

**STARSHIP TROOPERS**

by

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FROM THE FEDERAL NET - NOTICE - JOIN UP NOW!

Proud YOUNG PEOPLE in uniform, the bloom of human evolution.

YOUNG PEOPLE

I'm doing my part... Me, too... Are you?

The mobile infantry logo: LIGHTNING BOLTS ON A BLACK SHIELD.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Join the mobile infantry and save the world! Service guarantees citizen-ship. Would you like to know more?

BUG METEOR

Behold actual pictures of a METEOR, this one a mile across, as it hurtles past an observation ship.

OFFICIAL VOICE

The Bugs send another meteor our way!

A BRIGHT EXPLOSION in space out beyond the moon.

OFFICIAL VOICE

But this time we are ready! Planetary defenses are better than ever! Would you like to know more?

KLENDATHU - WHY WE HAVE TO FIGHT!

Klendathu, a fierce orange planet ringed by an asteroid belt, orbits a double star.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Klendathu, source of the bug meteor attacks, orbits a twin star system whose brutal gravitational forces produce an unlimited supply of meteorites...

A "You are here" map of the KNOWN GALAXY shows the Earth in relationship to the BUG PLANETARY SYSTEM and Klendathu.

OFFICIAL VOICE

To ensure the safety of our solar system, Klendathu must be eliminated! Would you like to know more?

LIVE BROADCAST - FROM ORBIT - THE INVASION OF KLENDATHU!

For BATTLE GROUPS, sixty STARSHIPS strong, orbit the orange planet. Graphics: KLENDATHU: THE INVASION

OFFICIAL VOICE

We break net now and take you live to Klendathu where the invasion has begun!

EXT. KLENDATHU - NIGHT - THE CAMERA

Takes the Mobile Infantry CAP TROOPERS wearing fully armed Marauder POWER SUITS as they move up the line, the pans to the NET CORRESPONDENT

NET CORRESPONDENT

We've just landed here on what cap troopers are calling "Big K" with the 6th Mobile Infantry division... It's an ugly planet, a bug planet, a planet hostile to life as we IGKKKKKK!

Blood hits the lens as the Correspondent is cut in half. The CAMERA catches a glimpse of HUGE CLAWS as Cap Trooper JOHNNY RICO, 18, blows away SOMETHING BIG big with his pulse cannon.

JOHNNY

Com'on, let's go! ON THE BOUNCE

The cap troopers move out, among them DIZZY FLORES, 18, ACE LEVY, 19, and KITTEN SMITH, 18. The CAMERA pauses, unsure.

FED NET CENTRAL (O. S. )

FOLLOW THEM...! GO! GO!

The CAMERA follows. The PULSE of BUG BATTERIES is blinding. Cap Troopers scream as they are torn apart right and left by an enemy seen only in disorientating glimpses.

JOHNNY

THIS WAY!

The group splits into two, and the CAMERA follows Johnny. Something slices Kitten Smith, and he goes down screaming.

JOHNNY

KITTEN!

Johnny stops to help his comrade. A CLAW slashes into him.

JOHNNY

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Now something grabs the CAMERA, spinning it around. We glimpse the hideous jaws of an ARACHNID WARRIOR.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

The CAMERA hits the ground. Johnny, badly wounded, bleeding from the mouth, crawls into CAMERA, trying to get away from the dark INSECT SHAPES that close in on him.

JOHNNY

Oh, God... Oh, God, help me... please help me...

His eyes glaze over as he remembers

FLASHBACK:

INT. NEW UNI HIGH - CLASSROOM - DAY - CARMEN IBANEZ

Is beautiful, just 18, and quite pleased with herself because Johnny Rico is clearly infatuated with her.

RASCZAK (O.S.)

The end of another school year, and for me no doubt another failure... Rico, pay attention!

The teacher JEAN RASCZAK, 38, a rugged veteran who proudly displays his missing hand, scowls at Johnny, bemused.

JOHNNY

Sorry, Mr. Raszak.

But as soon as Raszak turns back to the class, Johnny begins to sketch a cartoon on his desk's touch screen.

RASCZAK

Here in History and Moral Philosophy we've explored the decline of Democracy when social scientists brought the world to the brink of chaos, and how the veterans took control and imposed a stability that has lasted for generations since... You know these facts but have I taught you anything of value? You. Why are only citizens allowed to vote?

Raszak points at LANNY, 17, with his stump.

LANNY

It's a reward... what the Federation gives you for doing Federal Service.

Raszak is crestfallen, makes a big show of patience.

RASCZAK

No. Something given has no value! Haven't I taught you dimwits anything? I guess they ought to revoke my teaching credential...

Laughter. Johnny's cartoon, meanwhile, is taking shape: Johnny and Carmen flying round planet Venus in a space ship.

RASCZAK

When you vote, you're exercising political authority. You're using force. And force, my friends, is violence, the supreme authority from which all other authority derives.

CARL JENKINS, 18, a super intelligent geek, jumps in.

CARL

Gee, we always thought you were the  
supreme authority, Mr. Raszak.

Laughter. Raszak grins.

RASZAK

In my classroom, you bet. Whether it's  
exerted by ten or ten billion, political  
authority is violence by degree. The  
people we call citizens have earned the  
right to wield it.

DIZZY FLORES, 18, athletic, pretty, no nonsense, chimes in.

DIZZY

My mother always says that violence never  
solves anything.

RASZAK

Really? I wonder what the city fathers of  
Hiroshima would have to say about that.  
You.

Raszak points at Carmen.

CARMEN

They probably wouldn't say anything.  
Hiroshima was destroyed.

Johnny presses "SEND" on his desk, and the cartoon appears across  
the way on Carmen's screen.

RASZAK

Correct. Naked force has settled more  
issues in history than any other factor.  
The contrary opinion 'violence never solves  
anything' is wishful thinking at its  
worst.

While Raszak looks away, Carmen throws Johnny her wonderful  
smile, and Johnny's gone, checked out, flying round Venus.

RASZAK

People who forget that always pay... They  
pay with their lives and their freedom.

Dizzy notices the dreamy look on Johnny's face. So does Raszak.  
He points at him with his stump, snaps Johnny to.

RASZAK

You. Tell me the moral difference, if any,  
between the citizen and the civilian?

JOHNNY

The difference lies in the field of civic virtue. A citizen accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic, of which he is a member, defending it, if need be, with his life. The civilian does not.

RASCZAK

The exact words of the text. But do you understand it? Do you believe it?

JOHNNY

Uh, I don't know.

RASCZAK

Of course you don't. I doubt if any of you here would recognize 'civic virtue' if it bit you in the ass.

A bell rings. Rasczak shrugs, indifferent.

RASCZAK

Well, that's it. Have a nice life.

EXT. NEW UNI HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY - JOHNNY AND CARMEN

Walk with their friends. Several COUPLES hold hands. Johnny tries to take Carmen's hand, but she demurs. Johnny broods.

CARMEN

C'mon, let's see if they've posted the math final test yet.

STUDENT

Hey, Rico, we gonna take Tesla?

JOHNNY

How should I know?

STUDENT

You're captain of the team!

EXT. QUAD - DAY - JOHNNY AND CARMEN

Join other students around a MULTI-SCREEN KIOSK.

CARMEN

First thing Fleet Academy looks at is your math scores. Wish me luck!

Carmen enters her name, receives her score: 97%! She beams.

JOHNNY

Good for you.

CARMEN

Your turn...

Then she spots Carl across the way talking with MARCO, 17.

CARMEN

Hold on... I wanna talk to Marco. His  
sister's at Fleet!

Carmen rushes off. Johnny checks his score: 35%! Crushed, he makes  
sure no none else has seen. Carl walks up to him.

CARL

You still haven't kissed her yet? Don't  
lie.

JOHNNY

What's the hurry?

CARL

Others are waiting.

Carl points out Dizzy, talking with friends.

JOHNNY

Did you read her mind?

CARL

Don't have to... Some mating semaphore is  
pretty hard to miss.

It's true. You can tell by the way she looks at Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yeah, but I want Carmen.

CARL

You got it bad.

Carmen returns to Johnny as Carls heads off.

CARL

Don't forget about this afternoon.

(to Carmen)

He's always late when he walks you home to  
fish for a kiss.

Carmen blushes, covers.

CARMEN

She's flying starships!

JOHNNY

Who?

CARMEN

Marco's sister. Can you imagine  
maneuvering half a million tons through  
crowded space lanes... You gotta have  
nerves of steel! Reflexes are critical.

JOHNNY

I have good reflexes.

Carmen notices the way Dizzy's looking at Johnny, doesn't like it one bit, takes Johnny's arm.

CARMEN

C'mon Johnny, we'll be late for Biology.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - DAY - THE BIOLOGY TEACHER

Is an older woman, very spry, also blind. Johnny, Carmen and other students gather around covered lab tables.

BIOLOGY TEACHER

For our final today, please identify the mouthparts, the abdominal organs, and for extra credit, locate the nerve cord and count the ganglia. You may begin.

The students remove the cover to reveal large alien bugs, 60 centimeter ARKELLIAN SAND BEETLES laid out for dissection.

CARMEN

Eeuch!

JOHNNY

Aw, c'mon, it's just a bug.

BIOLOGY TEACHER

Just a bug, eh? We humans like to think we are Nature's finest achievement. I'm afraid it isn't true. This Arkellian Sand Beetle is superior in many ways. It has fewer moving parts, can reproduce itself in vast numbers, and unboud by concerns of ego and mortality, makes the perfect selfless member of society.

JOHNNY

Better put your goggles on.

Johnny slices the abdomen open with asurgical laser. Green fluid sprays from the slit. Carmen turns away looking ill.

BIOLOGY TEACHER

Our galaxy is teaming with insect life. We have identified over two billion species so far. Human, life, it would seem, is the anomaly.

CARMEN

But we're Intelligent. Human minds have invented art, mathematics and interstellar travel.



BIOLOGY TEACHER

True, we know of no insect society that has produced a Shakespeare, an Einstein or a Cherynkov, but before you let that go to your head, take the example of the Arachnids, a highly organized, highly evolved insect society.

She points to an insect evolution chart that starts with a common ant and ends with a two meter tall ARACHNID WARRIOR.

BIOLOGY TEACHER

They are relatively stupid by human standards. Workers have an IQ of 12, warriors around 35, and yet the Arachnids have colonized planets. Over a million years of evolution, Nature has provided the Arachnids with the biological means to hurl their spore into space.

Johnny applies a spreader and jacks the insects abdominal cavity open with aresounding crack. Bug guts gush out.

JOHNNY

Well, if that's the crop, that must be the gastric caecal...

CARMEN

Excuse me...!

She heads for the door, hand over her mouth.

EXT. CIVIC PARK - DAY - JOHNNY AND CARMEN

Walk home from school together.

JOHNNY

35% on the math final! No one could be that dumb with numbers.

CARMEN

Well, at least you didn't lose your lunch over a bug. How embarrassing.

JOHNNY

Who cares about bugs? You can't go anywhere if you don't know math.

CARMEN

Don't be so sure. I like you even if you are dumb with numbers.

JOHNNY

Then how come you won't hold hands with me at school?

CARMEN

I don't want everyone to see.

JOHNNY

Why won't you kiss me when we're all alone?

CARMEN

How come that's all you talk about anymore?

JOHNNY

It's all I think about anymore.

Indeed, they are all alone now. The look in Johnny's eye says how about it. Carmen grins, reaches for Johnny's hand.

EXT. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION - DAY

Carmen and Johnny stand together near a bank of TRANSPORTERS.

CARMEN

You can't walk me home.

JOHNNY

Why not?

CARMEN

I thought you were going to help Carl.

JOHNNY

Carl can wait.

CARMEN

Johnny, my Dad's home today.

Johnny's face darkens with frustration.

JOHNNY

What's he got against me... I mean, I'm a teenager. You can't be a citizen when you're only a teenager!

CARMEN

It's not you, Johnny. Your parents are rich they don't need to be citizens, and that stuff means a lot to my dad. He's a veteran.

JOHNNY

Well, if your dad doesn't like me, how come we're such good friends?

CARMEN

Sometimes I do what I want, eh?

Carmen steps into the flux. ZAPPP! She's gone. Johnny grins, happy to be in love.

INT. CARL'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Johnny is hard-wired to the stacks of processing units that comprise Carl's basement workshop. Carl concentrates on the image of a playing card, the six of diamonds, displayed on a monitor.

CARL

Don't think about it... go on instinct.

JOHNNY

Ace of spades.

The ace of spades appears, and the computer indicates "no match". Carl puts another card up, the jack of diamonds.

CARL

Statistically speaking you should've accidentally guessed right by know.

JOHNNY

In addition to "psychic dolt" this test also proves I'm unlucky? Two of hearts.

Wrong again.

CARL

Luck is not a factor. No one really knows why some people are sensitive and some aren't. Federal studies like this might provide a clue.

The next card up is the nine of clubs.

JOHNNY

I wouldn't want to know what everyone was thinking. Four of spades.

Suddenly, A GIANT YELLOW FROG jumps onto the keyboard, fritzing the monitor. Johnny removes the blindfold.

CARL

Cyrano, you big yellow turd!

Johnny knows this frog, scratches him on the neck.

JOHNNY

He just wants attention. You don't play with him like you used to.

Carl concentrates for a moment.

CARL

Go bug Mom, Cyrano.

Cyrano's eyes widen. He hops off the table and up the stairs two at a time. Carl clears the screen.

JOHNNY

How do you make him do that?

CARL

I gave him the impression that there was a fly crawling up my mom's leg. He is going to go eat it.

From upstairs, CARL'S MOM shrieks.

MOM (O.S.)

Get out! Get out! CARL...!

JOHNNY

Carl, promise me you won't ever do anything like that to me.

CARL

Don't be afraid. Can't do humans... yet. C'mon let's go.

Carl, puts up more cards, Johnny misses them all.

JOHNNY

Ten of clubs. You still gonna sign up for Starside R&D?

CARL

Passport to the Universe. Who wouldn't want that?

JOHNNY

I've been thinking about applying for Federal Service, too. Fleet, maybe.

CARL

Your father will never let you.

JOHNNY

I'm eighteen. It's my decision, I think I'd make a pretty good pilot. I've good great reflexes. You need that for maneuvering, you know.

CARL

Only 1 in 14 male applicants make it through stellar navigation. So what do you think your chances are?

JOHNNY

Eight point... no, uh, seven...

CARL

If you can't do those numbers, you haven't got a chance.

JOHNNY

All I know is Carmen's going to be a citizen, and I don't think it'll work out for us if I'm not.

CARL  
Love... how excruciatingly pathetic. Now  
try and pay attention.

Carl puts a card up.

JOHNNY  
Queen of hearts.

The computer indicates a match. Johnny peers around at the  
monitor. It is the Queen of hearts.

CARL  
Well, what do you know about that!

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - STANDS - DAY

Carmen and other students wearing orange and black sing the "Uni  
High Song". The SCOREBOARD says: "REGIONAL FINAL"

Across the field, fans wear red and gold and sing another song.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Johnny and other UNI HIGH TIGERS, all exceptionally robust young  
man and women, suit up in their orange and black uniforms.

DIZZY  
Tesla's tough. They tumble good and they  
hit HARD.

Dizzy bounces a JUMP SHOE to Johnny. The spring fires and vaults  
it high into the air. Johnny catches it, puts it on, smiles cocky  
at the TESLA GIANTS who suit up in red and gold.

JOHNNY  
We tumble good, too.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - DAY - WHAM!

Tigers and Giants Collide. Powered by jump shoes, the play is  
gymnastic. Johnny moves the ball, flips high in the air over the  
Giant defensive line, makes ten meters before he is brought down.

EXT. STANDS - DAY

The CROWD Cheers as Johnny runs back to join his team. He sees  
Carmen waving, glad that Johnny has seen her among all the people.

EXT. HUDDLE - DAY

Johnny and other Tigers listen as quarterback Dizzy calls the  
plays.

DIZZY

Kick three, fade left. On two.

They make fists, then break for the line of scrimmage.

EXT. SCRIMMAGE LINE - DAY - THE TIGERS

Have the ball. The Giant's QUARTERBACK assigns ZANDER BARCALOW, 18, handsome, super-confident, to guard Johnny.

ZANDER

Time's running out.

Zander points. The SCOREBOARD shows "TIGERS 19,GIANTS 20", three minutes and counting on the clock. Johnny grins.

JOHNNY

A lot can happen in three minutes.

DIZZY

Hut... hut!

Johnny takes the handoff, flips over a gauntlet of Giant guards. Zander hurls himself at Johnny, misses. Johnny scores. Zander tumbles into the crowd, loses a jump shoe.

EXT. SIDELINES - DAY

Zander looks up and sees Carmen, smiling as she offers him a hand. She helps him up. He holds her hand longer than necessary.

CARMEN

Are you alright?

ZANDER

I'm getting better.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - DAY

Johnny runs back to join his team as the crowd cheers. The Tigers lead 21-20. Johnny frowns when he sees Carmen talking to Zander on the sidelines, shaking his head, smiling.

EXT. SIDELINE - DAY

Zander finds his shoe, straps it on.

ZANDER

So what are you doing later?

CARMEN

Everyone is going to the dance. Aren't you?

ZANDER

I don't know. It's my last night as a civilian. I ship out for Tereshkova tomorrow.

Zander heads for the field. Carmen follows, interested.

CARMEN

You're going to the Academy? That's where I want to go. I'd love to talk to you about that.

A REFEREE blows his whistle at Zander, signalling impatiently.

ZANDER

I'm all ears.

CARMEN

Don't you have to finish the game?

EXT. SCRIMMAGE LINE - DAY

The Giants are in possession. Zander lands hard in front of Johnny.

JOHNNY

Don't get any ideas. She's my girl.

ZANDER

You can never be sure.

Johnny scowls at Zander, turns his head to look back at Carmen. She waves, smiling. The Giants pull ablitz.

DIZZY

WATCH THE BLITZ...!

Zander knocks Johnny on his ass, and the Giants score. It's "TIGERS 21, GIANTS 22" and less than a minute to go.

