

TERRA INCOGNITA

by

Cillian Daly

PREVIEW

FADE IN:

SPACE - STARFIELD - ROTATING SLOWLY

Stars recede. A full moon arcs into view, momentarily blinding, as we enter --

INT. KUIPER OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE DOME - NIGHT

A long, dusty white tube, eight feet in diameter, points towards the stars, collects their faint light.

BARRY DAVIS, 58, a tired, gentle man, dressed for summer, stands at the telescopes base. He clears some dust away from the eyepiece, takes a look.

A playful grin spreads across his face.

DAVIS

Any surprises left out there..?

INT. KUIPER OBSERVATORY, HAWAII - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

TELEMETRY streams across an array of touch-screen panels, bathing the confined room in pale blue light. On the wall hangs a calendar, open to JULY 2114. A naked woman, wrapped only in her hair, smiles back -- Nothing changes.

In the middle of the room, two technicians -- JAMES KEPH watches the DATA stream in front of him race up the screen -- MARCUS TAYLOR reads an old, dog-eared paperback book.

KEPH

Sit and monitor. I'm second only to a computer. I just react, and hit a button. A monkey could do this.

TAYLOR

And do it well. Monkey wanna get me another coffee?

KEPH

Monkey do. Reluctantly.

Keph stretches, moves to the door at the back of the room.

TAYLOR

Duly noted.

Taylor resumes reading as --

BEEP - BEEP - BEEP

Keph stops mid stride, turns. Taylor looks over the top of his book.

On one SCREEN a large block of numbers flashes red.

Taylor stares at the data, eyes widen, his book forgotten.

Keph leans on the back of his chair.

KEPH
That's a pretty big loss.

TAYLOR
It's huge. What is it, Rigel?

KEPH
Looks it.

TAYLOR
Must be the array. You want to
realign it?

KEPH
Yeah, no problem.

Keph lands in a chair, fingers dance across the interface. On screen, names and data streams are isolated, boxed off.

KEPH (CONT'D)
Yeah, it's Rigel. I mean, it's not
Rigel. Shit, nothing there.

TAYLOR
Realign it then.

Keph stares at Taylor.

KEPH
You're not getting it, man -- It's
realigned already. The array is
receiving. Rigel isn't there.

Taylor looks at Keph's screen, bewildered, back to his own display as --

BEEP - BEEP - BEEP -- More urgent now.

The screen shows a bigger block of data turning red -- And then another.

TAYLOR
Jesus. That's Antares gone. And
Beetleguise. This a test? Someone
shitting with us?

Keph glances over, puzzled. More alarms flash across multiple screens.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
What in the hell..?

INT. CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Davis strides down a tight hallway, past offices, cubicles and old equipment left to rot. Taylor follows on his heels.

DAVIS
How long?

TAYLOR
(looking at watch)
Six minutes.

A beat.

DAVIS
And you're sure?

TAYLOR
Positive. Keph is running the diagnostic algorithm now, but a failure there still doesn't explain it.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Taylor slides back into his chair, as Keph glances at Davis.

KEPH
Lost a couple more.

The screens now show a lot of red data.

DAVIS
Everything checking out?

KEPH
Nope. Cycled the system three times, same result -- It's like the whole damn galaxy is switching off.

Davis exhales, thinking.

DAVIS
Let's start up the Meade, do this the old fashioned way.

INT. TELESCOPE DOME - NIGHT

The entire telescope platform rotates as big heavy gears work below.

Keph looks over from a small computer terminal.

KEPH
OK, that should be Rigel.

Davis puts his eye to the scope, as Taylor watches. Davis adjusts the eyepiece--

Davis stands, face white as a sheet, gestures to Taylor to look.

Taylor does so, reluctantly. After a moment --

TAYLOR
Should be.
(standing up)
'Cept it isn't.

DAVIS
Looks like we got a serious problem here, folks.

Davis looks to each of them. Keph and Taylor look back, unsure. The computer terminal emits a soft BEEP. Keph checks it.

