

EMPIRE

Teleplay
by
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Via time portal digital mail

To: TV Producer, circa 2014

From: Ignacio Toula, Member of the Citizen's Council, 2212

Re: Producing a New Series 'Empire'

You are decadent and weak. You think you live in a moral world, but in fact it is immoral. A world where the weak and undeserving have the same political power as those who sacrifice themselves for the common good.

The last two hundred years have witnessed dark days indeed. One by one the great nations fell into bankruptcy and corruption. The terrorist attacks of 2048 left over one hundred million dead. The great cultural capitals of the world, including New York, Shanghai, and Paris, lay in ruin. Deadly bio-weapons threatened the human race with extinction.

Saviors appeared. Our glorious Founders. They assembled vast armies and, by 2053, the main elements of the false republicans had been defeated along with their debauched ways. From the ashes rose the United Empire, a planet-wide government and the dawn of a new era of peace and order. Citizenship is solely earned through service, voting privileges are only bestowed upon those who deserve them. And the greatest political power is reserved for those who are willing to sacrifice everything to protect the United Empire's core values: soldier citizens.

Over time, the United Empire's power has been extended to the many planets within its control. New jump gate technology—'gates' constructed by nano-robots billions of light years from Earth—have allowed us to terraform and colonize to ensure the continued prosperity of the human race. Our enemies are legion, including the rebel psionics who use their minds as terrorist weapons. Two years ago we defeated them to end the Psionic Wars, but many scurried away like rats to hide in distant planets.

How can you repent for your licentious ways? Green light the attached one hour pilot teleplay for the series *Empire*. Think *Spartacus* meets *Starship Troopers*. This series is designed to appeal to the vast gaming audience (who play, for instance, *Halo*) by using digital effects to bring to life a dramatic space opera storyline. The main plot arc follows United Empire officer Henry Snowe as he leads his citizen soldiers against alien armies while hiding a family secret that would lead to his destruction by the very Empire he has sworn to serve.

May the Empire last forever.

(CONTINUED)

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GENRE: Sci-fi

LOGLINE: In the waning days of a corrupt Empire, Captain Henry Snowe struggles to hide a family secret as he leads his soldier citizens into battle against alien hordes.

FADE IN:

EXT. ALIEN PLANET - DAY

The opening scene is a flash-forward of a chaotic battle that takes place at page 30. The characters will be introduced after this scene.

On a desolate red planet, twelve soldier citizens of the United Empire are under attack by alien monsters.

COMMANDER OREN

Hold your positions. Remember you
are soldier citizens of the Empire
...

An alien monster slashes open Commander Oren's belly with its razor-sharp tusk. Commander Oren drives the creature back with his makeshift sword and ESMERALDA steps forward to slice off its tusk. Oren stumbles back clutching at his belly to keep his intestines from spilling out. The attacking alien monsters gain ground as the soldier citizens take in their commander's terrible injury.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

(fading)
Retreat! Defensive formation
omega.

HENRY

(rushing over)
Tanq! Grab the commander. We'll
cover you.

TANQ throws Commander Oren over his shoulders and begins running toward the shuttle. Henry and Esmeralda protect each side of Tanq; the remaining soldier citizens form a protective wedge around their Commander. Alien monsters harass them from all sides and a soldier citizen screams as he is cut in half by the mandibles of a giant monster; there is mounting panic as the troops continue their frenzied run.

TITLE:

48 HOURS EARLIER

UNITED EMPIRE MAIN BASE, SAN FRANCISCO, 2212

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Below a large UE INSIGNIA on the wall of a large ballroom, dancing couples swirl to CLASSICAL MUSIC (modified version of Halo Orchestra Theme). Most of the dancers are dressed in military uniforms while others wear futuristic formal wear. We see one couple—HENRY and ESMERALDA—dancing ballroom-style with eyes locked. Henry is a good looking all-American in his late twenties; Esmeralda is roughly the same age with a dark complexion and short dark hair. Song ends and Henry gestures Esmeralda toward the exit.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Henry and Esmeralda tumble laughing into a shadowy corner of a hallway. They embrace followed by a passionate kiss; the shoulder of Esmeralda's dress slips off, partly revealing her back. Henry draws back after he touches long scars on her back.

HENRY

Sorry. Where...

ESMERALDA

Got those from Rigel Five.

HENRY

One of the first jumps out of the system?

ESMERALDA

Yep.

HENRY

You're enlisted?

ESMERALDA

(nods)

Second Lieutenant.

HENRY

But ...

ESMERALDA

I'm not in uniform. I know. Just wanted to feel like a civilian one last time.

HENRY

But that's against regulations. We jump in two days.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

Everyone on base must remain in full uniform. Code Regulation 6 dash...

ESMERALDA

... 85. I know. I'm jumping.

HENRY

I'm squad leader of Alpha Squad. I jump with Beta Squad.

ESMERALDA

(with a big grin)

Looks like we're teammates.

HENRY

You're ... out-of-uniform ...

ESMERALDA

I think we've established that. But not completely. You haven't checked my underwear. I assure you it is in full compliance with the Code.

HENRY

This is serious. A serious breach of protocol.

ESMERALDA

Your first time, huh?

HENRY

(beat)

What?!

ESMERALDA

Your first jump mission? It can be tough on the nerves.

HENRY

(voice rising)

What has that got to do with anything... I'm your superior officer. Attention!

Esmeralda adjusts her dress and stands to attention and looks straight ahead.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll forgive your breach of protocol this time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY (CONT'D)

But you're an officer of the Empire
and should know better. The Code
... the Code ...

ESMERALDA

(in a tired voice)

... keeps us safe. And strong. I
know. We all know.

She turns to leave.

HENRY

(calming)

I have a question. Why not have
the scars fixed? It would take a
medbot less than a minute.

ESMERALDA

You heard about Rigel Five, right?
How we lost fifty soldiers
citizens?

HENRY

Of course.

ESMERALDA

Well, I keep the scars to remind
me. Of their sacrifice. And to
remind me to be very very careful.

HENRY

I see.

ESMERALDA

See you tomorrow.
(pause then mildly
sarcastic)
Sir.

Esmeralda leaves; Henry remains with bemused look.

EXT. SNOWE FAMILY RESIDENCE - DAY

Stately manor on large estate located in the hilly region of
Marin County. A ROBOT LAWNMOWER mows the shining green front
lawn. Another ROBOT GARDENER whizzes by carrying a potted
sequoia tree.

INT. SNOWE FAMILY RESIDENCE - DAY

Kitchen and living area with spartan furnishings; a simple
dinner table, and a few sleek counters. A window reveals the
backyard with marble statues of nude sylphs and a large
sparkling blue pool.

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CONTINUED:

On kitchen shelf, a HOLOGRAM PICTURE shows a happy and smiling family that includes young Henry Snowe, his toddler-aged sister Talia, father Jack and late mother Katherine. Henry is in kitchen with TALIA, Jake's now sixteen year old sister. She is pretty with vulnerable girl-next-door looks. Henry brings Talia her morning BREAKFAST in a small blue bowl, it looks like porridge.

HENRY

Now try and finish this.

TALIA

(grimacing)

You know I don't like breakfast.

HENRY

Mom and dad used to say it's the most important meal of the day.

TALIA

Yech.

HENRY

You're welcome.

TALIA

Sorry. I'll eat it.

(takes a spoonful then
speaks with mouth full)

See.

HENRY

Manners?

TALIA

Yeah right.

(gulps down meal)

Didn't you say you were going to see Dad tomorrow? Before you jump?

HENRY

I hope to. I've made arrangements for Nana to stay with you while I'm gone.

TALIA

Can I see him too?

HENRY

You know he ... he's ill. He doesn't want to see you when he's like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TALIA

(eyes downcast)

I just want to see him. I don't care how he looks.

HENRY

Soon... soon he'll get better.

TALIA

That's what you said two years ago.

HENRY

I know.

TALIA

Maybe if he gets a little better I can see him?

HENRY

We'll see.

Talia spills a small amount of porridge on the table. Her brow furrows as she stares at a white napkin laying on the other side of the table; after a moment the napkin rises off the table and begins to dance as it makes its way mid-air over to Talia.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What? What are you doing?

Henry snatches the napkin out of the air; he throws the napkin toward Talia and it lands next to her bowl.

HENRY (CONT'D)

The holoscanners could be watching!

TALIA

I did a sweep this morning. No scanners. No big deal.

HENRY

(angry)

No big deal? Do you have any idea what would happen to us if anyone found out?

TALIA

Whatever.

HENRY

(trying to remain calm)

I can't believe you. You think I need this? Right now?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HENRY (CONT'D)

(looks at wall clock with
a holographic image of
8:15 am)

Let's go. You'll miss the lift.
I'll drop you off on my way to the
base.

TALIA

We've got the annual tour of the
Hall of Heroes tomorrow. You've
heard about the new exhibit, eh?
The one starring our father? Guess
I'll get to see dear old dad after
all.

(pause)

Two hundred demerit points if you
miss it. And I'm only a hundred
away from a public lashing. So
can't skip it.

(she wolfs down another
two spoonfuls)

Let's move mister. What ya waiting
for?

The two collect their bags then head out the door.