EXT. HUDDLE - DAY

Dizzy orders up the next play. Johnny keeps looking over his shoulder because Zander's back talking to Carmen again.

DIZZY

Flip six, three hole. Rico? Hey!

Dizzy slams Johnny upside his helmet with her forearm.

JOHNNY

What?

DIZZY

You were drifting. Flip six, three hole. On one, got it?

JOHNNY

Just throw me the ball, Diz.

They make fists and break.

EXT. SCRIMMAGE LINE - DAY

Johnny takes position again across the line from Zander who now grins at Johnny broadly. Johnny doesn't grin back.

DIZZY

Hut!

At the snap, Johnny breaks for open field. Dizzy throws, Johnny catches it, trips Zander up painfully, and hurls himself into the end zone as a horn sounds the game's finish.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - DAY - CHEERING UNI FANS

Rush onto the field as the school band strikes up a victory march. Tigers do flips in the air. Giants look dejected. Zander picks himself up, watches Johnny leave with Carmen.

INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Johnny walks through rooms filled with elegant furniture. He's all spiffed up for the big dance. His MOTHER catches him preening in front of a mirror by the TRANSPORTER in the hall.

MOTHER

Who said you could grow up so fast? Last time I checked you were only five years old. You had such a bright little face...

JOHNNY

Aw, don't get mushy.

Johnny's FATHER enters carrying a FEDERAL SERVICE CATALOGUE.

FATHER

This came for you today. I presume on your request.

JOHNNY

A lot of my friends are doing Federal Service...

MOTHER

You aren't thinking of applying...?

Johnny shrugs.

FATHER

Have you lost you lost your mind? I'd rather take ten lashes in Public Square than see you ruin your life.



JOHNNY

It's a term of service, not a career. I just want to get out on my own and see the Galaxy for a couple of years.

MOTHER

Johnny, people get hurt... people get killed in the Federal Service. If something happened to you I don't know what I would do...

FATHER

Who gave you this idea? It's that teacher. What's his name? You know the one I mean.

JOHNNY

Mr. Raszak.

FATHER

Raszak... Silly name. There ought to be a law against using a school as a recruiting station!

JOHNNY

No, Mr. Raszak doesn't do that at all. He sorta discourages you really.

FATHER

Good, because you're going to Harvard, and that's the end of it.

JOHNNY

I'm eighteen. It's my decision.

FATHER

Oh, is that how it is?

MOTHER

Wait you two. Dad and I have a surprise for you that will settle this. Can you guess what it is?

JOHNNY

Uh, no.

FATHER

A trip to the Outer Rings. Whad'ya think of that?

JOHNNY

Wow! Santori and Zegema Beach, I've always wanted to go there.

MOTHER

Good good, then it's all settled.

FATHER

A year at Harvard and you'll see this "Federal Service" is just menial training for inferior people so they can call themselves "citizens" and take airs for the rest of their lives.

JOHNNY

Wait a minute! Carl is doing his Federal and he isn't inferior. He's the smartest kid at school!

FATHER

Sorry. Carl's a fine boy...

Johnny puts on his jacket.

JOHNNY

I don't know what they teach at Harvard, but I think I'm pretty good enough the way I am!

MOTHER

Johnny, please. Calm yourself.

JOHNNY

Well, that's what you're saying! You're saying that I'm not good enough the way I am now!

Johnny stomps out, the transporter goes ZAPPP!

MOTHER

Why did you go and do that? He was all ready to go Zegema Beach!

FATHER

Teenagers!

INT. UNI HIGH GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Everyone at the "Farewell Dance" is dressed up. Rasczak and other TEACHERS chaperon. A spotlight finds the BAND LEADER.

BAND LEADER

Alright, everybody, this is the last dance, so let's turn down the lights and make it a slow one.

The lights go down. Dizzy, dressed pretty, brightens when she sees Johnny standing alone near the dance floor.

DIZZY

Hey, Rico, wanna dance?

JOHNNY

Actually, Diz, I promised Carmen...

DIZZY

Too bad for her if she's not around.

Dizzy pulls him onto the floor, holds him close.

DIZZY

You know, it's sad... Most of us probably won't see each other again after tonight.

There is an invitation here. Johnny doesn't take it.

JOHNNY

You still gonna play for Brazil?

DIZZY

Looks like, unless Tokyo lets me start.

JOHNNY

Well, anyone who gets you is lucky.

DIZZY

How come we never got together?

Dizzy looks at Johnny meaningfully. He's distracted. Carmen crosses the room, stunning in her formal.

JOHNNY

Can't we just be friends, Diz?

DIZZY

Sure.

JOHNNY

Uh, look, Diz...

DIZZY

Guess you gotta go.

JOHNNY

You're the best.

Johnny heads for Carmen. Dizzy watches jealously as Carmen takes his hand. She looks around for someone to dance with. Carl, a nerd in a tux, waves shyly.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Carmen and Johnny dance. Johnny wants to kiss her, Carmen playfully avoids.

JOHNNY

Isn't it great to be in love?

CARMEN

How do I know if this is love?

JOHNNY

It wouldn't be so romantic if we weren't...

CARL

Outa the way you two!

Carl and Dizzy dance by, Dizzy smiling bravely because Carl is a terrible dancer. Johnny goes in for the kiss again.

CARMEN

Romance is just a vestigial biological response to procreation...

JOHNNY

Aw, you're in love with me... You just dont know it yet.

Johnny's confidence makes her smile. Johnny moves in to kiss her, but the music ends. Everyone applauds. The lights come up and people head for the doors. Johnny sees Raszak.

JOHNNY

Wait, I want to talk to Mr. Raszak.

CARMEN

I'll meet you outside.

Johnny heads over to Raszak.

JOHNNY

Mister Raszak?

RASZAK

What is it, Rico?

JOHNNY

I just wanted to say thanks'cause History and Moral Philosophy was the best class I had this year.

RASZAK

(smiling)

Well, it's not really my job to please. Hope you learned something.

JOHNNY

I wanna join up, Mr. Raszak. I think I have what it take to be a citizen.

RASZAK

Good for you. Go find out.

JOHNNY

Well, my parents are against it, and I know it's my choice, but I was wondering... What would you do if you were me?

RASZAK

Figuring things out for yourself is the only freedom anyone really has. Use that freedom. Make your own choice, Rico.

EXT. UNI HIGH GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Johnny walks out and finds Carmen talking with Zander. He wears the blue uniform of a Fleet pilot trainee. Carmen examines his FLEET PIN, a pair of silver wings.

CARMEN  
Johnny, this is Zander.

ZANDER  
Yeah, we know each other from the game. No hard feeling, eh, chum?

JOHNNY  
None at all... We won.

CARMEN  
Good luck at the academy.

Zander takes back the wings and pins the to his tunic.

ZANDER  
Always.

EXT. PROMENADE - NIGHT

Johnny and Carmen walk together along the river holding hands.

CARMEN  
He just got accepted to the Fleet Academy. Isn't that great?

JOHNNY  
Yeah, sure, I guess.

CARMEN  
No, I mean if he can get in, maybe I have a chance.

JOHNNY  
What are you talking about? We both know you're gonna be a pilot.

CARMEN  
Zander is going for pilot, too.

JOHNNY  
You two have so much in common.

Carmen pulls Johnny to a stop, looks him in the eye.

CARMEN  
Johnny Rico, you're jealous!

JOHNNY  
I can't help it.

CARMEN  
He's nothing like you.

JOHNNY

I don't even know if you're my girl.

Carmen smiles, leans in close to Johnny.

CARMEN

Are you the boy for me?

JOHNNY

I'm gonna do it, Carmen. I'm gonna sign up  
for Federal Service.

They kiss, tentatively, but the passion grows and they break  
apart, breathless.

CARMEN

Oh, Johnny...

EXT. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION - NIGHT

Johnny and Carmen making out as they wait their turn. There are a  
few other people around including a POLICEMAN.

CARMEN

Everyone's looking... we shouldn't...

JOHNNY

Who cares?

CARMEN

You're right. Let's never stop...

POLICEMAN

Hey, you, there's a place for that!

Without stopping, Johnny pulls Carmen into the flux. ZAPPP!

INT. FEDERAL HOUSING - NIGHT

Johnny and Carmen kissing at her front door. Johnny moves his hand  
tentatively to Carmen's breast. She takes his hand, smiling, puts  
it under her shirt.

JOHNNY

I love you, Carmen.

CARMEN

Shhh...

She puts her mouth on his and they melt together. The door flies  
open, and CARMEN'S DAD stands there.

CARMEN'S DAD

Carmen, it's late. Get inside.

CARMEN

Sorry, Dad. See you, Johnny.

Carmen ducks inside. Her father looks Johnny over. He carries a terrible battle scar on his face.

CARMEN'S DAD

I don't want you around Carmen anymore.  
Get me?

JOHNNY

Maybe Carmen's gonna make her own  
decisions from now on, Mr. Ibanez.

Carmen's Dad reddens. He'd like to punch Johnny out.

CARMEN'S DAD

Carmen's gonna be a citizen. She don't  
need you and your rich family. The  
Federation'll give her everything she  
needs.

CARMEN (O.S.)

Dad, leave him alone...

Carmen's Dad slams the door in Johnny's face.

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Johnny and Carmen meet Carl in front of the induction center where a steady flow of prospective citizens file through the main doors.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

The RECRUITING SERGEANT is missing one arm. He smiles broadly at the three teenagers.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

Fresh meat for the grinder, eh?

CARL

That's us. Where do we sign?

He turns in his chair to grab the forms. Johnny and his friends see that he is also missing both legs. The Recruiting Sergeant catches them looking, smiles even wider.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

Here and here and here.

As he signs, Johnny looks at the campaign ribbons on the Recruiting Sergeant's chest. We hear MUSIC: "The Mobile Infantry Anthem" plays softly in honor of distant battles.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

Welcome to the adventure of Federal  
Service. Follow the blue line.

INT. PROCESSING HALL - DAY

Johnny, Carmen and Carl are routed into different lines, joining other hopeful civilians. A COLONEL makes a speech over the loudspeaker.

COLONEL

There is no guarantee of service. We don't need all of you. It costs a great deal to train human beings for useful tasks. Many jobs are hazardous to your health. If you are chosen and do not wish to serve you may resign at anytime simply by completing form 1240/A. Thank you for exercising your constitutional rights.

INT. CHANGING ROOM - DAY

Johnny and others in the line strip down. The guy in front of Johnny is DON, 18, athletic and cheerful.

DON

They took my sister, they'll take anybody.

INT. TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Johnny grimaces as a TECHNICIAN installs an INTERFACE PLATE on his side, drawing fluids.

DON

Oh, this is the part that hurts!

A PSYCH OFFICER sits down across from each candidate.

PSYCH OFFICER

No talking please. I'm going to ask you some questions. Please answer all questions truthfully. We'll know if you don't. Birthplace?

JOHNNY

Here in Buenos Aires.

The Psych Officer checks Johnny's response on a meter.

INT. VARIOUS TESTING STATIONS - DAY

Johnny is poked and prodded, subjected to aural, visual and pharmacological stimuli, and scanned from head to toe.

PSYCH OFFICER (V.O.)

Are your parents currently citizens?

JOHNNY (V.O.)

No, sir.



PSYCH OFFICER (V.O.)  
Which do you think is more important,  
courage or confidence?

JOHNNY (V.O.)  
Courage, I guess.

PSYCH OFFICER (V.O.)  
Please complete this sentence. I want to  
be citizen because...

JOHNNY (V.O.)  
I want to be a citizen because... well,  
because of my girl, sir.

INT. DEBRIEF - DAY

Johnny sits across from a MAJOR who views a list on a monitor  
Johnny can't see.

MAJOR  
I'm happy to tell you that you've been  
accepted for Federal Service.

JOHNNY  
Wow, that's great.

MAJOR  
Looks like you're quite an athlete. Boy,  
look at those reaction stats.

The Major clucks his tongue as he highlights the last category on  
his list: "MOBILE INFANTRY"

MAJOR  
My job is to determine what you're best  
suited for.

JOHNNY  
I want to be a pilot, sir.

MAJOR  
Sorry, son, no way. Your school records  
say you don't have the math skills.

Johnny swallows this. He knew it was coming. The Major deletes  
"Pilot" from the list, then several other items.

MAJOR  
That rules out the scientific and  
engineering applications, and I'm afraid  
we reserve non-military options for  
candidates who are frankly less able-  
bodied than you are, son...

He turns the monitor around and shows Johnny the list. The only  
thing left is "MOBILE INFANTRY".

MAJOR

It looks like the only thing you're good for is cannon fodder. I'm putting you down for the Mobile Infantry.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Carmen proudly takes the Federal Service oath with about twenty-five other people, a gleaming silver FLEET PIN on her chest. She looks around for Johnny, sees him grinning at her.

JOHNNY ET AL

... of my own free will, without promise, coercion, or inducement, after having been duly advised and warned of the meaning and consequence of this oath, do now enroll in the Federal Service of the Terran Federation for not less than two years and as much longer as may be required by the needs of the Service...

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Johnny and Carmen walk out together happily, hand in hand.

CARMEN

I wonder where Carl is. You don't suppose...?

JOHNNY

Naw, I made it, Carl made it.

Just then, Don rushes past, shamefaced, crying.

JOHNNY

He was in the group with me. I guess he didn't...

CARMEN

Shhh! Don't make him feel worse.

The Recruiting Sergeant is getting ready to go home. He's got legs now, and he takes a prosthetic arm from its case and snaps it on. He grins when he sees them staring.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

They put me out front to discourage the weak-hearted, but at the end of the day I go home. How'd you kids do?

CARMEN

I'm gonna go for pilot.

RECRUITING SERGEANT

Good for you. We need every pilot we can get.

Johnny holds the door for Carmen and the Recruiting Sergeant.  
Suddenly Carl appears looking a little paler than usual.

CARMEN  
Hey, Carl, what's wrong?

JOHNNY  
Did you get Starside R&D?

CARL  
No.

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Johnny and Carmen are stunned.

JOHNNY  
I don't believe it!

CARL  
I got Games & Theory.

Well, everyone's a little impressed by this.

CARMEN  
Games & Theory? That's Military  
intelligence... Oh, Carl!

JOHNNY  
Whoa! Way to go, boy-yo!

RECRUITING SERGEANT  
Next time we meet, I'll probably have to  
salute you. What about you, son?

JOHNNY  
Infantry, sir.

The Recruiting Sergeant beams, offers a prosthetic hand.

RECRUITING SERGEANT  
Well, good for you. The Mobile Infantry  
made me the man I am today.

Just what Johnny wanted to hear. They watch the old Sergeant walk  
away. MUSIC: "The Mobile Infantry Theme". Carmen takes Johnny and  
Carl by the arm as they walk.

CARMEN  
Let's all make a vow. Let's swear we'll  
always be friends no matter what.

JOHNNY  
I'll go for that.

CARL

Well, we're gonna be millions of light years away from each other, and chances are we'll never see each other again, but sure...

CARMEN

I can't wait to tell my Dad I'm in. He's gonna be so happy!

JOHNNY

My father's probably gonna kill me.

INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Johnny stands sullenly as his Father rages at him.

FATHER

You'll resign, and that's all there is to it. It might look bad, but if that's the worst you suffer...

JOHNNY

I won't quit!

FATHER

I'm telling you, you will! You're not going back. You're going to go on vacation!

JOHNNY

I'm not going on vacation! I want to be a citizen! It's my decision. I made it.

Johnny turns for the door. His father throws his last shot.

FATHER

You walk out that door, you're cut off, young man... You understand me? Alright, THAT'S IT, YOU'RE...

INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Johnny walks out, grim, sees his mother, tears in her eyes.

FATHER (O.S.)

... CUT OFF!

MOTHER

Johnny, why won't you change your mind? Does citizenship mean so much to you?

JOHNNY

Well, yeah, sure...

MOTHER

I hope so. I hope you don't ruin your life over some silly little girl who wants to look handsome in a uniform.

Johnny's face reddens.

JOHNNY

Don't talk about my girl that way.

Johnny turns on his heel, heads for the transporter. ZAPPP!

EXT. FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION HUB - DAY

Johnny looks for Carmen among hundreds of young people bound for Federal Service destinations. Recruits wear civilian clothes. Everyone else is in uniform.

P.A. (O.S.)

Outbound group 1380, Ursa Minor and Tyko, now transporting at bank 17...

Now he sees her entering struggling with luggage. Johnny rushes to help her and soon he is carrying all her bags.

JOHNNY

You're late.

CARMEN

My Dad had to help me pack. Suddenly he's afraid he's never gonna see me again or something. It was sweet, but it took forever. Anyway, I guess I'm ready to go.

At the freight station, Carmen enters her Federal I.D. card and gets numbered tags for her bags.

JOHNNY

Me, too. I'm wearing everything I own.

Johnny loads them onto a conveyor belt.

CARMEN

Poor boy. I'm sorry your parents were so mad.

JOHNNY

Who cares! The Federation'll give me everything I need for the next two years, right?

Carmen's already moved to the next line. Johnny follows.

CARMEN

You talk to Carl?

JOHNNY

He left this morning. He couldn't say where.

Carmen logs in, enters her destination: "LUNA - TERESHKOVA FLEET ACADEMY". The tickets station spits out a pass.

CARMEN

It's exciting, but it's scary, too isn't it. Going someplace new where you don't know anyone.

Carmen heads toward a bank of transporters. Johnny stops her, takes her by the arms.

JOHNNY

I'm gonna miss you.

CARMEN

I'll miss you, too, Johnny.

JOHNNY

I love you.

P.A. (O. S.)

Outbound group 948A, Tereshkova, all sections, transporting at bank 5.

CARMEN

Oh, that's me.

She scans her pass, but Johnny stops her again.

JOHNNY

Com'on, just say it. Try it on for size.

CARMEN

Alright, I love you.

Carmen kisses him, jumps into the transporter.

JOHNNY

Do you mean it?

CARMEN

I said it. Isn't that enough? Don't forget to write!

ZAPPP! The last thing he sees are her beautiful eyes.

FROM THE FEDERAL NET - A WORLD THAT WORKS!

People are doing Federal Service jobs all over the known Galaxy.