ON SCREEN

The same telemetry from the control room, only smaller in scale. And now every bit of data is RED.

BACK TO KEPH

KEPH
It's -- I don't know what it is, but half the sky is gone.

DAVIS
You two keep looking. Double check it. We're not a national observatory just for the hell of it.
(beat)
Time to start waking people up.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

A flotilla of tiny vessels dotted across the glittering sea.

EXT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN DECK - DAY

An ENSIGN pounds the deck, clings to a small PDA as he weaves through the chaos of a combat ready ship. He enters --

INT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN BRIDGE

FLEET ADMIRAL ASCOT and CAPTAIN TOWNE watch the sea through the main window.

Behind them, on the rear bulkhead, a group of TECHNICIANS gather around a cluster of flat panel monitors. One technician holds a REMOTE CONTROL unit.

The ensign stops in front of Ascot, salutes, holds out the PDA. Ascot dismisses him with a nod.

ASCOT

(regarding the PDA)

This is what I love about being on the frontline, Captain -- Top Brass always want to know what you've found before they give you the order to go look for it.

Ascot hands the PDA to Towne.

ASCOT (CONT'D)

Let's move it on.

TOWNE

Aye sir.

Towne rotates, addresses the technicians.

TOWNE (CONT'D)

OK, time to take a look. Roll her out.

The technicians scramble, final checks, and an affirmative nod.

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN - SAME TIME

Remote submersible MANDY, the mass of a small car, powers through the water, her quad props WHIRRING her on. Her movement startles a shoal of fish.

INT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN BRIDGE

A technician turns from the monitors.

TECHNICIAN #1

Passing twenty nine hundred feet. Visibility as expected. Thermal imaging, negative. And radiation output, eh, point two Millisieverts above background. ETA one minute.

ASCOT

Very good.

A second technician points to one of the screens.

TECHNICIAN #2

Abundance of life down there.

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN

An abnormal abundance.

Life flocks around Mandy as she continues her descent.

INT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN BRIDGE

TECHNICIAN #1

We're losing visual, local
wildlife's too dense -- kinda cool.
Thermal's rising. Water's warmer
than the surface.

TOWNE

Radiation?

TECHNICIAN #2

Climbing -- point eight
millisieverts.

TOWNE

(to Ascot)
Getting real warm.

ON SCREEN something MASSIVE pushes past the camera, rocking
the submersible.

TECHNICIAN #1

Whoa-- That nearly took out Mandy.

TOWNE

Sonar, what the hell was that?

SONAR OPERATOR

Whale, Sir.

TECHNICIAN #2

Levelling out at sixty five hundred
feet.

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN

Mandy pushes through an immense mix of sea life, so abundant
that they no longer swerve to avoid her. Her search light
trying desperately to push past the mass, to see ahead.

And then she's through -- a massive void of empty space filled with her own artificial light. Nearby, a BLUE WHALE pounds through the ocean -- Nature's own nuclear submarine.

Mandy slows, her thrusters WHUMPING in reverse. She hangs in the murky depth; a confused puppy not comprehending the sight before her.

INT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN BRIDGE

<p>TECHNICIAN #1 Visual just coming back up-- be a second. (beat) Here she comes...</p>	<p>TECHNICIAN #2 Radiation spiked as she broke through--</p>
---	--

The screens FLASH white, settle down as the picture returns.

TECHNICIAN #1
Thermal has doubled. OK, visual's
up -- What is that, stone?

TECHNICIAN #2
Looks like paving, a slab of some
kind-- Hey, I'm getting a drain on
Mandy... She's down ten percent.

Ascot and Towne move closer, lean over consoles to see.

TECHNICIAN #1
We're getting a ping from the
sensors -- wow.

ASCOT
What is it?

TECHNICIAN #1
Big and... metallic, based on the
readings... Can't be right... It's
huge.

Ascot and Towne exchange glances.

ASCOT
Move us closer.

