall into their hands, then mine, then theirs again. They had it a couple of nights ago, and I was tracking them to get it back. But I don't know where it is now.

(MORE)

HATCH (CONT'D)

You see, I was so desperate to get away from you because I had to find it again.

ROWE

What is it?

HATCH

I think you know what it is. It's home. An island.

ROWE

You've got about two seconds to start making sense.

Hatch can only muster a laugh.

HATCH

Things stopped making sense a long time ago, man. I wish I could explain this in clear, concise terms but the universe isn't so clear cut. You and I come from the same place, this planet, this island. The treasure will lead us there.

ROWE

Why does Deberzi want the treasure, then?

HATCH

That man wants it because the Cult wants it, and that why the Confeds want it.

RAYNE

Which is why that squadron was there at the hotel.

HATCH

Right. They all want to know the location of this island. Why? I don't know. I just know why I want it.

Rowe can only nod.

ROWE

Because it's home.

Hatch looks sentimental.

HATCH

I've spent the last six years
looking for that treasure so I
could find home. Now it's lost. Again.

SYD (O.S.)

Not necessarily, wanderer.

All eyes turn to Syd, standing in the doorway.

SYD (CONT'D)

I think I know exactly where your
treasure is.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

In a particularly dense patch of foliage, Ridek and Shera
are holed up. Ridek looks angry.

SHERA

I'm sorry, all right?

He ignores her.

SHERA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to bring you into this!

RIDEK

Didn't mean to? You seduced me! You
were conning me! You were probably
going to frame me as the guy who
killed your friend Azel.

SHERA

Don't say that! Don't ever! I never
knew he was dead. I didn't want him
dead. And I'm NOT conning you!

RIDEK

Right, another lie. Just like you
lied about there being money
waiting for you at the post office.

SHERA

Money was waiting for me there...
just some other stuff as well.

Ridek scoffs and looks away.

SHERA (CONT'D)

Everything I told you was true. I never lied, only left out the part about joining the Underground. Azel was my fiance, he did leave me money, and...

Her face looks hurt.

SHERA (CONT'D)

I DID fall in love with you.

He looks over to her, still scowling slightly.

SHERA (CONT'D)

Someone killed him. I mentioned him and that cop found me out. They know I killed that officer by now and that I'm with the Underground. They'll have bulletins all over the planetary intercom by now. Both of us won't be able to live here freely anymore.

ROWE

Yeah, thanks for that.

SHERA

We have to find passage off. I wasn't lying, I don't know anybody on this rock. No contacts, no nothing. If we want to stay alive, we have to find a way off. Do you know anyone who can help us?

Ridek considers.

RIDEK

I think I do.

CUT TO:

INT. SAHARA - OBSERVATION ROOM

Back in the observation room, all four stand around the table. They are all looking down at something.

HATCH

I actually thought I'd never see it again.

SYD

Fate has brought it back to you, I suppose.

HATCH

I suppose.

RAYNE

What is it? And don't give me that "home" tripe. What is it, really?

HATCH

That's part of my quest, lady. To find out what it means.

A brief moment of silence.

ROWE

It's beautiful.

HATCH

Sure is.

On the table, the crystal Syd had taken from the two seedy men is there. Hatch picks it up and holds it to the light.

HATCH (CONT'D)

This is the only solid information I can get from it.

The light shines through and something is projected onto the table. .8.5.8.1.19.21.19.

ROWE

What is it...?

HATCH

Coordinates, probably, but I have no idea what system it uses. Someone else thought it was code to tell us something. But a string of numbers could mean anything, so I don't know. I just know that all my answers, all our answers, lie with finding out. This and the island are all I'm living for.

Syd doesn't seem as interested as he turns to Rowe.

SYD

Kristopher, I should tell you something. I do believe our search for someone to heal our cracked ribs and torn muscles has come to an end.

ROWE

What now?

Syd walks to the door.

SYD
If you'd indulge me.

Rowe follows him out.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT - DAY

Outside, Rowe and Syd walk out of the Sahara. There, sitting on a landing strut, is Sarola.

ROWE
Who's this?

SYD
Captain Rowe, Isaac Sarola. I found him at the hotel just after your little heroic stunt and invited him over.

Isaac gets up and stand tall before the two. Rowe sizes the man up.

ROWE
Jushai Prime?

ISAAC
That's right.

ROWE
I could tell. A war veteran. Were you a medic?

ISAAC
I was.

ROWE
I happen to have a soft spot for veterans. I'm one myself, but on the opposing side. Does that bother you?

ISAAC
No. Not any more.

Rowe nods.

ROWE
You good? Served on a ship before?

ISAAC
I'm still good. And no, haven't
served on a ship before. But busted
legs are busted legs wherever they are.

ROWE
That's right.

Rowe waves his hand in.

ROWE (CONT'D)
We got a dozen bunks, pick yours out.

Isaac nods and runs in.

SYD
A man of few words.

ROWE
Tragedy does that to a man. He'll
outgrow it, though. I had to.

They start to walk back in...

RIDEK (O.S.)
Excuse me! Wait!

The turn to see Ridek and Shera. Both are running and out of
breath.

RIDEK
Thank heavens we found you!

ROWE
I remember you. Um... Ridek?

RIDEK
Right! Hey, you people still
looking for hands?

ROWE
I suppose we are.

RIDEK
Well, we're both available. Ready
and willing to serve.

ROWE
You seem to be pretty cut up from
the last time I saw you. You
running from something? Why should
I hire someone who's got something
to hide?