OFFICIAL VOICE

From all over the known Galaxy,  
prospectice citizens work together to make  
a better tomorrow! Would you like to know  
more?

CRIME & PUNISHMENT - TONIGHT!

A CRIMINAL stands before a FEDERAL COURT

OFFICIAL VOICE

A murderer was captured and tried today.  
Sentence: DEATH. Tonight at six, all net,  
all channels. Would you like to know more?

NOTICE - ARE YOU PSYCHIC?

A Federal clinic specializing in psychic research.

OFFICIAL VOICE

If you think you are psychic, maybe you  
are. Harness your unique abilities and  
take advantage of the many Federal  
benefits available for psychic citizens.  
Would you like to know more?

TRAVEL ADVISORY - INSECT TRAGEDY ON TANGO URILLA

A prefab township sits on the shores of a tranquil alien bay.  
Then, a "You Are Here" map of the Known Universe.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Disregarding Federal warnings, Mormon  
extremists established Port Joe Smith, a  
settlement of 300 on Tango Urilla, a  
system just inside the Arachnid Quarantine  
Zone.

Archival pictures of a captive two meter ARACHNID WARRIOR,  
multiple eyes, cutting mouthparts and claws. Wary SCIENTISTS keep  
their distance as it eats a COW.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Too late they realized tha Tango Urilla  
had already been chosen by other colonists  
- Arachnids!

Now body parts litter the ruined streets of Port Joe Smith.

OFFICIAL VOICE

The council asks future colonists to obey  
all official Federal warnings. Would you  
like to know more?

EXT. CAMP CURRIE - PARADE GROUND - DAY

SERGEANT ZIM is 40, astoundingly fit, and like all drill  
instructors, he carries a small baton. He addresses sixty shorn  
RECRUITS.

ZIM

The problem with you is that none of you  
are good enough the way you are.

Johnny stands in formation with his squad, among them:

BRECKINRIDGE, 18, DJANA'D, 19, KATRINA McINTIRE, 18, ACE LEVY, 18, SHUJUMI, 18, and KITTEN SMITH, 18.

ZIM

I am your senior drill instructor, Career Sergeant Zim.

(then)

TO THINK THIS HAD TO HAPPEN TO ME! What a bunch of apes. No, strike that. You don't rate that good... you sunken-chested, slack-bellied, drooling refugees from apron strings! In my whole life I've never seen such a disgraceful huddle of momma's spoiled little darlings! Suck in those guts! You there, EYES FRONT!

Zim gives Kitten Smith the hairy eyeball. Smith cracks up.

ZIM

Do you think I'm funny? Do I make you laugh? Do you think I'm a comedian?

Kitten Smith shake his head "no", but he can't stifle himself.

KITTEN SMITH

Sorry...!

ZIM

The first and last words out of your stinking holes will be "sir". Do you get me?

KITTEN SMITH

Sir, sorry... sir.

ZIM

See the armory? Run around it!

Kitten Smith squints. Out in the distance, a tiny building. Zim smacks him on the leg with his baton.

KITTEN SMITH

YEOW!

ZIM

RUN, I SAID. Bronski, keep pace!

Kitten Smith runs. Big CORPORAL BRONSKI, 28, takes out after him, laying a baton across his backside every time he slows.

ZIM

You are now all brothers and sisters in the same family, my family, the Mobile Infantry. I will be your mother. I will be your father. If you do not please me I will throw you out of my family because I hate all slackers and negative hackers. Do you get me?



JOHNNY ET AL

Sir, yes, sir!

Zim points at the little WHITE PICKET FENCE leading to a transporter near the front gate.

ZIM

Anytime you think I'm being to tough,  
anytime you think I'm being unfair...  
QUIT! Grab your gear and take a stroll  
down "Washout Lane". Get me?

JOHNNY ET AL

Sir, yes, sir!

ZIM

I wonder if there's a handful of guts in  
the whole bunch. Who thinks they've got  
what it takes to knock me down?

Breckinridge, a big guy from a farm planet, steps forward.

BRECKINRIDGE

Sir, I guess maybe I do, sir.

Zim crooks a finger at him. Breckinridge charges. Zim knocks him flat. Breckinridge holds his arm, twisted now.

ZIM

You alright, Breckinridge?

BRECKINRIDGE

Sir, yes, sir. It's my arm. I think it's  
broken, sir.

ZIM

MEDIC!

A MEDIC charges up, checks Breckinridge's arm, grins.

MEDIC

Clean break... Doc'll have him back on  
active duty by tomorrow.

ZIM

Good. Who's next?

Shujumi steps up, assumes a fighting stance. Zim looks him over. There's not not much to him. Shujumi attacks Zim, counters his counter, dances out of range.

DJANA'D

Lookit the little guy go!

Now Zim attacks. Shujumi flip kicks Zim in the head.

JOHNNY

He's good alright.

KATRINA

I'll bet he makes squad leader.

ACE

He'll have to get past me.

The recruits check Ace out. Zim sweeps Shujumi's legs, puts a knee in the little man's throat. Shujumi passes out.

ZIM

MEDIC!

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

The Recruits tumble a brutal obstacle course using JUMP BOOTS.

ZIM (V.O.)

Some of you may not make it.

Djana'd hits a tower and falls to the deck hard, dropping her rifle. She holds her knee, hurt. Zim races over to her.

ZIM

WHY IS THAT WEAPON ON THE GROUND? YOUR  
WEAPON IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU ARE!  
PICK IT UP! PICK IT UP!

Zim begins to kick her because she doesn't move fast enough.

ZIM (V.O.)

You might think I am unfair.

EXT. ZERO GRAVITY COMBAT - DAY

The Recruits watch poor Kitten Smith spar with Zim. Kitten Smith whacks Zim across the jaw. Zim doesn't even flinch.

ZIM

Is that all you got? You hit like kitten,  
Smith! This is a punch.

WHAM! Zim knocks Kitten Smith for a loop.

ZIM (V.O.)

You will not like me.

NT. HYPERPHYSICAL TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS - DAY

Zim watches the recruits face simulated 3-D OFF-WORLD FOES. In one room, CYCLOPS SOLDIERS of Antilles, in another, red DEATH WALKERS, and in a third, screeching ARACHNID WARRIORS.

ZIM (V.O.)

But if you survive you will thank me because you will be born again hard. You will be a new person. You will be a Cap Trooper. And then, MAYBE, you'll be good enough...

EXT. COMBAT KNIFE PRACTICE - DAY

Zim throws a knife, buries the point in a narrow post.

ZIM (V.O.)

... to serve in my family.

ACE

Sir, I don't understand who needs a knife in a nuke fight anyway... All you gotta do is push a button, sir!

Zim yanks the knife out of the post.

ZIM

Put your hand on the post, private.

Ace obeys. Zim throws, sticks his hand to the post.

ACE

AWK!

ZIM

The enemy cannot push a button if you disable his hand. MEDIC!

Zim pays no attention to Ace who remains stuck to the post. A recruit trots up. Johnny stares, surprised. It's Dizzy.

DIZZY

Sir, recruit Flores, reporting for duty, sir.

She snaps Zim a salute and hands him her orders.

ZIM

I see you specifically requested transfer from Fort Cronkite to this training group...

Dizzy grins self-consciously at Johnny.

DIZZY

Sir, I heard it was the best, sir!

ZIM

It is the best... BUT WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'RE GOOD ENOUGH? ON YOUR BELLY AND GIVE ME FIFTY, RECRUIT!

Dizzy hits the deck and starts doing push-ups, counting off as MEDICS arrive and go to work on Ace's hand.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

The Recruits line up for mess piled four-square together on a single plate, meat on the bottom, ice cream on top.

ACE

I'd like to disable Zim...!

KATRINA

Improper Attitude! They'll kick you out for talking like that...

DJANA'D

They can kick you out for anything. Improper Conduct, Unsatisfactory Performance...

KITTEN SMITH

Off you go down Washout Lane, bye-bye!

Ace cuts into the front off the mess line.

ACE

Aw, you either got what it takes or you don't.

DJANA'D

C'mon Ace, wait your turn!

ACE

At ease, soldier. It's all the same muck.

JOHNNY

Better get in line like everyone else, Ace.

Silence. There could be a fight. Zim, standing nearby, watches with interest. Ace opens his hand.

ACE

You got some guts for a rich kid. I guess you and me could be buddies.

JOHNNY

What an honor...

ACE

Hey, don't laugh. Everyone oughta have a friend like me!

Ace makes a big friendly show of trading places with Johnny.

BRECKINRIDGE

Come on, Ace, back off the line! Back off the line!

Now everyone's laughing, pushing Ace to the back of the line. Johnny has his grub. Dizzy comes up with her tray.

DIZZY

Hey, amigo, come chow with me.

JOHNNY

No thanks, Diz.

DIZZY

What's your malfunction, Rico?

JOHNNY

You are. I joined up to get out on my own.  
And you had to tag along.

DIZZY

What? You think I joined the Mobile  
Infantry because of you?

JOHNNY

You saying you didn't?

Johnny turns away. Dizzy watches him go, hurt.

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY

The Recruits tumble down the difficult course in their power suits. At the head of the pack, breathing hard, Johnny and Ace race.

ACE

What makes you think... you'll make...  
squad leader, Rico?

JOHNNY

Something... I've got... you don't.

ACE

You rich kids... are all the same!

JOHNNY

It isn't about rich... It's about who's  
best...!

They come to a trap, prepare to leap.

DIZZY

Coming through!

Dizzy jumps over them from behind. Johnny and Ace tumble into the mud. They watch, chagrined, as Dizzy reaches the end of the course effortlessly.

ZIM

C'mon, move it, you apes!

INT. SHOWERS - NIGHT

Dizzy enters as the recruits scrub down.

KITTEN SMITH

We all have one thing in common. We were all stupid enough to sign up for Mobile Infanterie. What's your excuse, Breckinridge?

BRECKINRIDGE

Well, my family is all farmers. I hate farming. Mobile Infantry's pure picnic by comparison.

KITTEN SMITH

So the grow'em big and dumb on the farm planet, eh? Djana'd?

DJANA'D

I'm going in for politics. You gotta be a citizen for that. So here I am.

KITTEN SMITH

C'mon, keep it going... Katrina!

KATRINA

I wanna be a mom. It's easier to get a licence if you've served.

ACE

I'm going career... officer's training. That's why I wanna be squad leader. They look for that.

JOHNNY

Wanting it doesn't make you the best one for the job.

ACE

Oh, yeah? I don't see anyone else here with the chops to lead.

JOHNNY

Well, maybe you better look again.

SHUJUMI

Federation's gonna give me a scholarship when my hitch is up. I wanna be a neurologist, study brain chemisty and associated stimulus...

Dizzy dresses down. Johnny and all the other guys check her out. She has a fabulous body. Dizzy cathees Johnny looking. He turns his back as she steps into the shower next to him.

KITTEN SMITH

Your turn, Rico!

JOHNNY

Aw, who asked you to be so noseey?

KITTEN SMITH

Me, I got plans to be writer, and a  
writer's got a right to be nosey. Flores,  
you know Rico from Buenos Aires... What's  
his story?

Dizzy uses her hand to divert the shower spray towards Johnny's  
crotch.

DIZZY

Well, some say he turned his back on the  
family fortune to be a citizen, others say  
he did it for a girl... missed a spot  
there, bucko... which is funny because  
Johnny says I joined up to be with him,  
but why would I do that? He doesn't even  
like me.

BRECKINRIDGE

Don't look that way to me.

Everyone looks down at Johnny's crotch, laughing. Johnny blushes,  
grabs a towel and exits the shower.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT - INTO CAMERA

Johnny pans the barracks with a little handcam, neat bunks in a  
row, other recruits lounging around in their skivvies.

JOHNNY

I know it's not much, but it's home. Over  
there's my bunk where I dream about you  
every night...

Ace, Kitten Smith, Shujumi and Breckinridge dance around and moon  
the camera.

JOHNNY

Hey, do you mind?

Johnny moves the camera away from the guys. Katrina walks by from  
the shower with Dizzy, mugs into frame.

KATRINA

Hey, what's going on?

DIZZY

I bet it's that girl I was talking  
about... Her name's Carmen, I think.

ACE AND THE OTHERS

Carmen! Ooh la la, Carmencita!

KATRINA

Hi, Carmen!

Johnny heads for the door.

ACE AND THE OTHERS

Hey, where you going? Come back...! He's getting away... Grab him...!

The picture goes all screwy, comes up again on:

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT - into CAMERA

Johnny talk quietly now outside the barracks door.

JOHNNY

Boot's pretty tough, and sometimes I think I won't make it, but then I imagine you're watching me, and that gives me something... I try harder. Thanks to you, I think I might have a shot at squad leader.

The barracks lights go out. Taps plays over the public address. Johnny lowers his voice.

JOHNNY

Uh-oh, I gotta pack it in. I hope you're having fun, hope you're careful. No training accidents for you, eh?  
(leaning into camera)  
I want to kiss you so badly. I want to feel you next to me, I -

Behind him, someone begins to sing, badly.

ACE

I love you truly, so truly, dear...!

Ace, the singer, and the other guys peer down from the transom over the door, giggling, delighted with themselves.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. TERESHKOVA FLIGHT ACADEMY - DAY

Carmen watches the end of Johnny's letter. Ace continues to sing.

ACE

Our love will grow, dear, year by year...

JOHNNY

Bye! Write me! I'm gonna kill you guys!

The letter ends. Carmen smiles. A BALD CADET PILOT smacks her on the arm as she runs by in a sleek blue pressure suit.

BALD CADET

Orbit in five, Ibanez! First one there gets to fly!

Grinning, Carmen grabs her duffel, takes off after her.



INT. BOARDING CORRIDOR - DAY

Carmen and the bald cadet race for the hatch past other recruits.

INT. BOAT - DAY

Carmen gets there first, jumps into the pilot seat. The Bald Pilot takes second seat.

CARMEN  
Looking it down!

Two LATE CADETS duck in through the closing hatch door.

LATE CADET  
Oh no, not Ibanez again, she's crazy!

CARMEN  
On my mark, in three, two, one...

EXT. LUNAR ORBIT

The Boat stracks upward from the lunar floor past orbitting training platforms where CADETS in brightly colored pressure suits float against the Earth which hangs beyond the horizon.

CARMEN (O.S.)  
... GO!

INT. BOAT - LUNAR ORBIT

Carmen blasts past a DESTROYER orbiting in dock, zips between CORVETTES and other slower fleet traffic in the crowded space lanes of Luna. The two late cadets are terrified.

BALD CADET  
Geez, I thought I liked to fly fast!

CARMEN  
This is nothing. Today, I get to fly that!

She points. Now visible from behind a host of smaller ships, STARSHIP ATHENA, of older design, but impressive.

INT. ATHENA - COMMAND AND CONTROL - DAY CYCLE

Carmen arrives on the bridge, dark, cramped, all-business. She salutes the instructor, CAPTAIN DELADIER, 40s.

CARMEN  
Pilot Trainee Ibanez reporting for duty,  
ma'am.

DELADIER  
Take the number one chair, Ibanez. Follow  
all instructions of you supervisor.

CARMEN

Yes, ma'am!

Carmen turns for her station, but stops in her tracks. Her supervisor is Zander Barcalow, now a 2nd Lieutenant.

CARMEN

Hey! What are you doing here?

ZANDER

I'm the guy who's gonna teach you to fly this crate.

Carmen logs on. The ship recognizes her as a pilot trainee.

CARMEN

Assistant instructor... You must be some kind of a hot stick. Should I call you "sir"?

ZANDER

Only when I give you an order.

DELADIER

Prepare for departure.

Carmen and Zander go to work.

CARMEN

It's amazing, us running into each other like this. Maybe it's fate.

ZANDER

Maybe not. I heard about this crazy girl coming through the academy, solid math, a little wild on the stick, but a natural. When it turned out it was you, I made sure we'd run into each other...

DELADIER

Alright, take her out, Ibanez.

CARMEN

Yes, ma'am.

All eyes are on Carmen as she grabs the stick. The ship shudders under her hand. She winks at Zander.

CARMEN

In simulation, my supervisors could never keep up.

ZANDER

This isn't simulation anymore. Take'er out easy, cadet.

CARMEN

Oh, yes, sir. Vector?

ZANDER

Twenty-five by five, roll seven. And don't exceed port speed.

Carmen rocks the stick, and the view from the bridge spins smoothly away from the dense orbiting yards of Luna toward the outer system.

CARMEN

Or...?

ZANDER

They revoke our flight status.

CARMEN

Oh, I see... teamwork.

Carmen jogs past lumbering freighters. Zander's impressed.

DELADIER

Steady as she goes, number one. Prepare for warp. Number two, design for Jupiter orbit.

ZANDER

Yes, ma'am. Star drive in three... two... one...

Space appears to bend. Zander and Carmen share a smile. They blur together, becoming one, then: WHAM!

EXT. LUNA - STARSHIP ATHENA

Disappears in a flash of blinding light.

EXT. WAR GAMES COURSE - DAY

The Recruits have been divided into two teams. RED TEAM includes Ace, Katrina, Breckinridge, and Djana'd. Johnny, Shujumi, Kitten Smith, and Dizzy are part of BLUE TEAM.

ZIM

The object of this exercise is to capture your enemy's flag before your enemy captures yours.

Bronski passes out Morita SmartRifles.

ZIM

These weapons have been modified for this exercise. If your enemy hits you, your suit will fail. You will be unable to move. You will be as good as dead.

EXT. WAR GAMES COURSE - LATER

Djana'd bumps the magnification of her heads up display to survey Blue Team's flag guarded by two recruits. She jumps down to joining other Red Team members on the move.

DJANA'D

It's right over the next ridge... Only two guards.

Johnny, Kitten Smith, and Dizzy open fire from athicket as they pass. Djana'd and the others collapse as their suits fail, Djana'd laughing because playing at war seems funny.

KITTEN SMITH

You are now prisoners of the Blue Team.  
Tell us your plans or die!

DJANA'D

Oh no! Name, rank, and mind your own  
business is all you get from me!

