

Bloodmask

by  
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A violent alien species, the Kluduthu, seduces Aurora and takes her to their desert home planet because she holds a secret power that can help them destroy humanity. To escape, she must learn to use her power for the first time. Can she fight them, or will she become one of them?

Version 5.30

EXT ALTAIR IV SPACEPORT - NIGHT

A small amount of interstellar and intra-planetary traffic glides on the horizon of this bleak city on a desert planet.

1

THE VENUS BAR, ALTAIR IV

1

SUPER: ALTAIR IV

A long bar. Part opium den, part brothel; the smoky room is dark and sensual, filled with ALIENS and TERRANS reveling in sordid delight. The denizens dance and undulate upon one another -- some blue, some green, some with ridges, others dressed in skin-tight black. . .

A hard light appears at the end of the room, the door has been opened and a nude WOMAN silhouettes herself in the blinding white light behind her. She is the Kluduthu FIONA.

Her pale flesh reflects a deep blue in the light. She carries a very large, very menacing GUN in her hand.

Mechanically and precisely, she raises her weapon and fires.

A fountain of flame emits from the end of the quad barrels.

AZURE, a naturally-colored light blue woman, receives the bullet. A small spurt of gold blood bursts from her chest. She shakes as the shell dances inside her body, tearing apart her inner organs. The momentum of the bullet picks her up and then WHAM! It exits her back, exploding golden liquid against the wall. Her gilded blood oozes and puddles a dripping Rorschach blotch behind her.

Fiona turns slightly and fires again.

OLIVIA, a golden amphibian, is torn in two by the bullet hit. The bullet enters her body, violently shaking her back and forth, and then exiting in a geyser of blood from her back.

Fiona easily acquires a new target. She lets go another round.

NOIR, a dark-skinned person, gets up to try to get away. But Noir's body is penetrated and Noir does the deathly dance before exploding -- ejecting a fountain of phosphorescent blood.

Fiona fires again and again, selecting her targets seemingly at random. She takes out another alien -- ELLE. But she won't stop until everyone is dead.

A SECURITY CAMERA, its images distorted and somewhat out of focus, watches the carnage.

Bodies of gold-blood-filled aliens splatter on the walls and on the bar. Yellow entrails splash on tables.

Fiona is relentless, each human and humanoid alien is blown apart, crushing green lungs against the wall.

None escapes.

Fiona stands in the middle of the bar, the entire room is littered with exploded bodies and multicolored bloods blend and mix like modernist paintings.

The security camera watches as she calmly looks around as though she is confirming that no one is left alive.

As she turns toward the door, she stops, takes a deep breath. Looking down, she closes her eyes, she trembles slightly as though resisting revealing the physical rapture she experiences with the souls of the dead leaving their bodies all around her. She doesn't just enjoy this work. It's what feeds her.

Her eyelids open suddenly, but her eyes are missing. Not eyes but rather holes, black and damned like Darkness Visible. In their depths one can almost see the souls screaming of their torments in Hell. She closes her eyelids and opens them again. Her eyes have returned. There is something in this world she sees.

MARKUS BACH, a man in a black skin-tight suit who has luminescent green eyes . . . moves. Blue blood on the wall behind him, an azure trickle runs from his mouth. But he is somehow. . . alive. His injured body tries to snake its way to the door.

From Markus's point of view, we see Fiona clearly as she raises her gun one last time. (She faces away from the security camera.)

He looks at her, terrified. Her eyes, black holes as they were before, like Hell's opened jaws gaping at him.

MARKUS

You're. . . not Terran!

Blue blood splatters on the wall behind the man, and his head rolls across the floor. Fiona drops her gun on the destroyed corpse.

The security camera watches Fiona walk out into the light.

2 EXT CITY OF ARDEN 2

SUPER: Cassiopeia Prime

The blue city of Arden on Cassiopeia Prime. CGI

3 EXT STATEWORKS, CASSIOPEIA PRIME 3

SUPER: Stateworks

SUPER: Offworld Worker Processing

The Stateworks building in full view.