EXT. UNITED EMPIRE MAIN BASE - DAY

Shot of sprawling military campus with domed buildings, lush
gardens and large marble statues of soldier citizens in
heroic poses.

INT. COMMANDER OREN'S OFFICE - DAY

Henry steps through doorway into COMMANDER OREN'S office.
Oren is a middle-aged male with a large scar across his right
cheek. He sits behind an imposing translucent desk. In
front of the desk are two chairs; seated in the right chair
is Esmeralda who turns to smile at Henry as he ENTERS the
room. Henry clears his throat and takes the remaining chair.

COMMANDER OREN

(tight smile)

Nice to see you Jake.

HENRY

Sir.

COMMANDER OREN

Esmeralda tells me you two have
already met.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

(beat)

Met? What? Yes... well. Yes ...

COMMANDER OREN

(laughing)

Steady soldier. I realize the two of you have only been briefly introduced. We all know Omega Squad had to bow out of this mission due to a vicious flu bug. Good thing we have Henry and his squad as back-up because the jump window won't be open much longer. The two squads will need to get to know each other very quickly before we leave tomorrow. Alpha and Beta squads will need to work as one.

HENRY

(now in a steady voice
while avoiding looking at
Esmeralda)

Of course, sir.

ESMERALDA

(turning toward Jake)

I've sent you some updates on the Trafalgar system and Planet X-11. Of course we won't know what to really expect until we get there.

Looking down, Henry presses a button on a ring on his left index finger ring and a holographic iPad-like tablet appears; with his right hand he presses a holographic button and a star system appears. The images closes in on a giant metallic ring hanging in space near a red planet.

HENRY

Yes, I see it.

(presses another button
and the hologram
disappears)

Thanks. I'll review this
carefully.

COMMANDER OREN

(rising)

Sounds good. But first let's go meet with our two teams. Most of them are winding down from a final training exercise. We'll surprise them at the gym.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Henry and Esmeralda also rise, they lock eyes for a moment then Henry looks away.

INT. MAIN BASE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Six soldiers (four male and two female) are changing in a locker room; two males with towels around waist. Three are one side of the room, including TANQ, are laughing at some joke. Tanq is 6' 3" with a heavy body-builder frame, and is of Han Chinese descent. Three are on the other side, including JEREMY who is smiling at something his companions are talking about. Jeremy is a skinny white guy with a wandering eye. Tanq looks over at Jeremy, narrows his eyes, then walks over to him. Tanq peers at the back of Jeremy's neck where he sees, at the base of Jeremy's hairline, scar tissue forming a circle.

TANQ

(angry)

Hey, look what we have here.

Tanq and his two comrades approach Jeremy. Jeremy whirls and looks startled.

JEREMY

Huh?

TANQ

You one of them psiborgs?

JEREMY

(nervous)

What's it to you?

TANQ

I don't like your kind. None of us do.

Tanq's two comrades nod while snarling.

JEREMY'S COMRADE

He has as much a right to enlist as any of us. The Psionic War has been over for two years.

TANQ'S COMRADE

Two years isn't long. Tanq's parents were killed by those freaks.

JEREMY

I had nothing to do with that. I never signed up to fight.

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CONTINUED:

TANQ

(glowering down at Jeremy)
 You're all the same. I don't care
 if the Empire decided to integrate
 you. You're all just a bunch of
 vat-grown freaks. Your sick
 parents grew you in a vat, and here
 you are now. Pretending to be
 normal. Didn't your mama tell you
 you'd never fit in? I guess she is
 a freak too, just like her son ...

Jeremy cries out and punches Tanq in the nose. He swings
 again and manages to rip Tanq's shirt collar. Tanq's nose
 starts to bleed and he wipes it with his right hand, his eyes
 bulge in anger. Tanq feels the torn collar then rips off his
 shirt.

TANQ (CONT'D)

See what a real man looks like?
 One hundred per cent human! Not
 like you, you little freak.

Tanq lunges at Jeremy. The four other soldiers face off one
 on one, but don't fight. Jeremy gets in three quick blows,
 which serve to anger Tanq further. Tanq grabs Jeremy by the
 right arm and throws him against the locker.

TANQ'S COMRADE

Get him!

TANQ

Now I'll teach you a little lesson.
 Alpha Squad doesn't put up with
 mutants pretending to be like us.

Esmeralda, Henry and Commander Oren ENTER the locker room.
 For a moment they appear startled at the scene before them.

ESMERALDA

Attention!

The soldiers freeze with the exception of Tanq who is still
 moving in on Jeremy.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

I said 'Attention.'

Tanq snarls and ignores her and continues to move toward
 Jeremy. Esmeralda leaps forward and kicks the lower back of
 Tanq's right leg. Tanq collapses to the ground, momentarily
 stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COMMANDER OREN

Thank you Lieutenant. What do we have here?

JEREMY

(standing at attention)

A minor dispute, sir. Everything is under control.

HENRY

(looking at Tanq)

It doesn't seem like that to me. Tanq, what's happening here? You know we jump tomorrow with Beta Squad?

Tanq struggles to his feet, deflated.

TANQ

Yes sir. It's just ... it's just we didn't know we'd be jumping with a ... a psiborg.

HENRY

(looks at Jeremy then back at Tanq)

You mean a psionic person. You know they've been granted full personhood status. They're allowed to earn citizenship through service, just like the rest of us. Their powers, controlled and under the right circumstances, now serve the United Empire.

TANQ

But ...

COMMANDER OREN

This comes from an Empire Directive. End of story.

TANQ

(head bowed)

Yes sir. It won't happen again, sir.

COMMANDER OREN

Hmmm ... this is not good. We're supposed to jump in twenty-four hours and this is the team we're taking?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)
 (he looks toward Esmeralda
 and Henry)
 Suggestions?

HENRY
 Discipline, sir. Fighting prior to
 jumping is prohibited by Code
 Section 87-21.

ESMERALDA
 I agree. Discipline.

COMMANDER OREN
 Yes, discipline. Call both squads
 to the hilltop. Full battle packs.
 Time for a little run. Then six
 lashes each for our two fighters.

EXT. OPEN FIELD ON HILLTOP - NIGHT - HALF HOUR LATER

The sun nears the horizon casting spiky shadows from the
 twenty-one soldiers assembled on a hilltop in an open field.
 Above the sun a reddening cloudless sky crackles with yellow
 lightning. The soldier citizens are lined up in two lines,
 each carrying a large black backpack, Jeremy and Tanq are at
 the front of the line. Commander Oren, Henry and Esmeralda
 stand together near the front and are dressed in uniforms but
 without backpacks.

HENRY
 Commander, an ion storm is starting
 up. As you know, the Code
 prohibits most outdoor exercises.

COMMANDER OREN
 (wryly)
 Hmmm... suspect our teams may face
 greater dangers than an ion storm.
 I think we should go ahead.

ESMERALDA
 I agree.

HENRY
 Understood.

COMMANDER OREN
 (taking a few steps toward
 the front of the line of
 soldiers)
 All right listen up. Five
 kilometers. Kid's stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A yellow bolt of lightning arcs toward the soldiers and slams into the ground next to an old leafless oak. The oak tree is blasted out of the ground and lands like a javelin less than twenty feet from the soldiers. The tree crackles with fire and smoke.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

You heard the starter's pistol.

Now get moving.

Tanq laughs and begins to jog in formation, as does Jeremy and the rest of the troops. Begin MUSIC (Moby's Bring Sally Up). Shots of the soldiers running in near-darkness, illuminated by occasional flashes of yellow lightning. Rain begins to pour down in buckets although no clouds can be seen. The terrain slopes downward and becomes increasingly wet and muddy, making running more difficult. Two-thirds of the way down the hill a soldier-TEAK-stumbles and falls into the mud. Commander Oren gestures at the two soldiers at the back of the line to follow him. As the rest of the troops continue to jog in formation, Oren, Henry, Esmeralda, and the two soldiers run up to Teak.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

On your feet, soldier.

TEAK

I...

Teak rubs his ankle then tries to get up but falls back breathing hard

TEAK (CONT'D)

It's my ankle sir. I think it's sprained... badly.

ESMERALDA

You heard your Commander. On your feet.

TEAK

(gasping for air)

I can't.

Esmeralda looks toward Oren who nods. Esmeralda steps up to Teak who is now on all fours breathing hard. She delivers a quick kick to his head that lays him out flat and apparently unconscious.

ESMERALDA

(to the two soldiers)

Take him away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Henry nods toward Esmeralda as in 'job well done.' Teak is picked up by the two soldiers who begin to drag him down the hill. Oren, Esmeralda and Henry then start running to catch up with the jogging soldiers.

EXT. PUNISHMENT AREA - NIGHT

Total darkness now save for the occasional illumination by the yellow lightning. Tanq and Jeremy are each strapped to a pole with their shirts off. All of the soldiers stand in formation with hands held behind their backs as they look at Tanq and Jeremy. Behind these soldiers are four tiny jail cells that can only hold one person in standing position—Teak peers between the bars of one cell. Commander Oren nods toward a soldier with a glowing red whip. The soldier takes a step toward Tanq.

TANQ

(quietly to Jeremy)

Don't let 'em see you cry. Don't give 'em the satisfaction. Remember. Fear is the mind killer. It is the ripper. The stalker. The black death. I will fear no fear.