EXT. RED TEAM FLAG - DAY

Red Team opens fire as the Blue Team appears. Shujumi and other Blue Team members go down in an ambush led by Breckinridge. Johnny dives for cover, and finds himself sharing it with Dizzy.

KITTEN SMITH

I'm going in! Let's go!

Kitten Smith makes a run for the flag with a rifle team. Ace and Katrina open fire from two new hidden Red Team positions, taking Kitten and his team down with a cross fire.

JOHNNY

Man, they're defended... no way in.

DIZZY

Flip six, three hole.

JOHNNY

What?

DIZZY

High school... remember? Run a flip six,  
three hole play, and you might score...

Johnny looks at the course in a new way, nods.

JOHNNY

Cover me.

DIZZY

You got it.

Johnny tumbles open ground, vaults into the air. Dizzy takes out Breckinridge as he rises to fire. Johnny lands, knocks out Katrina, then Ace. He picks up Ace's fallen Morita.

JOHNNY

Thanks, pal.

EXT. OBSERVATION TOWER - DAY

Zim and CORPORAL BRONSKI watch Johnny firing both Moritas simultaneously and taking out the remaining Red Team defenders. He grabs the Red Team flag and hurls it into the air like spear.

ZIM

Kid's got some moves...

INT. AIRBORNE SKIMMER - DAY

The Recruits line up in the door of a SKIMMER, the military's standard utility aircraft, to practice drops from altitude.

ZIM

Smith, GO! McIntire, GO! Flores, GO! Rico,  
I'm making you squad leader!

JOHNNY

Sir, thank you, sir!

ZIM

Don't stand there dumb... GO!

Johnny jumps, plummeting toward the earth.

JOHNNY

YEEEE-Haaaaaaaaaaaaa...!

Next in line, Ace scowls.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The Recruits have some free time. Johnny makes a big show of polishing the chevrons that designate him as Squad Leader.

KITTEN SMITH

Look at him. Do you think anyone has ever  
been so pleased with himself?

ACE

Zim hadda choose someone to be his brown  
nose, I guess.

JOHNNY

I just want you guys to know that I'll  
never do anything that I haven't asked you  
to do first.

Johnny approaches Dizzy.

JOHNNY

Couldn't've done it without you, Diz.  
Friends?

Dizzy smiles, shakes.

DIZZY

Yeah, sure... friends.

Bronski walks through with the mail.

BRONSKI

Levy... Shujumi... Rico.

Johnny grabs the E-disk, pops it into his handcam. The Fleet Mail logo appears: "APPROVED MESSAGE"

JOHNNY

Bet it's from my girl.

Johnny's pals gather for a look. Carmen appears, dressed down to skivvies, in her quarters aboard starship Athena.

CARMEN

Hi, Johnny, I would've written sooner, but they've really got us going every moment here.

ACE

Yeow, Rico, you don't deserve that!

JOHNNY

Shhhh...!

CARMEN

I'm glad you're doing so well. If they haven't made you squad leader by now, I'm sure you will.

Johnny holds up his squad leader chevrons victoriously.

JOHNNY

All it takes is the love of a good woman...

The image changes abruptly. Now Carmen's wearing a trim blue flight suit. She stands the camera on Athena's gunnery deck. Outside, the rings of Saturn sparkle in bright solar light.

CARMEN

Look at that. Isn't it beautiful? I had to show you. It's great to be out here on my own. I'm just not some little girl from Buenos Aires anymore. I'm gonna be a starship pilot, and I'm gonna see the universe...

(she sighs)

And that's also the problem because I don't really want to get married, Johnny. I don't want to have kids. I want a command, a ship of my own, and you know, I don't think that's gonna leave a lot of room for you and me.

Johnny is stunned. All the other recruits suddenly seem to have something else to do.

CARMEN

I know that's not what you wanted to hear... but I have to follow my heart. I'm sorry. I'm afraid you'll hate me, and I couldn't stand that. Write me, alright? Write me, so I'll know that we'll always be friends.

The Fleet Mail logo appears again: "END OF MESSAGE". Johnny shuts the handcam off. Ace puts a hand on his shoulder.

ACE

Funny how they always want to be your friends after they kick your guts out.

JOHNNY

It's what I deserve.

ACE

Whad'ya talkin about?

JOHNNY

I joined up for her. I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for her. I'm a fool.

ACE

You made squad leader on your own, and, hey, you still got me to kick around.

Johnny smiles in spite of himself.

JOHNNY

Thanks, Ace.

Johnny turns for the door, flipping the chevrons like a coin. Dizzy watches him leave. She'd so like to comfort him.

EXT. LIVE FIRE COMBAT RANGE - DAY

The Recruits arm their Marauder power suits. Zim and Bronski wear Command model suits with rank designations. Johnny checks weapons, scans the electronics on each squad member's power suit.

ZIM

With the Marauder's visual capabilities, all you have to do is look at something to hit it, so you will exercise **EXTREME CARE** on my firing line. Do you get me?

RECRUITS

Sir, yes, sir!

ZIM

The live firing combat range is the closest simulation of actual combat we can provide. If you do not hit your target, it will shoot you...

Fifty blackened AUTOMATED TARGET DRONES fitted with pulse guns are presently visible along a gauntlet of low walls, gullies, and three-story building facades.

ZIM

The Marauder power suit will prevent serious injury, but if you are hit, you will be non-operational and your team score will suffer accordingly. Rico, has each member of your squad completed a weapons safety check?

JOHNNY

Sir, yes, sir!

On a signal from Zim, the Live Fire Combat Range comes to life as the target drones take cover and disappear from view.

ZIM

Perfect score for this exercise is 300. B company came through last week with 285. I expect you to do better.

EXT. LIVE FIRE COMBAT RANGE - DAY

The Recruits take out the target drones as they appear. Halfway through the course, a recruit takes a hit and goes down, immobilized. Djana'd has a clear shot, but Breckinridge gets in her way.

DJANA'D

You're in my line of fire, Breckinridge

Before the others can react, a second drone appears.

JOHNNY

CROSSFIRE! EVERYBODY DOWN!

Everyone kisses dirt. Pulses from the two drones fly thick overhead. Shujumi rises to fire, a round slams him back to the ground. Johnny and Djana'd knock out the two drones.

JOHNNY

Alright, no more screw ups. Ace takes point. Diz, you and Kitten Smith cover the flanks. Djana'd, you're rear guard. Move out.

The squad resumes its advance. Breckinridge bangs on his helmet. There is something wrong with his "head up" display.

JOHNNY

What's the problem?



BRECKINRIDGE

Dunno. Display's fritzed.

DJANA'D

Lose another rifle, we're gonna mess up  
our score...

JOHNNY

Let me see.

Breckinridge takes off helmet, hands it to Johnny. Djana'd turns  
on Breckinridge. Her "head up" zeroes him.

DJANA'D

How come when something goes wrong, it's  
always you, Breckinridge?

That's when Djana'd trips on a loose stone. She fumbles her rifle  
and it discharges. The round tears the top of Breckinridge's head  
off. The Recruits stare in horror.

JOHNNY

Oh, God... uh... MEDIC!

Zim arrives with Bronski on the bounce.

ZIM

Rico, you are relieved of squad command.  
Levy, McIntire you will escort private  
Rico to the C.O.'s Office.

The Recruits watch Johnny leave, stare aghast at their dead  
comrade. No one looks at Djana'd, who stands alone sobbing.

INT. C.O.'S OFFICE - DAY

Johnny stands before the C.O. braced by Katrina and Ace. Zim and  
the C.O. are both saddened by the proceedings.

C.O.

Rico, did you give the recruit permission  
to remove his helmet?

JOHNNY

Sir, yes, sir. Breckinridge reported a  
helmet malfunction, and I asked him to  
show it to me, sir.

C.O.

Are you rated to repair a Marauder power  
suit, Rico?

JOHNNY

Sir, no, sir.

C.O.

Then why did you order your man to remove  
his helmet during a live fire exercise?

JOHNNY

Sir, I needed everyone in my squad operational, sir... I... I wanted to win, sir.

C.O.

(sigh)

You disobeyed safety regulation 21-404. You may, of course, demand trial by court martial.

JOHNNY

Sir, no, sir!

C.O.

Do you freely admit to the charges made against you?

JOHNNY

Sir... I guess I do, sir.

Zim looks out the window. Djana'd, dressed for travel, in civilian clothes, crying as she heads off down Washout Lane.

C.O.

Sergeant, we've lost two recruits over this incident already... is there any possibility of salvaging this man?

Zim

I believe so, sir.

C.O.

Alright. We'll try administrative punishment. Until then you are confined to your quarters, Rico.

INT. BARRACKS - SUNSET

Johnny looks out the window to the parade ground where a POST has been erected. The Recruits look up as Zim enters.

ZIM

Alright, let's go, Rico.

Johnny takes off his shirt. Ace who now holds the chevrons of squad leader, watches, feels bad for his pal.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - SUNSET

The Recruits stand with recruits from other platoons. Johnny is led to the post and strung up as the C.O. reads the charge.

C.O.

For incompetence of command, for failure to abide by safety regulations in a live fire exercise, for negligence which contributed to the death of a teammate...

Zim steps up to Johnny, offers him a red rubber mouthpiece.

ZIM

Bite on this. It helps. I know.

C.O.

... recruit trainee John Rico is sentenced  
to administrative punishment. Ten lashes.

Johnny takes it in his mouth. His tear away shirt is torn away.  
Johnny stands at the post alone. Corporal Bronski, a big man with  
an unhappy task, unrolls his whip.

C.O.

You may carry out the sentence.

BRONSKI

One.

CRACK! Johnny's face wrenched by pain, spontaneous tears, a  
terrible sound stifled by the bright red mouthpiece.

BRONSKI

Two.

CRACK! Again. Dizzy flinches for Johnny.

BRONSKI

Three.

CRACK! Ace looks away.

BRONSKI

Four.

CRACK! Zim watches without any apparent emotion.

BRONSKI

Five.

CRACK! Johnny faints, sagging against his tether.

FADE OUT

EXT. OUTER SYSTEM

STARSHIP ATHENA cruises past, 600,000 metric tons of star class  
destroyer, FIGHTERS and LANDING BOATS lining her open hangar deck.

INT. ATHENA - COMMAND AND CONTROL - NIGHT CYCLE

Carmen works alone on the empty bridge. She yawns. Zander brings  
coffee for himself and Carmen.

CARMEN

Thanks. You read my mind. Third watch  
always seems to last forever.

ZANDER

Oh, I don't know... Depends on who you are spending it with.

He caresses her hair. She kisses his hand. Zander notices the plot map.

ZANDER

Profile's wrong... there.

CARMEN

No, I replotted the course. It's more efficient this way.

ZANDER

Three weeks aboard a starship and you know it all, huh?

CARMEN

Hey, check it.

Zander slides into his chair, runs a check.

ZANDER

You know I was talking to Captain, Deladier, and she said...

CARMEN

Don't change the subject. Am I right?

ZANDER

Well, whad'ya know...

CARMEN

Don't mess with the boss. So what'd the captain say?

ZANDER

She got a command... and she thinks we oughta team up officially and crew for her. She thinks we're good together.

CARMEN

You and me, huh?

Zander turns his chair so they are very close, moves a finger along her hand, up her arm and playfully around her breasts.

ZANDER

I have a feeling about us. We're good together, way ahead of the curve in every department. I seem to be able to anticipate your needs. You know what I want...

Carmen grabs him between his legs.

CARMEN

No, what do you want?

Zander pulls her to him and they kiss passionately. She breaks it off, gets serious for a moment.

CARMEN

I want to be part of the best flight team  
in the Fleet...

ZANDER

Me, too... Day and Night Cycle.

They start to caress again when suddenly ALARMS sound. Captain Deladier appears on the hot screen, still waking up.

DELADIER

Report.

ZANDER

Captain, we are in the path of an  
unidentified object moving at near light  
speed...

Carmen and Zander frantically check their displays.

CARMEN

WHERE IS IT?

ZANDER

THERE! GRAVITY FIELD... IT'S BIG!

CARMEN

It looks like an... asteroid.

DELADIER

In this part of the system?

Carmen and Zander see it through the front screens: A huge ASTEROID tumbles directly towards them at terrific speed.

ZANDER

Sweet Jesus...!

Carmen breaks glass that reads "EMERGENCY RETROS", arms the switch within and fires the rockets.

EXT. OUTER SYSTEM

Starship Athena torques to one side. The asteroid grazes the ship, cutting a huge gash in Athena's hull. Ice and rock travelling in its wake shreds COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT.

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL - NIGHT CYCLE

Carmen and Zander brace themselves as diamond hard particles pound the front screens. The ship continues to tumble.

EXT. ATHENA - FLIGHT DECK

A Fighter loses it's mooring, tumbling into other craft, explosions ripping the deck.

INT. ATHENA -VARIOUS - NIGHT CYCLE

CREWMEN are sucked into space. Others hang on frantically as automatic doors seal Athena's wound and their fates.

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL - NIGHT CYCLE

CAPTAIN DELADIER arrives on the bridge, now crowded as other FLIGHT OFFICERS rush to their stations. Zander's going through star charts.

DELADIER

Where'd it come from?

ZANDER

Trajectory indicates it came out of the Arachnid Quarantine Zone.

DELADIER

Number 4, contact Fleet and tell'em there's a loose asteroid headed their way.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Communications are down, ma'am.

DELADIER

Engineering. Damage assessment.

ENGINEERING OFFICER

Hull's compromised. We're lucky to be alive, ma'am.

Deladier notices Carmen staring at a monitor, stunned. A DEAD CAP TROOPER trails in the wreckage of the flight deck.

DELADIER

Good work, Number 1. You'll do.

CARMEN

Thank you, ma'am.

INT. BARRACK'S - DAY

Johnny wears his civilian clothes, packs as the other recruits get ready for the day's training. No one says anything. He moves stiffly, careful of his back.

DIZZY

It stinks, you goin.

JOHNNY

I don't stay where I'm not wanted.

DIZZY

If they didn't want you, they woulda kicked you out, amigo.

JOHNNY

Hey, they humiliated me in front of everyone! I'm just supposed to take it, huh? Well, I'm not gonna, and I guess that proves I just can't cut it.

Corporal Bronski leans in, impassive.

BRONSKI

Your call's going through, Rico. Take it there.

A nearby VU-PHONE lights up. The screen flashes: "RINGING". His mother appears when she picks up the other end.

MOTHER

Hello... Oh, Johnny...!

JOHNNY

Hi, mom.

MOTHER

Bill... pick up... it's Johnny! You little rat. You haven't called, you haven't written. It's been so lonely here without you...

The screen splits as Johnny's father activates an extension.

FATHER

Johnny! Where's your uniform...?

Johnny's mother makes a face to shut him up.

FATHER

Well, it's just good to hear from you. What's up, son?

JOHNNY

It's not really working out for me here, dad. I was thinking... I was hoping it would be alright if I came home.

MOTHER

Well, of course you should come home immediatly!

JOHNNY

I've made a mess of things. I've been so stupid...

FATHER

Don't talk like that. Get yourself home as fast as you can.

MOTHER

We'll all have dinner. I'll fix your favorite.

FATHER

Yeah! We'll talk it out and have a good glass of wine... and... well, we love you, son.

The sky in Buenos Aires seems to darken perceptively. Johnny's mother looks out the window.

MOTHER

Oh, my, what's that?

FATHER

Looks like rain.

MOTHER

This time of the year...?

The transmission ends abruptly. A phone company logo appears: "TRANSMISSION TERMINATED"

VU-PHONE VOICE

Your transmission has been terminated due to atmospheric interference. Please try your call again later.

Johnny zips his duffel, hefts it gingerly over his shoulder.

JOHNNY

Well, see ya.

DIZZY

You take the stroll down Washout Lane, you're only proving one thing, Johnny.

JOHNNY

What's that, Diz?

DIZZY

That you don't have what it takes to be a citizen!

Dizzy turns on her heel and marches away.

INT. THE C.O.'S OFFICE - DAY

Johnny signs form 1240/A. Zim stands as witness.

C.O.

Now you, Sergeant.

Zim signs bitterly. The C.O. sighs.

C.O.

That's it, son. You can go.



The C.O. and Zim turn to other things. Johnny picks up his duffel and heads out the door.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

Johnny walks alone, sad. A skimmer hums by overhead and he looks after it. Out across the parade ground he sees the gunt of Marauder power suits as recruits tumble the obstacle course.

EXT. WASHOUT LANE - DAY

Johnny reaches the little white fence that leads to the transporter. He turns back for one last look and notices people running to the Communications shack. Kitten Smith runs by.

JOHNNY

Hey, Kitten, what's going on?

KITTEN

It's war!

EXT. COMMUNICATION - DAY

Johnny joins others to see what's on the Federal Net. Recruits, non-coms, and officers gather without any sense of military decorum. People cry openly, among them Corporal Bronski.

OFFICIAL VOICE

... early estimates. Millions dead, a city in ruins...

On screen, the smoldering ruins of what was once a huge city.

JOHNNY

Oh, jeez, is that Geneva?

KATRINA

Goddam bugs whacked us, Johnny.

OFFICIAL VOICE

... Buenos Aires has been wiped of the Earth. Nothing lives in what was once called the Latin Paradise...

Johnny is horrified. Dizzy is suddenly standing next to him.

DIZZY

Aw, Johnny, geez... It's home.

OFFICIAL VOICE

The Federal Court met moments ago and voted unanimously for mobilization to destroy the Arachnid threat.

Johnny sets his jaw, turns and runs for the C.O.'s office.

INT. C.O.'S OFFICE - DAY

The C.O. and Zim and other staffers watch the grim news unfold. Animation illustrates the insect treachery.

OFFICIAL VOICE

The meteor derived from here, near Klendathu, in the Arachnid's home system...

ZIM

I'm serious, sir. I'll go anywhere. I want combat.

C.O.

Forget it, Zim. We're gonna need you here. The only way you'll get a combat assignment is if you bust yourself to private. You get me?

ZIM

Yes, sir, I get you.

C.O.

What can I do for you, Rico?

JOHNNY

Sir, I wish to reconsider my request to drop out, sir.

C.O.