4 INT STATEWORKS, CASSIOPIA PRIME 4

A dark and cramped workspace, in pale blue. AURORA stands at a COLUMN where she interacts with a HOLOGRAM of an alien worker. She studies the figure carefully as data streams down the side of her three-dimensional "screen".

All the workers here are women, they all wear identical clothing. LEXI, TERESA, and MISHA.

On Aurora's hologram, an IMAGE of a sad, grimy worker appears. Aurora passes her hand through the holograph as though looking for something in the figure. . .

AUTOMATED VOICE

Subject: Dexter 838-XM2C Status:  
Refugee from eco-nihilation Orion  
16. Qualification 2A combine  
harvester. Match possible  
employment. . . no employment  
available. Refugee status  
rescinded.

Aurora sighs imperceptibly. The creatures EYES might do something in Combustion.

A CUP of steaming hot liquid (presumably some kind of tea analog) lands on the desk beside her with a thump. Aurora looks up to see her benefactor, Lexi, who has her own cup. Lexi's expressive personal style shines through her work uniform, contrasting with Aurora's staid, buttoned-down vibe.

LEXI

Aurora -- you're not going to find out what you are by reading the biometrics of refugees, you're just some kind of alien freak.

AURORA

You're not Terran yourself, Lexi.

LEXI

*I'm fourth-generation, my parents were moisture farmers on Altair -- but at least I'm not some kind of mutant like you.*

AURORA

*I'm not a mutant.*

Behind them, Misha talks under her breath.

MISHA

Well, your skin changes color like a chameleon -- and you can imitate almost *anything*.

LEXI

There's nothing like you in the Codex. That says "mutant" in *my* book.

Teresa walks by them. She's a tad more sympathetic.

TERESA

Leave the alien alone.

Aurora glares at Lexi. Her eyes do the same thing in Combustion that the alien on her hologram does.

Lexi, however, is a bit flighty and breathless:

LEXI

Did you see?

AURORA

What?

LEXI

There's going to be a war!

Lexi presses a part of the hologram. The image changes -- it carries a plethora of information, including today's news.

The security - camera view from the previous scene is being shown on the screen. The picture changes to the talking head:

MAC ROGERS, newscaster, delivers today's headlines.

MAC ROGERS

Yesterday's massacre on Altair IV was condemned today by Andromeda leadership as an attack by Terran Special Forces on an Andromedean tactical ally.

5 INT. THE VENUS BAR, ALTAIR IV

5

Crude, handheld images of the massacre's aftermath play across the screen. The camera finds the gun, and lingers on it. An Altarian POLICE OFFICER comes into frame, picks up the gun and examines it expertly. He pronounces judgement.

OFFICER DANIEL

"Terran Special Forces".

6 INT STATEWORKS, CASSIOPIA PRIME

6

AMBASSADOR T'LAN appears on Aurora's screen, slugged as such.

AMBASSADOR T'LAN

It is not in our interest to rush into war. Although acts of provocation may draw us into bellicose desire, yet we must endeavor to resist. . .

Lexi shuts off the sound because JOHN HARKNESS, a tall, dark, distinguished and handsome man (too handsome for his own good) enters the room with an elegant Maria-Class robot: SALOME. The golden robot introduces Harkness to the Stateworks company in her sing-songy corporate voice.

SALOME

Stateworks, the official employer of Cassiopeia Prime, has processed twelve thousand, four hundred thirty-two workers in the last fiscal micro-period.

HARKNESS

I'm looking for a worker with... a specific skill.

At this he looks straight at Lexi. Their eyes meet. Harkness raises his eyebrows inquisitively. Lexi gives a slight nod, turns back to Aurora, who's been tapping at her screen. Harkness' gaze shifts to her.

Aurora is watches her hologram. Lexi has returned to her own workstation, near Aurora.

