

Flashpoint

Based on the Novel *Aqualene: High Adventure to Clean Energy*
Revised March 2020

FADE IN:

EXT.GASOLINE FILLING STATION, DAY

Drivers lined up at filling station. Sign reads: \$17.99 /
gallon. Six-gallon limit. Windowless van screeches into lot.
Armed THIEF runs to kiosk. Taps end of pistol on glass.

THIEF

Reach!

ATTENDANT

Sorry, no cash in the....

THIEF

Shut up and gimme the key to the
tanks! (beat) Toss in a pack of
Camels.

Nervous attendant shoves items into sliding money drawer.
Thief tosses key to his PARTNER who's just backed van up to
tank access cover.

Partner feeds in a rubber hose and switches on a pump in back
of van. Partner walks up to WOMAN pumping gas. Orders her
back into her car. A police car arrives. COP jumps out and
surveys scene. Sniffs air. LITTLE GIRL in nearby car is seen
peering out the open window. Male CUSTOMER spies the heist
unfolding, pulls a rifle out from his pickup.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Mommy, why does that man have a gun?

Customer thrusts rifle stock to shoulder, drawing a bead on
thieves. Cop observes. Suddenly realizes risks.

COP

Don't fire that weapon.

(beat)

'les you wanna level this whole
goddamn block!

Reluctantly, man lowers gun. Overhearing the exchange,
thieves panic, climb into van and speed off with flailing

hose spilling fuel over pavement. Customers scream and run from the scene. Gasoline attendant yanks lever and deploys fire retardant foam over the ground. Drama ends with more cops arriving to secure scene.

INT. NASA RESEARCH INSTALLATION, NIGHT

SUPERED: 3 MONTHS EARLIER

Inside a high-security laboratory, scientists watch a brightly lit combustion take place inside a cylindrical glass chamber.

Over a monitor in lab: TEST FORMULA COMPLETE. STANDBY TO SAVE DATA. The room suddenly shakes, a thunderous explosion is heard. Fire breaks out. Panic erupts for the exits.

INT.UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL, DAYTIME

Woman dressed in NASA attire, RENEE DELONG stands behind a podium.

We enter the room through eyes of ADAM HARLOW. DeLong's voice becomes more audible as we sit near other attendees.

DELONG

You will each receive a minute sample of AQUALENE's remnants and the key minerals NASA used to create it.

ATTENDEE 1 raises a hand. DeLong recognizes him.

ATTENDEE 1

Can you tell us about the origins of the minerals? Where they are mined?

DELONG

Some are from Earth. Others were excavated from the lunar surface.

ATTENDEE 2 raises a hand. DeLong recognizes her.

ATTENDEE 2

Should one of us reconstruct the formula, how is the data to be delivered to NASA?

DELONG

You must hand-deliver your findings to the Propulsion Labs in Pasadena. Absolutely NO Internet transmissions.

That will be all.

The engineers and scientists shuffle out. Adam Harlow approaches DeLong.

ADAM
(skeptical)
Uh, how was I selected for this project?

DeLong reads his name tag and looks at her clipboard and smiles.

DELONG
Adam Harlow. Yes, of course. You were recommended by DOCTOR HEINRICH MANN, German professor at MIT. He was quite impressed with your marks in mineral synthetics.

ADAM
Always wondered whatever became of him.

DELONG
He's been aboard the space station. Research. He'd appreciate a call from you, I'm sure. (Writes on scrap paper and hands to Adam) You'll need this encryption to get through to him.

INT.UNDERGROUND LAB, NIGHT

Supered: 2 MONTHS LATER

Foot traffic passes above Adam's crude lab below ground. He's having a phone conversation with Heinrich Mann.

ADAM
... Yes, and that data you sent, it may be just what we've been lookin' for, Doctor.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
Zhat's one helluva task you got your fingers on. Vatch yourself, Adam. Someone is ...

Static abruptly ends the call. Adam scribbles on a notepad and gives it to GAMIL HABIB who is hunched over a microscope.

ADAM

Doctor Mann confirmed what we've been thinking last couple days.

HABIB

Thank you, my friend. I shall run this one and ...

ADAM

Don't stay late. Your family needs you. (beat) I'm stepping out for some air.

Adam exits lab into a dim corridor.

EXT. SEATTLE DOWNTOWN STREET.NIGHT

Adam quickens his pace along a dank narrow street. Dark car suddenly appears close behind. From the window a blunt instrument strikes Adam on the head. He grunts, falls, stumbles to his feet. Car speeds off. Adam staggers into nearby alley.

EXT. ALLEY, MORNING

Raining. Adam is lying next to a dumpster. A DERELICT in rags approaches and gently nudges Adam.

DERELICT

Mister Harlow, that you? Lemme help yuh up, man.

Adam gets to his feet, gingerly blots hair. Steps to rinse blood out at a nearby drain pipe dripping from a brick wall.

ADAM

Thanks, Joe. I ... I think I'm okay now.

Adam pats derelict on back, gets his bearings, then walks down the alley toward a side street.

INT. UNLIT DINER.MOMENTS LATER

OWNER's voice sounds from across the room as Adam enters darkened cafe. Chairs are up on tables.

OWNER

Over here, Mister Harlow.

Adam approaches cafe owner and DETECTIVE FISCHER sitting at a table. Startled, Adam halts. Camera scans police tape strung across the kitchen area. Adam sits down with apprehension.

OWNER

This is Detective Fischer. Adam Harlow, Officer. Adam nods.

ADAM

What's going on, all closed up? And, where's MOI?

OWNER

I sent her home. You call later.

Detective leans on the table toward Adam.

DETECTIVE

Tell me, Mister Harlow, how well did you know Gamil Kabib?

ADAM

(puzzled)

What do you mean, how well *did* I know him?

Detective glances cafe owner. Gestures with nod to break the news to Adam.

OWNER

Mr. Kabib was murdered early this morning, downstairs. Just outside your lab.

Adam pauses in disbelief. Then lunges up from chair.

ADAM

It can't be! Did you say ... murdered?

Shock grows to anger, laced with sudden despair. Adam moves about the table with flailing arms. Fischer rises, watching Adam with scrutinizing eyes.

ADAM

How the fuck am I gonna tell his wife and ...? Dammit! Who did it?

Detective steps between Adam and the front door, just in

case. Adam returns to chair, head in hands.

DETECTIVE
 (direct and slow)
 Now, tell me: What is the nature of
 your work, Mister Harlow?

Adam lifts eyes, glancing to kitchen and police tape,
 avoiding eye contact.

ADAM
 (alluding tone)
 Mundane stuff. Fault-line tectonics
 (beat) for the U.S.G.S.

Detective lowers himself into a chair, continuing in a point-
 blank manner.

DETECTIVE
 Okay. So, what do you have down there
 that compels two perpetrators to break
 in and kill a man?

Adam shrugs. Shakes head. Wrings hands despondently.
 Detective rises.

DETECTIVE
 All right.
 (beat)
 Let's go down and have a look.

From kitchen, detective opens a padlock to a rickety door.
 Both enter the underground.

INT. SEATTLE'S OLD UNDERGROUND

The two walk a short distance along a narrow dimly lit
 corridor. Adam pauses to SNIFF the air. Detective points to
 the ground outside the lab.

DETECTIVE
 Here's where we found Kabib's body.

Adam grimaces and shakes his head in disgust.

ADAM
 Alright, I get the picture!

DETECTIVE
 Over there, that's where these guys
 had it out. One shot and wounded the

other, then left the scene, down that-a-way.

Detective points down dark corridor, pulls out a tablet and slides finger over screen.

ADAM

Got him in jail?

DETECTIVE

Yep. Name's Richardson. Thomas Richardson. Texas license.

ADAM

Never heard of him.

Detective enters lab. Nudges an over-turned cot and a desk.

DETECTIVE

Looks like you lived in here. Anything dangerous or toxic?

Adam scans the room. Sees a box of VIALS under a workbench. BLUE FOAM oozes from them. Conceals his interest in vials.

ADAM

Uh, no. Nothing hazardous, let alone salvageable.

DETECTIVE

Collect your personal effects, whatever you can pack out in one load, right now. A team will analyze the scene tomorrow. (beat) Is that blood I see in your hair?

Adam ignores the question, stuffs clothes and personal items into a small duffle. Glances at the box of vials again. Exits ahead of the detective through cafe's backdoor into kitchen.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE SUITE, DAYTIME

RODNEY PANACH motors his chair up to a wide desk. Peers at world oil market data on multiple screens above. Desk phone rings. A uniformed man's face appears on a screen. It is COLONEL STRIKER, aboard the International Space Station.

PANACH

What do you have for me, Colonel?

COLONEL

That professor up here I told you about; he's been in contact with the mineralogist, the one in Seattle, working on NASA's fuel project.

PANACH

Anything important?

COLONEL

Yessir. He's been on to something, according to Sands and Richardson. Meanwhile, I've taken the German professor out of commission up here.

PANACH

There'll be something in it for you, Colonel.

Panach cuts the call, peers up at oil production graphics, and shakes his head.

EXT. IN SMALL CAR, AFTERNOON

Adam and Moi Song are driving through town to her apartment. Adam glowers remorsefully.

ADAM

Had I known there'd be violence, I wouldn't have pulled you ... or Gamil into this mess!

MOI

(with heavy Mandarin accent)
Too big a project. Adam cannot do alone.

ADAM

They killed Gamil, dammit. Who will be next?

MOI

Gamil die with honor.

ADAM

At least the vials are still there.
(beat) Until the cops toss `em out.

MOI

We must return to get them.

ADAM

Are you game?

MOI

Game? This no time for game, Adam!

ADAM

Never mind. Later tonight, we go!

They drive past miles of tented encampments, listening to radio news.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The Dow slid further in heavy trading,
with energy leading the sell-off for
the seventh straight...

INT.BUNK ROOM ABOARD INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION. DARK

Young African-American intern GREG WALKER stares down at Heinrich Mann strapped to a bunk. A readout says: Entering Deep Sleep. Greg exits bunk room.

INT.HEINRICH'S WORKSTATION ABOARD ISS. MOMENTS LATER

Apprehensively, Greg slips behind monitor. Logs in. Sees a MESSAGE in large type scroll across the screen. Whisper reads it from screen.

GREG

*"S.O.S. Vashon lander launch codes
scrambled. Cannot make contact with
Europa Command. Classified mining
mission, NASA UM-331.*

Greg bites lip, thinks feverishly. Unsure of himself, he begins a reply, pauses, pokes keys again, agonizes over his words, then deletes his text. Looks around the workstation and finds Heinrich's cell phone, copies something from the monitor into the phone, shoves it into a pocket, logs off and leaves quickly.

EXT. DESERTED SIDEWALK NEAR BRICK BUILDING, NIGHT

In the shadows of rain and dank street lighting, Adam and Moi tamper with broken window at street level of old brick

building.

INT. UNDERGROUND SEATTLE, NIGHT

Moi and Adam have climbed through and are standing in an old 19th century underground. Wiping away cobwebs, Moi shines her flashlight into a downward-sloping dirt-covered corridor.

They stop at a FLOODED area. Dripping sounds are heard. Rats scurry away as the flashlight sweeps left and right.

ADAM

Street drain-off. God, it stinks!

Moi slips off her shoes. Both begin to wade in mud and water, Adam leading the way.

ADAM

Careful. No tellin' what's under this muck.

Adam suddenly loses footing and slips under, thrashing about until Moi clutches his hand and pulls him back to the edge. Adam curses as he wrings shirt out. Looks around for another way through. Behind him and unknown to him, Moi returns to the water, wades knee deep, bends over and wrestles with something below the surface. Water laps her chin as she works at it. Suddenly a loud sucking sound fills the cavernous room. Adam spins around, amazed to see mud and water draining through a grate.

ADAM

(embarrassed)

Like, why didn't I think of that?

INT. ADAM'S LAB

In the shadows of sidewalk light filtering in, the two step into the small lab. Adam tucks box of VIALS under his arm. Scoops up tattered BINDER, which he hands to Moi. Removes a brick in crumbling wall near workbench.

ADAM

The THUMB DRIVE, it's gone!

MOI

Listen...

Voices are heard. A flashlight bobs toward them in the

corridor. Moi turns off her flashlight.

ADAM
 (whispers)
 Run!

In darkness we hear a scatter of footsteps and grunts as bodies collide.

EXT. STREET, NIGHT

We see Adam backing out of window and dropping to feet onto sidewalk. Pauses, glancing around for Moi. Runs away, slicing through the street.

Adam is seen approaching scene where Moi's car was parked. Gap in line of parked cars shows hers is gone.

EXT. BUS STATION, DAY

Gray and raining. Adam steps off a Greyhound bus, sets his tote bag down, slips into a rain jacket. A HAND grips his shoulder from behind. Adam spins with a raised hand in self-defense. His friend DELL JACKSON chuckles.

DELL
 Jumpy as ever! Good to see ya, joker!

ADAM
 Been too long. Where you parked?

The two climb into a vintage red pickup and drive off in a roar.

INT. BUNK ROOM ABOARD SPACE STATION. LIGHT

Greg pokes suspiciously at a CELL PHONE and places it on his bunk, then leaves the cabin.

INT. GALLEY ABOARD SPACE STATION. LIGHT

Greg enters galley where the Colonel Striker is sitting alone sipping from a carton.

GREG
 Sir? I mean ... Colonel?

COLONEL
Coffee? Juice?

GREG
No thanks.

COLONEL
I expected you'd come around to make conversation, eventually. Don't see the interns in here much.

Greg searches cabinet for a snack. With ambivalence, he turns to colonel.