Sorry, son. I can't do it. You signed the 1240/A. It would be illegal.

JOHNNY

Sir, I know it was wrong. I didn't learn from one mistake and I made another, sir.  
(then)

Sir, my family... my whole family was in Buenos Aires, sir.

Zim picks up Johnny's 1240/A off the C.O.'s desk.

ZIM

Is that your signature, Rico?

JOHNNY

Sir, yes it is, sir.

ZIM

Doesn't look like it to me.

Zim gives the C.O. a look. The C.O. shrugs, turns away, watching the news of the coming war. Zim tears up the 1240/A.

ZIM

Get outa here, private.

FROM THE FEDERAL NET - HUMANKIND GOES TO WAR!

Actual pictures of Buenos Aires: SURVIVORS pick through rubble, people wail, kids play tag in the ruins.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Out of the ashes of Buenos Aires comes first sorrow, then ANGER!

ANGRY PERSON

The only good bug is a dead bug!

OFFICIAL VOICE

Would you like to know more?

COMBAT - VICTORY ON DANTANA!

A wounded CAP TROOPER, grim smile, flashes "V" for victory as his weary comrades carry him off the field.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Cap Troopers establish a foothold on Dantana, a planet system at the outer edge of the Arachnid Quarantine Zone. Casualties are high, but casualties won't stop the Mobile Infantry! Would you like to know more?

HOME FRONT - KIDS KILL BUGS AND MOM IS GLAD!

MOM smiles as her CUTE KIDS stomp insects in the garden. FACTORY WORKERS turn out ordnance. PEOPLE line up to enlist.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Everyone's doing their share. Are you? The war effort needs your effort at work, at home, in your community. Would you like to know more?

LEADERSHIP - SKY MARSHALL ANNOUNCES OFFENSIVE!

SKY MARSHALL DIENES, 72, addresses the FEDERAL COUNCIL.

SKY MARSHALL DIENES

We are a generation commanded by fate to defend humankind! We must meet the threat with our valor, our blood, with our very lives, to insure that human civilization, not insect, dominates this galaxy now and always.

The council rises to its feet for a standing ovation.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Sky Marshall Dienes announces plans for an offensive against Klendathu, source of the bug meteor that destroyed Buenos Aires.

LIVE BROADCAST - AQZ

FLEET BATTLE STATION TICONDEROGA is a sprawling pre-fab structure covering several square kilometers of space where STARSHIPS are stacked in berths. Super title: "COUNTDOWN TO VICTORY"

OFFICIAL VOICE

We now break net and take you live to Fleet Battle Station Ticonderoga deep inside the Arachnid Quarantine Zone.

INT. BATTLE STATION - NIGHT CYCLE

The camera follows the Net Correspondent as he works a corridor crowded with MOBILE INFANTRY and FLEET PERSONNEL.

NET CORRESPONDENT

No one here in the AQZ knows when the invasion of Kendathu will occur, but everyone's talking about it, and the talk says tomorrow!

Newly minted cap troopers Johnny, Dizzy, Ace, and Kitten Smith happen along.

NET CORRESPONDENT

Here's a bunch of M.I. kids who look like they eat bugs for lunch!

DIZZY

Yum, yum yum...!

NET CORRESPONDENT

So you're not too worried about fighting the Arachnids...?

ACE

Hey, shoot a nuke down a bug hole, lotta dead bugs, am I right?

KITTEN SMITH

I just hope it's not over before we get in it!

NET CORRESPONDENT

Some say the bugs were provoked by human attempts to colonize within the AQZ, that a "live and let live" policy is preferable to war with the bugs...

JOHNNY

Yeah, well, I'm from Buenos Aires, and I say kill 'em all!

INT. RECREATION DECK - NIGHT CYCLE

Johnny and his friends drink at a crowded bar. Around the room there's singing and dancing, a mad sort of revelry bred of fear and excitement, but nearby a VETERAN drinks alone.

KITTEN SMITH

That guy's been in it.

JOHNNY

How can you tell?

KITTEN SMITH

The eyes. He's got the 1000 meters stare.

He's hard and humorless, all wised up. Ace admires his LASER CUT TATTOOS. Dizzy eyes his skull and crossbone earring.

ACE

Great scars.

DIZZY

I like the jewelry. Hey, amigo, where can I get an earring like yours?

VETERAN

Port Joe Smith, Outer Rings, Dantana...  
Every time I come back from a drop, my  
gunny gives me a bone. I got three now.  
You don't see a lot of guys with three.

JOHNNY

What's it like... combat?

VETERAN

I guess it's not so bad. I mean as long as  
you don't get any on you.

KITTEN SMITH

Get any what on you?

VETERAN

Oh, you'll know when it happens. See you  
on the bounce.

The veteran pays his tab and heads out.

ACE

I say we all go to the laser parlor and  
get cut together.

JOHNNY

What do I want with a scar?

DIZZY

What, your skin's too pretty? C'mon,  
everyone's doing it!

CARMEN (V.O.)

Hey Johnny! Johnny Rico!

Johnny looks up and sees Carmen. She looks great in uniform with the hat and the lieutenant's bars on her shoulders.

JOHNNY

Carmen...?

Johnny remembers himself, snaps to attention, salutes. Dizzy and the others follow suit. Carmen salutes back, sheepish.

CARMEN

Oh... at ease. Guess I oughta lose the hat when I'm off duty, eh?

Dizzy, disgusted, turns back to Ace and Kitten Smith. Carmen tucks her hat under her arm. Her hair is very short.

JOHNNY

What happened to your hair?

CARMEN

What do you think? Everyone did it when we got our wings. You don't like it, do you?

JOHNNY

It's alright, I guess. You hear from anyone made it out of B.A. alive?

Carmen shakes her head, sadly.

CARMEN

It's funny. Sometimes I forget. Then it hits me, and I can't stop crying.

JOHNNY

I try just to be happy I'm still alive.

CARMEN

You don't look very happy to see me.

JOHNNY

Should I be?

CARMEN

Johnny... Life is so different from the way it was. One day you'll see what I did was best for both of us.

Zander leaves a group of FLEET OFFICERS to join them.

ZANDER

Everything coposetic, Lieutenant?

CARMEN

Zander, you remember Johnny? Zander and I are a flight team now.

Zander puts his arm around Carmen, gives her a squeeze.

ZANDER

Best in the Fleet!

JOHNNY

I get it. This is the part that's best for both of us. Don't do me anymore favors, eh?

Johnny turns to leave.

CARMEN

Johnny, wait...

ZANDER

Forget it, Carmen. The Mobile Infantry does a thankless, dirty job, so they naturally tend to be short-tempered, thoughtless and rude.

Johnny turns back to face Zander.

JOHNNY

You got something to say about the Mobile Infantry?

ZANDER

You heard me. Wanna make something out of it, private?

JOHNNY

Not with an officer, no, sir. The M.I. doesn't mint stupid cap troopers.

Everyone can see what's about to happen. A circle is forming, Fleet on one side, Mobile Infantry on the other.

ZANDER

Let's disregaed rank... Everybody hear that? Rank is not an issue here.

CARMEN

Zander, please... Let's go!

Zander takes off his hat.

ZANDER

It's alright. What's he gonna do?

WHAM! Johnny punches him right in the nose. Zander goes down, bleeding. Ace and Kitten Smith grab Johnny.

ACE

Whoa, easy there, buddy... Nice punch.

Zander staggers to his feet, ready to fight, but Fleet Officers pull him back. Carmen looks at Johnny, the hate in his eye, the blood on his fist.

CARMEN

What's wrong with you?

JOHNNY  
Hey, it's just a vestigial response to  
procreation... bitch.

Carmen turns away, stung. Johnny immediately regrets. Dizzy, for  
her part, couldn't be happier.

DIZZY  
Forget it, Johnny. Cap Troopers and Fleet  
weren't meant to mix!

INT. LASER PARLOR - NIGHT CYCLE

Johnny grinds his teeth as a laser mounted on a robot arm finishes  
slicing anint ricate pattern into his arm.

JOHNNY  
It hurts...!

Dizzy, Ace, and Kitten Smith awtch, grinning, passing a bottle.  
Ace pours booze directly into the fresh wound.

ACE  
No, this hurts.

JOHNNY  
YAAAAAAAAA!

KITTEN SMITH  
Well, here's to it! We're gonna fightn,  
and we're gonna win!

They put their arms side by side. Each has a similiar scar:  
Lightning bolts on a shield and the words: "DEATH FROM ABOVE"

ACE  
Mobile Infantry rules!

JOHNNY  
Death to all bugs!

DIZZY  
Don't get any on you!

EXT. KLENDATHU - FROM SPACE

FLEET STARSHIPS of every class maneuver in tight orbit around the  
orange planet. The "Mobile Infantry Anthem" plays loke Holst,  
pounding and relentless. The invasion has begun!

INT. BULL RUN - DROP ROOM

Johnny and his platoon, wearing fully armed MARAUDER POWER SUITS,  
wait to drop with other cap troopers. Their mood is grim.  
LIEUTENANT WILLY, 35, easy-going and confident, enters.



ACE  
Officer on deck!

Everyone snaps to attention.

LT. WILLY  
At ease. Alright... we got hot poop  
straight from the top: Willy's Wildcats is  
in with the first wave. Means more bugs  
for us to kill...

This does nothing to break the tension. Lt. Willy reassures.

LT. WILLY  
Now if you follow orders and remember your  
training, I guarantee you'll make it back  
alive. Any questions?

There are none.

LT. WILLY  
Alright... next we got a little last  
minute briefing from Military intelligence  
I think you're gonna like...

The briefing plays on "head up" displays and the ready room  
screens. A captive BUG WARRIOR clicks and shrieks as FEDERAL  
SCIENTISTS torture it. The troopers cheer.

OFFICIAL VOICE  
Everyday Federal scientists are looking  
for new ways to kill bugs and you can  
help...

The head scientists turns and speaks to camera. It's Carl. Johnny  
and Dizzy share an amazed grin, noticing a difference in their old  
friend, something that speaks of... authority.

CARL  
To defeat the enemy, we must know the  
enemy. Take for instance your basic  
Arachnid warrior. Minimal IQ, armored,  
completely lethal. You can blow a limb  
off...

Carl picks up a pulse gun and blows one of the bugs legs off. The  
insect screams.

CARL  
... and it's still 86% combat effective.  
But here's a tip: Aim for the nerve stem  
and put it down for good.

Carl fires again. The bug kicks and squeals as it dies. Carl  
tosses the pulse gun aside.

CARL

Now while you are out killing bugs, we want you to be our eyes and ears. The bugs use some kind of plasma burst to divert meteors and aim them toward Earth. We need to know how they do this. If you encounter any plasma, report it immediately to your superior. Good luck and good hunting!

The briefing ends as klaxons sound.

P.A. (O.S.)

This is the Captain speaking. All personnel prepare for drop. We are at D minus three and counting.

LT. WILLY

Move out!

Johnny and the other troopers climb into capsules on the port track. Dizzy gives him "thumbs up". The capsule seals as it moves with the others down the firing tube.

INT. CAPSULE

Johnny gets the shakes as the capsule bumps and booms toward the firing tube. Lt. Willy appears on the "head up" display.

LT. WILLY

Smash the entire area, kill anything that has more'n a couple legs, and don't any of you loafers come back aboard with unexpended bombs. Get me?

JOHNNY ET AL

Yes, sir!

FIRE CONTROL (O.S.)

Five seconds...

Sweat rolls down his face, hyperventilation... WHAM!

EXT. SPACE - KLENDATHU ORBIT

SILVER CAPSULES stream toward Klendathu from the rear tubes starships of Bull Run. We move down the line past Mannerheim, Dauntless, George Marshall, and Yamamoto to the RODGER YOUNG.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - COMMAND AND CONTROL

Carmen holds Rodger Young in tight maneuver. Suddenly, a burst of BLUE BUG PLASMA rips past the starboard bow.

CARMEN

Plasma, ma'am... from the planet.

DELADIER

Bug Batteries... According to Military intelligence, it'll be random and light. Drop status?

ZANDER

Drop is 35% complete, ma'am.

Two more bursts of bug plasma streak past.

DELADIER

Steady as she goes, Number 1.

EXT. KLENDATHU - HIGH ATMOSPHERE - NIGHT

The Capsules burn when they hit atmosphere, outer skin tearing away in big silver sheets.

INT. CAPSULE - NIGHT

Johnny takes in ENTRY DATA from the heads up display.

GUIDANCE COMPUTER (V.O.)

... surface in twenty-five seconds... LZ has been identified... beacon is in place...

INT. RODGER YOUNG - COMMAND AND CONTROL

Carmen watches nervously as deadly bursts of bug plasma fill the heavens around the battle group. Below, the surface of Klendathu fairly hisses with outgoing defensive fire.

DELADIER

This isn't random or light. Someone made a mistake...!

ZANDER

That's it, we're empty ma'am!

Out the front screens, a blast from below hits George Marshall amidships and it reels into Yamamoto. Both starships begin to burn.

DELADIER

Someone made a big goddam mistake! Get us out of here, Number 1!

Carmen dodges past burning ships, avoids collision with Dauntless, and then - KA-WHAM! - they're hit. Carmen flies out of her station and into CAMERA hard.

EXT. KLENDATHU - CLOUD LAYER - NIGHT

The second skin tears away. Johnny is sitting on air.

GUIDANCE COMPUTER (V.O.)  
... surface in fifteen seconds...  
deploying chute now...

The chute pops. Across the sky, lit by outgoing bug plasma, he can see hundreds of cap troopers in ordered rows drifting down into the cloud layer. It's quiet in the clouds, then:

EXT. KLENDATHU - NIGHT - FROM THE AIR

Johnny looks down as he passes out of the clouds and sees the battlefield. Plasma blasts explode into the sky. THOUSANDS OF BUGS boil out of the ground to defend against the invader.

GUIDANCE COMPUTER (V.O.)  
... surface in five... four... three...

Johnny burns his chute off, drops the last hundred feet and lands on the bounce.

EXT. KLENDATHU - NIGHT - JOHNNY'S POV

The FLASH PULSE of bug batteries, screaming voices on the com, concussions shaking the ground. None of it compares to the sound of his own racing HEARTBEAT. Lieutenant Willy shouts.

LIEUTENANT WILLY  
Up there on the ridge! We'll nuke those  
bug positions from theAAAAA!

A HOPPER (an airborne Arachnid warrior with powerful rear legs and "pop out" wings for gliding) lands on Lieutenant Willy and cracks his head like a nut.

ACE  
KILL IT!

Johnny and Ace open fire, backing away. Pulse rounds tear it apart, bug guts gushing.

JOHNNY  
Lieutenant's bought the farm. Where's the  
Sarge...?

ACE  
I didn't see him!

Now comes a flood of WORKERS building ever advancing fortifications, and with them, hundreds of deadly ARACHNID WARRIORS.

KITTEN SMITH  
Here they come...!

DIZZY  
Ace, what're we doing?

ACE

I uh... uh...

Dizzy and the others open fire simultaneously. The whole area goes white hot in the magnesium flash of so many pulse cannons. Shujumi fires wildly at advancing insects.

SHUJUMI

You want some? Here's some! C'MON!

JOHNNY

Don't waste your amm on on the workers!

Shujumi can't hear. A warrior finds him, rips his leg off, hurls him back into the waiting jaws of the oncoming bugs.

SHUJUMI

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

He fights, screaming. A claw reaches for his face, ripping the top of his head off.

KATRINA

Let's get out of here!

Now the ground opens behind her and a huge (6 meters) TANKER BUG lumbers out of the ground, it's funnel-shaped snout extruding above multiple eyes.

DIZZY

Look out!

The tanker bug sprays and hits Katrina. She screams, as her legs melt out from under her.

KATRINA

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Warriors converge to feed on her. Ace wants to help her, but Johnny blocks him.

JOHNNY

C'mon, Katrina was right. We gotta get out of here!

EXT. KLENDATHU - NIGHT

Johnny and the other survivors on the bounce. The entire surface of Klendathu seems to be churning with insects as more and more bugs come to the surface to repel the invasion.

JOHNNY

It's a general retreat! The boats are coming down.

They come to the rear lines where the Net Correspondent and his CAMERAMAN are doing live coverage of the invasion.

NET CORRESPONDENT

We've just landed here on what cap troopers are calling the "Big K" with the 6th Mobile Infantry Division. It's an ugly planet, a bug planet, a planet hostile to life as we know IGKKKKK!

The Correspondent is cut in half by a warrior. Johnny blows it away.

JOHNNY

C'mon, let's go! ON THE BOUNCE!

The cap troopers move out. Kitten Smith looks up as a purple beacon streaks across the sky.

KITTEN SMITH

I can see the beacon...!

ACE

Retrieval!

A hopper pounces on Kitten Smith, and he goes down screaming.

JOHNNY

KITTEN!

Johnny touches down, stares in horror as Kitten Smith's head rolls past his feet. Johnny opens up with his pulse cannon. The hopper attacks, puts a claw right through Johnny's thigh.

JOHNNY

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Crushing jaws close around him, crushing, cutting his flesh. Johnny brings the muzzle of the pulse gun under the hopper's nerve stem and SPLAT! blows its head apart.

DIZZY

Johnny! JOHNNY! WHERE ARE YOU? JOHNNY!  
Johnny...!

But Dizzy can't find Johnny, and soon she's lost in the smoke. Johnny looks down at the terrible hole in his leg where bright arterial blood gushes.

JOHNNY

Medic... MEDIC...!

Now two more Arachnid warriors close in on him through the enveloping smoke. He fires his pulse rifle empty, and dropping it, crawls desperately, dragging his useless leg.

JOHNNY

Oh, God... Oh, God, help me... please help me...!

A third Arachnid warrior rears up in front of him, deadly jaws slashing down toward him, when suddenly it is blown to pieces in the blinding blast of a point-blank pulse cannon.

VOICE (O.S.)

Take my hand!

Johnny reaches out. A STEEL HAND takes his, dragging him back as bugs attack. His rescuers's pulse cannon thunders overhead. Bug parts fly as insects swarm in for the kill.

FADE OUT

FROM THE FEDERAL NET - 100, 000 DEAD IN ONE HOUR!