The tech nods, pushes on the controls. A second later, the image on screen moves forward through the murk -- stones become detailed, more pronounced. And more angled.

TOWNE
Is that sloping?

A technician taps in a command, changing the data on one screen to show --

FORWARD TELEMETRY. The data changes rapidly, like a fruit machine. Then the numbers stop, brakes being slammed on.

TECHNICIAN #1
Forty five degrees. To five decimal places.

TECHNICIAN #2
Christ -- That isn't natural.

Lights dim, flicker.

TOWNE
What in the hell?

A COM OFFICER turns from his console.

COM OFFICER
Engine room reporting two percent loss across all four reactors.
(pause)
The *Hammersmith* is reporting same.
It's fleet-wide, sir.

Ascot now watches the monitors, tries to see around the corners.

ASCOT
Give us a sweep. A slow sweep.

The view pans slowly around.

INT. PACIFIC OCEAN

Mandy rotates, gazing across the sea bed. Suddenly, light flares from up ahead -- whatever her light shines on is highly reflective.

INT. USS MERRYWEATHER - MAIN BRIDGE

Ascot, eyes wide, stares at the monitor -- he recognizes something. Towne sees it too.

TOWNE
Holy mother of Christ.

TECHNICIAN #1
Sir--

Ascot stands to his full height --

ASCOT
Lock down the bridge! Red Alert!

TOWNE
Red Alert! You heard the Admiral!

A KLAXON SHOUTS around the bridge, red lights FLASH in sequence as the crew lock down the command deck with precision.

Ascot puts a hand on the shoulder of the Com Officer.

ASCOT
Get me a secure line to the White House, real damn fast.

The Com Officer swallows.

COM OFFICER
Aye sir!

EXT. ABOVE SYRIAN DESERT - DAY

BELOW -- Two tiny sun-drenched figures work on a partially BURIED STRUCTURE. A BASE lies a few hundred feet away.

EXT. SYRIAN DESERT - BURIED STRUCTURE - DAY

CORBAN NEERY, geriatric adventurer, delicately chips away at a stone plinth. Sweat slides down his freckled brow.

CORBAN
(softly)
You won't find anything Corban, they said. Only sand. Sand and failure.

He looks over at his companion -- GEN MARBEN, 27, athletic, and wearing shorts even an old man can appreciate.

CORBAN (CONT'D)
Gen! This shouldn't be here!
Isn't it amazing?

Gen smiles back.

GEN
Yet here it is!
(to herself)
Every day, it's amazing.

CORBAN
The crustal displacement fellows are going to have aneurisms.

Gen puts her tools down, wipes sweat from her forehead, squints out across the desert. Heat boils the air above it.

GEN
This heat's amazing.

She sees something --

GEN (CONT'D)
When are those crusty fellows
coming out to visit?

CORBAN
(without looking up)
Thursday. Why?

GEN
Who's that then?

Corban shields his face from the sun, follows Gen's
outstretched finger. After a moment --

CORBAN
I have no idea.

A military DROP SHIP races into the airspace above them,
hovers a hundred feet above their base camp. Heavy rotors
THUMP the air.

GEN
(shielding her face)
Jesus!

INT. DROP SHIP COCKPIT

Graphical information spills across the consoles -- two
names, Corban Neery and Gen Marben -- flash red. Then a
steady green.

PILOT
I.D confirmed.

EXT. SYRIAN DESERT

Corban and Gen watch the drop ship descend softly onto the
ground between them and their camp.

Dust settles, rotors idle down, the rear hatch SHUNKS open.

Five MEN file out. All battle hardened marines, lead by
LIEUTENANT MURPHY, a rugged heavyweight, face already
scarred.

MURPHY
Doctor Neery, Doctor Marben.

It's not a question, they nod anyway, shake Murphy's outstretched hand in turn. Murphy's eyes linger on Gen for just a moment.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Murphy. I'm here to escort you back to your university, you can pack, take any small items you may need -- Then onward.