JEREMY

(swallows hard then nods)

I will fear no fear.

The whip curls back and glows bright red against the darkness; it is brought forward to lash Tanq across the back. Tanq's eyes squeeze shut as he is struck but otherwise he remains motionless. The soldier steps toward Jeremy whose face is darkened. The lightning flashes and Jeremy grunts when the lash strikes him across the back.

ESMERALDA

One.

The lash flies again.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Two. Three. Four. Five. Six.

At the end of the lashing, Henry unties Tanq and Jeremy who both collapse to the ground. A hovering MEDBOT approaches.

COMMANDER OREN

All right you meatheads. Show's over.

EXT. COLONEL JACK SNOWE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A large skyscraper with an outside tube elevator.

INT. TURBO-ELEVATOR TO COLONEL JACK SNOWE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Henry enters the turbo-elevator, presses the button for the penthouse suite and begins to ascend. As the elevator begins to accelerate, Henry looks through glass walls at the cityscape below him. He gets a faraway look as if deep in thought.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

This flashback sequence is the first of two showing a father-YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE-and son-TWELVE YEAR OLD HENRY SNOWE-standing side-by-side among the redwoods in Big Sur forest. The sky is clear and dirty-yellow.

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE

All right Henry, give it a go.

Remember: relax your mind.

Young Henry Snowe's brow furrows as he accesses his psionic powers; he is focusing on a branch fifteen feet above him. At the tip of the branch is a large acorn; the branch begins to sag as if something is pulling at it; after a few moments the acorn comes flying off and sails toward young Henry who reaches out and catches it with his right hand.

YOUNG HENRY SNOWE

I did it!

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE

Great job! That's terrific!

(hugs his son)

YOUNG HENRY SNOWE

Let's do that again! Something bigger.

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE

Okay. But no rush, son. It's best to master each stage before moving on.

YOUNG HENRY SNOWE

Yeah, I know Dad, I know.

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE

It's only been a week since you've become aware of your powers. Your mom and I are very proud. But you can never tell anyone. Not a soul.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE (CONT'D)

Under any circumstances. Not even your closest friend. Otherwise ... Otherwise you'll end up in some UE laboratory. They'll dissect you bit by bit.

YOUNG HENRY SNOWE

I know. You told me.

YOUNG COLONEL JACK SNOWE

(reaching out to put his hand on his son's shoulder)

I know I did. And I don't mean to scare you. But you can never forget. You must follow all rules. Follow the Code. Don't give them any reason to suspect you.

YOUNG HENRY

Yes father.

INT. COLONEL JACK SNOWE'S RESIDENCE - DAY

Elevator doors swoosh open, snapping Henry out of his memories. Henry exits the elevator into a hallway that takes him to a door to the building's penthouse suite. He takes a deep breath, opens the door then enters a large spacious room. In the center of the room is seated COLONEL JACK SNOWE in a large stuffed reclining chair. Colonel Snowe is in his late-fifties and is dressed in a white bath robe. His drawn and haggard face stands in marked contrast to the vibrant young man in the flashback sequence. There is an intravenous (IV) bottle filled with red liquid next to the chair as well as another smaller tube embedded in the vein of Captain Snowe's right wrist. He is facing a wall filled with psychedelic swirling colors. Off to his left and partially hidden in shadows, a standing life-size HOLOGRAPHIC FIGURE in a white dress can be made out. Henry approaches but Colonel Snowe does not appear to register his arrival.

HENRY

Father?

COLONEL SNOWE

(turns his head slightly and looks at Henry with heavy-lidded eyes)

HENRY

Father?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL SNOWE
 (stares dully at Henry)
 Hmm?

Henry reaches down and presses a button on the chair's armrest. The wall 'scrolls' up to reveal that it is in fact a wall-sized window that overlooks the Pacific Ocean far below. Bright sunlight streams in and Colonel Snowe turns away from the onslaught.

COLONEL SNOWE (CONT'D)
 (in weak voice)
 Yes? Henry? Is it you? It is.
 Come for a visit?

HENRY
 Yes, father.

COLONEL SNOWE
 Nice of you.

HENRY
 I jump tomorrow. It'll be the
 second jump using the new gates.
 We can jump eight star systems now.

COLONEL SNOWE
 (feebly)
 I see.

HENRY
 My first command role. As leader
 of Alpha Squad. Under Commander
 Oren who heads up Beta Squad.

COLONEL SNOWE
 Oren?

HENRY
 Commander Oren. Your old friend.
 Remember how you served with him on
 Venus? During the Canteen
 Rebellion?

COLONEL SNOWE
 Oren. Yes, of course I remember
 him. A good man.

HENRY
 Uh yes. I've made arrangements with
 Nana for Talia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COLONEL SNOWE
(staring with glassy eyes
at Henry)

Hmmm...

HENRY
Talía ... Talía is going through a
phase. She ... she won't listen to
me. She needs... she needs you. She
needs a parent.

COLONEL SNOWE
Hmmm...

HENRY
I spoke to the doctor. He said we
can begin weaning you off the beta-
blockers. It won't be easy.

COLONEL SNOWE
(stirring for first time)
No. I need them. For the pain.

HENRY
Father. Listen to me. The doctors
say that you have physically
recovered. Your spine is fully
restored.

COLONEL SNOWE
No.

HENRY
But the doctors say it's ... mainly
in your head. That maybe this is
your way of dealing with mom's
death ...

COLONEL SNOWE
(firmly)
I said no.

Henry looks over to the shadowy figure in the corner of the room and we now see it is a life-size HOLOGRAPHIC FIGURE of his late mother Katherine Snowe in her white wedding dress; a creepy memorial for his father. Henry's head drops.

HENRY
Yes sir.

COLONEL SNOWE
(silence)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HENRY

Well, I need to get going. To
prepare for the jump. Goodbye.

The liquid in the IV bottle glogs and Colonel Snowe sighs as the drugs enter his system; when he speaks his voice is even drowsier.

COLONEL SNOWE

Goodbye. And good luck. Do your
duty. As a soldier citizen of the
United Empire.

HENRY

(nods then heads for the
exit)
Yes sir.

EXT. SPACEPORT - DAY

The spaceport is a large silver dome encircled by runways that jut out like spokes. Camera zooms to focus on a small white spaceship held aloft by beams near the outside edge of the dome. On the side of the spaceship is written in black block letters 'UE Reagan'. Camera tracks down through the window to the twenty-one members of Alpha and Beta Squads seated within the spaceship.

INT. REAGAN SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers are seated in rowed chairs as they prepare for take-off. At the head of the rows are three officer chairs where Commander Oren, Henry and Esmeralda are seated. Commander Oren's fingers dance over a holographic tablet screen hovering over the chair's armrest.

COMMANDER OREN

Prepare for launch.
(pause)
Launch.

EXT. REAGAN SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

The spaceship launches and begins a steep ascent. It shoots out of the atmosphere and we see the outlines of a distant glowing ring--this is a JUMP GATE that permits spaceships to 'jump' through quantum space to travel billions of light years to distant planets. The spaceship closes and we see the gate is a giant metallic ring hanging in space. There are several small ROBOTIC SPACECRAFTS flying near the exterior edges of the ring. The spaceship zooms toward the ring and blinks out as it enters. Next we see the spaceship emerge from another gate. A small red planet can be seen.

INT. SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

COMMANDER OREN

(into a receiver on the
pedestal)

Assume orbit around Planet X-11.

(to Esmeralda and Henry)

Get your troops ready. We'll head
down in one hour.

(stands and EXITS)

ESMERALDA

So ... you are Colonel Jack Snowe's
son. I had heard about you when I
was in the Academy... Well, more
about your father.

HENRY

And?

ESMERALDA

Must be nice. To have such great
connections. Your father is a Hero
of the Empire, after all. Your own
rise as a soldier citizen has been
... shall we say, precipitous.

HENRY

Your point?

ESMERALDA

No point really. Just saying it
must be nice, is all. All the
wealth of the Empire at the
disposal of the Hero's family.

HENRY

Yes, we are ... lucky. I can
assure you though I earned my
stripes every bit as much as you or
anyone else.

ESMERALDA

(smiles darkly)

Of course.

HENRY

I appreciate your plain-speak. We
had better get to the shuttle.

(rises and heads toward
the back of the ship)

EXT. REAGAN SPACESHIP - DAY - ONE HOUR LATER

Shot of a small shuttle housed inside the left wing of the larger spaceship. Cut to interior of the shuttle where twelve of the troops are sitting against the wall in cramped surroundings. Commander Oren is discussing something with a soldier leaving Henry and Esmeralda in the front of the shuttle. Henry checks his straps carefully; cinches the shoulder belt tight

ESMERALDA

Eat lately?

HENRY

Huh? Yeah, I just wolfed back a sandwich. Not sure when we'll eat again after we land.

ESMERALDA

Bad idea. Have you ever dropped before?

HENRY

Sure, training exercises. And once from the space station down to Mars when I was a cadet.

ESMERALDA

This is different. Let's say; more intense. Hold onto your stomach.

HENRY

Thanks for the advice.

COMMANDER OREN

(taking a seat at the front and securing his straps)

All right. Here we go. Hold on tight. I expect each one of you ready for action the moment we hit ground.

Henry looks nervously toward Esmeralda who smiles back at him.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

On my count. Three two one. Drop.