Actual pictures of the battlefield, man and insect lying dead together on the blood drenched plains of Klendathu.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Crsis for Humankind! Fleet official admit they underestimated the Arachnid's defensive capability. Would you like to know more?

SKY MARSHALL RESIGNS!

Retiring Sky Marshall Dienes salutes incoming SKY MARSHALL TEHAT MERU, 75, bfore a gathering of the Federal Council.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Accepting responsibility for Klendathu, Sky Marshall Dienes resigns. His successor, Sky Marshall Tahat Meru, outlines her new strategy.

SKY MARSHALL MERU

Until we understand the bug better, we must proceed with caution... We can ill afford another Klendathu.

SCIENTISTS SUSPECT MYSTERIOUS BRAIN BUGS!

FEDERAL SCIENTISTS display an organizational chart of the Arachnid species topped by a QUESTION MARK.

OFFICIAL VOICE

To explain the intelligent military actions of the Arachnids, Federal Scientists postulate the existence of a leadership caste... BRAIN BUGS!

SOMETIMES LOVED ONES DIE FOR A GOOD REASON!

Names scroll by designated KIA, WIA, and MIA accordingly.

OFFICIAL VOICE

Families of those who have died or become incapacitated by Federal Service are entitled to benefits! If you see the name of a loved one, please do not call. A Federation official will call you. Would you like to know more?

EXT. FLEET BATTLE STATION TICONDEROGA

The Rodger Young limps to port, a huge chunk ripped out of its mid-section. Although stable, she flies inverted.

CARMEN (O.S.)

Ticonderoga, this is Rodger Young requesting approach vector...

TICONDEROGA C&C (O.S.)

Affirmative, Rodger Young... one zero zero niner five two... welcome back.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - COMMAND AND CONTROL

Zander and Carmen stare at the BATTLE-SCARED STARSHIPS and BURNT-OUT HULKS that line the docks of Ticonderoga.

CARMEN

You know, we're lucky to be alive.

A bloody bandage wraps Carmen's head. Zander nods grimly.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - GANGWAY

The DEAD BODIES of CREWMEN and CAP TROOPERS are being off-loaded via conveyer belt. Zander and Carmen make their way up the steep companionway beside the ghastly conveyer belt.

ZANDER

Give me hand, willya?

Carmen takes his hand. Zander kisses her.

ZANDER

I was thinking. Maybe we should get married, Carmen.

CARMEN

You weren't thinking... you were dreaming!

ZANDER

If we're gonna be a team, why not be a real team?

CARMEN

There's a war on. I want a command, I want my own ship, you do, too...



ZANDER

So?

CARMEN

So who's got time to get married?

Carmen lets his hand go and leaps through the hatch. Zander falls back onto the conveyer belt, finds himself eyeball-to-eyeball with a horribly maimed trooper, scrambles to get off.

INT. BATTLE STATION TICONDEROGA - COMMON AREA

Zander joins Carmen in the crowded common area where dead bodies compete for space with wounded awaiting triage. Survivors watch casualty lists scroll ba on a Federal Net terminal.

ZANDER

Fleet encourages marriages among flight officers. You'd probably get a promotion out of it.

CARMEN

Funny...

ZANDER

I'm not kidding. Marriage is -

CARMEN

No, funny there's almost no wounded at all.

ZANDER

Hey, bugs don't take prisoners.

Carmen looks at the words at the Net terminal: "WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?" She bites her lip, enters Johnny's name. In an instant, she has the news: "RICO, JOHN D. - KIA"

CARMEN

Oh no.

Tears fill her eyes.

ZANDER

Carmen...?

CARMEN

Excuse me...!

She rushes away. Zander looks at Johnny's name on the screen, shrugs, presses the "ERASE" button.

INT. TICONDEROGA - CORRIDOR

Zander finds Carmen, sagging against a wall, weeping.

ZANDER

I'm sorry, Carmen.

CARMEN

Please, I... Everybody's lost someone by now. This shouldn't be any different...

Zander puts an arm around her. She holds on tight.

CARMEN

No, I... Oh, Zander, I'm a fool.

ZANDER

You're upset, that's alright.

Zander kisses her hair. Tears roll down her face.

CARMEN

No, don't you see? No one can wait for anything anymore... You're right... We should get married...

Zander holds Carmen as she sobs, feeling lucky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STASIS TANK - DAY CYCLE

JOHNNY'S BODY floats, suspended in fluid, mouth hanging open, his skin white as death. A low underwater KNOCKING wakes him. He opens his eyes and sees Ace and Dizzy outside the tank.

Ace holds up a KIA list, pointing at Johnny's name, laughing: "Rico, John V - KIA". Their voices are distant and garbled. Dizzy cups her hands against the side of the tank.

DIZZY

Two more days.

Johnny's wounds are now mostly scars except for his leg where delicate robotic arms culture layers of new tissue. Johnny gives a weak thumbs up. The knocking sound continues.

Johnny turns. A STEEL HAND taps the side of the tank. Johnny grins, astonished. The man wearing it is his former high school teacher, now a Lieutenant, Jean Rasczak.

EXT. SPACE - AQZ

A BATTLE GROUP consisting of STARSHIPS, their TENDER, FREIGHTERS and other SUPPLY CRAFT.

INT. TROOP TRANSPORT - M.I. QUARTERS

Johnny stows his gear along with Ace and Dizzy. Across the room, a collection of battle-hardened vets check out the newcomers.

ACE

Dizzy says you two knew this Rasczak character in Buenos Aires...

JOHNNY

He was our teacher... He was great.

ACE

Yeah, well, I hear he's a real nutbuster.

DIZZY

The Roughnecks killed more bugs than any other outfit in 2nd Brigade... Only took 15% casualties on Big K.

They size up the Roughnecks. There are scars, power prosthetics, and one, big SUGAR WATKINS, 26, wears a bug claw on a chain around his neck.

JOHNNY

Seeing as how we're about all that's left of 1st Brigade, you'd have to call that an improvement.

(to Sugar Watkins)

You top kick?

SUGAR WATKINS

Are you kidding? They always get killed. You want the job?

JOHNNY

I wouldn't mind.

CORPORAL BIRDIE, 24, turns, gives Johnny the once over.

BIRDIE

I would. Nice earring.

Dizzy looks her over. Not too big, but she's tough.

DIZZY

Where you been besides Big K?

BIRDIE

Outer rings. Zegema Beach.

JOHNNY

I always wanted to go to Zegema Beach.

SUGAR WATKINS

Good luck. It's not there anymore.

ACE

Is your Lieutenant as bad as they say?

Birdie belts him, and Ace goes down.

BIRDIE

No one talks about the Lieutenant that way. He saved my life!

Ace jumps up, ready to fight, but other Roughnecks block him.

SUGAR WATKINS

Mine, too.

OTHER ROUGHNECKS

Same for me... me, too...

Johnny and Dizzy shrug. Ace's on his own.

ACE

Sounds like he is quite a guy.

SERGEANT GILLESPIE, 28, steps into the room.

GILLESPIE

Attention!

Everyone snaps to. Raszak enters.

RASZAK

This is for you new people. I only have two rules. Rule one, everyone fights. Rule two, no one quits. If you don't do your job, I'll kill you myself. Do you get me?

JOHNNY, DIZZY AND ACE

We get you, sir!

He points at Johnny's earring with his steel hand.

RASZAK

Get rid of the jewelry. I hate it. Welcome to the Roughnecks.

BIRDIE

Raszak's Roughnecks!

The Roughnecks cheer. Raszak smiles vaguely.

RASZAK

Alright. There's a new Sky Marshall and a new plan. We're gonna clean out the systems outlying Klendathu one planet at a time. Tomorrow we hit Tango Urilla. After Fleet glasses the planet, M. I. mops up.

EXT. TANGO URILLA - DAY

BUG WARRIORS stand sentry on earthworks that tower the entrance to their colony where an endless line of WORKERS enter bearing foodstuff appropriate to this exotic jungle planet.

A distant sound. A warrior looks up, curious. Suddenly a FORMATION OF TAC FIGHTERS screams down from high orbit and a white hot nuclear firestorm burns consumes the landscape.

Bugs scream as they twist and kick in the wall of flame. Heat melts the dirt into dark glass. Ash turns the sky red. The out of the smoke come Raszak and his Roughnecks.

RASCZAK

Spread out, teams of three. When you locate a bug hole, secure it, gas it, and close it.

EXT. TANGO URILLA - FLATS - DAY

TAC FIGHTERS streak by overhead. On the ground, Johnny, Dizzy and Ace are on the bounce. Ace spots a bug hole where workers and warrors have broken through the glassed surface.

ACE

There.

Rockets take out warriors. Bug guts go flying. Dizzy sets workers on fire. Johnny and Ace step over burning bug carcasses to the rim of the hole and fire their gas rounds.

JOHNNY

Fire in the hole!

Johnny drops an H.E. round, and they're in the air when the explosion collapses the entrance to the bug city.

BIRDIE (O.S.)

You new guys over there... WE could use some help...

EXT. TANGO URILLA - MOUNTAINS

BUGS boil out of the ground. Birdie, Sugar Watkins and other Roughnecks are about to be overrun when Johnny touches down with Ace and Dizzy.

JOHNNY

Looks like you've got a little bug problem, ma'am...

BIRDIE

Stop it, trooper. Give it everything you've got!

The cao troopers let the bugs have it, but the insects keep coming, the living crawling over the dead, and now, trudging up out of the ground, comes a TANKER BUG.

JOHNNY

WATCH OUT!

The tanker bug starts to spray, creating a toxic perimeter around the hole. Raszak arrives just as Birdie takes a chemical hit, falling to ground minus an arm, screaming.

BIRDIE

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Johnny jumps, landing behind the tanker bug in the mouth of the hole. It turns with surprising speed. Johnny flips up onto its back, cracks its armor with his pulse cannon.

RASCZAK

Sugar, in for pick up!

Rasczak and Sugar Watkins pull Birdie to safety. Johnny fires a rocket into the hole he's made in the tanker bug's back, and jumps clear. KA-WHAP! The big bug explodes.

RASCZAK

Gas that hole and close it!

The Roughnecks fire gas rockets into the bug hole. Johnny touches down beside Rasczak.

RASCZAK

Where'd you learn to do that, soldier?

JOHNNY

Uni High Tigers, sir. Don't you remember?  
I was captain of the team.

RASCZAK

I'm not interested in nostalgia, Rico, I need a corporal. You're it until you're dead or I find someone better.

Rasczak turns away, gives Birdie prosthetic thumps up as she is carried past to meet an arriving skimmer.

RASCZAK

Don't worry, Birdie, your next arm comes with a factory guarantee!

Dizzy and Ace gather around Johnny, clap him on the back.

DIZZY

Way to go, amigo!

JOHNNY

I'm gonna need a squad leader.

ACE

No way. Big K taught me I ain't executive material.

JOHNNY

What about it, Diz?

DIZZY

(a snappy salute)

Looks like I'm your girl, sir.

Tac Fighters reel by over head. WOMP! Suddenly, BUG PLASMA shoots skyward from the flatlands below. Several Tac Fighters are blown out of the air. Flaming debris rains down.

RASCZAK  
Saddle up, Roughnecks. That's our trash!

Roughnecks head out on the bounce.

EXT. TANGO URILLA - RIDGE - DAY

Johnny and the others look down a sheer cliff on the bug battery, a charred circular pit some ten meters across. Inside, something is moving.

JOHNNY  
What kind of stinkin' bug is that?

Johnny jumps the magnification on his "head up". Down in the pit, a giant translucent PLASMA BUG rears out of one of the subterranean tunnels that ring the battery.

SUGAR WATKINS  
You never seen how they do it before?

Johnny shakes his head. Swollen BREEDER BUGS gather around the plasma bug to inject it with their catalytic jelly.

ACE  
Agghh! It's making me sick...!

The plasma bug writhes in pain and begins to swell, color changing from yellow to blue in accordance with some violent internal chemical reaction.

SUGAR WATKINS  
It's gonna pop!

WOMP! The plasma bug explodes in its cauldron. A blast of bug plasma streaks past them towards the heavens. Now a new plasma bug crawls into the pit to begin the cycle anew.

GILLESPIE  
Sir, look!

Sergeant Gillespie points. A hole opens near the battery and dozens of warriors rampage out of the ground and up the cliff face toward the Roughneck position.

RASCZAK  
We must be right over the colony. Let's get some air support, eh?

GILLESPIE  
Yes, sir! Fleet, this is Roughneck patrol, over...?

Rasczak moves off down the line giving orders.

RASCZAK  
Corporal, I want pulse cannons there and there! Rifle teams, spread out along the ridge! Sugar, bring up that flame thrower!

GILLESPIE

Fleet's pulling the battle group back to safe distance... They'd like us to knock out those batteries, sir.

RASCZAK

They'd rather spend our lives than risk their ships. Who's got the nuke?

DIZZY

That'd be me, sir.

RASCZAK

Heat it up.

Dizzy activates a tactical nuke. It makes a distinctive HIGHPITCHED SQUEAL.

RASCZAK

Roughnecks, you may fire at will.

The Roughnecks open fire. Bugs are blown to pieces but they keep climbing. A warrior breeches their line. Sugar Watkins torches it. The nuke's ready light flashes.

DIZZY

I'm hot, sir!

RASCZAK

FIRE! BLAST SHIELDS DOWN!

Johnny blows a warrior away from the edge. Dizzy leans over and fires. The rocket streaks down toward the battery.

RASCZAK

HIT THE DIRT!

An explosion in the two kiloton range turns the world black and white. When color returns Johnny and the others look down on the smoldering crater which was once the bug battery.

GILLESPIE

Now comes the part I hate the most.

JOHNNY

What's that?

GILLESPIE

We go down into the colony and make sure all the queens are dead.

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

The Roughnecks fight their way down gassed-out tunnels into bug city. They meet warriors at every turn and kill them. Helmet lamps make weird shadows of dead bugs piled everywhere along the way.



SUGAR WATKINS

You knew the Lieutenant before the war...  
What was he like?

JOHNNY

He was a teacher, kind of a know it all...  
Always had this little smile.

SUGAR WATKINS

Geez, I don't think I've ever seen him  
smile.

JOHNNY

Must fill your bottle up real quick when  
your wife and kids get smeared.

Johnny joins Rasczak, Ace and Dizzy and they blow away several  
warriors guarding the entrance of a large chamber.

INT. BUG NURSERY - DAY

The QUEENS are eight meters long with corpulent bodies and tiny  
heads. Only one survives, and though she is herself dying, her  
abdomen, rippled by life within, continues to undulate.

JOHNNY

All dead except one, sir.

RASCZAK

Kill the bitch.

JOHNNY

Yes, sir.

Johnny signals. Dizzy's pulse cannon rips open the dying queen.  
Thousands of wriggling premature bugs come spilling out.  
Horrorified, knee-deep Roughnecks set them afire.

EXT. TANGO URILLA - BASE CAMP - DAY

FLEET ENGINEERS unload PRE-FAB BARRACKS from HERCULES CARGO BOATS.  
Roughnecks eat. Rasczak stands, banging a spoon on his mess kit.

RASCZAK

Tango Urilla is now bug free. Means the  
Roughnecks have killed a helluva lotta  
bugs...!

Roughnecks cheer. Rasczak kicks open a CARGO MODULE. Beer kegs  
roll out. He kicks open a second module. Inside, musical  
instruments. Ace picks up a violin.

RASCZAK

I expect the best, but I give the best.  
Habve some fun. That's an order!

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT - LATER

Ace leads a little quartet, plays a sweet fiddle. Roughnecks laugh and dance. Dizzy tries to pull Johnny into the fun.

DIZZY

C'mon...

JOHNNY

Nah, I don't do that anymore...

DIZZY

You used to dance...

JOHNNY

I said no. Want me to pull rank?

DIZZY

Well, excuse me, sir...

Dizzy heads back to the others. Johnny turns and finds Raszak regarding him with an odd, sad smile.

RASCZAK

Yopu asked me some advice once, Rico. Want some now?

JOHNNY

Yes, sir...

RASCZAK

Never pass up a good thing, eh?

Gillespie appears.

GILLESPIE

Lieutenant, Brigade's on the com...

Raszak heads away. Johnny joins Dizzy.

JOHNNY

Hey, Diz...

DIZZY

What?

Johnny takes her hand, bows implishly.

JOHNNY

May I have the honor?

He pulls her out among the others and they begin to dance. Ace watches with a grin, puts some spirit in his fiddle.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS - NIGHT

Raszak is in holo conference with an INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

At 0821 we received a distress call from Planet P, priority code, requesting reinforcement...

RASCZAK

I thought 4th brigade cleaned out P.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

Owen reported the eradication of a low generation colony a month ago. That's why MICOM wants onsite assessment.

RASCZAK

Sounds more like some idiot at Military Intelligence Command wants to get me and my cap troopers killed...

The Intelligence Officer reddens.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

Take your group down to P and have a look see. Leave the thinking to us, Lieutenant. That's not your job.

RASCZAK

My job is to protect the lives of my soldiers so they can kill bugs, Major, and if you're walking me into a trap -

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

Bugs don't lay traps... They aren't intelligent! Unlike you, they're stupid enough to follow orders!

VOICE (O.S.)

That'll be all, Major. Dismissed.

The Intelligence Officer disappears abruptly. A new hologram appears. Rasczak's jaw drops. It's his former student Carl Jenkins, now a Colonel, weary and pissed off.

CARL

This conference is over. Do your duty, Lieutenant. That's an order.

Rasczak recovers, salutes stiffly.

RASCZAK

Yes, sir.

INT. PRE-FAB SLEEPING UNIT - DAY

Johnny and Dizzy are making love. The door pops open. Rasczak stands there. Dizzy ducks under the covers. Johnny manages a salute.

RASCZAK

Corporal, the Roughnecks are moving out for Planet P immediately. Get yourself squared away and report to Gillespie for logistics.

JOHNNY

Yes, sir!

RASCZAK

Who's that with you?

Dizzy shows herself, grinning.

RASCZAK

Report in ten minutes.