GREG
(with raised courage)
Why is Dr. Mann restrained to his bunk, in DEEP SLEEP?

COLONEL
Simple! I found him poking around in restricted, Pentagon business. That's prohibited up here, you know.

GREG (timidly) Uh, yes sir.

Greg slowly rises. Hesitates. Then starts to leave galley. Pauses at hatchway. Colonel eyeballs him.

COLONEL
Something else on your mind, young man?

GREG
Uh, well. Yuh see, Dr. Mann and I... we received a message. But I don't think you can...

COLONEL
(eager)
Try me, son ... in the name of national security.

Greg relaxes a little as colonel offers a chair at table. Draws in a breath. Sighs thoughtfully.

COLONEL
Where was the message from?

GREG
A lunar mission. Some astronauts are

stranded.

Colonel stiffens. Composes himself. Glances around to be sure nobody can hear them. Leans closer to Greg.

COLONEL

I see. (beat) What else did the message say?

GREG

A Captain DeLong is trying to contact Europa Command, but can't. Jammed radio transmission.

COLONEL

I'll do what I can, son. Don't mention this to anyone else. It could delay rescue efforts. Understand?

GREG

Yessir.

INT.CAB OF PICKUP

DELL

Kinda sudden to see yuh out this way. Everything okay?

ADAM

(shrugs)

It's been awhile. Left the firm to join a project for NASA.

DELL

(skeptical)

Darn quiet out here for a fast-pace city boy like you.

ADAM

Weird shit came up. Had to get out of town. (beat) To sort things out.

Surrounded by woods and some fields, the truck pulls up to lone cabin. They get out.

DELL

Make yourself at home. Got all the raspberries a man can eat.

INT. DELL'S CABIN, EVENING

With interest Dell watches Adam unpack vials and remove their stoppers. Adam sniffs a BLUE substance inside a vial and carefully begins laying out chemistry implements from a small canvas bag.

DELL

How'd yuh get involved in this deal
you call, uh. (beat) Aqua-lene?

ADAM

NASA's baby. To replace gasoline. But
their formula was hacked. Someone with
a helluva lot of power.

DELL

Someone with a big stake in energy, I
reckon. (beat) Never did make the
news.

ADAM

Secret stuff. Like everything, ever
since the oil shortage. Bunch of us
around the country got roped into
recovering the formula. Never had much
to go on.

DELL

Trial and error, huh? Whachu got in
them glass tubes?

ADAM

That Chinese girl I told you about,
she wrote an ALGORITHM to search out
the right compound. Been beating our
heads against the wall for weeks.
Finally, we might be onto something.

Adam stands up and sighs. Locks eyes with Dell.

DELL

What is it, joker?

ADAM

There's a missing piece to this, Dell.
A detail I never mentioned.

DELL
Okay... I'm ready.

ADAM
Truth is, I had an assistant working
for me when it happened: A
breakthrough!

DELL
I reckon you'll reward him his due.

ADAM
Can't. He was murdered. And that girl
helpin' out, she disappeared.

Dell stands and walks into the kitchen, then returns
scratching his head.

DELL
Got yersef into a dangerous business,
huh.

Adam stands at the window, his back to Dell. Heaves a big
sigh.

ADAM
Sure did. (beat) So, I'd best be
moving on. No point in draggin' you
down with me.

DELL
Take some doin' to pull me out of it
now, boy!

Adam remains at the window, his back to Dell, listening,
waiting.

ADAM
Look, man. These guys aren't fooling
around. They're playing for keeps,
dammit!

DELL
I heard yuh. (beat) And you got some
competitors, so let's get to it!

Adam faces Dell, pleased of what he's hearing. Grins and
hands Dell a slip of paper.

ADAM
Alright, we'll make this shit tonight,

and I'll need these items.

Dell glances over the paper.

DELL

Didn't reckon on buildin' a still...

ADAM

Well, sort of. (beat) You still got that old Honda?

DELL

Ya, but it ain't run for years.

INT. BUNK ROOM ABOARD SPACE STATION. DARK

Greg lies down on bunk. Reads new message on Heinrich's phone. Curses softly and begins to enter new message. Colonel appears in the airlock. Wielding a TASER, he rushes Greg. Greg steps aside to narrowly evade taser. Phone clatters to floor. Colonel repeats fierce assaults on Greg, hoping to recover phone.

After several narrow exchanges, Greg manages a choke-hold on colonel but quickly is disarmed. Greg retreats to bunk. Scoops up smart phone and with emphatic poke, sends his message.

Greg SMASHES phone against a metal bunk support. The device breaks in pieces as Colonel jabs Greg with TASER, who succumbs in dramatic paralysis. Colonel hurries to STRAP Greg to bunk, then sets controls for Deep Sleep. Tidies his uniform and exits room quietly.

INT. SMALL NONDESCRIPT ROOM, DAYTIME

Moi Song is tied to a chair. A woman circles her with threatening authority. A man stands guard at the door.

WOMAN

Your father will be worried. Give me his cell number. I will tell him you are safe.

Moi stares blankly past the woman, who becomes agitated.

WOMAN

So, you want to play that game, huh? I know more than you think.

Moi's blank stare breaks as woman begins speaking in fluent Mandarin.

WOMAN

(subtitles)

Tell me the whereabouts of Mr. Harlow's laboratory records. He possesses information I want.

MOI

I do not know anything about his record keeping.

WOMAN

What do you know about the underground lab?

MOI

A man with a wife and children was killed there.

WOMAN

(losing patience)

The notebook! Where is it?

Moi ignores the question. Interrogating woman motions to the guard. He produces a sheet of PLASTIC FILM and stretches it over Moi's face. She struggles but is quickly subdued.

WOMAN

Part of its contents are with our competitor. It contains details worth billions... more than I can say for your life.

Breathing becomes impossible. Moi squirms painfully. Her eyes flash in desperation. The film around her mouth becomes drawn. The guard looks worried and steps forward to release the film. Woman interrogator puts up a hand.

WOMAN

Wait! Let's give her a few more seconds to decide.

Woman places a finger against Moi's cheek. She slides a long pointy nail near Moi's lips, pauses another agonizing moment, then punctures the film. It collapses and Moi gasps for a

breath.

WOMAN
(English)

Okay, sweet pea, what've you got for me?

INT. ABOARD A PRIVATE JET, NIGHT

Rodney Panach sips a cognac and motors his chair upright. He punches a button on the armrest. Colonel Striker's voice comes over a speaker as the monitor blinks on.

COLONEL
(over monitor)
Good evening, sir. I've made the arrangements you requested.

PANACH
I can trust the mining mission will submit to failure, then Colonel?

COLONEL
Affirmative. With a few minor details to take care, we'll achieve absolute silence.

PANACH
Very well, Colonel. However, you have failed me in procuring the formula. Harlow has slipped away, and remaining details of the formula remain with him, only to fall into the hands of our competitors.

COLONEL
I trust you haven't forgotten our deal, Mister Panach.

PANACH
This is about results, Colonel. If you cannot get the honey, bring me the bees.

Panach terminates the transmission and knocks back his cognac.

INT. DELL'S CABIN, DAWN

Outside a rooster crows. In front of a makeshift still and crude chemistry equipment, Adam awakens on a sofa, rubs his eyes and gazes at the crude apparatus.

ADAM

I think we got something!

Adam leaps off the sofa and kneels to observe the blue liquid dripping from the condenser pipe into a fruit jar. Dell appears from the bedroom and stretches, glancing at the clock on the wall.

DELL

I ain't pulled an all-nighter like that since algebra class. Coffee?

ADAM

Black.

(beat)

Got us two ounces of gold, so far.
Couple more to go.

DELL

You really gonna ride that bike?

Adam nods. His phone makes an audible sound, he steps out on the porch to read a message. Steps back in the cabin and heaves a sigh.

ADAM

Damn!

DELL

What is it?

ADAM

I got beat out... by some guy in
Kansas! A Clarence Riggs.

DELL

You sure? Already got his data to
NASA?

ADAM

Must have hand delivered it. That's
their stipulation.

Adam curses under his breath, squats on his heels and watches the last few drops drip from the pipe.

DELL

So, is it... Game Over?

ADAM

This was a winner-take-all agreement.
(beat) But I still want to test my
batch. Get the bike ready.

INT. STATION'S GALLEY

Mission director drinks coffee and looks over some papers.
Colonel Striker sits down across from him.

COLONEL

I had no choice but to put these two
down. The kraut doctor broke into a
sensitive site. And the black kid, he
was covering up. Nobody up here but me
has Pentagon privileges!

DIRECTOR

Germany's going to have something to
say about this, you know. Should have
turned it over to me.

COLONEL

Procedures are everything! We loosen
`em and chaos breaks out.

EXT. DELL'S FARM YARD. LATER

It's raining as Dell adds air to Honda tires from a
compressor just outside the barn. Adam approaches from the
cabin carrying his phone in one hand and the jar of blue
formula in the other.

DELL

Yuh look like you struck the mother
lode, boy!

ADAM

Just heard back from Admiral
Petroleum!

DELL

How're they in this?

ADAM

Offering me a position. I applied months ago when I lost my job... before NASA recruited me.

DELL

You sure about them? That's a mighty big outfit. Doesn't fit you.

ADAM

I know. But I'm broke. Besides, I'm out of the running for this NASA nonsense.

Dell shrugs, tossing the air hose out of the way.

DELL

I still think you ought to take your data to 'em.

Adam considers it. Nods.

ADAM

First we gotta see if this Aqualene shit even burns.

DELL

Don't expect much out of the bike. She's plum wore out.

ADAM

It'll have to do. I need a five gallon container, cup of salt, and your garden hose.

Dell walks off toward cabin. Adam stands over the Honda, suddenly looking doubtful. Opens the fuel TANK and peers inside. Dell returns with the can and a carton of salt, and yanks on a garden hose. Starts filling the can.

DELL

Yuh know, gas rationin' don't give me enough fuel to drive my raspberry crop to market. Reckon I'll be sellin' out b'fore long.

Adam pours some of the blue formula into the 5 gal container, adds salt, then pours formula into a small vial, seals it and drops it into his coat pocket.

ADAM

You keep most of this fuel for the truck. I'll need just TWO CUPS in the bike.

DELL

Lucky to git far on that little bit.

After pouring off two cups of Aqualene into the jar, Adam pours it into the bike's tank. Adam reaches in with a key and scratches a mark at the fuel level. He straps on a helmet hanging from handlebars. Adam tries kick starter. Crank breaks off. Dell grabs hold of the fender, ready to push.

ADAM

Alright, get me a run at it. Back in a few minutes.

The bike starts after a 2nd push. Standing in a downpour, Dell watches bike spit & sputter. Adam revs it, jams his foot down on the gear change and races out of sight.

(deadpan) Dell wipes splattered mud off his overalls and sits down in a lawn chair.

EXT. BACK WOODS NEAR DELL'S PROPERTY

Adam rounds a curve, encounters two aggressive bikers out of nowhere. Tires spin as he gases the Honda and plunges into the woods. Skillfully races up and down terrain to stay ahead of the PURSUING bikers. (from various angles) Narrowly clears a wide gully in flight to end up on the main road. Peels off helmet, listening. Alluded bikers! Looks inside tank. Gasps. Guns motor and disappears down road.

INT. RURAL CALIFORNIA REFINERY, DAYTIME

A limo pulls up to a security gate outside Admiral Petroleum's Crimson plant. The car enters gates and pulls up outside a rambling chateau. A wheelchair ramp deploys and Mr. Panach rolls down. KEN BURKE greets him and the two stand on a rise overlooking the compound.

BURKE

Things are shaping up in good order, sir.

PANACH

I'll be the judge of that!

Burke walks beside Panach, pointing out the new dormitory and landscaping at the installation.

PANACH
(irritated)
I came to see the fucking plant, not a
retirement center!

Burke cuts down a path and leads his boss into the chateau.

INT.CHATEAU CONTROL ROOM

We see them exit elevator into a room busy with techs and carpenters installing new equipment. Panach rolls up to a large window and peers out. A box-like building with a domed roof dominates the compound.

BURKE
Well, what do you think, sir?

Stacks of piping grab Panach's attention.

PANACH
(agitated)
What's the holdup down there? Those
materials were to be installed a week
ago, and this plant ready to go!

Burke retreats to a large table behind them. One engineer leans over it, studying BLUE PRINTS. His arm shakes. He averts his eyes from Panach. Burke motions the engineer aside and points to a place on the paper.

BURKE
The plans, sir, they're not complete.
Right here, the JUMBLED DETAILS we
still need decoded are missing.

Burke sees Panach ready to explode. Burke gestures toward the engineer WILSON nearby.

BURKE
We hired Wilson here to DECODE that
section of data, stolen from NASA's
lab. He's done little but ask for more
compensation, sir.

Panach turns to Wilson. Removes the cigar from his mouth. Points to technicians rushing around the room.

PANACH

Look around. What do you see? A country club? A lounge? This company cannot afford to waste time with you. Follow me.

The three disappear through a connecting door to control room.

EXT. DELL'S FARM YARD

Adam rides into the yard, grinning. Bike is covered in mud.

DELL

Figured I'd see you walkin' that thing back. Been near twenty minutes.

ADAM

Backwoods to the highway... and back! Plenty of fuel. Take a look.

Adam cuts motor. Dell sees for himself.

DELL

You dirty dog! Ya done topped her off, dint ya?

ADAM

Ha! Who's gonna sell me gas around here?

DELL

(gets the picture)

Damn!

(beat)

I can see why folks is gittin' killed over this Aqualene stuff. Forget that Riggs fella beating yuh out, you git your ass down to Pasadena!