Confusion, naturally.

CORBAN

Onward to where?

MURPHY

Classified, sir.

Gen steps forward.

GEN

Now hold on -- we can't be expected to drop everything, everything we have here, to go gallivanting off to classified locations at the whim of some Lieutenant! Our work here is too important.

(turning)

Corban, tell him.

Murphy grins.

MURPHY

You'll be kicking yourselves in about twelve hours -- this site is of absolutely no consequence, compared to what's waiting -- Promise.

The Lieutenant holds out a small square envelope to Corban.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

For you.

Corban thumbs the envelope open, slides out the DIGITAL PERMAPAPER and reads quickly. Corban passes it back to Gen.

CORBAN

National Security Orders. This is serious.

MURPHY

Gravely so. Can I suggest we move?

GEN

What about the site? What we're seeing here is--

Murphy steps forward, leans close.

MURPHY

You'll want to see what we've got.
It'll blow your mind.

(looking at the drop ship)
Now I can walk or drag you onto
that thing. But either way you're
getting on it. Ma'am.

Silence. Dust swirls. A marine crunches his foot on the sand.

CORBAN

Gen.

GEN

OK. OK! You're a demanding
bastard, Lieutenant.

MURPHY

Yes Ma'am. OK! Moving out!

THE DROP SHIP

Rises into the air, shrugs off gravity, as it skims over the sand towards the horizon.

INT. HEISENBERG LABS - PARTICLE ACCELERATOR CONTROL - DAY

Two blue eyes, framed by early twentieth century SPECTACLES, widen as digital text scrolls, reflected, across the old optics.

JEFF DWYER slides a hand across a digital display, taps a large green icon.

JEFF

Time to fire this bitch up.

A low HUM rattles the foundations from deep below. Jeff turns to a smaller console, starts a countdown sequence, as the hum becomes a WHINE -- like a jet engine powering up. He turns, steps out into

CORRIDOR

Long wide conduits reach out in both directions, curving away thousands of feet in the distance.

Jeff stands before a small monitoring screen mounted on the side of the main conduit -- the accelerator tube its self.

A small PDA in his hand syncs with the data screen.

JEFF

Here we go.

The whine now a ROAR, punctuated by rhythmic WHUMPS -- energy pulses around the system.

Jeff watches, wide eyed, grinning.

And his smile suddenly fades -- the POWER INDICATOR slides from green to red, digits drop to single figures.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What the--

He taps the PDA. Nothing. Taps it again, more frantic. Nothing.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Oh come on!

The entire system is dead. Jeff strides back into the

PARTICLE ACCELERATOR CONTROL ROOM

As a COM panel BLARES to life.

JEFF (CONT'D)

(touching the screen)

What the hell are you trying to do to me?

COM VOICE (O.S.)

Doc, not our call -- direct military orders. One of their boys is on his way down. Big fella.

Jeff turns, ready to fight. Lieutenant Murphy blocks the doorway. The fight disappears.

JEFF

What in the hell could you possibly want with me?

MURPHY

Doctor Dwyer?

JEFF

Unfortunately.

MURPHY

You alone, sir?

JEFF

And single. But you're not my type.

Jeff begins the process of resetting the accelerator.

MURPHY
Sir, please. This involves
National Security.

A beat. Jeff pauses, turns.

JEFF
Should I just bend over?

EXT. HEISENBERG LABS - LANDING PAD - DAY

Murphy guides Jeff towards the drop ship as the engines power up.

INT. DROP SHIP - PASSENGER BAY

A marine straps Jeff into a flight seat. Across from him, Corban and Gen. They acknowledge Jeff as he glances at them.

JEFF
What field you in?

CORBAN
Archeology.

JEFF
Ah. Diggers.

CORBAN
Scientists.

JEFF
Who dig. They pluck you off the
side of an ancient building site?

Corban and Gen are unimpressed. Murphy takes a seat, as the drop ship lifts into the air.