SHERA

We don't have anything to hide,
sire. We're Underground.

Rowe smiles.

ROWE

Oh! Hey, I got this thing...

He points to his tracker.

ROWE (CONT'D)

If you can remove it, both of you
are onboard.

SHERA

That? That's nothing. Trackers are
extremely fragile things. Take a
pitchknife to its exterior
conductor and you're free as rain.

Rowe smiles. So does Syd.

CUT TO:

INT. SAHARA - ROWE'S BUNK

Rowe's bunk is now much brighter than it was previously.
However, he still laments over the picture of his former crew.

ROWE (V.O.)

All things considered, we had it
easy on Rosani. No one died, I got
hurt a little, and our little band
of rogues grew. Not only that, I
think I finally got back a little
bit of that pride I'd been missing
since we took the Sahara. Finding
Thomas Hatch, a piece to a puzzle
I've been trying to put together
since childhood, put some energy
back into my step. But I couldn't
get cocky. I did good this time,
but could I keep it up? Could I
steer my own fate from here on out?
All I knew then was I had a
starting point.

A knock is heard at the door. A moment, then Rowe puts the
picture face down.

ROWE

Yeah?

Rayne walks in.

ROWE (CONT'D)

'Sup?

RAYNE

What do we plan on doing about Deberzi?

ROWE

What should we do? We got our trackers off, we have what he wanted and we're about to leave this rock forever.

RAYNE

Will he not track us down? What about the planet's authorities, looking for Ridek and Shera?

Rowe stands up and circles around her.

ROWE

Probably not, but if they decide to come calling, we'll make do. You'll just have to trust me.

Rayne nods. A communicator beeps. Rowe speaks up.

ROWE (CONT'D)

What is it?

SYD

Kristopher, we have a problem.

CUT TO:

INT. SAHARA - COMMAND

We see the command center of the Sahara for the first time. It's nothing too outlandish for a ship with no warp nacelles, but it is quite comfortable looking. The lighting is a soft blue with three stations on either side of the oval shaped room.

One console is at the very front and a center chair. At the very front is a large panoramic window with computerized readouts melded with the glass. Syd is there, so is Shera.

SHERA

I've never seen Confederate technology so advanced before. This ship is nice.

SYD

Could you fly it?

SHERA
I don't have experience but I
suppose I could try.

The door slides open and the two commanders walk in.

ROWE
What's our problem, Syd?

SYD
Have a listen.

Syd hits a button. A voice crackles through the speakers.

VOICE
... Rosani is still ruled by
criminals, and the people not only
let it happen, but abide by it. We,
Those Who Walk in the Light came
only to liberate you from the
tyranny of your regent and show you
a better life. But you refused us,
kept yourselves under their heel
while we tried to lift you up.

(beat)

And now these criminals have put a
stop to our holy mission of
liberating the entire galaxy. By
allowing these criminals to rule
you and halt our own efforts, you
have just doomed the lives of
uncounted trillions.

(beat)

There is no other due punishment
for that but death.

ROWE
God damn Cult. What are they doing?

SYD
I believe they're planning on
burning this planet alive.

RAYNE
We have to leave!

She heads for the front console.

SYD
That may be harder to do than you
realize. They're in orbit with
hundreds of cruisers over fifty
times the size of this ship.

(MORE)

SYD (CONT'D)

We may be fast, but they're a wall
we can never break through.

VOICE

You, the people of Rosani and the
criminals that claim to rule you,
are forfeit. If we cannot be
allowed to accomplish our goals, we
have no other choice.

Rowe considers. He takes the center chair.

SYD

Might I mention that this is all
our fault for not promptly
returning Hatch like you promised?

The other look to Syd.

ROWE

You're saying the reason they're
going to destroy an entire world is
to kill one man?

SYD

Typical Cult mentality. Trust me, I
know how they think.

Through the window, he sees the Confederate ship. It's
taking off.

ROWE

Follow them.

RAYNE

What?

ROWE

The Confederates. They have a weak
point in their scanners just under
their belly. They won't be able to
detect us if we get up under there.

RAYNE

I don't think-

ROWE

Try not to do that. Right now, just
trust me.

Rayne looks suspicious. However, she follows his directions.

ROWE (CONT'D)

Syd, do me a favor. Get a subspace tracker on that Confederate ship when we latch up underneath her.

SYD

May I inquire?

ROWE

Don't have to, Syd. You can read my mind.

Syd only smiles and nods.

ROWE (CONT'D)

This is the last time I let fate have its way with me.

CUT TO:

INT. SAHARA - MEDICAL BAY

Hatch is unconscious and on the bed. He is flanked by Isaac, sitting at his side. Isaac has cleaned up, no longer sporting his poor man's beard and is wearing a white shirt and black pants.

Ridek slowly walks in, coddling his chest lightly.

RIDEK

Hey, man, you got any pain killers or something? The stuff the nurses gave me is wearing off.

Isaac looks up and nods slowly.

ISAAC

No, sorry. Gave the last of it to this guy. Gunshot wound. I'll get more next port.

RIDEK

Dammit. Thanks, anyway.

Ridek turns to exit but stops.

RIDEK

Y'know, you're the second person this week who looks really familiar to me.

ISAAC

Never seen you before.

Ridek shrugs and exits.

The medic looks back at Hatch and shakes his head.

ISAAC

Don't know why I lied like that. I
know him. And I know you.

We close in on Hatch's face.

ISAAC

Whoever you two are, I know you.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END