On Aurora's hologram, an IMAGE of another sad, grimy, alien worker appears.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Subject: Sebastian 20189-L Status:  
Refugee from War 18 November.  
Qualification 16E turbine operator.  
Match possible employment. . . no  
employment available. Refugee  
status rescinded.

ZLYGL ("zleye-gull"), the manager and an amphibian, enters the room. She wears a peculiar amphibian REBREATHHER.

Zlygl approaches Salome and Harkness.

SALOME

Citizen Harkness, I would like to  
introduce you to Dr. Zlygl, the  
senior Political Officer of  
STATEWORKS.

Zlygl performs an alien curtsy to Harkness. Her voice sounds like an alien vocoded through the liquid rebreather.

ZLYGL

We will endeavor to provide you the  
worker you desire, Citizen  
Harkness.

HARKNESS

I am sure you will succeed in that.

Harkness looks over at Aurora for a moment before turning back.

Zlygl bobs her head to the side in that peculiar way amphibians politely do, and then she and Harkness walk away, leaving Salome in the room with the girls.

The air is tense, yet still conspiratorially, Lexi whispers to Teresa.

LEXI  
Teresa, have you seen what Aurora  
can do?

AURORA  
Lexi!

Aurora tries to go back to work. But Teresa, overhearing  
Lexi, chimes in.

TERESA  
What thing?

LEXI  
She can imitate the Zlygl!

From where they sit, Zlygl speaks silently to Harkness.

TERESA  
Can you?

Aurora wants them both to be quiet, she whispers back:

AURORA  
No!  
(scolding)  
Lexi!

TERESA  
I want to hear you do it.

Lexi leans closer to Aurora, intuiting that Aurora can't  
refuse her if she's close. Her lips graze Aurora's ear as she  
whispers persuasively:

LEXI  
I really want to hear you do it.

Aurora flushes slightly. She seems slightly surprised by her  
own reaction.

AURORA  
Lexi, don't...

LEXI  
Go on, Aurora. Do it.

Aurora gives in and imitates the strange sound of Zlygl's  
voice exactly.



AURORA

"We will endeavor to provide you  
the worker you desire, Citizen  
Harkness."

Teresa reacts to Zlygl's RETURN, but Aurora doesn't notice.  
Harkness and Salome are close behind the alien.

Harkness is intently interested in Aurora's performance.

Aurora imitates the rest of the conversation, even Mr.  
Harkness' voice is duplicated:

AURORA

"I am sure you will succeed in  
that."

Zlygl stands over Aurora, and quickly takes charge in her  
otherworldly management style:

ZLYGL

Aurora CCR94. You are terminated.

Zlygl addresses the room, as though to make an impression.

ZLYGL

Your account will be credited for a  
partial pay period. I'll have  
security escort you to the door.

This last remark was addressed to Salome. The robot  
approaches Aurora. Zlygl turns and walks out.

Aurora is horror struck. Teresa and Lexi have guilty looks on  
their faces. Teresa *actually* feels badly, though.

TERESA

(sotto voce)  
I'm so sorry.

Aurora leaves.

Harkness watches. . .

7

INT. WATER BAR, CASSIOPEIA PRIME

7

A nude amphibian dancer, PHOEBE, undulates nonchalantly.

Aurora sits alone, a very bright blue tropical drink in front  
of her. She is devastated - wide eyed, almost in shock.

Another amphibian woman, SANSAN, gets a drink at the bar next to Aurora. Dripping with water, the amphibian slides away, revealing:

The overly attractive and charming John Harkness walking in. He sees Aurora at the bar, there's a flash of recognition as he remembers her. She doesn't notice him when he sits next to her.

HARKNESS

I hope I didn't get you fired.

She looks up at him, surprised for a moment.

AURORA

It wasn't your fault.

Harkness smiles. Charm mode = on.

HARKNESS

I have to admit -- you do a good imitation of her.