MURPHY
Doctors Neery and Marben were
excavating the ruins they recently
found in Syria. Against all odds.

GEN
Corban found them.

JEFF
I saw that, yes. Congrats. Doctor
Marben, you're obviously too pretty
to dig around in the muck.

Corban throws his eyes up. Gen stares at Jeff, looks away.

GEN
I do, on occasion, get very dirty.

JEFF
(glancing at Corban)
I like her! Attractive.
Intelligent -- likes to get very
dirty. Sounds like a party.

Corban leans forward, eyeballs Jeff.

CORBAN
Gen doesn't party.

Gen hides a grin, Murphy lets one of his own spread across his face.

Outside, a city-scape slips past at speed, drops away as the craft climbs.

JEFF
(to Gen)
If you, instead of Captain America
over there--

MURPHY
--Lieutenant--

JEFF
--Had appeared in my doorway, I
could have shown you things no one
else has ever seen. Magical
things.

Gen raises an eyebrow.

MURPHY
Doctor -- you may still do that.

Murphy lets it hang in the air as all eyes turn to him.

MURPHY (CONT'D)
In fact, I guarantee it.

JEFF
You make a lot of promises?

GEN
He makes a few.

Outside, the sky has been replaced with faint stars.

EXT. LOS ANGELES SUBURBS - HI-TECH KITCHEN - NIGHT

DILLON, 5, runs across the floor, feet barely touching the tiles. He holds a thin metal tube, a light BLINKS on top.

Dillon's destination -- his father -- GLEN MCMAHON, 37, clean shaven, smiling, stands behind the island in the middle of the room.

DILLON
Daddy! Daddy! Mom's calling!

Glen whisks Dillon off the floor with ease, loops the offered PHONE over his ear.

GLEN
Evening. How's the view?

The voice of "MOM" comes through crystal clear.

MOM (O.S.)
Hey chicken. View's perfect -- in about thirty seconds it'll be of you.

Glen turns towards the patio doors and carries Dillon out to

EXT. NEAT GARDEN

GLEN
Lights!

As LIGHT floods the garden as if the sun snapped on.

GLEN (CONT'D)
We're out on the grass, well lit --
You should see us.

Glen looks up, points a finger sky-ward. Dillon follows, gazing, as they --

RECEDE FROM VIEW

The house and garden shrink, pull the surrounding suburbs and land with them. Ribbons of roads, now thin wires; hills mere dimples. A distant metropolis now a model.

GLEN (CONT'D) (O.S.)
See us yet?

Wisps of cloud pass.

MOM (O.S.)
Not yet. Our kid ok?

GLEN (O.S.)
You'll see for yourself in a moment!

The curvature of

PLANET EARTH

Rotates into view as stars are realized behind fading cloud. The sight from low Earth orbit is stunning.

From below, a white surface appears, "NO STEP" stenciled on it.

The view ripples as stars blink out, a reflection of small quarters, data spilling across a screen, fills the view -- a little round PORTHOLE set within a grey bulkhead.

INT. SPACE STATION "OUTREACH" - CREW QUARTERS

KELSIE MCMAHON, 31, cherry-pie blonde, overalls covered in mission patches, gazes with sky-blue eyes at a display.

A little targeting reticle blinks and then stops, flashes blue as it locks onto two recognizable figures, standing floodlit in a garden.

KELSIE
(speaking to the air)
Wave.

ON SCREEN

Glen waves up, almost directly into the scope. Dillon mimics him.

KELSIE (CONT'D)
Got you! He looks so cute! -- And tired.

GLEN (O.S.)
Ah it's his birthday! Leave him be. Anyway, he wanted to be awake for you. Didn't you little man?

DILLON (O.S.)
(nodding enthusiastically)
Hi mom!

Another wave far below.

KELSIE
He's buzzed. Happy birthday, chicken.

GLEN (O.S.)
Bed after this. And mom can see you up there, so she'll know if your awake!

Kelsie can see Glen place Dillon down on to the ground and run back into the house.