Rasczak slams the door shut on them. They fall back into one another's arms, laughing as they resume lovemaking.

DIZZY

Planet P? What kind of name is that?

JOHNNY

They ran out of names a long time ago in this part of the galaxy.

EXT. PLANET P - BAD LANDS - DAY

The Roughnecks move through canyons of towering wind-carved rock formations. Gillespie carries the communications package.

GILLESPIE

I don't understand it, Lieutenant. It's not getting anything from 4th Brigade... not even their transponder.

RASCZAK

Keep trying, Sergeant.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - CONTINUING - DAY

The Roughnecks walk in a column far below. Something is watching from the above... HOPPERS, lots of them, moving from rock to rock for better position.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - CONTINUING - DAY

Ace sees something out of the corner of his eye.

JOHNNY

BUGS...!

The hoppers hit. Several Roughnecks go down. Everyone opens up. Dive-bombing bugs are blown to bits. Roughnecks set them on fire when they hit the ground.

DIZZY  
Johnny, watch out!

A burning bug hurls itself at Johnny. Johnny jumps out of the way as Dizzy fires, blowing it apart. The deadly hoppers seem to be everywhere above them in the rocks.

RASCZAK  
LET'S GO! ON THE BOUNCE!

EXT. FLAT LANDS - DAY

The Roughnecks move out into the open. In the distance they see 4th Brigade HQ, a walled compound and partially constructed landing pad.

RASCZAK  
Gillespie, put in call for retrieval.  
We're off this rock. Gillespie, do you  
read me?

GILLESPIE  
AAAAAAAAAAAA!

Two hoppers are pulling Gillespie up into the rocks where other bugs join to feast.

RASCZAK  
Throw a rifle!

Dizzy tosses her Morita to Rasczak. Gillespie writhes in the hopper's claws. Rasczak fires, killing Gillespie.

RASCZAK  
I expect any one here to do the same for  
me... Rico, Watkins, Flores, Levy prepare  
for rear guard action. The rest of you  
make for 4th Brigade.

Johnny and the others cover the Roughneck retreat as hoppers soar down on the flat lands from the canyon walls.

RASCZAK  
FIRE...!

Johnny and the others blast bugs out of the air.

RASCZAK  
FALL BACK 100 METERS...!

A second wave of hoppers come in.

RASCZAK  
AND FIRE...!

For now, the sky is clear.

RASCZAK  
4TH BRIGADE HQ! ON THE BOUNCE!

EXT. 4TH BRIGADE HQ - DAY

The OUTPOST is 50 meters by 100, standard issue pre-fab. The Roughnecks land on the compound wall. Inside, WORKER BUGS graze on the remains of 200 dead cap troopers strewn over the complex.

RASCZAK

Jeez, Command really humped the bunk on this one...

Rasczak turns away. Roughnecks engage in the sport of methodically killing the workers.

RASCZAK

Rico, you're acting Sergeant now. My last Sergeant lost the com pack. Put together a search team and find the radio shack. We need retrieval.

JOHNNY

Yes, sir.

INT. 4TH BRIGADE HQ - OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Johnny surveys the aftermath of the last stand with Rasczak, insect and human dead everywhere.

DIZZY (O.S.)

It's here, sir.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Rasczak and Johnny enter the radio room. A DEAD MAJOR is slumped over the console with hole in the back of his head. Johnny checks the equipment. It's dead, too.

JOHNNY

Diz, see what you can do.

DIZZY

I'm on it!

Dizzy goes to work. Rasczak checks the wound in the back of the dead major's head.

RASCZAK

What's that look like to you, Rico?

JOHNNY

Looks like a bug was in his brain, sir.

ACE (O.S.)

Lieutenant, I think you're gonna wanna see this, sir.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

A BUG HOLE in the middle of the floor is surrounded by carnage.

ACE  
Dirty bugs came in right when they were  
having chow!

RASCZAK  
Gas that hole and seal it.

Then they hear a sound. Tap tap tap. Rasczak signals for quiet.  
Tap tap tap tap. It's coming from the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The Roughnecks enter cautiously. The noise is coming from a  
freezer. Ace stands ready to fire. Johnny levers open the door,  
jumps back as GENERAL OWEN, 60, tumbles out face first.

ACE  
Officer on the deck, sir.

RASCZAK  
Pick up the general!

Roughnecks prop him up. General Owen tries to talk, but no words  
come out. Rasczak bends down to listen.

GENERAL OWEN  
Get out... you gotta get me out...!

RASCZAK  
General Owen, sir?

The old man grins, hugely relieved.

GENERAL OWEN  
At ease, Lieutenant. Thank God for you,  
for all of you... this is grand... so  
where's the boat?

INT. COMMUNICATIONS - HALLWAY - DAY

Johnny and Rasczak help the old General, now wrapped in a blanket,  
rambling.

GENERAL OWEN  
I was forced to hide, of course. The  
security of the Federation in this theater  
of operations was at stake!

JOHNNY  
Diz, what's with the uplink?

Dizzy lokks up from where she is working on the radio controls.

DIZZY

Workin on it...!

GENERAL OWEN

They get in your mind... they make you do things! Look here... They did it to Farley...!

He points at the hole of the dead major's head.

RASCZAK

The distress call... The bugs wanted us to rescue you...!

GENERAL OWEN

Oh, you can be sure of it! They were biding their time... waiting for the most opportune moment!

Rasczak's lost interest in the general. He's on the com.

RASCZAK

To all Roughnecks, this is Rasczak. Prepare for attack. Repeat. We are going to be attacked...!

GENERAL OWEN

They weren't gonna do it to me. Oh no! I know too many secrets!

Rasczak looks at General Owen with contempt.

SUGAR WATKINS (O.S.)

Fire in the hole!

An explosion in the mess hall closes the bug hole.

EXT. OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

GENERAL OWEN blinks as he steps out into the light. Roughnecks snap to attention. General Owen looks at the carnage that was once his command and begins to keel, collapsing to his knees.

GENERAL OWEN

Oh God...! My soldiers...! All of my boys and girls...!

The Roughnecks are shocked. They've never seen a general break down before. Lieutenant Rasczak slaps Owen hard.

LT. RASCZAK

Shut up! Your soldier's dead and you're not!

GENERAL OWEN

I know... I wish you'd shoot me...

LT. RASCZAK

I oughta!



And it looks like Raszak just might, but just then Ace touches down next to Johnny and Raszak.

ACE  
Lieutenant, we got trouble!

EXT. RAMPARTS - DAY

Raszak and Johnny join other stunned Roughnecks to see THOUSANDS OF BUGS on the march from every direction. Bug batteries open up in the distance.

RASZAK  
Warm it all up! Everything you got! Levy, collect the big guns from the towers. Watkins, put General Owen with the wounded. Rico, where's my communications?

JOHNNY  
What's going on, Diz?

DIZZY (O.S.)  
I got power! Gimme a minute!

Johnny runs for the communications room.

JOHNNY  
We don't have a minute!

INT. COMMUNICATIONS - DAY

Dizzy has the board up. Outside the battle has begun. Nukes go - WOMP! - and pulse guns chatter.

DIZZY  
What frequency?

JOHNNY  
All bands.

DIZZY  
Roughneck patrol to battle group...  
Roughneck patrol to battle group...

RODGER YOUNG (O.S.)  
This is Rodger Young... What's going on down there? We're taking plasma! We have Orion P-11 as clear!

JOHNNY  
SHUT UP, SIR! We need pick up now!

RODGER YOUNG (O.S.)  
What is your position?

JOHNNY  
Landing zone is extremely hostile. Come down on this transmission!

RODGER YOUNG (O.S.)  
Inside 4th brigade compound? That's crazy!

JOHNNY  
Then I hope you have a crazy pilot! Keep  
the line open, Dizzy!

Johnny races out the door.

EXT. 4TH BRIGADE HQ - DAY

The COMPOUND is white hot as Roughnecks on the walls unload nukes.  
Johnny crosses the compound, lands next to Raszak on the wall.

JOHNNY  
Boat coming down, sir!

The Roughnecks stop firing as they run out of nukes.

ROUGHNECKS  
I'm empty... all nuked out... Me, too!

Johnny scans the battlefield. Nukes have turned the surface into  
dark glass. Now, out of the smoke, come the bugs, steaming glass  
cracking beneath millions of marching feet.

ACE  
Jeez, we musta killed a million  
already...!

JOHNNY  
Not enough, I guess.

Sugar Watkins sees Genera Owen in the compound below, stumbling  
aimlessly among his dead soldiers.

SUGAR WATKINS  
General! GENERAL, stay with the wounded...  
Sir, the general...!

RASCZAK  
Ah, the hell with him...

Hoppers sweep into the compound. The Roughnecks open fire. General  
Owen make easy pickings for ones that get through.

RASCZAK  
Fall back... form a circle! If no living  
bug comes over that wall, we cannot be  
harmed.

Dizzy arrives on thr bounce as the Roughnecks fall back into the  
compound. Bugs pile in over the walls. The circle affords them 360  
degrees of kill zone.

RASCZAK  
Rico, Flores, Watkins, Levy! We control  
the sky until retrieval!

JOHNNY ET AL

Yes, sir!

Rasczak, Sugar Watkins, Johnny and Dizzy stand back-to-back in the center of the circle, sweeping the skies with the heavy guns from the towers. Hoppers are blown to pieces.

ACE

Getting low here, sir!

DIZZY

300 rounds and counting, sir!

RASCZAK

Make every shot count!

Johnny looks up. A RETRIEVAL BOAT hurtles down through bursts of bug plasma, takes a grazing hit, rights itself with retros and lands within the circle. Roughnecks cheer, saved!

RASCZAK

Sergeant, secure the boat!

JOHNNY

Yes, sir!

Roughnecks move to protect the boat. The hatch blows open.

RASCZAK

Board the wounded!

Dead bugs ring the compound walls, forming ramps for living insect soldiers to enter the compound in greater numbers.

RASCZAK

Move to retrieval on my command! First group, now...!

The circle shrinks as Roughnecks fall back and board the boat. More and more bugs pile in over the compound walls.

RASCZAK

Alright, Flores! Levy! Rico...!

Suddenly, the ground collapses under Rasczak. He falls in to his waist, vomits blood as something chews on him from below.

RASCZAK

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

JOHNNY

Cover us, Ace!

Ace and the others fire from the boat. Johnny and Dizzy fire at the ground around Rasczak. Rasczak stops screaming. They try to pull him free.

JOHNNY

Hit your jets, sir!

RASCZAK

I can't My legs are gone... Get on the boat...

The compound wall collapses. A wave of bugs charges in.

RASCZAK

Rico, tell'em to glass this goddam planet. I've never seen so many bugs upstairs at the same time...

JOHNNY

We're not leaving you here, sir!

Weakly, Rasczak picks up his pulse gun, checks the power.

RASCZAK

This is my farm. Get on the boat, NOW! That's an order, Sergeant.

JOHNNY

Give'em hell, sir!

Johnny and Dizzy run for the boat. Rasczak opens fire, picking his shots, but soon the bugs are all over him.

RASCZAK

C'mon you sons of bitches! There's no bug alive can kill a real mAAAAAAAAA!

At the boat, Dizzy turns to look back at Rasczak. A hopper swoops down on Dizzy, it's claws ripping into her abdomen.

DIZZY

AAAAAAAA! GET IT OFF ME GET IT OFF GET IT OFF GET IT AAAAAAAAAA!

Johnny blows the bug off her back. Blood sprays from a deep gash in her neck. Johnny picks her up, tries to stop the blood with his hand. The life is leaving her eyes.

JOHNNY

Hang on, Diz... don't die on me...

A TANKER BUG breaches the broken wall. Ace jumps out to help his friends. The hatch closes just as the tanker bug sprays. The boat blasts off, dripping metal.

INT. CARGO BAY - DAY

Johnny holds Dizzy in his arms, drenched in her blood, fighting G-forces as the boats heads for orbit.

DIZZY

I bought the farm, didn't I, Johnny?

JOHNNY

No, you're gonna be alright, Diz!

DIZZY  
It's alright 'cause I got to have you,  
Johnny...

MEDICS push Johnny aside, go to work on Dizzy.

INT. BOAT - COCKPIT - DAY

Johnny slams into the cockpit. Out the front screen, violent bursts of BUG PLASMA fill the sky as they break atmosphere.

JOHNNY  
Get on the com and tell Fleet to glass  
that rock...!

The co-pilot turns around. It's Zander. His eyes narrow.

ZANDER  
On whose authority, Corporal?

JOHNNY  
This would be mine, sir. Acting Sergeant  
John Rico. I've assumed command on this  
mission.

The pilot turns around. It's Carmen.

CARMEN  
Johnny...! I thought you were dead!

JOHNNY  
I'm not, but alot of my soldiers are.  
Glass the planet!

Johnny leaves. Carmen punches up Fleet Command.

CARMEN  
Rodger Young, this is inbound shuttle De  
Ruyter with an official request from the  
Mobile Infantry to bombard Planet P-11...

INT. BOAT - CARGO BAY - DAY

Johnny returns to Dizzy's side as the medics struggle to save her. Blood pours out of her mouth. Her body thrashes.

DIZZY  
JOHNNY HEH HEH CAN'T HEH BREATHE GOD  
JOHNNY CAN'T HEH HEH HEH HEH...!

Dizzy dies. A Medic slaps her. Her head lolls, mouth open, eyes blank. They drop her and move on to the next casualty. Johnny sits there, stunned. Carmen enters from the cockpit.

CARMEN  
Negative on your request. Fleet Command  
has the battle group on standby...

Carmen sees Dizzy lying dead on the deck.

CARMEN

... I'm sorry.

JOHNNY

We gotta choke on the mud and the blood  
and Fleet can't be bothered to spit.

CARMEN

No, I think something's up. The Sky  
Marshall's here.

She points out for a viewing port. Johnny looks. Fifteen battle  
groups, 100 ships strong, lay off Planet P, all of them dwarfed by  
the Sky Marshall's flagship, Buenos Aires.

CARMEN

I thought you were KIA, Johnny...

JOHNNY

That was just a mix up.

CARMEN

You look so... I don't know, you look like  
you've really been in it.

JOHNNY

What happened to your eye?

Carmen touches the scar over her eye.

CARMEN

Almost got knocked out of the sky over Big  
K.

JOHNNY

I like it. It's kinda... you.

EXT. BATTLE GROUP - ORION SYSTEM

The BOAT lands on the flight deck of the Rodger Young in the midst  
of the flotilla.

INT. OFFICERS QUARTERS - DAY CYCLE

Zander enters, watches Carmen dress. She hums as she checks  
herself in the mirror, touches thr scar over her eye, smiles.

ZANDER

Where are you going?

CARMEN

A funeral.

ZANDER

That girl who died on the way up... his  
girl?

CARMEN

Yeah.

ZANDER

How do you feel about him now?

CARMEN

I don't know, Zander.

ZANDER

I do.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - GUNNERY DECK

Carmen enters as Johnny speaks. Dizzy is laid out in dress gray. The surviving Roughnecks have gathered to pay final respects.

JOHNNY

Dizzy bought the farm. She was my good friend, and friends are the best luck anyone gets... But in war, we must go on without our friends. We take with us their memory, and we are left to wonder if there is meaning in their death. Let me tell you what it is: Dizzy bought the farm so we can keep on fighting.

Several INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS march into the bay.

JOHNNY

Officer on deck!

Everyone snaps to attention. Colonel Carl Jenkins strides into the room. His eyes are hollow, and he looks grim. He returns Johnny's salute, nods to Carmen.

CARL

Please continue, Sergeant.

JOHNNY

Dizzy wouldn't want our tears. She'd want us to remember her... with a vengeance. So go out and kill a bug for Dizzy. Kill as many as you can. You are her revenge, and every bug you kill honors her death.

Johnny nods to the GUNNERY CREW. They load Dizzy's body into a tube. Johnny steps back, salutes Dizzy. Everyone salutes.

JOHNNY

Womb to tomb, cap trooper!

ROUGHNECKS

Womb to tomb!

The CREW CHIEF fires the tube. Out the viewports, A PULSE OF LIGHT disperses into space. The Roughnecks file out. Carl approaches. Carmen takes Johnny and Carl by the hand.

CARMEN

Well, look at this. The three of us back together again.

JOHNNY

How are you, Carl?

CARL

Johnny, I'm sorry it had to be your unit on Planet P. That mission had a very low survival probability...

JOHNNY

Bugs laid a trap, didn't they?

CARL

Elegant proof of intelligence, isn't it? We thought there might be a brain on P.

CARMEN

You knew and you sent them anyway?

CARL

A colony has to reach a certain size before it produces a Brain... we think 300 generations. Woulda too expensive to launch an operation if there wasn't a Brain...

Carl sees the way Carmen is looking at him, like he's a bug.

CARL

You don't approve. Well, too bad. We're in this for the species, boys and girls. It's simple numbers, they have more, and everyday I have to make decisions that send hundreds of people like you to their deaths.

JOHNNY

Didn't they tell you, Colonel? That's what cap troopres are good for.

Carl allows himself a tiny smile.

CARL

Hope you're ready for more. We're going back to P to capture that Brain.

JOHNNY

The Roughnecks are always ready, sir.

CARL

I hear they need a new Lieutenant... Want the job?

JOHNNY

I'll take it... until I get killed or you find someone better.



KLAXONS sound. Suddenly, everyone has someplace to go.

CARMEN

Hope you get your Brain Bug, Carl.

CARL

It's good to see you two. It reminds me of the way things were before...

Carl turns abruptly and heads away. His entourage follows.

CARMEN

Take care, wilya Johnny?

JOHNNY

See you on the bounce!

INT. RODGER YOUNG - COMMAND & CONTROL

Carmen steps onto the bridge. There's a new NUMBER 2 sitting in Zander's chair. She's right out of Tereshkova, and she looks scared. Carmen turns to Captain Deladier.

CARMEN

Where's Lieutenant Barcalow?

DELADIER

He requested a combat assignment. There's always a need for experienced pilots on the ground. I had no choice but to let him go... He said you'd understand.

Carmen bites her lip, takes first chair. Deladier feels bad for her, knows she's made a painful decision.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - DROP ROOM

Roughnecks are suiting up. Ace enters.