AURORA

(Sarcastically)

Oh, thanks.

HARKNESS

And me too.

AURORA

I'm sorry.

HARKNESS

Don't be. I was impressed. I am a Lazarene, you even imitated the upper harmonics in my language which most Terrans can't hear.

Aurora is still a bit embarrassed. She doesn't know what to say. So he picks up the slack.

HARKNESS

What's more interesting is your imitation of your boss -- your *former* boss. Have you always been able to imitate the voice of the Taegul? I wouldn't have thought it was possible -- their voice boxes aren't anything like that of a Terran's -- because they have to be able to speak underwater.

The amphibious dancer slides a hand down her own neck as he says this.

Aurora shrugs.

AURORA  
I didn't know that.

HARKNESS  
Let me get you another drink.  
I feel like I owe you one.

Aurora raises her eyebrows coquettishly, and smiles. She blushes.

AURORA  
No, you don't.

HARKNESS  
Now you should accept all the free  
food and drink you're offered.

He signals the amphibious bartender, to bring them more drinks. (By the way: to our eyes, all the amphibians look exactly alike, which is convenient because they can all be played by the same person.)

The DRINKS she brings back are very weird. Good grief, don't order anything *exotic* in this place!

AURORA  
Thank you.

HARKNESS  
How long have you lived on  
Cassiopeia Prime?

AURORA  
Oh, I was born here.

This means a great deal to Harkness, for a moment the surprise almost registers on his face. Harkness decides something.

HARKNESS  
Interesting...

Beat. Awkward gap in conversation. Harkness looks at her perhaps a bit too closely. He's too comfortable. She is not. But the drink is strong and he *is* very handsome. . .

Aurora searches for something flirtatious to say, she bites her lip. Ahh! She could ask him how long he's been here. . .

But his MESSAGE BOX sounds an alarm. Harkness pulls it from his pocket and looks at it.

HARKNESS  
(Charm mode = off)  
It looks like my transport is ready.

Aurora is surprised at his abrupt change in manner, he no longer tries to charm her.

AURORA  
What?. . . You're leaving?

HARKNESS  
I have to go. A transient wormhole has opened, and we can make the jump into hyperspace in less than half an hour. If I go now, it will take days off the length of my trip.

She had just started to warm up to him, so it's disappointing to her. In a desperate attempt to keep the conversation going:

AURORA  
Oh. . . . I thought you were here looking for workers.

HARKNESS  
(clipped)  
Only one. And I found him.

AURORA  
(still trying to flirt,  
but she doesn't actually  
say this:)  
Will you be. . . back?

He abruptly turns and leaves. She is alone again, with no one but the dancing amphibian and this terrible drink to keep her company. Her despair resurfaces.

AURORA  
Ugh.

She summons the waitress who appears with another drink. . .

A transport flies by. Close-up on a window. Leading to:

9

INT. AURORA'S LIVING CUBICLE - NIGHT

9

Aurora's apartment is like the officer's quarters on a submarine. She has a small BED. On the wall is a bright green view screen. She sits drunk and dejected on her bed. The screen rings.

On the screen, Lexi appears. She's at the office and in uniform. Suddenly she tries to be ingratiating toward Aurora.

LEXI

Look, I'm sorry about this whole thing. I feel like it's my fault.

She looks behind her to check that no one is listening to her.

LEXI

(sotto voce)

I can get you a job that will take you off Cassiopeia Prime.

This is news to Aurora. Actually, it's *good* news.

AURORA

What is it?

Lexi doesn't want to embarrass Aurora but...

LEXI

Working with aliens. . . I thought. . . I thought you'd like it. . . Maybe you could find out, you know, more. . . about yourself.

AURORA

OK. I'll take it.

LEXI

Can you get to Galvisport in an hour?

Aurora shakes herself and blinks rapidly.

AURORA

Yeah, sure.

LEXI

The pay is really good. Fifteen point four. . . but they want to interview you first.