KELSIE
Tell him to brush his teeth!

GLEN (O.S.)
Teeth! Brush 'em! And get your jimmy-jams on! -- Done.

Kelsie's eyes tighten, glazing with tears. She stops them before they begin.

KELSIE
Miss you two.

GLEN (O.S.)
Miss you.
(beat)
Six days left.

KELSIE
Yeah, six days. It'll fly.

She watches the screen as the little reticle flashes back to red, the image changes to a blurry mass.

KELSIE (CONT'D)
Lost visual. We've gone below the horizon.

GLEN (O.S.)
I'm still here.

KELSIE
I know.

A SHRILL triple beep from overhead --

COM VOICE (O.S.)
Doctor McMahon, report to conference room three.

Kelsie looks at the screen in her hands.

KELSIE
I have to go.

GLEN (O.S.)
I heard. Love you.

KELSIE
You too.

She turns the device off, lays it down on the bunk beside her. This is no zero-G environment -- here there is gravity.

Kelsie leans over, touches a panel on the bulkhead.

KELSIE (CONT'D)
This is Doctor McMahon. On my way.

EXT. SPACE STATION "OUTREACH" - MOVING PAST WINDOWS

Inside, Kelsie strides along the corridor, SLATE TERMINAL in hand.

INT. SPACE STATION "OUTREACH" - CORRIDOR

Kelsie reaches a large double door, slides a hand over the panel on the wall. Two doors SHUNK open. Kelsie steps into --

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

The door close behind her. Already inside -- Corban, Gen, Jeff, Taylor -- sit around a large circular table, blue dome in the centre.

Joining them, COMMANDER LEWIS HAYMAR, 42, intense, rugged, stands with his hands behind his back.

Next to Haymar, CAPTAIN CHARLES GRANT, 58, grey hair cut close to his scalp, piercing eyes and a physic that could have fought for Sparta.

Murphy and five MARINES sit against the far wall.

Grant leans onto the table, nods at Kelsie's arrival. Haymar sees her too.

HAYMAR
Finally Lieutenant -- we can begin.

Kelsie sheepishly sits beside Taylor, who goes to speak--

HAYMAR (CONT'D)
We can all get acquainted and chit-chat later. You need to be briefed.

Grant slides a finger across the display in front of him -- the room's lighting scheme switches from blue to orange.

GRANT
Start then. Room's secure.

Above the table a very detailed HOLOGRAPHIC rendering of a STAR SYSTEM snaps on. The star field shrinks, rapidly replaced by a rotating SPIRAL GALAXY.

The Milky Way.

HAYMAR

The secrecy that underlined your arrival will become apparent as we go, and please keep any questions until the end.

A flurry of quiet agreement.

HAYMAR (CONT'D)

Two events, I'll take them one at a time.

(beat)

Approximately forty hours ago, the Kuiper National Astronomical Observatory, Hawaii, witnessed strange readings from some of their equipment. Areas of space that were being automatically monitored for various projects began to lose targets.

Grant looks around for reactions. Everyone is still as they were.

HAYMAR (CONT'D)

These stars had apparently ceased to exist.

Jeff chimes in.

JEFF

Gone? That's impossible.

TAYLOR

We thought so too, we double, triple checked, I believe someone is still checking. But the fact remains, they no longer exist.

Haymar glances at Grant. A shrug in reply.

The graphic zooms in on a portion of the galaxy, a red rectangle drawing attention to one sector.

Grant gestures at Taylor.

GRANT

Continue.

Taylor stands, clears his throat. Haymar sits, reluctantly. The graphic shifts to the next position.

TAYLOR

Effectively, what we observed, was a wave, travelling outward from some distant point, engulfing the stars as it passed.

The hologram shifts -- a top down view of one small sector of the galaxy, a RED ARC spreads across it, like a radar display of old. The front edge of the arc FLASHES as it intersects labelled stars in the display.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Rigel was the first one to go, then Antares. The rest cascaded after that.