INT. SHUTTLE BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Bay doors open beneath the shuttle and it drops through the bottom of the spaceship. Background MUSIC is Blur's Song 2.

EXT. SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Shuttle breaks away from Reagan spaceship as it drops toward the planet in a free fall.

INT. SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Half of the crew elated by free fall while other half nervous when shuttle vibrates and groans as it gains velocity. Henry white-knuckles his shoulder straps.

COMMANDER OREN

(smiling)

Hold on!

ESMERALDA

(raising her arms in the
air)

Woohoo!

EXT. SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

After a dramatic plunge, the shuttle fires booster rockets as it approaches the surface. The rockets kick up dust and stones as the shuttle settles on the surface. The planet is mainly a red desert with some hilly regions; stubby green brush dots the landscape.

INT. SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

COMMANDER OREN

(unbuckling his straps)

Always enjoy the ride!

ESMERALDA

It takes getting used to.

HENRY

(quietly)

Funny. Never have any trouble in a spaceship. Dropping from the sky is not my idea of fun.

COMMANDER OREN

You should have seen your dad when he was young. Once outside of Rigel—we were just pups, had been cadets for less than six months—he jumped from an orbiting space station to an out-of-control communications satellite. Wearing nothing but a spacesuit and a kick-ass attitude.

(building in enthusiasm)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

Then of course we have his jump that saved the Empire. No propulsion or safety harnesses. Jack just leapt from a ninety-five storey building, swooped in and caught those rebels with their psionic pants down ...

(hesitates and looks over at Henry who remains silent)

Of course he suffered terrible injuries... We will always remember his sacrifice.

HENRY

(finishes unbuckling his strap and rises)

Sometimes the apple falls far away from the tree.

COMMANDER OREN

(after exchanging a puzzled glance with Esmeralda, Oren rises to face his troops who have begun to mill about)

All right maggots. It's game time. Time to earn your fabulous pay. Get prepped. We step out in half an hour. And get ready to make history. As you know, this is only the fourth planet the Empire has ever found with a breathable atmosphere.

INT. SNOWE FAMILY RESIDENCE - DAY

Talia Snowe is eating her lunch in the kitchen. Her grandmother—NANA—is a blonde-haired woman in her late-seventies who is serving Talia an orange juice to go with her salad.

NANA

What's the plan for today?

TALIA

They're making us take a stupid tour of the Hall of Heroes. Like they do at least once a year. 'Serve the Empire and you too one day could become a hero, blah, blah, blah.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NANA

I heard they created a new exhibit
this year. One with your father.
Have you heard about it?

TALIA

(sourly)

Yeah sure. Big whoop.

NANA

(frowning)

It is a big deal.

TALIA

(focusing on her food)

Uh huh.

NANA

Well, just make the best of it. I
know this is difficult.

TALIA

Uh huh.

NANA

With Henry gone, I'll need to get
some shakelite for the food
converters. Do you have any
preferences?

TALIA

(silent)

NANA

Talia?

TALIA

(finishing meal and
beginning to rise)

No, anything will do.

NANA

Okay. I just worry about you.

TALIA

I'm fine. Right as rain. Couldn't
be better... It's just that ...

NANA

Just what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TALIA

Well, this is a bit weird. But I keep feeling like somebody is watching me. Somebody maybe not so good.

NANA

(smiles)

Probably just boys... Speaking of ... I could have sworn George Maverston was staring at me across the aisle at the food depot. Good looking man, nice strong legs.

TALIA

Here we go.

NANA

What?! George and I aren't even eighty yet. Plenty of fire left in the furnace.

TALIA

Gross.

NANA

Well, anyway, I wouldn't worry too much about boys staring at you.

TALIA

(shakes her head)

No, that's not it. I dunno. Anyhow, got to run. I've had too many demerits for late classes already. Don't want to be subjected to a public shaming or anything. Tends to ruin my day.

NANA

All right. Don't forget to take your raincoat. It's really coming down out there. Might develop into another ion storm.

EXT. OUTSIDE TALIA'S HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Talia, dressed in a YELLOW RAINCOAT, is walking along an urban street lined with skyscrapers; a hard rain splatters the sidewalk around her. Camera pans to TWO RED ROBED FIGURES watching her through a window from five stories up (the robed figures are psionic rebels and resemble the red robed psionic rebels from the Hall of Heroes exhibit with Colonel Snowe, which is described in an upcoming sequence).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Camera closes on the two figures whose faces are masked by the shadow from their hoods. Camera cuts to close-up of Talia as she whirls to face the window with the robed figures. But when she tries to spot them they are already gone. Talia shivers and pulls her raincoat tighter around her then continues walking. Ahead we can see a NEON SIGN at the entrance of a tall building: 'Marin County H.S.'

INT. COLONEL SNOWE APARTMENT - DAY

Brief sequence to show Colonel Jack Snowe sitting in his reclining chair and staring with heavy-lidded eyes at the screen of swirling lights in front of him. The IV bag to his left bubbles as the liquid flows into his veins. Colonel Snowe sighs and continues to watch the swirling lights.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - DAY

Twelve troops are marching in two rows five hundred yards away from the shuttle (six members of Alpha Squad, including Jeremy, and six from Beta Squad, including Tanq). Several soldiers, including Jeremy, are holding holographic tablets and punching on keys as they walk. Two additional soldiers, so-called 'mecs', are at the lead of each row; these soldiers are fully encased in robotic battle armor which forms an exoskeleton around them. At the very front walk Commander Oren, Henry and Esmeralda.

COMMANDER OREN

Smell that air! So fresh. Maybe this is how Earth once smelled.

ESMERALDA

Already seems like an excellent candidate for colonization, maybe with a little terraforming. Amazing how those scientists from UEF found this one. Six hundred billion clicks from Earth. Incredible.

COMMANDER OREN

It's that new Hubble scope in orbit around Venus. It can sift through the cosmos for proverbial needles in haystacks. Who knows what they'll find next?

HENRY

They say we are entering a whole new age.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now that the nanobots can build a jump gate in less than a year, we can start colonizing planets that can sustain human life.

ESMERALDA

Not to mention the minerals in the ground. Commander, I heard a rumour back at the base that this planet was chosen primarily for its resources. Apparently millions of tonnes of shakelite. Enough to power thousands of plutonium cannons.

COMMANDER OREN

Rumours, eh? That's classified, but you'll find out soon enough. We'll begin sinking shakelite detectors tomorrow.

(grins)

We need to find inhabitable planets like this for our overflowing masses. If the Empire can make a few shekels on the side to cover its expenses, then all the better.

HENRY

A few shekels? A tonne of shakelite would sell for enough UE credits to buy an entire moon.

JEREMY

(walks up from the marching soldiers)

Lieutenant Esmeralda. I need you to look at something. I'm getting some strange readings.

(he hands his holographic tablet to Esmeralda)

At first there was almost nothing. Just your basic static from atmosphere and the buzz from that greenish vegetation we see everywhere.

ESMERALDA

Hmmm ... Now it's lit up like a One True tree.

JEREMY

And the readings are strange. Look at that. Five hundred BCUs.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

That's normally associated with brain activity. And the field seems to extend from the ground up to a hundred meters. Then just regular atmospheric readings above this envelope.

ESMERALDA

Maybe a misreading?

JEREMY

I don't think so. Human brain activity would register around two hundred BCUs. But maybe things are wonky because...

TANQ

(with a VIEWER in his right hand, runs up to shout)

Commander! Look!

(points toward the horizon where a dust cloud approaches)

COMMANDER OREN

Hmmm...

(raises the viewer to his eyes)

Can't make out much. Too much dust. But I can see creatures, almost like rhinos or something. Strange. There weren't supposed to be any carbon-based organisms on the planet. We ran a scan after we got through the gate. The findings were consistent with the Hubblescope. No organisms. How long until it gets here?

JEREMY

(looks at his tablet)

One minute at its current speed. Less if they speed up.

ESMERALDA

We don't know if they mean us harm.

HENRY

I don't like this. These creatures appear out of nowhere and are heading directly toward us. Should we return to the shuttle?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COMMANDER OREN

(shaking his head)

We've got enough fire power to take out a herd a hundred times that size. Let's send a warning shot.

(turns toward soldier in exoskeleton armour)

Send them a warning round. Make sure it clears them by a good ten meters.

SOLDIER IN EXOSKELETON ARMOUR

Yes sir.

He steps forward and raises his right arm; there are four small rockets mounted around his wrist. He looses one of the rockets and it sails toward then above the cloud of dust; the dust cloud does slow.

COMMANDER OREN

(to the same soldier)

Send another one. But this time land it five meters in front of the dust cloud.

The soldier in the exoskeleton armor fires another rocket that explodes near the front of the approaching cloud; dust and stone spray everywhere, but again the cloud does not slow.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

Battle positions! Form a line. When they get within thirty meters let them have it. Short controlled bursts ...

All of the holographic tablets disappear.

JEREMY

(to Oren)

Sir! I've lost all power.

HENRY

And my gun's gone too.

(looks around to see other soldiers banging on their weapons and getting no responses)

SOLDIER IN EXOSKELETON

Sir! I've powered off. I can't get out of my armor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Comander Oren looks toward the incoming dust cloud; heads of strange alien creatures can now be seen, including tusks and fangs. He points toward four soldiers.