INT. WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE, EVENING

Delegates of the International ENERGY COALITION walk into the room and sit at a large table. U.S. PRESIDENT takes a seat at the head of the table. Across from him sits the CHINESE delegate.

PRESIDENT

I regret to call this meeting so suddenly. As members of the energy coalition, you have a right to know the latest progress on our joint lunar mining mission.

CHINESE DELEGATE

We are heavily invested in this project. Please give us news.

The president fidgets awkwardly. The German and British delegates wait for him to speak.

PRESIDENT

It's been over 24 hours since Ground Control had contact with the Vashon lander. Europa Command was to intercept Vashon in lunar orbit but now must prepare to return to earth, empty-handed. The mission will have to be scrubbed.

A buzz of talk erupts around the table in various languages. Delegates shake their heads in disbelief. The Chinese delegate stands.

CHINESE DELEGATE

This is very unfortunate. We trust American space program and put one of our own astronaut aboard.

PRESIDENT

Let me assure you, we are doing everything we can in our power to resolve technical problems aboard Vashon.

GERMAN DELEGATE

Can you speak about the previous mission's SHIPMENT? When does it arrive at your new processing center?

PRESIDENT

(relieved to change subject)
The seven-ton shipment of minerals will be transported to NASA's Aqualene plant in the next couple of days.

BRITISH ENVOY

If you will, sir, how safe is that

shipment?

PRESIDENT

Our Secret Service has the minerals under 24 hour surveillance. Once they arrive, a remarkable presentation awaits each of you at LUKEFIELD Air Base. Let us reconvene here at 2100 hours.

Delegates and their aides talk among themselves in low tones. Dissatisfaction and anxiety fills the room as they shuffle out.

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, AFTERNOON

Adam exits LAX airport, carrying a single overnight bag and attache. Misses last taxi in lineup. Boards a city bus outside terminal.

INT. CROWDED CITY BUS

From window trashy homeless encampments and boarded-up mansions flick by on the way into town. Upon entering the downtown area, a young TOUGH boards the crowded bus and plops down next to Adam whose suit screams "Employed!" Angry tough eyes him with disdain; a challenge to the *haves*.

TOUGH

(speaking to anyone listening)
Look here, a well-heeled biz-ness man, huh? Bet you just laughin' your way through the filth, the slums, the hungry.

ADAM

Lay off, pal. Nobody's bothering you.

TOUGH

`Cept you, lookin' high and mighty in them fancy threads.

Tough delivers a mild SHOULDER SLAM. Adam ignores it. Repeats but harder, only to be nailed back with an elbow to the throat. Swivels and ties tough guy up in a PAINFUL chokehold. Tough guy yelps and begs for release.

TOUGH

Okay ... okay, man ... lemme up ...

I'm chillin'!

ADAM

Town's got enough fucking trouble,
don't need more from you.

DRIVER stops bus, blows a whistle, and stomps down the aisle toward Adam.

DRIVER

What the hell is going on here?

ADAM

(calmly)

Young man missed his stop, sir. If
you'd be so kind to let him off...

Adam releases coughing tough and watches him bump past the driver and out the door. Driver resumes driving. Adam exits bus at next block and stands gazing up at a imposing precipice.

Sigh reads: Admiral Petroleum. Adam enters through guarded doors.

INT.ADMIRAL PETROLEUM POWER BUILDING

Inside the mammoth lobby Adam gazes at huge photographs of the company's holdings. Shows his ID to a guard and rides elevator to top floor. Exits elevator into plush office area. An attractive and mannered SECRETARY greets him by name.

SECRETARY

This way, Mr. Harlow. We have been
expecting you.

ADAM

Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

Secretary escorts Adam into a small boardroom. Alone there, he looks the room over, notices a TWO-WAY WINDOW at the far end, and sits at the long table. Looks at his credentials and checks his phone. Mr. Burke enters the room with two unnamed associates. They introduce, shake hands and sit. Burke produces a dossier and lays its pages out on the table.

BURKE

Well, Mr. Harlow, I see you applied
with Admiral some months ago,

following a stint of work with a Seattle firm, which you left suddenly, on unfavorable terms?

ADAM

Yes, sir. The company was moving in an ill-productive direction.

BURKE

Tell us what you've done in the interim; consulting, research, lectures ... projects?

Adam pauses long enough to scan the room. Glances at the associates, the two-way mirrored window, and back to Burke.

ADAM

Some contracted research with NASA. Synthetic fuels; a facsimile of what other firms are developing.

BURKE

Did NASA accomplish its goals? Adam crosses his arms and smiles.

ADAM

Let's just call it a work in progress. I fulfilled my assignment as one of many consultants. The rest is confidential.

BURKE

Of course. And, as you've indicated here, you prefer R&D work.

Adam nods. Burke turns to the associates and holds a whispered exchange, then turns to Adam.

BURKE

We'd like to offer you a position at our Crimson plant, in central California, cutting-edge technology with an emphasis on grain-based cellulites. Is that something you could live with, until a promotion comes up?

ADAM

It sounds up my alley. I won't let you down, sir.

BURKE

Very well. I'm going to leave you with our recruitment attorneys. Gentlemen, take him through the routine paperwork. Congratulations, Mr. Harlow.

Burke stands, shakes Adam's hand and exits boardroom through a door at the opposite end of the room. He enters a small darkened room down the hall. A TECHNICIAN is hunched over a surveillance monitor.

BURKE

Got him on visuals?

TECH

Take a look.

Multiple IMAGES of Adam appear on a large monitor. Each frame displays a different angle from various points around the boardroom. A monitor on the table emits the voice of Mr. Panach, who is speaking from his private jet.

PANACH

The attache'! What have you got its contents?

BURKE

I can't make out much of anything, sir. And the file, it's scrambled.

PANACH

Of course it is! He's carrying the missing data, and I'm holding you responsible for gaining possession of that file. Have him at the airstrip in 45 minutes!

BURKE

Uh, yes sir.

The tech gestures toward the INSTRUMENTS. The meter's needle jumps and flickers.

TECH

First sign of nerves I've seen out of this guy.

Panach's voice crackles from the speaker.

PANACH

Get back in there and close the deal,
before we lose him!

Burke exits lab and appears in the boardroom. Adam twirls a gold pen between his fingers while reading a document meticulously. Burke is irritated, worried. Moves closer and places a hand on his shoulder.

BURKE

Is there a problem, Mr. Harlow?

Adam looks up from the paperwork.

ADAM

No.

(beat)

But before I sign this release, I need
to be excused for a couple of hours to
deliver some important items to a lab
in Pasadena.

Adam clutches his attache' and stands. Burke struggles to conceal his angst. His eyes dart about the room in panic.

BURKE

Uh, no worries! Our security director
lives in Pasadena. He'll drop it there
for you, before 5pm.

ADAM

Out of the question. Please call me a
cab.

Burke's voice cracks. Perspires. He glares at his watch and slams a hand down on the intercom.

BURKE

SARAH! Get in here. Arrange for a
pickup with our private carrier!

ADAM

Impossible. I must...

Sarah walks in smiling with a packing envelope in her hand. Burke rushes to cradle an arm around Adam's shoulder.

BURKE

Sarah, please congratulate our newest
addition to the company. Would you
please show Mister Harlow Admiral's

finest hospitality?

Adam wrings his hands. Ambivalence fills his eyes. Sarah sees this and daintily escorts him out to her desk. She smiles and holds the envelope open, patiently. Behind Adam, Burke looks to Heaven and crosses himself.

BURKE

We have little time, Mr. Harlow. Admiral's CEO will be waiting aboard the company jet. He is eager to meet with you.

Adam carefully extracts a THUMB DRIVE from his attache' and slips it into the envelope, seals it, and entrusts the parcel to Sarah, who smiles and bids him a silent farewell. Burke exhales, his eyes rolling. He glances at his watch and hurries Adam into the elevator.

BURKE

As I said, Mr. Panach will meet with you aboard his jet. It's just one of our company policies to welcome our talented engineers, Mr. Harlow.

Adam's view of Sarah holding his parcel is cut as the elevator doors shut.

INT. UNDERGROUND NASA COMMAND CENTER, NIGHT

Unnamed GENERAL passes through a military post, into a dimly lit high-security communications center. Lab-coat donning staffers tend to rows of monitors. A back-lit wall map displays the flight path of the VASHON LUNAR MISSION. General is greeted by another official and sits down at a control booth. Colonel Striker's voice crackles from a speaker.

COLONEL

Yes, General? How can I be of help?

GENERAL

Colonel, the long-range audio link with our Vashon mission has failed. NASA's ground engineers have exhausted all means to re-establish contact. Perhaps you can redirect a remote link through our auxiliary satellite network, from up there.

COLONEL

I see.

(beat)

I'll do what I can.

GENERAL

Many are depending on you, Colonel.
Carry on.

General cuts the link. Displays hope amid obvious doubts.

INT. COLONEL STRIKER'S CABIN ABOARD ISS

The colonel swivels around to view a monitor. We see display
REMAINING LIFE-SUPPORT aboard Vashon. A digital timer
readout: 00:17:32.

COLONEL

A pity they won't be returning.

INT. PRIVATE CABIN ABOARD JET, NIGHT

Reclined in his chair, Mr. Panach sips liquor in flight. Over
the whine of jet engines, there's a knock at the door, Burke
appears.

PANACH

Well? Show him in...and shut the door
on your way out.

Adam Harlow enters. In a guarded manner, his eyes take in the
cabin before settling on the most powerful man alive. Lowers
himself into a seat across from Panach, whose chair is
motoring upright.

ADAM

I did not expect to ...

Panach smiles with confidence.

PANACH

... fly with the eagles? It is a fact,
most never make it off the ground
these days, Mr. Harlow. Let me pour
you a drink. Scotch, cognac, vodka?

ADAM

No thank you. Altitude and alcohol do
not agree with me.

PANACH

A wise man keeps his wits, Mr. Harlow.
And a rare pleasure for me to make
acquaintances with new company blood.
Those ready to climb the ladder of
corporate success.

ADAM

I wish to keep my fingers on the
future of energy, sir. Never was much
for scaling the rungs of management.

PANACH

I had hoped to acquire you earlier,
barring previous obligations that
follow a man of your capacity, on a
mission.

ADAM

Just another government project, sir.

Panach let go a barrel laugh and lit a large cigar.

PANACH

Sometimes those little tax-paid deals
can roll into game changers. And Mr.
Burke tells me your knowledge of
mineral synthetics qualifies you for
Research and Development at Admiral.
Company perks await preparedness.

The cabin lights dim. A screen on the wall lights up with a
slideshow of luxury estates, labeled as recently acquired
properties.

ADAM

Figured one or two to be enough, even
for a CEO.

PANACH

Seizing property is seizing
opportunity, Mr. Harlow. We own
hundreds of luxury estates. One can
belong to you for helping us get this
country back on its feet.

Adam leans over to peer out a window into the night. Panach's
eyes do not leave him.

ADAM

Who owned these estates before you

acquired them?

PANACH

Anyone who's made it in show business, sports, politics, the like. Diversifying in hard times gives one an edge against the odds, Mister Harlow.

Adam turns and faces Panach. Locks eyes with him.

ADAM

And if I do not rise up to your expectations?

PANACH

(chuckles)

Trust me, Mr. Harlow! You will exceed expectations at Admiral.

Panach punches a button on his chair. Another property, dripping in luxury shows on the monitor.

PANACH

Look here. I've already selected one, tailored for you, just north of the Riviera Country Club, on Napoli Drive.

The printout Panach hands him threatens to be contaminated. Adam grows increasingly suspicious.

ADAM

Not exactly the signing bonus I had in mind, sir. Not for an entry level position in ethanol research.

PANACH

In this economy, one man's loss is another man's profit. Admiral's going to need every bit of its hard-earned capital, and *your* expertise in uncharted research. For that, I'm prepared to pay seven figures.

ADAM

Quite the inducement for any man possessed by an appetite for luxury. But with all due respect, I cannot...

PANACH

...disclose proprietary secrets,

funded by public tax dollars? Is that what you feel obliged to tell me, Mr. Harlow?

ADAM

In defense of my integrity, I'd be lying to say otherwise.

The whine of the jet's engines drops an octave. Panach yanks back a sleeve to see the time on his diamond-clad Rolex.

PANACH

We'll be landing shortly. Work starts tomorrow. In the meantime, ask yourself what you can do for this crippled industry. What you are willing to sacrifice for our nation's pride?

Panach's chair motors back. The cabin door opens. Burke gestures. Adam exits.

EXT. ARMY BASE, NIGHT

A double tractor-trailer rig idles in a lit compound. Soldiers secure the load while a military OFFICER steps up to the driver's window.

OFFICER

You'll be covered overhead by a chopper the entire trip. Crews at Lukefield expect you at 1:35am. Besides some weather over the pass, roads are clear. Move out.

Officer steps down. Truck pulls out onto highway beneath chopper.

INT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY, NIGHT

Driving rain over windshield. Approaches and enters a long stretch of treed-canopy over roadway. A SQUAD CAR's flashing lights suddenly appear in middle of road through wipers. Truck driver brings rig to stop, blast of air brakes. Armed TROOPER beckons driver from rig. Orders hands up against squad car where he is STRUCK on back of head. Falls unconscious. Chopper hovers above dense canopy of trees, but VISUAL SURVEILLANCE remains impaired.

INT.CHOPPER'S COCKPIT

We see tops of trees only. Road is not visible from chopper other than a hint of the flashing lights. Chopper resolves to hover before seeing the rig exit from under the canopy.