The display continues to show the arc spreading, devouring stars as it goes.

Jeff raises a hand.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Yes?

HAYMAR

(mumbling)

Jesus, I said no questions.

JEFF

What distances are we looking at?

TAYLOR

Light-years in seconds.

Taylor pauses for effect. Silence.

JEFF

Are you kidding? You're talking some phenomenon way outside known boundaries -- what, is it acting on the quantum level, transdimensional reactions?

TAYLOR

Unknown. Whatever it is, it's galaxy wide. The visible width is in excess of trillions of kilometers.

Blank faces.

HAYMAR

What was all that?

JEFF

It means, that what ever that is, whatever force is driving it, it's shitting on what we know as the laws of physics.

Gen, quiet until now, speaks out.

GEN

What does all this mean? For us?

TAYLOR

In a little under thirty hours,
that arc will intersect with our
own sun -- and in all probability,
annihilate it.

A collective groan, Gen and Corban whisper, Jeff shakes his head.

JEFF

That answers my next question.

Grant puts out his hands, quiets the room.

GRANT

Please! While this cosmic event
seems to defy the laws of physics,
and fascinating though that is,
there is more.

(beat)

Commander?

Haymar resumes his lecturing position.

HAYMAR

At precisely the same time the
Kuiper Observatory lost their
stellar signals -- This is the
second event now -- one of our
satellites detected a strange
surge, an energy signature, deep in
the Pacific Ocean -- What was found
down there is emitting radiation --
way above normal levels.

Jeff furrows his brow.

JEFF

I'm sorry -- 'is'?

A troubled grin from Haymar.

HAYMAR

Yes, still is.

(changing the graphic)

The vessel sent to investigate sent
back this data--

The hologram changes again, displays an area of sea, a little red dot blinks the location. It quickly becomes an underwater image, undersea terrain grows before their eyes.

On the sea bed, a HUGE PYRAMID projects from the silt.

A little scale bar appears superimposed over the view. The length of one side is "550 METERS".

CORBAN
(aside, to Gen)
I was wondering where we came in.

Gen watches the graphical display dance in front of her.

GEN
Can that be real?

CORBAN
It's an expensive, unnecessary
illusion if it's not.

Grant gestures to Corban.

GRANT
Doctor Neery, first impressions?

CORBAN
(shrugging)
Large pyramid.

Haymar exhales, obvious annoyance. Grant looks down at the table, snaps back to Corban.

GRANT
Anything else?

CORBAN
At first glance, it's similar to
the Khufu pyramid at Giza, but
you've seen more than me, had more
time. I can assume you have some
visual recordings of the structure,
samples from the surrounding
terrain, additional measurements?

A nod in reply.

CORBAN (CONT'D)
I would have to examine them, give
you an in depth analysis. But I'm
guessing your time-frame won't
allow that.

Corban starts to smile, but as quickly, it vanishes.

GRANT
Actually -- it will.

Questioning looks from all. Grant tips his head towards Haymar. Haymar obliges him, pressing a button on the table.

With a low, electronic RUMBLE, the wall on the far side of the room rises into the ceiling revealing --

EARTH. Motionless. Oblivious.

The view is partially blocked by a massive jumble of architectural scaffolding, as if grown from the side of the space station.

Caught within the giant web, a even stranger site -- a thin, donut shape, with a large radius, hangs in the middle. Metal conduits branch out at intervals, connect multi-story habitats to the centre.

Within the main ring, massive heat shields face inwards, small gaps allow thin barrels to project through to the centre.

Two massive propulsion modules sit on the rear of the donut.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Officially, that's the space elevator program that keeps experiencing budget overruns.

JEFF

I knew that thing wasn't real.

Corban and Gen approach the window.

CORBAN

Oh my.

Gen turns to Grant.

GEN

What is it then, unofficially?

Grant gives it a moment, smiles, and without turning--

GRANT

We call her the USSN H. G. Wells.

(turning)

She's a time-machine.