COMMANDER OREN

You, you, you and you. Get those mecs out of their armour. The rest of you form a defensive line. Any ideas?

ESMERALDA

No sir.

HENRY

Retreat?

COMMANDER OREN

(looks back toward shuttle)

Too late. Let's give these beasts a taste of steel. Draw knives!

The two soldiers are pried out of their exoskeletons. They form a phalanx with the other soldiers. At the head of the phalanx is Tanq. All draw long blades from sheaths that are attached to their belts.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

Hold your positions. Remember you are soldier citizens of the Empire.

The alien creatures descend upon the soldiers. The snarling creatures are each the size of a rhinoceros, but with six long spider-legs. They have outstretched necks, glowing red eyes and large black-gummed mouths filled with rows of long razor fangs. The creatures smash into the phalanx like a hammer hits a nail. Two of the soldiers fall out of formation and the creatures descend upon them and rip them to shreds. The remaining soldiers stab and slash at the creatures; Tanq drives his sword through the eye of a creature and it screams in pain and withdraws; Henry whips around to slice off the chomping snout of a creature; Esmeralda nearly falls out of formation and Henry reaches over to steady her. [begin sequence from opening scene flashforward] Commander Oren fights bravely but a creatures slashes open his belly with its razor-sharp tusks. None of the creatures are killed.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

(choking)

Retreat! Defensive formation omega.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HENRY

Tanq! Grab the Commander. We'll
cover you.

Tanq throws Commander Oren over his shoulders and begins running toward the shuttle. Henry and Esmeralda take a position on either side of Tanq and the remaining soldiers also form a defensive barrier around the Commander as they run toward the shuttle. They are harried by the creatures and defend themselves from snapping jaws as they run. Another soldier is killed during the retreat when he is cut in two by giant mandibles. As they approach the shuttle, the door opens and four other soldiers step out. Each is armed with several throwing knives. They hurl the knives end over end and the blades strike the screeching creatures. This distraction provides cover for the surviving soldiers to dash onto the shuttle. After all of the survivors get through the door is slammed shut.

INT. SHUTTLE - MOMENTS LATER

There is a terrific crash as a creature slams against the shuttle door. The door bulges inward but holds while the entire shuttle rocks. After a few more hits the slamming stops.

TANQ

(looking out a window)
They're moving out.

COMMANDER OREN

(lying on the floor and grimacing
in pain; he wheezes as he speaks)
Keep a look out. Search the
shuttle for weapons. And figure
how to get power back.

MEDIC

(applying BANDAGES to
Commander Oren's stomach
wounds)
I need power. Commander, you are
losing too much blood. And you've
got bad internal injuries.

COMMANDER OREN

(coughs up blood)
Do tell. Give it to me straight.
I know it ain't lookin' too good.

MEDIC

Without power, I can't use my
equipment.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEDIC (CONT'D)

Your injuries ... your internal injuries are bad. Very bad. You don't have much longer.

COMMANDER OREN

No sugar-coating, eh? I like that. All right. Help me up. I need to have a private word with my command team. Let's have a little pow-wow.

The medic helps Commander Oren struggle to his feet. Henry puts his arm around the Commander's shoulders and helps to guide him to a small corner room. Esmeralda follows and once all three are in the room she closes the door behind them.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

Prop me up.

Henry helps him into a chair; he and Esmeralda remain standing. Commander Oren coughs up blood.

COMMANDER OREN (CONT'D)

Better make this quick. First off, Esmeralda: thank you for your service. You have performed impeccably. From the first time I spotted you as a cadet I knew you were made from the right stuff. You proved that on Rigel Five. It has been an honour serving with you ...

ESMERALDA

Commander ...

COMMANDER OREN

Sorry, but we don't have time for chit chat. I want you to witness this. Effective immediately Henry Snowe is promoted to the rank of captain and will be in command of this mission.

HENRY

Commander ...

COMMANDER SNOWE

I said no chit chat. You have the next highest rank, and so the field promotion goes to you. But I suggest you listen to your second in command. Listen to her carefully.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COMMANDER SNOWE (CONT'D)

Now Esmeralda I need to have a few moments with Captain Snowe.

ESMERALDA

Yes sir. It has been an honour. I will never forget what you've taught me. And will always be grateful.

COMMANDER OREN

Good luck lieutenant.

Esmeralda EXITS.

HENRY

Commander ...

COMMANDER OREN

(weakly)

Hear me out. I'm fading fast. Your promotion may turn out to be a double-edged sword, assuming you can find a way to survive this God-forsaken planet. I need to tell you something. The Empire is sick. And corrupt. I've suspected for years but only recently became aware of how bad things have become. How the Council manufactures crises to preserve its own power.

Commander Oren reaches into his tunic and pulls out a SILVER NECKLACE WITH A CRUCIFIX.

HENRY

What ...

COMMANDER OREN

Yes, yes, I know. A serious breach of protocol. Wearing religious iconography during service. Code section 93 dash 62. Guess old habits die hard. This was given to me by my grandfather. From the old days when the old ones still worshipped their old gods. Before the Empire decided it would be better if everyone worshipped one official deity. Less conflict that way, or so they thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Commander Oren fiddles with the crucifix and it opens up; he extracts what appears to be a computer chip and holds it out for Henry. Henry accepts it and holds it up to look at it carefully.

HENRY

What is it?

COMMANDER OREN

A key. A source of power. And, I hope, the beginning of answers. Take it. Take it to your father. He'll know what to do.

HENRY

(replacing the computer chip into the crucifix and pocketing it)

I told you my father ... he is not well.

COMMANDER OREN

You might be surprised. He is Colonel Jack Snowe, after all. A Hero of the Empire. I remember when he assumed his first mission command. Around your age. In fact, you'd be a year younger than he was. Congratulations. Will you do it?

HENRY

Yes sir. Of course.

COMMANDER OREN

(coughing blood)
Goodbye Captain Snowe.
(dies)

EXT. HALL OF HEROES - DAY

White imposing building with massive arched entranceway. Large marble statues of a man and a woman in heroic poses stand outside main entrance.

INT. HALL OF HEROES - DAY

A group of TWELVE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS and a TEACHER drift by exhibits on a conveyor belt (similar to the old Disneyland exhibits in Tomorrowland). TALIA is engaged in an animated conversation with several friends who ignore the exhibits as they scroll by.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the late Twentieth Century, video games were an increasingly popular past-time. In particular, gamers played within imaginary alien worlds.

Group of students roll up to another holographic exhibit: an overweight teenage boy with a baseball cap turned backwards sits in a plush chair in front of a LARGE FLAT SCREEN and a PS3 CONSOLE. A BIG GULP WITH A STRAW sits on a small end table next to the chair. On the screen appear images of a ferocious alien battling a human dressed in a 'Halo' outfit. The boy's face is passive and cow-like as he peers out of half-lidded eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Of course these simple pastimes gave way to more noble pursuits as the citizens of the Empire bravely explored planets. It was one of these first colonies—Alpha Centauri Prime—that gave rise to our first off-planet Hero of the Empire, a mere ten years ago.

The conveyor belt continues to the next exhibit. A small ten year old East Indian girl with braided hair and a snarl on her face faces off against a giant horrific alien (similar to the ferocious video game alien on the screen in the previous exhibit). In her right hand the girl wields a small spork (that is, a spoon/fork combination).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Beast of Horrors killed Teresa Anand's mother, father, and two brothers two weeks after the jump. Teresa managed to slay the creature with her spork.

Conveyor belt moves to the next exhibit. Teresa is now crouched on her haunches in front of a camp fire. There is a spit with a chunk of smoking meat turning over the fire. Underneath her eyes are swipes of dark chalk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Teresa buried her family and lived off the Beast of Horrors for the next three months until rescued by a jump ship. During this time, she fought off four other alien monsters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Conveyor belt moves forward to the next holographic exhibit. A now-adult Teresa stands in front of large worshipful crowd. In her right hand she holds a spork and, in her left hand, a large trophy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Teresa Anand returned to earth as a Hero of the Empire. One million citizens attended her granting ceremony. She is now a soldier citizen of the United Empire. She serves us. And keeps us strong. And free.

A student snickers at the narrator's propaganda and is silenced by a stern look from the teacher. The teacher taps a few keys on her holographic tablet then turns it to show the student: 'Micheal Onoichak - 10 Demerit Points'.

INT. SHUTTLE - DAY

HENRY

(emerging from the command room)

Commander Oren is dead. He told me to convey his pride in serving with such fine troops. He told us to never forget we are soldier citizens of the Empire. And to do our duty. Report.

ESMERALDA

Yes sir. I told them of the change of command. The creatures are nowhere in sight. We've been fashioning weapons.

(she holds out a makeshift long spear)

What are your orders?

HENRY

First, a few questions. Does anyone know what those creatures were?

JEREMY

(clearing his throat)

I may have an answer sir. Or at least part of one. Right before the power outage I took another reading and ran it through the correlation software. Brain waves, sir, like I said before. That's what the program coughed out.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEREMY (CONT'D)

And here's the interesting part.
Sentience.

HENRY

You mean those creatures?

JEREMY

No sir. I mean the planet ...