EXT. ROADWAY UNDER TREED CANOPY

Second identical rig pulls out from blind side of road and continues on, exiting canopy to Lukefield destination. Rig with NASA CARGO pulls out moments later and disappears in darkness.

INT. DORMITORY INSIDE CRIMSON COMPOUND, MORNING

Burke enters a single level dormitory, walks down hallway and knocks at one of the room doors, unlocks it from the outside. Adam Harlow is sitting on a small bed.

BURKE

Mr. Panach is ready to see you now. I presume you slept well?

ADAM

As well as one can expect, inside a prison camp.

Burke grins, leads Adam down hall, unlocks the outside door with a wave of his palm, the two exit and walk up a path toward the chateau.

BURKE

Security is the cornerstone to survival, Mr. Harlow. Take comfort in the fact you enjoy three meals a day and sleep in a warm dry bed. Many have much less these days.

ADAM

I'm forever indebted.

Burke ignores remark.

INT.CHATEAU'S CAFETERIA

Burke leads Adam into a small cafeteria where other engineers are hunched around a table, drinking coffee. Talk is minimal, HUSHED.

BURKE

Get breakfast. The boss will see you
in fifteen minutes.

Adam carries a tray and approaches the other engineers.
MELVIN BATES gestures his crew to make room. They comply,
offer nods, and stare blankly into their cups, one glancing
at an overhead camera.

BATES

You must be the new man; Adam Harlow.
Melvin Bates.

ADAM

Pleasure.

INT. UPSTAIRS, PANACH'S OFFICE SUITE

Burke enters suite and stands behind Panach. A video flashes
onto a wall screen in which virtual images of stainless-steel
plumbing, condensers, and fractioning tanks appear in
computer-enhanced graphics.

PANACH

What do you make of this?

BURKE

Typical high-volume refinery. Vacuum
distillation, catalytic cracking,
alkylation...

PANACH

(impatiently)

Open your eyes. It's a goddam copy of
Harlow's file! The one he was in such
a hurry to rush off to NASA.

BURKE

Seems hardly cutting-edge, if you ask
me.

PANACH

Boost the image, right there, where
vulcanizing takes place.

Panach waves a laser-pointer on the screen. Burke steps
around Panach and touches a control on the desk, expanding
the image.

BURKE

Appears things get complicated at that point.

A small automated icon maneuvers a labyrinth of pipes and valves, then halts abruptly at a tangled core of circuitry and plumbing.

PANACH

According to our intelligence lab in Memphis, Mr. Harlow's schematic contains a serious FLAW. Could be an old trick to leverage his game.

Burke's face tightens. He pounds a fist into his palm.

BURKE

Give me one hour alone with him, sir!

PANACH

Don't confuse yourself. Harlow isn't the type to give in to a beating. Let him get acclimated out here, help us finish up the groundwork. He'll be eating out of my hands, soon enough.

INT: CAFETERIA IN CHATEAU

BATES

We're pullin' out today, so I'm passin' the torch off to you.

Bates glances at two guards across the room. Lowers voice.

BATES

Some sophisticated plans with your name on `em. We got the plumbing and electrical started. Quite the apparatus on paper. Shame to see it fall into Admiral's hands.

ADAM

Won't do 'em much good. Not without the details, or the minerals.

BATES

Don't be so sure. LOAD of something damned heavy rolled in early this morning. You learn to keep your ear to

the ground `round here. Watch yourself, Harlow. Panach deals from the bottom of the deck.

A guard approaches, looks the men over, conversations fade. Guard pauses, then moves on.

ADAM

Any way out of this prison?

BATES

Nope. Guy named Wilson contracting solo just disappeared. Nobody seen him leave.

Adam draws a breath, swallows hard. Picks at this food.

ADAM

Great.

Across the room Burke enters.

BURKE

Wrap it up, Mr. Harlow. Boss's ready for you. Adam glances over to Bates.

ADAM

Thanks. Perhaps we'll meet up, someday.

BATES

Yeah? Maybe. Good luck, man.

EXT. LUKEFIELD MILITARY RESEARCH CENTER.LATE MORNING

U.S. President and his coalition watch last few seconds of Aqualene Production video inside hangar from folding chairs arranged in front of a partitioned area. Guards are posted everywhere. Lights are raised. A NASA OFFICIAL stands by. President nods, steps to a podium.

NASA OFFICIAL

Distinguished members of the Energy Coalition, I am proud and honored to be a part of these production PLANS for Aqualene. Despite a few pending developments, we are prepared to move forward and begin production within weeks. Our final product will generate

a Flashpoint of energy many times that
of conventional fuels, at zero
emissions!

One of two Chinese delegates SHEN ZHANG stands and faces the
U.S. President.

ZHANG

Mr. President, we wish to view the
energy source--the minerals taken from
lunar surface.

Others in the delegation concur in soft mutterings. President
gestures their attention to the NASA official. He dons a pair
of scissors and cuts a long blue ribbon strung across the
packing. Delegates applause, on cue with President.

NASA OFFICIAL

Please, everyone step this way. My
technicians will now unveil the
mineral packs, excavated from the moon
last year.

Three technicians begin cutting cartons from one of the
packs. They pull away the packing and the NASA official takes
a PROBE from his lab coat pocket. Scratches his chin and
looks closely at the surface. He gestures the other
technicians to have a look. He steps away and makes eye-
contact with the President.

OFFICIAL

I don't want to be the one to say
this, but...

PRESIDENT

But what? What's the matter?

OFFICIAL

Sir, this does not appear to be the
mineral group from our last mission.

Suspicious, the Chinese delegate steps closer. He picks up a
magnifying glass from a table of scientific instruments.
Holds it up to the mineral block.

CHINESE DELEGATE

I believe we look at industrial
concrete. Look close, at small stone,
one we see in construction job!

PRESIDENT

Of course, there must be a logical explanation to all of this.

NASA OFFICIAL

Might I suggest, sir, that we open the other crates? Take a look at their compositions?

CHINESE DELEGATE

That is good plan, sir. Please open.

The delegation buzzes with renewed excitement and chin-rubbing anticipation. The technicians tear open the packing. All eyes watch. Some hold their breath in fear. A technician wields a pick and begins chipping at the gray surface. Small stones clatter to the hangar's floor. Hushed whispers erupt into vocal debates among the delegates, many put in calls on cell phones.

PRESIDENT

Please, ladies and gentlemen, I assure you the FBI and NASA will be launching a full investigation into this matter.

CHINESE

I should hope they do. China is heavily invested in project. We cannot afford more failure at hands of America. This looks to be big scandal!

The technicians rush to poke and pry at the mineral blocks while the president herds the agitated delegation across the tarmac and onto the jet.

INT. COLONEL'S CABIN ABOARD ISS

Mr. Panach's voice comes over the speaker on the colonel's desk.

PANACH

Give me the status of our astronauts.

COLONEL

According to the readouts, the crew is finished.

PANACH

What assurances can you offer me,

Colonel?

Colonel pivots to a bank of controls. Peers at the digital readout. It shows 00:00:00. A message flashes over the monitor: LIFE SUPPORT EXPIRED!

COLONEL

My remote readings confirm the craft is no longer inhabitable, sir. I've also silenced two interlopers up here. I believe that guarantees a scrubbed mission, making it time to settle up.

PANACH

Patience, Colonel. You'll be justly rewarded, in due time.

Panach cuts the link. Colonel curses him and knocks back a drink. Looks out portal back at earth. Glare of sun projects his aging face's image on the window's Kevlar surface.

COLONEL

How far can one man stray from himself?

A knocks at colonel's airlock. He opens it. The mission director hands him a paper.

DIRECTOR

Colonel, orders from the Pentagon: you've been relieved of your duties up here. An Apex spacecraft will be docking soon. I've deactivated Deep Sleep. Your detainees will accompany you back to Earth.

Colonel nods mildly. Director turns and walks down the linkway.

INT. PANACH'S SUITE AT CRIMSON, DAYTIME

Adam follows Burke into Mr. Panach's office suite. He glances at multiple screens, one of which Panach is watching on a closed-circuit feed of the U.S. PRESIDENT pleading with BEIJING, over the telephone inside the Oval Office. Adam watches in disbelief.

PRESIDENT

...threatening to block our oil

shipping lanes? Such would constitute a declaration of war. (pause) It is imperative we put our trust in diplomacy. (pause) Twenty-four hours is not enough time. Give me *three* days!

The President slowly hangs up the phone in shock. Video fades on Panach's office monitor.

ADAM

You'll never get away with this!

PANACH

Oh, I will... and with *your* help.

Panach's chair pivots around. He smiles at Adam. Behind him the screens go blank.

PANACH

Mr. Harlow, you have developed a mix-down process that extracts and rearranges hydrocarbons, directly from some RARE MINERALS, mined by NASA. Is that correct?

ADAM

NASA business is their own. I'm here to develop ethanol, remember?

Panach lights a cigar. Shuffles some photos on his desk.

PANACH

Hidden talent lurks in our midst. Too bad, NASA is yet to crack the *Aqualene* formula.

Adam shrugs. Glances over a guard who steps in and takes a post by door. Adam returns his eyes on Panach.

ADAM

They've got others on the project who have succeeded. I hear it's a done deal...so I'm finished, free to move on. A monkey off my back.

PANACH

Oh, you mean others like ... Clarence Riggs?

Jolted, Adam stiffens with surprise.

ADAM

How do you know about Clarence Riggs?

Panach grins. Gestures toward the guard.

PANACH

Meet *Mister Clarence Riggs*. Not exactly NASA material, but his name served us well in catching you, Mr. Harlow.

Adam rises. Advances toward Panach. Burke gestures guard toward Adam. Adam halts at guard's drawn weapon. Tension and grief begin to overtake Adam as he reconstructs the deed.

ADAM

Those emails! None of them came from NASA.

(beat)

You...bastard!

PANACH

Looks like you are the winning candidate, Mr. Harlow.

ADAM

I told you, I'm not selling.

PANACH

Oh, I see. You want more. A bigger piece of the pie?

Adam sits down in a chair opposite Panach. His lips thin with rage.

ADAM

You'll have to accept my resignation, sir.

Panach pauses to knock back a drink. He puffs on his cigar. Adam watches Panach with disdain. Panach sets down cigar, leans forward, biding his time for effect.

PANACH

Desperate problems demand desperate solutions, Mr. Harlow. Amid bank failures and raging unemployment, I can deal you in on ONE important development in this brutal world.

ADAM

What can be more putrid than caving
into greed, scandal...treason?

Panach motors his chair around his desk and props up an 8x10
photo of Moi Song. Then delivers Adam a menacing grin.

PANACH

That China doll you had working for
you! ...and she knows plenty.

Adam pretends to remain cool. Eyes the guard, then Burke who
is sitting near a telephone shoots him a smug grin.

ADAM

She has nothing to advance your dirty
dealing!

PANACH

She has the algorithm to make
Aqualene! One of my competitors wishes
to buy in.

ADAM

Knock yourselves out! My use for her
services expired the day I left town.

PANACH

Wrong, Mr. Harlow. She has you. And
you'll pay the devil to keep me from
selling her life to the highest
bidder.

ADAM

We were never close.

PANACH

I take it you're still determined to
jump ship.

ADAM

I was never on board!

PANACH

Very well. Mister Burke, telephone
Montech Energy. Inform them our deal
is off. Then dispose of the girl. I'll
pay for the funeral arrangements.

From an end-table Burke picks up the receiver. We hear the
dial tone. Ignoring Adam, Panach motors his chair from his

desk without further comment. Anxiety finally blows the lid off Adam's bluff. Burke grins as he replaces the receiver.

ADAM

Wait! Okay. Okay. Dammit! I'll cooperate. You can build your fucking plant!

PANACH

I'm happy to see good sense prevails.

ADAM

What guarantee do I have Ms. Song is safe?

BURKE

I'll arrange a 1-minute phone call, tomorrow, sir.

Panach nods his approval, then picks up a rolled copy of blue prints. He shoves it into Burke's hands.

PANACH

I want that plant ready to fire up in TWO days... and keep Harlow under 24 hour SURVEILLANCE. Report back to me tomorrow morning. Good day, gentlemen.

Panach swivels his chair around to face window overlooking the compound. Burke escorts Adam out.

INT.ISS AIRLOCK

Before departing into the space craft for Earth with Striker, Mann, and Walker; a British COMMANDER grimaces as he rubs his chest while finishing a conversation with the ISS mission director.

COMMANDER

NASA will follow up with its own investigation on the ground. Good to see you again.

DIRECTOR

Likewise, Commander. And get those chest pains checked out once you get down. Mohave's got one of the best medical teams.

Commander gestures Colonel Striker, Greg, and Heinrich into the airlock. Turns and shoots a casual salute to mission director. Enters and closes airlock.

INT.APEX SHUTTLE CRAFT

Greg and Heinrich belt in just behind the cockpit. Colonel seats himself behind them. Commander attends to controls inside cockpit.

HEINRICH

Amazing, deez days, how one man can operate this tang.

COMMANDER

Times have changed, indeed, Doctor. Machine almost flies itself. You'll have your feet on the ground in...
(checks his watch) ...37 minutes.

Greg leans over to Heinrich, still a bit groggy.

GREG

(whispers)

Does that account for head winds?

Heinrich grins rhetorically, leans back and closes his eyes. A window view shows the station drifting away as the craft departs. Retro engines fire. The Apex shuttle tilts and drops away from ISS.

EXT.OUTSIDE ADMIRAL'S CRIMSON PLANT, DAYTIME

Adam glances at a clipboard in his hands, shouts orders to various crews who split up and get busy. Two armed guards follow Adam as he approaches a large tank. Burke walks up.

ADAM

I suggest we assemble an additional cooling tower, right here, in close proximity to the diffuser circuits.