ACE

Officer on the deck!

Roughnecks fall in. Johnny steps into the room. There are many new and much younger faces.

JOHNNY

I only have two rules. Rule one, everyone fights. Rule two, no one quits. If you don't do your job, I'll kill you myself. Do you get me?

ROUGHNECKS

We get you, sir!

JOHNNY

(to Ace, sotto voce)  
Who're all these kids?

ACE

We got reinforced. Most of'em just got outa boot...

JOHNNY

We're the old men, Ace.

EXT. PLANET P - 4TH BRIGADE HQ - DAY

CARGO SHIPS have landed. Cap troopers set fire to huge piles of dead bugs. BULLDOZERS push bodies into a mass grave, among them Raszak. Johnny walks past with his team.

JOHNNY

We'll take this high ground. Lookouts there and therte and up there. If the bugs come upstairs in this neighbor-hood, we'll be the first to know.

ACE

Got it. Fleet tactical wants to know where they can deploy the skimmers.

JOHNNY

Down there on the flats, eh? Listen up, Roughnecks! Our primary objective is to assist our friends from the Fleet...

Roughnecks boo.

JOHNNY

Alright, cut it out. We will deploy from skimmers in teams of six. If the bugs open up a battery, we put it out of business. Any questions?

A HERCULES CARGO BOAT hurtles out of the sky and lands on the high ground Johnny has intended for his H.Q. Johnny scowls, marches over to the boat and confronts a FLEET OFFICER.

JOHNNY

Would'ya mind moving your boat?

FLEET OFFICER

Better talk to the boss.

The cargo bays open to deploy FLEET SKIMMERS. Zander jumps down to oversee the operation.

JOHNNY

You're standing on my H.Q., Lieutenant!

ZANDER

This is a Fleet-driven operation, son, and the Fleet thinks my boat will be safer on the high ground. You can have everything else, eh?

JOHNNY  
You heard the Sky Marshall... Move it all  
down -

Suddenly, in the distance, bug batteries open fire, not one but  
twenty. Zander and Johnny share a look of concern.

ZANDER  
Rodger Young, prepare to receive outgoing  
fire...!  
(to his crew chief)  
I'll take the first group.

JOHNNY  
Saddle up, boys, that's our trash!

EXT. SPACE - PLANET P ORBIT

Bug plasma begins to take a toll on the battle group as the  
orbiting ships lay their eggs. Cap Troopers are sliced as they  
drop.

EXT. RODGER YOUNG - BRIDGE

Captain Deladier turns to Carmen.

DELADIER  
Evasive action!

Carmen dodges other starships, turns to her new number 2.

CARMEN  
Prepare for warp!

NEW NUMBER 2  
Yes, ma'am! Warp in 5... 4... 3...!

KA-WHAM! The Rodger Young takes a direct hit.

EXT. RODGER YOUNG - PLANET P ORBIT

The Rodger Young is cut in two. The rear section explodes, the  
forward section begins to burn towards the bridge.

INT. RODGER YOUNG - BRIDGE

Captain Deladier calmly evacuates the bridge. Power fails and so  
does the gravity.

CARMEN  
This is Rodger Young, we're going down...  
Repeat, this is Rodger Young, we're going  
down...!

DELADIER  
Ibanez... LET'S GO!

INT. RODGER YOUNG - ESCAPE CORRIDOR

Carmen and Captain Deladier run for the lifepods. An explosion flips the corridor. Captain Deladier's leg is crushed when an airlock closes on her.

DELADIER  
AAAAAAAAAAAA!

Carmen hits the release, pulls her free. Deladier pushes Carmen away.

DELADIER  
Leave me, Lieutenant! That's an order!

CARMEN  
No way, ma'am!

INT. RODGER YOUNG - LIFE POD BAY

Carmen pushes into the chaotic life pod bay. PANICKED CREW shoving, screaming, fighting. The ship pitches. They tumble, landing near a pod. Carmen jumps for it, pulls Deladier in after.

EXT. RODGER YOUNG - PLANET P ORBIT

The Rodger Young disintegrates as lifepods shoot away toward the planet.

INT. LIFEPOD - PLANET P ORBIT

Carmen navigates through a graveyard of floating wreckage, dead cap troopers, someone's trombone. She sets her beacon and the pod plummets downward.

CARMEN  
Mayday, mayday! This is Lieutenant Carmen Ibanez in lifepod RY63... I'm going in...

EXT. PLANET P - BASE CAMP - DAY

Roughnecks board the Skimmers. Zander approaches Johnny, upset.

JOHNNY  
What's your problem now, Lieutenant?

ZANDER  
The Rodger Young just burned up...

Johnny's face falls.

JOHNNY  
Any survivors?

Zander points. Far in the distance, a glowing pod plummets toward the planet. Johnny tracks it on his "head up".

INT. LIFEPOD - ATMOSPHERE - DAY

Carmen is shaken violently as the pod hits atmosphere.

EXT. PLANET P - DAY

CARMEN'S POD hits and goes straight through the crust of Planet P.

INT. BUG CITY TUNNELS - DAY

The pod comes to rest. Carmen blows the hatch, pulls Deladier out, grabs a Morita pulse rifle. Tunnels lead in every direction.

CARMEN

This is Lieutenant Carmen Ibanez. Is anyone receiving?

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY

Johnny grabs the handset from Ace.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Affirmative! Carmen, this is Roughneck base camp... What is your present location?

INT. BUG CITY TUNNELS - DAY

Carmen sees a warrior coming at her from out of the shadows. Carmen fires a burst and kills it. Now there are two. Carmen backs up firing, but there are too many.

CARMEN

My present location is 42 degrees South by 176 degrees East... situation is extremely hostile... I... AAAAAAAAAA!

They have her. She puts the barrel of the Morita in her mouth, but a claw cut her trigger finger off at the knuckle.

EXT. PLANET P - ROUGHNECK BASE CAMP - DAY

Johnny and Zander are horrified by what they hear.

CARMEN (O.S.)

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

JOHNNY

We've gotta go get her!

ZANDER

You know as well as I do she's probably already dead.

Johnny knows it's true, swallows bitterly, turns away. That's when he sees it. Nearby, the ground shifts, a claw breaks through, a hole opens up and bugs boil up out of the ground.

SUGAR WATKINS

Here they come!

They turn and see a second bug hole open up.

JOHNNY

We're outa here. Lieutenant, get your men into the skimmers. This real estate's about to go buggy.

ZANDER

Hey, just calm down, I'm giving the orders here-

The entire area underneath the base camp collapses to form a huge new canyon. The Hercules boat topples, crushing Skimmers and unfortunate Fleet personnel.

EXT. NEW CANYON - DAY

Johnny and the surviving Roughnecks pick themselves up. They are now 30 meters below the planet's surface. Above them, bugs line the wide rim of the newly formed canyon.

JOHNNY

Form a perimeter!

Through the dust, exposed bug tunnels can be seen in the canyon walls and piling out of them by the score, deadly Arachnid warriors. Johnny throws Zander a pulse cannon.

JOHNNY

Make yourself useful, fly boy... PREPARE TO REPEL BUGS!

The Roughnecks open fire at the charging bug horde. Warriors are blown to pieces. Gas grenades fly and H. E. rounds close tunnels. A maimed warrior gets through and heads for Zander.

ZANDER

AAAAAAAAAAAA!

Johnny and Ace team up to blow it away. Zander takes a deep breath, looks around, impressed. The Roughnecks have killed a great many bugs.

JOHNNY

Ace, get on the com. Tell Fleet we need retrieval... Sugar, salvage some armor and suit up Lieutenant Barcalow.

Sugar Watkins tosses a bloody jump boot his way.

ZANDER

Thanks.

ACE

Fleet Command says retrieval's no go. The battle group's at safe distance... and we got another problem.

Ace points out a Tanker bug that's been brought up to the rim. Johnny sees another.

JOHNNY

Looks like they're gonna hose us down...

Johnny chews on this.

JOHNNY

Alright... Listen up, Roughnecks. We're gonna head west down through bug city, pick up any Rodger Young survivors we run across, and join A Company. Get me?

ROUGHNECKS

We get you, sir!

Zander, awkward in a power suit, confronts Johnny.

ZANDER

What do you think you're doing?

JOHNNY

I'm gonna save Carmen.

ZANDER

That would mean a complete disregard for the mission objective. They hang you for that, Rico.

JOHNNY

Yeah, that's right.

Johnny and Zander stare each other down.

ZANDER

Let's go.

JOHNNY

Move out.

Johnny starts for the gaping mouth of an exposed bug tunnel and the others fall in behind him.

ACE

Bug hunt!

ROUGHNECKS

BUG HUNT!

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Johnny leads his deadly force through enemy territory. The Roughnecks kill everything that gets in their way. Zander lends his inexperienced hand.

JOHNNY

Mr. Barcalow, save power, don't waste it on workers... Ace, tell Aardvark we're on our way...

ACE

Yes, sir!

Warriors appear in the tunnel behind them.

JOHNNY

Sugar, close the tunnel...!

SUGAR

Fire in the hole!

Sugar Watkins fires an H. E. round and seals the tunnel.

INT. BUG CITY - FEEDING PIT - DAY

Carmen opens her eyes. She can hear BUGS CLICKING. She's in a pit filled with human dead. A nearby carcass wears a uniform from 4th Brigade Off in the dark she hears HUMAN MOANING.

She crawls over rotting corpses toward the sound. The moaning turns to SCREAMING. It's coming from outside the pit. She pulls herself up to peer over the edge.

INT. BUG CITY - THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

Carmen sees hundred of bugs at work, WARRIORS, WORKERS and dozens of small (2 meters) CHARIOT BUGS. Aworker walks pas, stepping on her, but pays her no attention.

She sees the source of the screaming: Captain Deladier is hold between two warriors, and she's screaming because of what she sees,

DELADIER

NAAAAAAAAA...! OH PLEASE...

The BRAIN BUG is huge (5 meters) and pulpy. I has vestigial legs that cannot support ist weight, and so it must be moved by a shifting carpet of chariot bugs.

DELADIER

... OH GOD AAAAAAAAAAAAAA...!

A thorn-like PALP unfolds out of the brain bug and strikes, driving deep into Deladier's head and sucks her brains out.



DELADIER

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Carmen watches horrified as Deladier dies. The suddenly a warrior grabs her from above and drags her out of the pit. She screams as its claws slice into her limbs.

CARMEN

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Now the brain bug comes for her. She sees the palp unfold, the thorn-like spike coming toward her. Carmen is no longer looking for escape. All she wants to do is die.

Suddenly, every bug in the chamber stops as though to listen. Carmen hears it. A HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL, getting louder. Johnny enters the chamber alone.

The warriors move toward him. He holds up a NUKE, source of the high-pitched tone. The ready light flashes. The Brain Bug emits a series of harsh clicks. The warriors freeze.

JOHNNY

You know what this is...?

Johnny makes an explosive sound. The Brain Bug slowly withdraws its palp.

JOHNNY

Sure you do... You're a big fat smart bug, aren't you?

Johnny moves toward Carmen. The Brain Bug's multiple eyes track him. The warriors holding Carmen threaten. Johnny turns on the brain bug, his finger on the nuke's trigger.

JOHNNY

I'll take you with me.

The Brain Bug clicks. The warriors back off. Carmen collapses. Johnny reaches for her.

JOHNNY

Take my hand!

Chariot bugs move the Brain Bug down a hole. Workers seal the hole behind it with amazing speed. Johnny drags Carmen back toward the tunnel he entered from. The warriors charge.

JOHNNY

Roughnecks... NOW!

Johnny throws himself on top of Carmen as the Roughnecks burst into the chamber, guns blazing. The fight is furious, point-blank, deadly to bug and Roughneck alike.

Sugar Watkins screams as a warrior rips his arm off. Zander takes a claw through the gut.

ZANDER  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

He blows it away, sees his intestines hanging out of the wound, shoves them back inside and keeps on fighting. A warrior rears up over Johnny and Carmen.

JOHNNY  
Weapon!

Ace throws him a Morita. Johnny catches it, pumps three rounds into the bug's nerve stem. He struggles out from under the dead warrior. Every bug in the chamber is dead.

JOHNNY  
Are you hurt?

Carmen throws her arms around Johnny.

CARMEN  
Johnny...!

Zander takes this in. Carmen sees him, then his wound.

CARMEN  
Zander...! Oh, you're hurt.

Ace takes a look at his wound, makes a face.

ACE  
Ah geez...

Zander pushes him away, struggles to his feet.

JOHNNY  
Can you walk?

ZANDER  
(clenched teeth)  
Not a problem.

JOHNNY  
Let's get some armor on her, and the we'll get outa this stinkin bug hole!

Various components are gladly passed forward. Johnny and Ace help her putting it on.

CARMEN  
I thought I was dead. Lucky for me you jokers showed up, eh?

ZANDER  
It wasn't luck. Rico ignored the mission objective to rescue you...

CARMEN  
Is it true?

JOHNNY  
Yeah, if I live through this, they'll  
probably hang me. Now com'on, let's move  
out!

INT. BUG CITY TUNNELS - DAY

The Roughnecks double-time it, racing for the surface. They come to a fork.

CARMEN  
Which way?

JOHNNY  
Up. We gotta be near A Company by now.

The tunnel floor drops out. FIVE ROUGHNECKS disappear into the hole. WARRIORS climb up into the tunnel.

JOHNNY  
FALL BACK!

The Roughnecks back up fast, shooting. Zander staggers, collapses. Johnny drops to his side, rolls him over.

JOHNNY  
How bad are you, pal?

ZANDER  
Been better, buddy.

Johnny sees warriors coming up into the tunnel by the score.

JOHNNY  
Alright, we're gonna carry you...

ZANDER  
Nah, I figure you folks oughta get upstairs  
before it's too late... Gimme the nuke.

Zander checks his pulse cannon's available power.

JOHNNY  
Don't be a hero...

ZANDER  
This is my farm. Now c'mon, give me what  
you got and get out of here...

Johnny nods, hands him the nuke. Carmen sees what's happening.

CARMEN  
Zander, what are you doing?

ZANDER  
Just giving you something to remember me  
by, baby.

CARMEN

Zander, no...!

He grabs her and kisses her. Johnny drags Carmen away. Zander opens fire as the first warriors reach his position.

INT. BUG CITY - INCLINED TUNNEL - DAY

Johnny and Carmen race desperately for the surface. They hear the chatter of Zander's pulse cannon and the screams of dying bugs.

JOHNNY

GO. GO GO GO GO...!

Tears stream down from Carmen's face.

EXT. PLANET P - DAY

Johnny and Carmen and the surviving Roughnecks make it to the surface. WOMP! A subterranean nuclear explosion blows a column of earth and stone into the air.

EXT. PLANET P - A COMPANY BASE CAMP

Johnny and the others enter A Company's perimeter. No one notices their arrival because everyone's gathered in a big circle watching the Brain Bug.

CARMEN

Look... they got it.

Several of its delicate legs were apparently broken during the capture. Carl approaches it without fear, puts his hand on the thing.

GENERAL

What's it thinking, Colonel?

Carl smiles in a cruel way.

CARL

It's afraid.

Johnny and Carmen approach the General.

JOHNNY

Sir, I'd like to turn myself in.  
Dereliction of duty by an officer during  
wartime.

GENERAL

And you freely admit to it?

JOHNNY

Yes, sir.

GENERAL

Is what this man says true, Lieutenant?

CARMEN

To the best of my understanding, it is, sir.

The General sighs, turns to his AIDE.

GENERAL

Round up a field court martial, wilya?

Carl steps in.

CARL

It's alright, sir. Acting Lieutenant Rico was under my orders... psi-orders.

The General smiles, relieved.

MAJOR

Oh, I see. Well, that's completely different. That's classified.

The General heads away. Carl winks at his friends.

JOHNNY

You always told me you couldn't do human...

CARL

I can't... but like I told you, it's a number's game. The Federation needs all the pilots it can get...

CARMEN

I don't know why, but every time the three of us are together I feel like everything's gonna be alright.

CARL

I hope you're right, Carmen. We've got one of their brains now. Pretty soon we'll know how they think, and then we'll know how to beat them. One day it'll be over, and everyone will forget that this was the moment. This is when it turned. And it wasn't the mighty Fleet, it wasn't any fancy new weapon, it was a cap trooper named Zim who captured a brain...

JOHNNY

Zim...?

Johnny sees a knot of soldiers around Zim, who is smiling, selfconscious and admirers shake his hand, pound his back. Johnny rushes to congratulate him.

JOHNNY

Hey, Sergeant Zim. Good job!

Zim turns, gives Johnny a wry look. He wears the single stripes of a private.

ZIM  
Thank you, sir.

Zim snaps to attention, salutes. Johnny has to smile.

JOHNNY  
Carry on, private!

FROM THE FEDERAL NET - AND SO THE WAR GOES ON!

Starships parked row-by-row in the floating yards above Luna. Meanwhile, at Camp Currie, cap troopers train.

OFFICIAL VOICE  
Armed with more soldiers, more ships, and  
with a unity unmatched in all of human  
history, the Federation marches on!

TECHNOLOGY - NEW WEAPONS!

Federation scientists are hard at work.

OFFICIAL VOICE  
Better gas to kill bugs with and, soon,  
the capacity to crack a planet in half  
with just one bomb!

ENLIST NOW!

Proud YOUNG PEOPLE in uniform, the bloom of human evolution.

OFFICIAL VOICE  
Citizenship now guaranteed to all able  
applicants. Put your plans on hold to  
fight for the future! Protect your  
continued right to evolve! Would you like  
to know more?

INT. STARSHIP SPARTA - THE BRIDGE

Captain Carmen Ibanez stands on the bridge of a brand new starship, the Sparta.

CARMEN  
We're over the target area now,  
Lieutenant!

INT. SPARTA - DROP ROOM

Lieutenant Johnny Rico looks his Roughnecks over before the drop.

JOHNNY

Saddle up, Roughnecks!

ACE

You heard the Lieutenant! On the bounce,  
troopers!

One thing's for sure: They'll keep fighting, and they'll win!

THE END