There is a terrific groan as if metal is being torn apart. The shuttle rocks and sways then the floor buckles and the whole shuttle sinks a foot into the ground. Inside the shuttle everyone sways and grabs something to steady themselves.

HENRY

What was that?

JEREMY

Don't think it was a coincidence.

ESMERALDA

Are we under attack?

JEREMY

I ... I think so. It might be the planet.

HENRY

Because it's sentient? Do you mean self-aware?

JEREMY

Maybe. But not like us. More like a dog.

TANQ

Dogs are smart.

JEREMY

True. I just mean it may be responding in a more instinctive way. Protecting itself. It's not too much of a stretch. A long time ago scientists came up with a similar theory; the view that the planet Earth itself is some kind of a super-organism. They called it Gaia theory. Gaia was the name the Ancient Greeks used for Mother Earth.

(warming to topic)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It all started with this Russian geophysicist named Vladimir Vernadsky and his 1926 book called The Biosphere...

There is another groan and the shuttle sinks a few more inches. The soldiers exchange increasingly panicked looks.

HENRY

Jeremy, we'll have to finish this later. Esmeralda, can I have a word with you?

Henry and Esmeralda ENTER the small command room--more like a large closet--and close the door. They are almost nose to nose in the cramped space; Esmeralda bears Henry's awkwardness for a few moments before speaking.

ESMERALDA

Yes?

HENRY

All right. We need a plan. Fast.

ESMERALDA

We face an uncertain enemy. Maybe an entire planet against us. Our troops are scared. You saw what happened out there. Those monsters killed four of us. And we didn't get any ...

HENRY

But they can be hurt. When that creature took a blade in its eye from Tanq it roared and fell back. They can be hurt bad. Let's just hope they can be killed.

ESMERALDA

But how can we know?

HENRY

Only one way to find out. Try to kill one. Let's see how I do.

ESMERALDA

(pause)

Henry, are you certain that is wise? You will likely die.

HENRY

If we can't kill them, we'll all die.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ESMERELADA

Then what?

HENRY

The hills a mile east of the shuttle. They extend above one hundred meters, beyond the field Jeremy described. We need to get to the top. Maybe the power will return and we can contact the Reagan. Get them to send in the cavalry.

ESMERELDA

I see. Quite the plan. Sounds risky as all hell. I like it. And ...

HENRY

Yes?

ESMERALDA

What I said to you before the shuttle drop. I didn't mean anything ... I mean you've already proved ...

HENRY

Understood.

The two step back out of the command room; Henry approaches Jeremy.

HENRY (CONT'D)

How did it create those creatures?

JEREMY

From our minds, I think. It conjured up creatures of terror by looking into our thoughts. That's why the monsters are both different and kind of recognizable.

HENRY

Why not just poison the atmosphere or something? Send in a cloud with toxic rain.

JEREMY

I don't know. It may only be able to physically manifest creatures. Our thoughts say 'This is horror' and the planet sends them our way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HENRY

So maybe, just maybe, the planet sizes us up somehow. Then devises an enemy to take us out and protect itself.

JEREMY

I think so. But ... this is mainly speculation. My readings faded too quickly for me to access the data I need for a full assessment.

HENRY

Then perhaps it's time for an experiment. We need to know what we're up against. And Jeremy, you'll have a special role to play...

INT. COLONEL SNOWE APARTMENT - DAY

Colonel Jack Snowe sits in his reclining chair in his apartment, his eyes half-lidded.

COLONEL SNOWE

Hmmm... Katherine?

A light comes on in the corner of the room where the holographic figure in the wedding gown stands. With the light on, we can now see the figure is Katherine Snowe, Colonel Snowe's late wife (and the same woman in the family picture in the earlier kitchen scene with Talia and Henry). The figure opens her eyes.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

Yes?

COLONEL SNOWE

Katherine, come here please. I want to talk. How are you?

The holographic figure begins slowly walking toward Colonel Snowe until she stands before him.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

Good. And you Jack?

COLONEL SNOWE

I've been better.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

Jack, don't be so hard on yourself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL SNOWE

Okay, I'll try. I miss you.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

I know.

COLONEL SNOWE

I love you.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

I know.

COLONEL SNOWE

(reaches out with his
right hand until it
touches and passes
through Katherine's
holographic hand)

I love you.

HOLOGRAPHIC KATHERINE SNOWE

Jack ... Jack, you know I ... you
know I'm not real, right?

Colonel Jack Snowe puts his head in his hand and begins to sob as the holographic figure looks down on him.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHUTTLE - DAY

The remaining fourteen troops stand outside the shuttle. There is another terrific groan and the shuttle sinks two more feet. With the exception of Henry, the troops whirl at the sound and watch in dismay as the shuttle settles further into the ground.

HENRY

(strips down to his
underwear and smiles)
Want to make myself look as
vulnerable as possible. Then maybe
the next beastie won't be so bad.

Henry grabs a spear and jogs out a hundred yards in front of his troops. At his side a long sword hangs within its sheath. He takes the spear and jabs it in the ground hard. There is a distant pained howl and the soldiers tighten their group. Henry smiles, closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

This is the second and last flashback sequence. Young Colonel Jack Snowe and eleven year old Henry are back in the dense Big Sur forest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG COLONEL SNOWE

Let's try something a little trickier. There! See that squirrel. Pick him up.

YOUNG HENRY

But dad, I can't do that. You know it doesn't work with living creatures.

YOUNG COLONEL SNOWE

I said I couldn't do it; but maybe you can. Remember your training. Take a deep breath. Calm your mind. Become one with the forest, with the trees.

YOUNG HENRY concentrates with furrowed brow to access his psionic powers; nothing happens. Henry takes a breath and relaxes brow; ten yards away the squirrel levitates two feet off the ground.

YOUNG HENRY

Wow!

The squirrel is released, falls to the ground and scurries away.

YOUNG COLONEL SNOWE

I knew you could do it! Amazing. I can already see your powers are much stronger than my own. Much stronger. Son, I'm proud of you. You can do anything ... if you put your mind to it!

Father and son embrace.

YOUNG COLONEL SNOWE (CONT'D)

Just remember. There are rumblings that even lab-grown psionic persons should no longer be tolerated. If they knew our family was born with these powers the United Empire would try to turn us into weapons. Even I couldn't stop them. No one can ever see you use your powers. As long as others can see or record you, you can't use psionics, no matter how tempting the situation may be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY

Yes, father.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHUTTLE - DAY

Henry opens his eyes to see a small dust cloud moving quickly toward him. Begin background MUSIC (soundtrack to Halo 3) that builds from a guitar solo to a beating drum. Henry takes a battle stance and balances on the back of his heel with the spear raised in his right hand. As the dust cloud closes Henry can make out within a snarling tusked monster racing toward him. Henry hurls the spear and it arcs then strikes the monster in the head, the creature lets out a terrific screech (the soldiers with the exception of Henry cover their ears) but does not slow. Henry begins a light trot toward the rushing monster with his sword held out. The creature leaps at Henry and, just before the two collide, he ducks so that the monster rushes overhead; once it is directly above him Henry turns and cuts off the creature's giant head. The creature caterwauls in the dust then is silent. Henry stands over the monster then toes it to make sure it is dead.

HENRY

(turning toward the
troops)

They die! We live. They die!

SOLDIERS

(raising weapons above
heads)

Hoorah!

The men whirl when there is another groan and the shuttle sinks down another three feet, the upper portion only is now visible.

HENRY

Form the lines! We move out now.

ESMERALDA

Everyone down to their skivvies.
We'll follow the captain's lead.

The men and women quickly strip down to their underwear. Each soldier grabs a weapon and a shield. Two lines are formed with Jeremy and Tanq at the head. Makeshift spears bristle from the group like a hedgehog.

HENRY

Let's move. Stay tight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The troops begin a fast run in formation; hear a distant cry. Approaching quickly from the horizon is a large dust cloud forming.

ESMERALDA
(quietly to Henry)
Good luck Captain.

HENRY
Thanks. And to you.

The troops close to within fifty feet of the incoming dust-cloud, fanged monsters can now be seen.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(to Jeremy)
Start the shield.

JEREMY
Yes, sir.

Jeremy closes his eyes in concentration for a moment and accesses his psionic powers. He uses these mental powers to form a translucent dome field that surrounds all of the jogging troops to create a 'psionic shield barrier'.

HENRY
Hold the line!

The alien beasts rush in and smash against the psionic shield barrier created by Jeremy; the aliens bounce over the barrier and above the rushing troops who remain sheltered beneath the dome.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Double speed!

The troops run toward the hill. As they run they are harried by the monsters that try unsuccessfully to pierce Jeremy's psionic shield barrier. Jeremy ensured that the barrier keeps the monsters out while permitting the soldiers to get through it, if necessary. Esmeralda spears a beast after the point of her spear goes outside the barrier. Henry and others also begin to flash their blades and spears through the barrier to stab and slice at the monsters. The second last man in formation stumbles--TEAK (the soldier who sprained his ankle in the earlier jogging scene)--and falls through the barrier; Teak is torn to shreds by the monsters. Another soldier almost goes down and Henry yanks him back into formation.