BURKE

Not enough time. Mr. Panach wants a simple pumping loop from that culvert down at the river.

Adam peers through a cyclone fence at the river below. Shakes his head.

ADAM

Won't be enough. Besides, if that pump fails the whole place will go up in flames. And you'll be dumping hot water in a salmon habitat.

Burke hesitates before returning a suspicious glare.

BURKE

You're stalling for time, Mr. Harlow.
No cooling towers!

Adam shrugs and continues his rounds at the plant.

INT.APEX SHUTTLE.MINUTES AFTER LEAVING ISS

The 3 passengers relax aboard descending spacecraft. Commander whistles with confidence from the cockpit. Suddenly he lurches forward, pounding his chest in agony. The pitch of the shuttle drops Apex's nose. Greg elbows Heinrich awake, he slips out of his belts, and leaps into the aisle. Greg looks back to see the immobile colonel in shock.

HEINRICH

Don't mind him. I need you in da cockpit!

The spacecraft bounces and pitches, setting off warning buzzers. Greg releases his belt and fights G-forces while making his way toward cockpit.

GREG

How is he?

Apex shakes Heinrich off balance. He's tossed about but finally frees commander's belt. Atmospheric particles threaten to shatter the windshield as the craft dips and accelerates. Noise grows to a deafening crescendo.

HEINRICH

He is out cold. Heart attack!

GREG

What are we gonna do, Doctor?

HEINRICH

I've some piloting behind me. You keep him alive.

Heinrich pulls commander away from controls and slides into the pilot's seat, wrestles with joystick. Apex begins to level. Tossed about, Greg hunches over commander, suddenly clueless.

GREG

Okay. What now?

HEINRICH

Peel off his helmet. Open da jumpsuit and start chest pumps!

Greg tugs at the helmet but cannot release it. Heinrich pokes at more controls, looks back, sees Greg is getting nowhere.

HEINRICH

Leave it. Work the heart. You gotta keep his blood flowing!

Greg rips open commander's flight garment and starts pushing on his chest.

GREG

The timing! I can't remember the timing.

HEINRICH

Count five. Repeat. Rest for five. Repeat. You nailed it in flight training, son!

Greg anchors himself over commander, counts his presses. Heinrich peers at the instruments then yanks on a microphone snaking out from the panel. Clicks the talk switch.

HEINRICH

We have medical emergency! Request navigation assistance. Do you copy?

A VOICE crackles from an overhead speaker.

VOICE

...loud and clear. Cannot establish auto pilot until you're below seventy-thousand feet. Can you maintain current latitude, at a nine percent trajectory?

Heinrich scans the controls, finds the instrument he's looking for, and punches some keys.

HEINRICH

Affirmative. Punching it in now.
Better get a medic team ready. The
commander's suffered heart attack.

VOICE

Roger. We'll track you all the way
down. Standby.

Spacecraft stabilizes. Heinrich wipes sweat from his forehead, looks over at commander. As Greg becomes exhausted giving CPR, the colonel appears, gestures Greg out of the way, and takes over.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM, EVENING

Uniformed military brass are bent over a lighted table displaying a strategic world map. They mumble to each other while pointing at tiny flags and ships marking various positions of the Chinese and American forces in Asian waters. The CHIEF OF STAFF glowers into a telephone nearby. Hangs up and approaches DEFENSE SECRETARY who is standing over the table map with the President.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Sir, I just got off the phone with our
ambassador in Beijing. The American
embassy is under siege.

President coughs and staggers with shock. Defense Secretary leans over lighted table map.

DEFENSE SECRETARY

An embassy takeover leads us no choice
but to...

A GENERAL moves in closer. Points at the map.

GENERAL

Take a look, here. Many of China's
newer fleet is in port. Cyber war with
India knocked out much of their
software. They must rely on an aging
fleet of BOOMERS, right here and here
to enforce a blockade.

President leans in with interest.

PRESIDENT

What are you driving at, General?

Defense Secretary hesitates. Rubs his jaw and turns to the President.

DEFENSE SECRETARY

A preemptive strike, Sir. Knock out a few of those boomers... buying us time to secure our shipping lanes...and prepared for any counter-offensive.

President grimaces. Bites his lip and peers over bifocals at his generals in attendance.

PRESIDENT

Attack China? This would be the destruction of my command! By God, haven't we another option?

INT.CRIMSON DORMITORY, EVENING

Wearing a side-arm, Burke returns Adam to his dorm.

BURKE

Tomorrow, Mr. Harlow. The plant's got to be ready tomorrow night. Sleep well, you've got a full day ahead.

Burke pulls door closed and slides a digital card. Heavy deadbolts are heard.

EXT.MOHAVE LANDING STRIP, NIGHT

The tarmac sparkles with emergency vehicles. Apex touches down and skids to a stop. A blitz ensues to Apex craft. The hatch opens. Medics rush to get in. Heinrich, Greg and the colonel exit the shuttle craft. A team of NASA personnel leads them onto a bus, which pulls away toward a terminal building.

INT.MOHAVE FLIGHT CENTER

Behind a glass partition, a woman in uniform identifies herself as MAJOR EMILY FAZZONI and leads Greg and Heinrich

into a quarantine section. Colonel Striker splits off through another door with MPs.

FAZZONI

A dramatic return, gentlemen! My name is Emily Fazzoni. I'll be handling your cases. You'll be in quarantine for 24 hours, unless we see a need for an extension. Find your private quarters this way. Freshen up and we'll meet back here in 30 minutes.

Heinrich and Greg enter doors inside the quarantine section.

INT.ADAM'S DORMITORY ROOM, NIGHT

Adam lies awake in the dark, listening to a crystal radio he's assembled. The news comes on over his earphone.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Little is still known about why the Chinese have surrounded the American embassy in Beijing, other than a dispute with Washington over missing cargo. NASA officials are expected to

The signal crackles and fades. Pretending to be asleep, Adam observes the odd flashing behavior of a digital clock on the wall, sure to be a HIDDEN CAMERA. He times the cycle with his watch, then jumps up to try the small window above his bed. It slides a few inches, and he quickly returns to the bed. After stuffing some items and a TINY VIAL into his coat pocket, he slides window open further. Sees a tiny TRIP SWITCH. Dashes back to the bed where he folds a BUSINESS CARD. Times the cycle change and leaps up to the window a third time, carefully sliding the window while positioning the folded card over the trip switch, climbs through and disappears into the dark.

EXT.OPEN GROUND VAULT ON COMPOUND

From behind a shrub Adam watches an electric forklift lower a large container into an underground vault. The side bears the lettering of NASA. The loader disappears behind a wall. Adam watches the guards follow the loader. He dashes toward the vault and descends some stairs below the surface.

INT.UNDERGROUND VAULT

A bare light bulb hangs from the ceiling, illuminating several stacks of NASA's cargo. Adam rips open the packing and lights a match. Multi-colored CRYSTALS glimmer in the flame's light.

ADAM

(whispers)

The fucking minerals! No wonder the Chinese...

Voices approach, compelling Adam to extinguish match and retreat to a back wall. A clatter of footsteps halts at the steps.

VOICE (O.S.)

Okay, bring her down...easy now. Keep her coming... Okay, good.

Voice fades as cement cover thumps into place. The light bulb goes out. Adam lights a match and walks back to where the stairs ascend to the cement lid. He pushes upward, but it does not budge.

INT.MOHAVE FLIGHT CENTER, QUARANTINE SECTION

Fazzoni sits down behind a glass partition separating her from Heinrich and Greg. An audio system is activated. She speaks in a monotone voice.

FAZZONI

Acting beyond your legal capacity is why you're here, gentlemen. Despite, the mission director's belief that Colonel Striker used excessive force, questions of how and why you accessed sensitive material must be answered.

HEINRICH

First, I wish to establish the fact Greg is innocent of ill intent. He was following my instructions, of which I shall take full responsibility.

FAZZONI

Duly noted, Dr. Mann. That may or may not justify your arrest aboard the station. My next question is directed at Greg.

Two dinner trays are dispensed through a wall-port nearby. Heinrich walks over to pick up the trays and returns.

HEINRICH

Pardon us for eating, Major. Deep Sleep leaves one quite famished.

FAZZONI

Not at all.

(beat)

Greg, your case puzzles me. The colonel accuses you of tampering with classified COMMUNICATIONS. Yet, nowhere in the network can we find evidence of it. Can you describe what the colonel might be referring to? Your story will be recorded.

Greg swallows his food and looks over to Heinrich.

HEINRICH

Go ahead, tell the major what you told me aboard Apex.

GREG

Um. After the doctor was arrested, I received a message at his workstation from a lunar spacecraft. The astronauts were stranded and could not contact Europa Command. So, um, I transferred the coding over to Heinrich's phone and logged out. Then...uh...

Fazzoni leans in closer. She glances at a panel near her chair indicating the audio recording is taking place.

FAZZONI

Yes? Go on. Then what happened?

GREG

Well...I drafted a message to Europa Command...but decided to first talk to the colonel. I found him alone in the galley and, well, I told him about it.

FAZZONI

Okay. So you decided to take this to proper authorities...and?

Greg gazes at a burned spot across his arm. He draws in a

breath and closes his eyes.

GREG

So, I'm lying there on my bunk. I hear a noise and look up. Next thing I know, the colonel is lunging at me with a Taser. I fight him off but the shocks of his taser wear me down. I mean, the air kinda sucks up there.

FAZZONI

(nodding)

So I've heard. Go on.

GREG

So, just before he over-powers me, I send the message to Europa. That's all, ma'am.

Fazzoni touches the recording panel and stands up.

FAZZONI

Thank you, gentlemen. That will be all for now.

Fazzoni exits the meeting area.

GREG

What about the astronauts? Doesn't anyone around here give a damn?

Heinrich stands up. Breathes a heavy sigh and shakes his head. Nobody seems to acknowledge the astronauts.

HEINRICH

You've got me there, young man. Doesn't make sense, unless...

INT.WHITE HOUSE SURGE ROOM, LATE NIGHT

The President steps into the Surge Room. Filled with anxiety, knowing he faces decisions of a lifetime. Struggles to maintain his confidence as he walks up to his Chief of Staff who is tracking two Chinese warships with Defense Secretary. Tension propels verbal communications to a caffeinated pace.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Mr. President, we're running out of time.

PRESIDENT

Do we have any positive developments
on the lost minerals?

DEFENSE SECRETARY

Negative, Sir.

President glances at his watch. Peers over at the lighted
map, addressing chief of staff.

PRESIDENT

Clarify the proposed targets.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Right here. These two Boomers pose a
direct threat to our navy and our
shipping lanes.

PRESIDENT

How long will we have to back out of
this, once there's a go-ahead?

DEFENSE SECRETARY

Hard to say. Maybe fifteen hours...at
which time detonation programming
locks on both boomers.

President turns away looking haggard, perspiring in the face.
His eyes sweep the room at decorated generals speaking on
cell phones and staring into monitors. Draws in a breath
before turning back to his Chief of Staff.

PRESIDENT

Alright.

(beat)

Go with it. I want constant coverage
of those damned Boomers!

FIRST LADY appears President's side, observing his obvious
stress. Addresses Defense Secretary and Chief of Staff.

FIRST LADY

(no nonsense tone)

I think we need some time alone,
gentlemen.

INT. CRIMSON CONTROL ROOM, EARLY MORNING

Alarm sounds. Guards rush out amid Burke's orders to find Mr.

Harlow and return him to the chateau.

BURKE

Release the dogs! Secure all gates! I want Mister Harlow captured and brought here immediately.

Mr. Panach enters room from his office suite in a fury. Burke turns to see Panach in his chair buzzing up behind him. Struggles to contain his anxiety.

PANACH

I'll have your neck for this security breach. How the hell did he just climb through a monitored window?

BURKE

Sir, I... I don't...

PANACH

...you don't have an excuse!

Panach wheels himself over to the window and peers at the plant. Lets Burke sweat before speaking again.

PANACH

With or without Mr. Harlow, we're firing up the plant. Have the CATERER set up by 5:30. President Kilpatrick will also be making a guest appearance.

BURKE

Yessir. I've arranged a holographic feed from the White House.

PANACH

Get the engineering crews to start processing the minerals. I want AQUALENE flowing by dark. We'll crush, liquefy, and refine everything right here at Crimson, then fly the concentrate out to an ocean platform for finishing.

BURKE

Yessir. The Mexican government has agreed to deploy a flotilla. We'll be in international waters.

PANACH

Have my chopper ready tonight. That'll
be all.

Panach swivels his chair and motors back into his suite. The door sweeps closed behind him.

INT.MOHAVE FLIGHT CENTER, DAYTIME

Heinrich sits by a window overlooking the runway. Heatwaves rise off the tarmac. Service vehicles have lined up along the runway. He stands and looks off to his right. In the distance an Apex shuttle craft approaches the runway.

HEINRICH

Greg! Come out ... at once!

Greg does not appear, so Heinrich strides over and bangs on his door.

GREG

(behind the door)

Leave me alone!

HEINRICH

You are right to be angry. (beat) But
a Europa shuttle is just landing.

Greg's door opens ajar. Heinrich glances back at the window facing the runway. Sees the shuttle craft whiz by on the ground. Skeptical, Greg appears by his side.

INT.OVAL OFFICE, DAYTIME

The Chief of Staff knocks, enters, stands near President's desk.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Sir, may I interrupt?

PRESIDENT

Not now, I'm buried in these
contingency plans...in case China --

CHIEF OF STAFF

The Defense Secretary just informed me
U.S. Intelligence has lost its fix on

those two Boomers. They've evaded us,
for the moment, Sir.