INT. HALL OF HEROES - DAY

Talia and several teenage students chat as they are moved along by the conveyor belt. The students quiet as they are taken into a large dark room. They stop next to a holographic diorama that displays an urban plaza filled with several dozen figures dressed in red robes. The plaza is surrounded by tall buildings. Talia and her peers stop for the first time to watch the new exhibit with rapt attention.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Empire has faced and overcome many challenges. Challenges that would destroy the very fabric of our society and return us to the dark times of bankrupt countries and global terrorism. To the decadent times when each man and woman was given a vote, no matter how undeserving. To the times of divisions, violence and hate before the governments of Earth were brought together in one United Empire. Our most recent threat began in 2107 when the psionic rebels launched a war to destroy us. Through the use of technology, the psionics transformed their minds into weapons of war. For five years their killing machine massacred innocent citizens of the United Empire. They appeared unstoppable. Until a hero appeared. One man who would change the course of Empire history. Colonel Jack Snowe of the Fifteenth Regiment.

In the right corner of the diorama a small holographic figure appears on top of a ninety-five storey building. The camera zooms in on this figure. It is a soldier—Colonel Jack Snowe—dressed in green fatigues and wearing a jet pack. In his right hand he holds a box-like device that we find out is a bomb. The soldier leaps from the building and extends his arms to reveal wing-like appendages. He swoops down toward the plaza. The hooded figures are caught off guard when the soldier suddenly appears in their midst. At the last second the soldier ends his dive a few feet above the pavement of the plaza by firing reverse rockets in the heels of his boots. The soldier plants the box-like device on the paved ground and immediately fires his jet pack to send him hurtling back into the sky. Out of each of the sides of the box a metal clamp appears;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the clamps burrow into the paved ground to secure the box. By now three of the hooded figures are huddled together with one of them holding an outstretched hand toward the soldier as he flies away. Several hundred yards in the sky above the plaza the soldier jerks back as if caught in an invisible net. He struggles as he is dragged back toward the plaza. The box-like device detonates into a powerful atomic-like explosion that ripples quickly through the plaza and vaporizes the surrounding buildings. All of the hooded figures in the plaza are also vaporized by the explosion. The impact of the explosion sends the soldier flipping end over end into the sky, his face visibly racked with pain. Then the scene ends and the holographic image disappears to be replaced with one of the decimated urban area with one whole block and dozens of buildings crushed into dust.

Talia bites her lip as she watches the scene with her father unfold. When the holographic image of Colonel Jack Snowe is drawn back into the explosion she squeezes her eyes shut. Two of her friends watch her with looks of concern.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Yes, a hero appeared. By taking out the psionic rebels headquarters Colonel Snowe turned the tide against the enemy, at the cost of devastating injuries to himself. Within weeks the war was over and over twenty thousand psionic rebels were executed for their crimes against the United Empire. But the threat remains. Even now the rebels are rebuilding their forces on planets outside of the United Empire's jurisdiction. Even now they ready their war machine against us. We must never rest. We must always be vigilant. We will vanquish this enemy and any other that would threaten the peace and order of our beloved Empire.

Talia becomes increasingly upset as she listens to the narrator. She turns and runs out of building as the teacher and students watch her with concern.

EXT. ALIEN PLANET-DAY

JEREMY

(between laboured breaths)
I'm tiring!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

How much longer can you hold it?

JEREMY

Don't know. I don't think I can make it to the hill.

TANQ

(gestures at his back as they run)

Then hop on!

HENRY

Just get us to that hill.

Jeremy jump's on Tanq's back, and continues to focus on maintaining the psionic shield barrier although his face is now lined with exhaustion. The troops jog in formation toward the hill while being harried by the alien monsters that keep smashing against the psionic barrier. The citizen soldiers make their way to the base of the steep hill, and Henry moves the troops into a defensive formation between two large boulders, their backs are against the hill.

JEREMY

I'm almost spent. The shield is too big, it takes too much concentration.

HENRY

You've done your job. Good work. Now get to the top of that hill with Tanq. Signal the ship as soon as you climb above the planet's field.

JEREMY

Yes sir.

HENRY

And Tanq. Protect Jeremy. Make sure he gets to the top.

TANQ

Yes sir. Let's go.

HENRY

(turning to the troops)
All right. The shield is about to come down. Form the phalanx between these boulders... like a mini-Hot Gates. Let's send these creatures howling back to whatever hell spawned them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ESMERALDA

Hot Gates? I don't get the reference.

HENRY

That's the name of an entranceway between two cliffs where King Leonidas set up his 300 Spartan warriors.

ESMERALDA

The Battle of Thermopylae? Circa 480 BC? Yes, I remember studying that one at the Academy. As I recall, it didn't end well. All of the Spartans were eventually slaughtered by the Persians.

HENRY

(smiles)

Wasn't going to mention that last bit.

The troops form a defensive phalanx with makeshift shields. Jeremy turns the psionic shield off and he and Tanq begin to clamber up the hill, picking their way over rocks and small shrubs. As soon as the shield comes down the alien monsters attack the troops with even greater ferocity; the phalanx holds and the seemingly-endless monsters are cut down one by one as they enter the space between the boulders.

EXT. HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy and Tanq scramble up the hill. A large long-snouted monster below them leaps over the phalanx and begins pursuing them.

JEREMY

Look! It's closing!

TANQ

Keep going! Faster!

Jeremy, exhausted, falls behind Tanq and is about to be eaten by the pursuing monster.

TANQ (CONT'D)

No!

Just as the monster tries to take a bite out of Jeremy, Tanq, while holding onto a rocky ledge with his right arm, reaches over and throws Jeremy up the hill with his left arm. The monster chomps down on Tanq's left arm below the elbow, severing it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tanq muffles a scream and balances himself on the hill then takes out his short sword with his remaining hand and drives it into one of the monster's eyes as it continues to clamp down on his arm. The monster screeches then tumbles dead back down the hill.

JEREMY

Oh no! Tanq!

TANQ

(eyes flutter in shock as
blood shoots out the
stump of his left arm)

Ahh ...

JEREMY

Tanq! Tanq! Listen to me.

Jeremy tears off his shirt and wraps it around Tanq's bleeding stump to form a tourniquet.

TANQ

Wwwhat?

JEREMY

I'll try to stop the blood flow.

TANQ

Huh?

JEREMY

(struggling to remain
calm)

Piece of cake. Now repeat after
me. Fear is the mind killer. It
is the ripper. It is the black
times. A howl in the dead of
night. I fear no fear.

TANQ

Huh? I mean ... Fear is the mind
killer.

JEREMY

I feel no fear.

TANQ

(closing his eyes)
I feel no fear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEREMY
 (concentrating his psionic
 powers to stop the blood
 flow)
 Again.

TANQ
 Fear is the mind killer. I fear no
 fear.

Jeremy removes the tourniquet and looks at the wound. The blood on Tanq's open wound has begun to coagulate. Jeremy replaces the tourniquet.

JEREMY
 Good. That'll keep for a bit.
 (flips open his communicator)
 Reagan, this is Sublieutenant
 Jeremy Steele. Can you hear me?

COMMUNICATION OFFICER ON
 SPACESHIP(V.O.)
 Yes, Sublieutenant Steele. Loud
 and clear.

JEREMY
 We are under attack. Commander
 Oren is dead and Lieutenant, er,
 Captain Snowe is now in command.
 The planet itself is the hostile.
 No electrical devices work on this
 planet. Repeat. No electrical
 devices work on this planet. Up to
 a hundred meters from the surface.

COMMUNICATION OFFICER(V.O.)
 Understood.

JEREMY
 Here's what Captain Snowe wants you
 to do.

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Henry, Esmeralda and the remaining five troops fight valiantly against the alien monsters. The defensive position continues to hold as the monsters try to squeeze between the boulders to get at the soldiers.

HENRY
 (stabbing a monster with
 his spear)
 Lieutenant. Report.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESMERALDA

The line holds... The men and women
tire ...

A many-fanged creature briefly bursts through the line and decapitates a soldier with his razor tail.

HENRY

No!

Henry stabs the creature through an eye; the creature falls back.

EXT. OUTSIDE TALIA'S HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Talia, dressed again in her YELLOW RAINCOAT, walks quickly along the rain-soaked sidewalk toward her high school building. Her face reveals that she is still in distress from watching the new exhibit with her father at the Hall of Heroes. In the same fifth storey room in one of the skyscrapers that line the street, Talia is being watched by the same TWO ROBED FIGURES. Close up on their faces that remain hidden in the shadows of their hoods. [The scene foreshadows the main plot of Season One where rebel psionics kidnap Talia to get revenge on her father.]

ROBED FIGURE ONE

She's alone. Should we take her?

ROBED FIGURE TWO

No. It's too soon.

Camera pans back to Talia as she enters a door at the base of her apartment building.

INT. COLONEL JACK SNOWE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Colonel Snowe is taking a shower. He grimaces in pain as he holds on to braces at each side of the shower. A MEDBOT hovers just outside the shower to assist him, if needed. Close up of his haunted haggard face.

INT. UE REAGAN SPACESHIP LAUNCH PAD - DAY

An alarm sounds as men jump into six small gunner ships stored within the spaceship's launch pad; each ship is only eight feet long and three feet wide and the pilot must lie down on his stomach and grip the JOYSTICK CONTROLS.

EXT. BELOW UE REAGAN SPACESHIP - MOMENTS LATER

Each pod-like ship drops out of the belly of the spaceship, a rocket fuselage fires at the end of each ship as they race toward the planet's surface.