PRESIDENT

(Explodes, with a fist down on the
table.)

Radar Jamming! Beijing suspects our
intentions. Every few minutes I want
to know all Chinese movements...and
any news you have on those damned
minerals!

Chief of staff exits.

EXT.OUTSIDE ADMIRAL'S CRIMSON PLANT GATES, EVENING

Van marked as a catering company drives up to security gate.
Armed GATE GUARD approaches as DRIVER wearing chef's hat and
coat opens window.

GATE GUARD

Hold it there, fella.

DRIVER

Running a little behind. Banquet meals
for a... Mister Panach?

Driver flashes a badge and produces a bottle of liquor
through the window.

DRIVER

He ordered this for Gate Security,
part of tonight's company celebration.

Guard nods. Accepts bottle and waves driver through as gate
swings open. Driver advances onto compound.

EXT.SEATTLE DOWNTOWN PIER.NIGHT

A dark sedan pulls up on one of the downtown piers under a
light rain. Nobody is around. Door opens. A large MAN exits,
open, rear door, pulls gagged and bound Chinese woman out of
sedan. She fights and squirms while being hoisted onto a
railing over the bay. Woman interrogator emerges from sedan.

WOMAN

Okay, sweetie, you're nothing more to
us than incriminating evidence.

Man glances at woman. She nods and Song disappears over the side. We hear a splash as they retreat to car.

INT.CRIMSON'S UNDERGROUND VAULT

Adam pants heavily in darkness with no luck of turning a hatch wheel. In the light of a flickering match flame, he rummages through his pockets, extracting a small vial. Extinguishes the match and breaks the vial over the wheel mechanism. Lights a second match and tosses it onto the wheel. It burns white-hot as he moves back from the heat. In a moment the hatch breaks apart and swings open into a tunnel. Adam steps through and peers up at a grinning face.

GUARD

Bang! You're dead, Mister Harlow!

EXT.SEATTLE'S ELLIOTT BAY

Moi thrashes about in debris-laden water along a seawall. Her head bobs under as she fights to free her bound feet and hands. She finally surfaces, clutching a floating log with one hand, rips off gag with the other. In the shadows a homeless woman in old clothes and matted hair has stepped away from a campfire behind the seawall. Extends a hand to Moi.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I won't hurt you.

Moi hesitates, clutches woman's hand and climbs out and sits by the fire near a sleeping child. Woman disappears under pilings and returns with handful of towels and clothes.

INT.MOHAVE SPACE CENTER

Hearing voices approach the quarantine center, Heinrich puts down a magazine and stands. Adjusts his bifocals to see the group dressed in jumpsuits. Greg slowly comes to his feet from a stuffed lounge chair.

HEINRICH

Take a look at that. Couldn't be anyone but ...

GREG

Oh shit! Is it really them?

HEINRICH

Europa Command flies no more than two pilots. I am counting five astronauts.

Greg eases himself toward the glass partition. Heinrich follows. Fazzoni walks abreast the astronauts, then leads them over to the partition. Pauses. Silence reigns as everyone gaze at each other. We can read the Vashon insignia on their jumpsuits. Fazzoni breaks the silence.

FAZZONI

Doctor Mann, Greg. Meet Vashon's crew!

One drops to her knees. Tears stream from her face.

DELONG

Do you have any idea what you did up there?

GREG

(apprehensive)

Uh, well. Yes, ma'am. I thought the colonel might help out but...

Delong looks up at Greg.

DELONG

As for Striker? He will face a court martial. You shall be honored.

Greg glances over to Fazzoni.

GREG

What about Doctor Mann? He taught me to trust my gut...to think beyond my fears.

FAZZONI

Tomorrow, young man, will be your chance to offer a compelling testimony on the doctor's behalf.

Delong stands. Gives an appreciative nod to Greg and Dr. Mann. The group moves down the hall.

INT.WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

The Chief of Staff is adjusting the President's collar. A camera crew is setting up behind him.

PRESIDENT

Couldn't this wait? We've got a more pressing agenda than fraternizing with an oil baron right now.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Only a few minutes of your time, Sir. We agreed on this with Admiral's CEO two days ago. Besides, any announcement of an energy breakthrough will boost your ratings and prop up the markets.

Techs string cables across the floor. Others tinker with a small circular stage off to one corner of the room. TECHNICAL DIRECTOR strolls up to the chief of staff, glances at his watch.

TECH DIRECTOR

We're on in 90 seconds, sir.

INT. CRIMSON CHATEAU, CONTROL ROOM

Broadcast engineers are taking their places at controls. Catering chef puts final touches on banquet table at opposite end of room (beyond clear camera view) while techs tinker with the holographic stage in foreground. Guards posted at exit doors. Mr. Panach motors up to the head of the table. Scrutinizes champagne bottles on the table.

PANACH

I ordered nineteen-thirty-six vintage, not forty-three. And where's my regular chef?

Chef straightens his garment nervously, then picks up two large cutting knives and begins swiping blades against each other.

CHEF

I do apologize, sir. This was the best vintage the company had in stock.

PANACH

And...what about Filipe?

CHEF

I'm afraid he took ill suddenly so I was put on. I promise a memorable...

A ruckus across the room breaks out as two guards burst

through the doors, holding Adam Harlow at gunpoint. Burke grabs a chair and swings it around. Adam sits down. Burke turns to guards.

BURKE
(loudly)
Don't take your eyes off him!

A SET DIRECTOR is shushing everyone quiet, pokes at a hand-held remote, and the holographic stage lights up. Director turns to Mr. Panach.

DIRECTOR
Streaming in...three...two...one.

The U.S. President's full body image begins to materialize on the stage. He's confused then gets his bearings and turns toward Mr. Panach.

PANACH
I wish to extend Admiral's gratitude on behalf of the many who are making clean energy a reality, Mister President.

PRESIDENT
Let me express no doubts of Admiral's unmatched capacity to develop a fuel product that will lift our country from the foes of economic strife.

The director (unseen by president) cues engineers' applause. Cuts, and cues Panach to continue. Panach raises a champagne glass.

PANACH
To expeditious economic recovery!

Director cues engineers to echo in response. Glasses clink. President receives a glass from an off-camera hand. Raises it, smiles half-heartedly, and gulps it. More is poured and Panach proposes a second toast.

PANACH
To the liberation of our great nation,
from the bondage of --

A scuffle breaks out behind the President's image as Adam springs to his feet. Burke gestures the guards to restrain Adam quickly. The President looks around, confused, then steps off the stage and disappears off holographic camera for

a few seconds.

ADAM

The dust of Apollo ...lies beneath my
feet...aging like a forbidden
wine...to be drunk only by --

The stroke of Burke's hand sends Adam to the floor, semi-conscious. The President re-appears, disoriented.

PRESIDENT

I must bid you farewell, as pressing
matters here in Washington beg my
attention...and thank you for
Admiral's dedication to --

Panach nods and holds his glass toward the president. He covers his MICROPHONE and glances toward the set director standing next to Burke.

PANACH

Kill the link...then kill Mr. Harlow!

Behind fading holographic image Adam groans on the floor. Panach turns to the engineers nearby.

PANACH

(exasperated)
Fire up the plant! I want evidence of
Aqualene before midnight!

Engineers begin activating systems. Panach gestures the chef to serve the meal. Then beckons Burke toward the table.

PANACH

I could offer Mr. Harlow a last
supper...but there's no time. Dispose
of our rogue poet in the usual manner.

Techs push the stage away. The guards yank Adam to his feet. By now the chef stands next to Mr. Panach with a PISTOL drawn on his temple.

CHEF

(loud and commanding)
Take your hands off Mr. Harlow. Step
away and put the weapons down, slowly!
Or Mr. Panach won't live to enjoy
dinner.

PANACH

Do as he says.

Guards step away and lay their assault weapons on the floor. A third guard retains his weapon and remains inconspicuous. Burke studies the chef as chef removes his hat.

CHEF

I'll give Ken Burke the honors of making introductions.

Sipping his glass, Panach glances over at Burke.

PANACH

Well? Who is this man?

BURKE

I know him as a CIA operative. Showed up during a lock-down following a major security breach in Baghdad. The Green Zone...too many years ago. The name is Striker, sir. Colonel William Striker.

Panach spits champagne through a gust of breath. His eyes fill with anger.

PANACH

Never met him face-to-face, but I know the name. Continue, please.

BURKE

I was with Atlas Security, a private firm in charge of certifying and transporting munitions. One hot afternoon the colonel walks up and informs me we were in possession of defective ammo...all part of a suspected arms ring operating inside our platoon. Next thing I know, he shoves a wireless detonator into my hands. Said he found it in our barracks. He orders me to activate it...right there in front of American and Iraqi brass. I was among the fortunate that day.

Burke draws two fingers across a long scar across his face. The colonel adjusts his pistol on Panach, then addresses the engineers and guards.

COLONEL

It's all true. A clever scheme to smear Western military presence, rout American troop placements, and drive up the price of oil. Bogus intelligence, manufactured and exported by Admiral Petroleum under the Atlas name.

PANACH

When did you become a crusading do-gooder of humanity?

Colonel ignores Panach's remarks.

COLONEL

Atlas's sole purpose was to fill the vacuum left by departed American troops, resulting in...

ENGINEER

Uh, sir. Our first analysis. I believe we have some results.

Engineer hands a printout to Burke. Burke hesitates. His eyes glance over Panach, then the colonel.

COLONEL

Go ahead, read it!

BURKE

Initial product matches the chemical properties documented by NASA. However, it is 27 percent more volatile, which has generated a dangerous thermal factor. Our condensers will approach peak temperature tolerances in minutes.

Engineers check their controls, anticipating a catastrophe.

PANACH

Clearly, we have developed a superior product, one that is patent-ready, which validates our alliances with NASA's contracted engineers. In such case, Admiral shall prevail, and I'm in a position to make a sweet deal, Colonel.

The colonel surveys the room. Eyes the doorway out. Locks

eyes with Adam. Contemplates the offer.

COLONEL

Mr. Harlow, get out now, while you can. Anyone who stops you will be responsible for Mr. Panach's execution.

Adam glances around in a confused manner.

PANACH

You heard the colonel, Mr. Harlow. Let's see how far you get.

Adam turns and bolts for the door. As he exits, Panach swings an arm into the colonel's pistol. The gun discharges before clattering to the floor. Its slug ricochets off the wine cabinet and passes through a guard's shoulder causing him to jerk his assault weapon up and spray the room with rounds that take out lights and ignite a fire in the control center. Pandemonium erupts. The room becomes dark, allowing the colonel to slip under the table where he pulls out a second gun from his smock. Aims the gun in Panach's direction from under the table and fires. Comes out from under the table and finds Panach is gone. Engineers and guards fight fire. Colonel exits through smoke.

INT.WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

The war cabinet huddles around, staring down at the lighted map.

DEFENSE SECRETARY

Intelligence relocated the Chinese Boomers, here and...here.

PRESIDENT

How soon can we lock on them?

DEFENSE SECRETARY

They'll cease to exist in... thirty-three minutes and counting, sir.

President nods and walks toward door.

PRESIDENT

And the minerals?

DEFENSE SECRETARY

Negative. A few leads have surfaced but --

PRESIDENT

Very well. Keep me informed of all developments.

President exits situation room.

INT.CRIMSON TUNNEL NETWORK

Colonel catches up to Adam in smokey underground tunnel.

ADAM

Who the hell are you? I mean, thanks for --

COLONEL

Let's just say I fell into the same trap you did...and I'm here to right some wrongs. Even if I do get you out alive, my career is over.

ADAM

I'm grateful. Uh, did you kill Panach?

COLONEL

Afraid not. Look, we need to find a way out of this hellhole.

Adam points down the cement corridor. Starts walking.

ADAM

This was a winery some years back, then Admiral bought it cheap. These passages lead to underground storage and aging rooms. They've got NASA's --

An explosion above them rocks the tunnel. Dust and debris rains down. The two break into a dead run.

EXT.SEATTLE WATERFRONT, NIGHT

Homeless woman helps Moi into taxi along water street. Speaks to driver as Moi enters car.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Here's ten dollars. It's all I got. Take her to the downtown police station. Hurry!

Driver takes money. Taxi pulls away.

INT.POLICE STATION

Moi walks up to a counter. A CLERK smiles.

CLERK

Yes, ma'am. Can I help you?

MOI

I ... I want to speak with officer
about important matter.

CLERK

Your name?

MOI

Moi Song.

Detective is looking at reports nearby overhears
conversation. Steps up to counter.

DETECTIVE

I'll take this one.

(beat)

Miss, please step this way, please.

Moi follows detective into a nearby office with name on door
FISCHER. He shuts the door behind them.

INT.FISCHER'S OFFICE

DETECTIVE

Moi Song, uh. You know an Adam Harlow?
Moi nods.

MOI

Mister Harlow, he in danger. How you
know him?

Detective pulls down a map of California. Shuffles some
papers on his desk and scoops up page he's looking for.

DETECTIVE

Seems he's been working on something
that has gotten the attention from
some big players in crime and energy.

MOI

I must find him.

DETECTIVE

So do I, ma'am. We think he is in California, and may lead us to a theft that is causing some friction between this nation and China. Can you help us? We have little time.

Moi nods. Thinks for a moment.

MOI

I receive strange call from him one day, when I was tied up by bad woman. She let us talk for very short time.

Detective glances at the map and picks up an electronic tablet.

DETECTIVE

Okay. Try to remember now. What did he say?

Moi closes her eyes to think. Recalls pieces of conversation.

MOI

He say funny thing about mountain wonderland, and Robinson's loft, and old wine smell. He not make sense to me. Then call suddenly stopped.

Detective jots some notes, turns to map. Scratches head.

DETECTIVE

(methodically)

A case is like a painting. You have to see it from several angles.

MOI

I think Adam give clue to his location.

Detective nods. Paces the room with a blank stare.

DETECTIVE

Robinson?

(beat)

Jackie Robinson grew up in Pasadena. Mountains in Pasadena? But that's not wine country...

Moi springs to her feet. Stares at map.

MOI

Maybe he see *my* map!

DETECTIVE

Map? What kind of map?

MOI

Disney map ... in my apartment.

Detective swivels around and types on a tablet. He peers at screen. Then turns to the pulled down map behind his desk.

DETECTIVE

You may be onto something. Look, the Matterhorn is here, representing Adam's location. The Robinson Treehouse is southwest, down here, in a direction that corresponds with his departure point.

MOI

Is he some place where wine was made, long time ago?

Detective tugs on map, let's it roll up. Picks up his tablet and keys.

DETECTIVE

I'm going to pass this case on to the FBI. Do not go home. I want you to stay with a friend. I will drive you.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM. LATE NIGHT

Technical director sits at an audio board while another tech listens over headphones. We hear audio of Adams voice.

TECH DIRECTOR

Okay, I've got it!

Director drops his headphones and walks up to Chief of Staff who is conferring privately with Defense Secretary.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Sir, I've something that begs your attention. During our holographic transmission--

Chief rolls his eyes, triggering Defense Secretary to cut him off.

DEFENSE SECRETARY

(sharply)

Look, you can see we're busy here.
It'll just have to wait.

CHIEF OF STAFF

And, get this equipment packed out, on
the double.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Yes, of course. But...

Technical director retreats in silence.

INT. CRIMSON TUNNEL WORKS NEAR AQUALENE PLANT

Adam and Striker stumble upon a tunnel guard posted beneath
the plant. Guard halts them at gunpoint.

TUNNEL GUARD

Not a step further. I'm taking you--

An explosion erupts beyond the guard post. The force knocks
down the guard and his weapon clatters to the pavement.

Colonel Striker scoops up the gun and turns it on the guard.
Adam walks into the smoke toward the plant. Striker
hesitates, then follows.

COLONEL

We're not going in there. This is a
goddam refinery. The place is going to
blow!

ADAM

And it's the only way out. With or
without you, I'm going in.

With ambivalence, Colonel feebly points the gun at Adam,
steams up in the face only to follow Adam as the guard runs
the opposite direction. The two continue through smoke-filled
tunnel in heated discussion.

COLONEL

Look here, I busted my ass to get into
this fucking hellhole, on a mercy
mission to get you out. It's time you
start taking some orders!

Adam pauses at a junction, then climbs onto a steel ladder leading up into the plant, stating his own case.

ADAM

I've been taking orders all my life.
Where's it gotten me?

Colonel slings the assault rifle over his shoulder and follows Adam up the ladder.

INT. INSIDE AQUALENE PLANT

The two climb out on to the floor of the plant. Fires are burning here and there and technicians panic to get out. A loud thud reverberates through the smoke-filled air. A PLANT ENGINEER rushes up to him.

PLANT ENGINEER

We're trapped, Mr. Harlow. The exits
have been sealed! You know the layout
best. How do I get my team out?

Adam glances around, locates and gestures at a ventilation port as a possible escape route.

ADAM

That's your best bet. Get everyone out
before it's too late.

Adam peers upward. Suddenly grabs a gas mask hanging on a nearby support pillar, pulls it over his face and begins to climb scaffold where a man TED is trapped.

COLONEL

Where the hell are you going?

Adam scales higher up the metal struts before looking back down at the colonel.

ADAM

I'm not leaving without Ted. He
followed orders, and look where that
got him.

COLONEL

You're a fucking saint, aren't you?

Adam throws his leg over the top and kneels over a welder on the highest catwalk.

INT. ATOP SCAFFOLD INSIDE PLANT

Ted is bloodied and contorted. Adam places his mask over the man's face, Ted pulls it off. Coughs blood.

TED

Don't fuss over me ... Mister Harlow.
I'm ... I'm finished! Get out ...
while you still can ... Exit through
the south gates.

Adam grimaces, realizing there's nothing he can do for the man.

ADAM

Too far on foot, man. We'd never make
it.

Ted wheezes for his last breath. Grins back at Adam.

TED

Panach's car! In the motor pool... Go
in ... style, Mister ... Harlow!

Adam grasps Ted's hand. Watches him fade. Climbs down the scaffold. Motions colonel to follow. As they climb down into the ventilation shaft.

INT. VENTILATION TUNNEL

More explosions shake the plant, lights flicker and go out as they round a bend to motor pool. Emergency lighting illuminates several parked Hum-Vs.

Colonel draws out a butcher's knife and occupies himself puncturing tires. Adam rounds a corner to set eyes on a sleek sports car. Circles the car feeling for a latch or lever to open the door. Suddenly driver's door raises. Adam slides in, pokes around, car starts, he fingers a paddle-shifter and car lurches forward. Rounds a bend to find the colonel who tosses away the knife and jumps in rising passenger door. Explosion brings some of the structure down over car. Adam throttles up a ramp into a cloud of debris and smoke.

INT. CHATEAU, PANACH'S OFFICE SUITE

Burke watches guards and engineers battle fires over closed-circuit monitors. Panach faces a cabinet where he's drawn out a pair of prosthetic legs and fitted into them. Standing

awkwardly, he grimaces as he gingerly takes each step toward a private elevator inside the suite. Doors snap open. He enters.

INT.INTERIOR OF PRIVATE ELEVATOR

Panach takes a small red remote from his shirt pocket, turns it in his fingers.

BURKE

You're really gonna do it, aren't you?

PANACH

I suspected Harlow might try to destroy the plant. That's why our engineers will have to edit the formula. Did you set the explosives?

BURKE

Yes. And I've ordered a crew to truck the minerals out...before the Feds have time to investigate.

Elevator doors snap open to a chopper powering up on a rooftop pad. Panach slips remote back into his pocket and hobbles forward toward the aircraft.

INT.CHOPPER COCKPIT-NIGHT

Burke maneuvers the chopper over the compound. Panach surveys the plant through binoculars. Burke stares down at a car speeding toward the opposite end of the compound.

BURKE

Uh, Sir, your car ... Somebody's driving the McLaren!

Panach jerks around and views the car through his binoculars.

PANACH

A crisis breaks out and my own men loot the place. Drop down over them!

Burke jockeys the stick, the chopper drops and angles toward front of car. Chopper skids narrowly miss the car as it pulls up. Panach draws a pistol from a shoulder harness and cocks the mechanism.

BURKE

Sir, that's not one of our men. It's Harlow...and that colonel!

EXT.COMPOUND'S SERVICE ROADS-NIGHT

The car speeds along the service road toward a group of buildings at the opposite end of the compound. Adam sees gates are shut, Humvees appear out of nowhere, and pull out toward the car. Adam performs a skidding turn-around and speeds up a side service road. The chopper swoops down, crisscrosses the front of the car. Pistol shots from the chopper strike the car and ricochet off the windshield. Adam pushes hard as the car approaches the smoking plant. Eventually he loses control of the car as it runs over a tangle of fire hoses. Car spins around and comes to rest, motor coughs and dies. Both looks out at a dimly lit security fence with coils of barbed wire over the top.

COLONEL

Fantastic! Couldn't you find a better place to crash this thing?

Adam's door rises, he rolls out, runs to the fence and searches for an opening in the shadows.

EXT.EDGE OF COMPOUND NEAR RIVER-NIGHT

The lights of the Humvees come into view. And the chopper is circling. Random gunshots are heard. Colonel appears in time to follow Adam under the fence and down toward a river. Adam and colonel huddle between some large boulders near river, unseen.

ADAM

There's a culvert about 20 yards off shore, to draw water for cooling the plant. It's a deep crossing point. The other side is forest. If we can get across, they'll never find us.

COLONEL

That's what you think.

ADAM

You gotta a better plan?

Colonel shrugs. Adam sees an opportunity to dash for the shoreline. Colonel pulls out a pistol and takes a shot at the chopper, then bolts toward the river. Both wade out and swim toward culvert amidst repeated gunfire from chopper.

EXT.EDGE OF LARGE CULVERT IN RIVER-NIGHT

Adam reaches funnel-like culvert, swallowing water that disappears into a black hole. Adam latches on to side, searching for colonel. Colonel is seen splashing violently, before he sinks below surface.

Adam panics and dives to bring him back up. Colonel finds a hold on cement funnel. By now the chopper hovers above them. A mounted flood light reveals Panach stepping out on the skid, a pistol in his hand.

PANACH

Here to redeem yourself, Colonel?

COLONEL

You gain nothing by killing us. Give it up for the sake of this nation!

PANACH

Wrong, Colonel! The White House is minutes away from a war with China. In all the aftermath, who shall emerge as the king of energy? ...the locomotive to sweeping economic recovery?

The chopper shudders in a gust of wind. Panach fights to regain his balance as the gun falls to the water. Burke shouts through the open door of the cockpit.

BURKE

Sir, The power lines! I cannot hold her here much longer.

Mr. Panach glances upward to see the lines dangerously close.

PANACH

Mr. Harlow, I can use a good man at my side. A brilliant engineer looking for a secured life...a successor, Adam.

Adam hoists himself up. He shakes violently and his teeth chatter in the wind and water. He gazes up at Panach. Colonel watches Panach in contempt.

COLONEL

No deal, Adam! He's a two-faced liar. You won't live to see tomorrow.

Ignoring Striker, Panach beckons Adam with fatherly compassion. He edges out over the landing skid and extends a

hand.

PANACH

What do you say? A truce...a clean break? Choose a city, a warm sunny spot to live out a good life. Climb aboard, Adam, before it's too late.

Adam looks down at the colonel in the water. They lock eyes.

COLONEL

Power corrupts he who wields it... and those who submit to it. So, if that is what...Mister Habib died for... I have nothing more to--

The colonel begins to slip below surface. Adam grabs an arm and pulls him up coughing. Trembling, Adam turns to Panach.

ADAM

I'll go with dignity ... down here with the colonel... before I sell my soul to you or the devil.

PANACH

As I suspected, a fool. Taker `er up!

Burke throttles the helicopter. The blades pitch and clatter as the aircraft slowly rises. Adam watches Panach work his way back along the skids to the cockpit. Panach pauses at the cockpit door where he clutches a RED DEVICE in his hand. The helicopter begins to drift away toward the opposite shore, and suddenly tilts awkwardly as its blade smashes into an overhead power line.

Sparks spray over the scene. As helicopter begins to fall, the Aqualene plant explodes, lighting up the sky for miles. As the light fades Adam sees the colonel is gone. Adam desperately holds on to the edge of the raging funnel as the fires over the plant die down. Lights and sounds of military choppers approach in the distance.

INT.HOSPITAL ROOM, DAYTIME

Adam begins to awake from a bad dream. NURSE props him up. Spreads curtains to let in sunshine. Adam comes to and surveys his surroundings, notices an IV in his arm.

NURSE

Mr. Harlow, we've got rice pilaf,
peas, carrots, and--

ADAM

Where the hell am I?

FBI BUREAU CHIEF, CEDRIC PITTS walks in and answers as he smiles at Adam.

PITTS

Sacramento Public Health, Mr. Harlow.
I'm Cedric Pitts, with the Federal
Bureau of Investigations.

NURSE

No more than ten minutes. He's got to
eat and get his rest.

Nurse sets food tray in front of Adam, glances at IV bottle and leaves room.

PITTS

Mr. Harlow, I'm documenting matters
concerning your involvement with
Admiral Petroleum, including details
that will go into the court deposition
against the criminally charged.

ADAM

Criminally charged? Who and what are
you talking about?

Adam begins picking at his food, giving half his attention to Pitts who speaks matter-of-fact.

PITTS

Any and all parties who can be linked
to exploiting government property.

ADAM

Look, I need to see my attorney. You
know, things are not always what they
appear to be.

PITTS

Perhaps, Mr. Harlow. But for now, I
thought you'd like to know what
transpired from the time your
involvement ended at Crimson...two
nights ago.

Adam's jaw drops open.

ADAM

Two nights? I've been out that long?

PITTS

Yes, you're quite the sleeper. This is my third attempt to speak with you. The doctor assures me you can now handle a little conversation.

Adam rubs his eyes and resumes poking and nibbling at his food. Glances over at the empty bed across the room.

ADAM

Where's the other guy who was with me out there? I need to thank him for sticking his neck out for me.

Pitts glances over his tablet, puzzled.

PITTS

The only other survivor was plucked from the river. More accurately put, he's a fugitive.

Adam stares at ceiling in disbelief. Pitts paces room while he reads from an affidavit.

PITTS

Says here Mr. Kenneth C. Burke, an interstate fugitive, is wanted for weapons racketeering, and linked to a handful of--

ADAM

To hell with Burke! What happened to Colonel Striker?

Pitts flips a finger across the screen and pauses.

PITTS

The colonel was found dead almost a mile downstream from where you were airlifted. It's a shame to see his career end in such a troubled legacy.

ADAM

Troubled? The colonel snatched me from Admiral's clutches, rescuing what I know about NASA's fuel formula. More

than sufficient for a dignified legacy, if you ask me.

PITTS

Perhaps...baring his actions aboard the International Space Station, jeopardizing the lives of three astronauts, not to mention a pair of civilians. His presence at the refinery is clearly a last-ditch effort to dampen a pending court martial.

Adam shakes his head and sighs.