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL — MOMENTS LATER

Esmeralda spots the six gunner ships zooming toward her position.

ESMERALDA
(pointing skyward)
Look!

TROOPS
Hoorah!

HENRY
Keep fighting!

EXT. GUNNER SHIP—MOMENTS LATER

LEAD PILOT
This is Rambo Five approaching
target. Maintain attack position.
All right. On my count, three two
one. Light 'em up!

All six gunner ships begins firing from Gatlin gun-like weapons protruding from the ship's nose.

EXT. BOTTOM OF HILL — MOMENTS LATER

The bullets tear through the alien monsters, shredding them and blowing off limbs and snouts: the waves of bullets decimate the monsters. The firepower turns the tide in the battle for the moment.

HENRY
Now's our chance! Everyone up the
hill. Move!

The troops scramble up the hill with Esmeralda and Henry at the rear.

ESMERALDA
Over there!

The planet begins to fight back against the gunner ships. A hundred yards to the left of the soldiers a huge mound of dirt begins to accumulate. The newly-formed hill stretches out to become an eight foot long barrel. The shaft begins shooting out a machine gun-like stream of small rocks and pebbles at the gunner ships. Other dirt mounds begin to accumulate.

EXT. GUNNER SHIP - MOMENTS LATER

LEAD PILOT

Incoming! Evasive maneuvers! Theta pattern.

The gunner ships break formation and begin diving and swooping as they try to avoid fire from below. The stream of pebbles hits the rear engine of one of the gunner ships and it goes down until it craters fifty yards from the bottom of the hill. The pilot dies in the explosion.

LEAD PILOT (CONT'D)

Return to the mothership. We've done all we can.

The gunner ships accelerate up and out of range as they blast toward the distant orbiting spaceship. As they ascend, the gunner ships are passed by a shuttle that has been sent from the spaceship to recover the soldier citizens on the planet.

EXT. HALF-WAY UP HILL-MOMENTS LATER

The alien monsters spring back toward the hill.

HENRY

They're regrouping! Faster!

The troops race toward the top of the hill. Henry and Esmeralda are forced to battle the first arrivals; Henry stabs a creature with his spear and it tumbles back taking the spear with it; Henry withdraws his short sword as he and the others continue their climb toward the top of the hill. As the group nears the top, Jeremy begins pelting the incoming aliens with rocks and sod. Tanq is resting with his head down, a tourniquet winds around the stump of his arm. The shuttle from the UE Reagan spaceship arrives from free fall and fires reverse booster rocket until it is hovering above the hill.

JEREMY

Hurry! The shuttle's here.

A terrific battle takes place as the soldier citizens of the United Empire repel the alien beasts; several soldiers suffer injuries from claws and fangs, but all survive as they jump into the hovering shuttle. It whisks them away, dodging pellet fire from below as it soars upwards.

INT. SHUTTLE - DAY

JEREMY

You'll be okay, big guy. Just stay calm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANQ

(smiling)

Easy for you to say. When this is all over, just don't call me stumpy.

HENRY

Phew!

ESMERALDA

We made it!

HENRY

Yes. Yes, we did.

INT. SPACESHIP - FUNERAL SCENE - NIGHT

Six flames burn in CANDELABRAS at the center of a large room. The entire crew is assembled, dressed in full uniform.

HENRY

We are here to honour the memory of six fallen warriors. Six soldier citizens. They each gave their lives in service to the United Empire. We rejoice at their glorious deaths.

ESMERALDA

I lost six comrades and our dear leader Commander Oren. We fought together—as one. I honour his memory and celebrate his valiant death.

MUSIC (Ludacris' Get Back) starts playing; the soldiers all break into individual dances, some with anguished expressions, some with expressions of joy. At the end of the song the flames are extinguished

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

Commander Oren always had a thing for the classics.

HENRY

I wish that I had known him better.

TANQ

(ENTERS the room)

Captain Snowe! They fixed me up already. Look!

Tanq rolls up his sleeve to reveal and flex a shiny metallic arm that begins at the right elbow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANQ (CONT'D)

Thanks to Jeremy, there wasn't too much nerve damage. No trouble fusing the mec-arm.

HENRY

Glad to see you are doing well. I've put you and Jeremy up for Class IV battle awards. It won't make up for your lost limb, I know.

JEREMY

Thank you sir. Tanq, how does it feel?

TANQ

Amazing. Captain, with your permission, may I make a small demonstration?

HENRY

Of course.

Tanq walks over to a series of lockers, reaches back with his mec-arm then punches the lockers; his fist smashes through the metal and shakes all of the lockers.

TANQ

(smiling)

Tanq is finally strong!

ESMERELDA

Glad to see it. Henry, you have another duty before we return through the gate. As senior officer on the first mission to this planet, you have naming rights.

HENRY

Thanks. It frankly never crossed my mind. But you're right. Planet X-11 deserves a name. How about we go with Gaia? The name Jeremy mentioned earlier. The old Greek name for Mother Earth.

ESMERALDA

Gaia. Sounds good. But she's one angry mother.

EXT. COLONEL SNOWE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Establishing shot of two distant figures approaching turbo-lift outside of building under a light rain. Cut to Henry and Talia; he is dressed in jeans, white t-shirt and light blue jacket and she is wearing the yellow raincoat.

TALIA

I'm nervous.

HENRY

He won't see you.

TALIA

We'll see.

HENRY

This is a bad idea.

Henry and Talia stop in the turbolift then turn to face the entrance.

FRIENDLY FEMALE COMPUTER

VOICE (V.O.)

Hello Henry and Talia.

(a concerned tone)

Talia, your father has placed protocol restrictions on your visits and I'm afraid you are not permitted to proceed. Henry, you are free to go.

TALIA

(to the ceiling)

Tell him I want to see him.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

(neutral tone)

Henry, you are free to go.

TALIA

Tell him!

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

Henry, you are free to go.

HENRY

Let's go home, Talia.

TALIA

Damn him! No, you go.

HENRY

Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TALIA

Yes.

Henry nods as Talia leaves; she turns and offers a weak smile as the turbo-lift door closes on Henry's look of concern.

INT. COLONEL SNOWE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Henry ENTERS the room.

COLONEL SNOWE

(groggily with eyes half-open)

Henry, is that you?

HENRY

Yes, father.

COLONEL SNOWE

Hmmm... Good of you to come.

HENRY

Your security protocol didn't let Talia in.

COLONEL SNOWE

(hesitates)

I cannot see her. Not like this. It would ... destabilize both of us.

HENRY

She's sixteen. She's old enough.

COLONEL SNOWE

I said no.

HENRY

(biting his lip)

Yes sir. I have something.

COLONEL SNOWE

What?

HENRY

Something from Commander Oren.

COLONEL SNOWE

I heard you were promoted to captain? Congratulations.

HENRY

Yes sir. On my mission with Commander Oren.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL SNOWE

Good man. We celebrate his glorious death. You know, it's strange. When we were both starting out, I worried about Oren, worried he was a bit soft. I mean things were pretty tough there for awhile during the Spider Wars. But he proved me wrong. I remember how he distinguished himself at the Battle of Khartoom ...

HENRY

I need to talk to you about the thing Commander Oren gave me.

COLONEL SNOWE

... We were camped at the beach of Nanjing Bay. When the rebels came over the hill they almost caught us snoozing ... Almost.

(blinks)

He gave you something?

HENRY

Is this area clean?

COLONEL SNOWE

Yes. No scanners.

HENRY

The Commander told me the United Empire is corrupt. That the Council of Citizens acts to entrench its power. That they plan ...

COLONEL SNOWE

Hmmm...

HENRY

Father, he gave me this. To bring to you.

Henry takes out the crucifix from his pocket and retrieves the tiny computer chip then goes over to a wall recess and places it over a blue square where the chip hovers. A detailed schematic map appears on the giant screen.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's a map of the Council Chambers. See here. On the fifteenth floor. There is a tiny key symbol.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Could be the place where the
Council buries its secrets.

COLONEL SNOWE

(eyes half-closed)

I see.

HENRY

And?

COLONEL SNOWE

I don't know. I can't help you.
I'm tired and need to rest.

HENRY

Please father... this is important.
You need to focus. Commander Oren
said the Empire was rotting ... we
are becoming slaves, not citizens.

COLONEL SNOWE

(eyes closed)

I need to rest now.

HENRY

But ... I understand. Please
reconsider Talia's visit. She
needs to see you. I worry about
her.

COLONEL SNOWE

(opening his eyes mid-way)

I need to rest.

HENRY

All right.

Head bowed, Henry turns to leave. He walks a few feet then notices the holographic figure of his late mother dressed in her sleek white wedding dress. Henry turns back toward his father and, for the first time, Henry's face convulses in anger. He accesses his psionic powers and focuses on the IV bottle next to Colonel Snowe. The bottle shakes slightly then explodes splaying fluid and tiny shards of glass. A red light flashes from the ceiling and a MEDBOT appears carrying a replacement IV bottle.

HENRY (CONT'D)

She was our mother too!

Henry whirls and leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLONEL SNOWE (CLOSE UP)
(thin smile curls the
edges of his lips)
Hmmm...

FADE OUT.

THE END