ADAM

Alright, alright. And don't tell me my tax dollars are paying for Mr. Panach's funeral.

PITTS

Think again. Rodney Panach has been blessed with resilient fortune. After his private helicopter struck a power line, he apparently swam to safety and remains at large.

Adam shrugs and chews a mouthful of food.

ADAM

Along with NASA's minerals?

PITTS

To the contrary! We arrested a group of Admiral's henchmen trucking the minerals out, within minutes of our arrival; averting a war with China.

ADAM

Yeah, the colonel told me things were tense ... down to pushing the button?

PITTS

Sorry, Mr. Harlow, I'm not at liberty.

ADAM

Okay. So, how did you locate us out there?

PITTS

Aside from infrared readings and

satellite images on the overheated plant, White House audio technicians dissected a video conference between the President and Mister Panach, which substantiated clues to what we already suspected of Admiral. I believe a few of your own sound bites contributed to our timely arrival...which may give you more than a dog's chance in court.

Adam becomes notably anxious. He bites his lip and shuts his eyes.

ADAM

Okay, that covers most of it.

(beat)

What do you know about a Chinese woman abducted by Admiral?

PITTS

Oh, you must be speaking of Moi Song.

Adam nods. He holds in a breath, expecting bad news. Pitts swipes a finger over his tablet and peers back at Adam.

PITTS

She's being held at a detention facility in Seattle. INS is filing charges against her.

ADAM

What the hell for?

Pitts raises his eyebrows.

PITTS

True, she did help us track you down. But circumstantial evidence suggests she maintained some sort of business association with the Chinese syndicate before they dumped her into Puget Sound.

Adam sits up.

ADAM

Or she was abducted!

PITTS

In exchange for asylum, her father agreed to turn over information about

a sophisticated black-market shipping network operating between North Korea and rogue interests in the Persian Gulf, concealed by hardliners in Beijing.

ADAM

Illegal weapons, plutonium ... traded for oil?

PITTS

Something like that. Miss Song may have surrendered information to someone with clout, an industry player with high stakes in global energy. A group bent on spoiling any cushy new alliances her father had established with Washington.

ADAM

How the hell did you expect Miss Song to prevent her father from talking to the wrong people?

PITTS

I didn't. Her old man's defection had validated her innocence until he was found murdered. Could have been Admiral's doings... or one of their rivals, any of which have connections to the Chinese mob.

Adam grows agitated.

ADAM

Why can't you see? Miss Song was abducted, then coerced into giving up information. She was trapped by Panach's clowns, just like I was!

PITTS

We have no clear evidence of that. Besides, she's not talking. She'll be incarcerated until deportation is finalized. I'm sorry.

Adam explodes. Presses upright and rips the IV from his arm. Pitts picks up his attache' and backs defensively toward door.

ADAM

Can't you see, they're using her as a pawn, to get to Aqualene ... to corner the markets!

PITTS

Song hasn't produced anything that proves she is on your side...or acted in the interest of NASA.

Adam lunges for Pitts but slides off the bed and falls to the floor. Hospital staffers rush in. Pitts exits apprehensively as Adam shouts from the floor.

ADAM

You gotta do something. Demand to see more evidence. For god's sake, you're the FBI!

INT.HOSPITAL ROOM, NIGHT

Physician pokes at a smart phone and smiles at Adam, who is strapped to the bed. Dictates his report into the device.

PHYSICIAN

Reduced inflammation, normal white blood cell count, minimal tissue scarring.

Physician slips phone into lab coat pocket.

ADAM

I want out of here...today!

PHYSICIAN

Aside from some lingering numbness in your feet, you'll be fine in a few days. As for the toxins you inhaled, there's no telling what the effects will be until you're my age.

Bedside phone rings. Adam glances at the guard posted outside the door and picks up.

ADAM

Uuh, hello?

(pause)

Oh, it's you. I heard the news yesterday. The prosecution ...

(pause)

(whispers)

Let's not play games, Moi. From the night you disappeared, your alliances have been in doubt. I was a fool to think we could have made a helluva good...

Adam's voice fades. He slowly hangs up the phone, grimacing in anguish.

EXT.OUTSIDE A MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE

Doctor Mann and Greg are boarding the aircraft as Fazzoni leaves them with her final words.

FAZZONI

...and stay out of trouble, gentlemen!

INT.HOSPITAL ROOM, MORNING

Distant thunder cracks outside Adam's window. Adam fingers a restraining strap across his chest. An orderly draws the curtains and places a large BOUQUET of flowers on the sill. A news ANCHOR appears on the TV monitor.

ANCHOR

On Wall Street energy markets gained new ground this morning with news of a promising new fuel in a joint venture between the U.S and China. The S & P gained new...

The clacking of a woman's heels enters the room. TV news fades into background. CINDY MOLLETT in a smart gray business-suit and a bossy attitude snatches up the TV remote and switches off the set.

CINDY

Mr. Adam Harlow?

ADAM

Uuh ...

MOLLETT

(sharply)

I don't know who you think you are... and what you stand for, but you've got some nerve to--

ADAM

Whoa, lady. Hold on! Could we at least start with an introduction?

She relents slightly.

MOLLETT

If you insist... My name is Cindy Mollett, a close friend to Moi Song; Apparently her *only* friend, if you get your way.

ADAM

What gives you the right to bust in here and preach the virtues of friendship?

Cindy glances at the strap over Adam and smiles a little. Then probes around the small recovery room. Sees the bouquet of flowers. Reads card.

MOLLETT

I see. You're a big man...a celebrity! *Renee De-Long*,uh? A ladies man, too! Do you know where Moi is right now?

ADAM

Not in Beijing, where she belongs. Adam's finger hovers over the nurse's call switch. Cindy's aggravation deepens.

MOLLETT

Now I see why Moi is so devastated! You're impossible, Adam Harlow. I was rather naive to leave Seattle...to inform you that I located Moi's car, along with your notebook, hidden under the spare tire. We had considered that to be... Oh, never mind!

Adam's eyes grow wide as he pieces the puzzle together. Regretting his remarks, he cannot find his words as Cindy storms out. Left alone and defeated, Adam bows his head and shuts his eyes in self-pity.

ADAM

(mumbles to self)

The car. My notes are still in Moi's car. How could I be so damned foolish?

Just then, Heinrich Mann and Greg Walker stroll in jovial and

ready to celebrate. Mann notices Adam bent over in a stupor.

HEINRICH

Catching up on your prayers, Mister
Harlow?

Adam bolts up and glances side to side at the two unfamiliar faces. The older one extends a hand. Adam clasps it, though confused.

ADAM

And you are...?

HEINRICH

Heinrich Mann. And he is my intern,
Greg Walker.

ADAM

Guys, thanks for dropping in but I...
(beat)
I need a big favor!

HEINRICH

You look like the world has come to
its end.

ADAM

Look, we don't have much time. You
gotta stop her!

Heinrich places a hand on Adam's shoulder.

HEINRICH

Someone take your money?

ADAM

Worse. A woman, her name is Mollett,
Cindy Mollett. Get her back in here.

Heinrich smirks over to Greg then back to Adam.

HEINRICH

Shaking things up around here vis the
laties, huh?

ADAM

Hurry! I gotta speak with her...before
she gets away!

Greg picks up on Adam's seriousness.

GREG

Okay, tell us what she looks like.

ADAM

Short brown hair, gray power suit...
and *frickin* tap-shoes!

HEINRICH

Tap shoes?

ADAM

Heels like a *freight* train! Please,
hurry!

Heinrich turns to Greg, gesturing his plan.

HEINRICH

Alright, you take da stairs at dat end
of da hall. We'll meet up at da drive-
through.

They exit the room quickly.

INT.GROUND FLOOR LOBBY OF HOSPITAL

Greg emerges from a stairway door, stands and watches people of all sorts exiting the building. Heinrich intercepts him and they rush toward the drive-up where they see an old couple getting into a taxi. Voice paging a doctor comes over the public address speakers.

VOICE (O.S.)

Doctor Nelson to radiology, Doctor
Nelson to Radiology.

The clacking of shoes suddenly becomes audible in the swarm of people coming and going. Greg spins around to spot a woman in a gray suit leaving a side door and out toward a walk-way.

GREG

You hear it? That's gotta be her!

Both nod in agreement and take pursuit. Heinrich strides up alongside Mollett. Greg keeps pace a few steps behind.

EXT.HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

HEINRICH

Pardon me, Miss. Could you possibly be

a *Cindy Mollett*?

Eyes forward, still heated from her encounter with Adam, has not time for men! Cindy keeps her pace toward parking lot.

CINDY

Maybe. State your business. You can see I am in a hurry!

Heinrich adjusts his gait to keep up.

HEINRICH

Ur, da name is Heinrich, Madam. You might say I am an acquaintance of Mista Harlow.

CINDY

Don't waste my time, Mister *Hen-ridge*.

HEINRICH

Er, *Heinrich*, madam.

(beat)

You see, I wish to attest on behalf of Adam Harlow.

CINDY

I'm happy we've established one another's agenda, but that doesn't fix things, Mr. Heinrich.

Cindy's walk speeds up. The two men adjust their steps. Greg remains unseen to her.

HEINRICH

(awkwardly)

Miss Mollett, I must confess I know nothing of da nature of dis quarrel. However, I did, vith due haste, make note of Mr. Harlow's despair, and his desperation to work through dis matter vith you.

CINDY

Not on my life!

HEINRICH

Perhaps dere's been some dreadful mistake?

CINDY

A major big one, I should say.

HEINRICH

Yes, of course, madam. A mishap you could perhaps explain to my colleague, Greg Walker, and myself before we bid you farewell.

Cindy halts, her shoulders high and her eyes still forward. She exhales with a change of mind as she speaks.

CINDY

Who did you say is with you?

HEINRICH

Greg Walker, my intern.

Cindy swivels around to see Greg standing several paces behind them. She produces a smile. Greg steps beside Heinrich, unsure of what's next.

CINDY

You're that kid on TV! The one everyone's been talking about in the news. The one who helped get those astronauts home safely!

Taken by surprise, Greg wrings his hands awkwardly.

GREG

Um, well...yes, sort of, Ma'am.

Cindy thrusts out a hand to Heinrich, then to Greg.

CINDY

I must apologize for acting so rude. It's just that Mr. Harlow was--

Greg is suddenly grim.

GREG

Guy did look pretty serious about settin' things right with yuh, Ma'am.

Cindy looks back at the rambling hospital complex and blows a strand of hair from her eyes.

CINDY

I did come an awful distance. If there's any chance for an acquittal, it's going to hinge on a darn good testimony from Mr. Harlow.

INT.WHITESTHOUSE OVAL OFFICE, DAYTIME

The President stands at a podium. Members of his energy coalition, the astronauts, Adam, Heinrich, Greg, Moi, and Gamil's WIFE are present at a reception gala. Photographers are snapping cameras as President finishes honoring attendees. He holds up a large government issued CHECK.

PRESIDENT

Now, I wish to honor an individual who gave his life on behalf of Aqualene... Mr. *Gamil Kabib*. I present to his wife, this five-million dollar stipend, in humbled appreciation for her husband's sacrifice.

Applause. Cameras flash as an aide gives Gamil's widowed wife a check. She bows and humbly receives it. President turns to Greg.

PRESIDENT

The media got ahead of me on this fellow. We owe much to him for his courageous actions aboard the International Space Station. So, in cooperation with Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NASA wishes to offer Greg Walker a full-ride college scholarship.

Applause. Greg waves a hand and grins with appreciation.

PRESIDENT

MIT has also informed me they expect to see Adam Harlow back in school next quarter to finish his degree, compliments of the Dean.

Applause. Adam displays an up-turned thumb. The Chief of Staff steps up to the microphone. Points to a large buffet spread.

CHIEF OF STAFF

We invite all of you to enjoy a banquet, followed by a brief technical presentation of our Aqualene production plans.

Crowd disperses and moves toward banquet tables. Adam peels

off to find Renee DeLong admiring artwork in nearby foyer.

RENEE

Up there, I never imagined I'd see any of you again. When our disabled spacecraft docked with Europa we were seconds from asphyxiation.

ADAM

I guess we both could have taken out some extra hazard and medical insurance before setting out on this venture.

RENEE

My apologies for you getting ensnared in Admiral's trap.

ADAM

A long-overdue adventure in the mundane life of a mineralogist.

Renee smiles.

RENEE

You carry yourself well for an unemployed scientist. You know a sizable sum of money awaits you. Once you pick up that diploma, report to NASA.

Adam seems to hesitate, as if an important detail is missing.

ADAM

I hear the Chinese are placing Moi Song on a team in charge of coordinating multiple shipping arrangement between six continents. What about her--

RENEE

It came down just this morning. She'll be granted dual citizenship, so I expect you'll be seeing more of each other.

Adam grins and pauses, glancing up at the room's decor.

ADAM

No matter how cloudy the circumstances, we've got to believe in

one another.

RENEE

Well said, Adam. I must say I had my doubts about humanity out there. Reminds me of my early dreams at SETI to establish contact with a more perfect civilization.

ADAM

(surprised)

You? An acclaimed astro-physicist, space corps commander...pondering extraterrestrial mumbo jumbo?

Renee launches a big grin.

RENEE

It was my fascination with *life beyond earth* that drove me to finish school and get on board with NASA.

Adam nods, making the connection.

ADAM

And that's how you knew the coding to slip past Colonel Striker's communication blockade, and get through to a civilian terminal!

RENEE

Enough shop talk, Adam. Heinrich and I are going to meet for lunch tomorrow at a quaint little Greek cafe along Pennsylvania Avenue. It's on the way to the Air and Space Museum. Will you and Moi join us?

FADE OUT