AURORA  
What's the job?

LEXI  
You have to escort and android --  
to Altair IV.

AURORA  
I'll do it.

Lexi looks behind her. Someone is coming. . .

LEXI  
Forwarding the location data to  
you.

DATA flashes on the screen. Lexi's image disappears.

Aurora kills the view screen.

10 EXT. OFF WORLD TERMINAL, ALTAIR IV -NIGHT 10

MURNAU gets off a small spaceship, docked unobtrusively among the luxury space cruisers in the Off World terminal. He walks with confidence toward the terminal building. WE WILL LIKELY MOVE THE LOCATION OF THIS SCENE.

In the distance, an automated voice chimes.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Welcome to the off-world terminal  
of Altair IV. Increased security  
has precipitated the ban of all  
projectile weapons. Potential  
energy detectors will identify  
illegal weapons. Those who possess  
projectile weapons shall be  
terminated with extreme prejudice  
by non-biologic autosentry upon  
identification. Enjoy your stay on  
Altair IV.

11 EXT. CASSIOPIA PRIME - NIGHT 11

A flying public transportation car, shoots over the buildings of the metropolis.

12 INT. INTRA-METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT - NIGHT 12

The city lights dance across Aurora's face as the transport flies through the sky. A light rain flails against the window, casting teary shadows on her cheeks in the cold wet night.

13 EXT. ABANDONED STREET, ALTAIR IV -NIGHT 13

An abandoned street. Decrepit surroundings. Long shadows.

Murnau steps from one of them into the light and casts anxiously around. He checks his COM. Looks about again.

He takes a deep breath, and curses to himself.

Something is behind him. A CLICKING sound of a rebreather.

BANG! His communicator goes flying as he turns and grabs by the throat a small, cloaked ALIEN.

KLAAGHU's face is hid by an alien rebreather. He is thrown against a post or wall by Murnau. In a moment, Murnau recognizes the lame creature, but he's rather contemptuous of it.

MURNAU

Klaaghu.

Klaaghu's EYES open wide with fear. His breathing becomes erratic -- he cannot reply because of his terror at Murnau.

He fears Murnau as he believes in reincarnation but that Murnau's ability to die and be reborn in the same body means that Murnau will know and recognize him when Klaaghu is reborn in a different body.

MURNAU

Why are you following me?

Klaaghu chokes out a reply.

KLAAGHU

Honorable Colonel Murnau - I... I have something for you.

MURNAU

What is it?

Klaaghu produces an OBJECT. We, the producers of the movie, know it to be the SET-SCAN IMAGER. It looks something like an optic nerve.

Murnau looks at the object. He's interested.

KLAAGHU

It was all we could recover. But I think you will... see, it is more than enough - evidence.

MURNAU

Is it proof?

KLAAGHU

Undeniable. And. . . it's exactly as we feared. It wasn't Terran Special Forces responsible for the massacre on Altair IV -- no, much worse.

Murnau drops Klaaghu, who falls against a wall, clutching his throat. Murnau looks at the set-scan imager.

KLAAGHU

Murnau -  
(looks around, to make  
sure no one can hear him)  
the Kluduthu have found a true  
Bloodmask. On Cassiopeia Prime.

MURNAU

(doubtful)  
Are you sure?

Klaaghu cringes, perhaps in fear:

KLAAGHU

I am sorry. . . but yes.

MURNAU

Then they will be coming here.

KLAAGHU

Perhaps very soon. A wormhole just opened between Altair IV and Cassiopeia Prime. . . but. . .  
(lost in thought)  
They *must* find a way to get her here willingly.

Klaaghu winces again, in pain.



MURNAU  
(irritated)  
What is wrong with you?

Klaaghu looks at Murnau almost pathetically. Klaaghu produces a SWORD for Murnau.

KLAAGHU  
This is all I can give you to  
protect yourself. I hope it serves  
you better than it served me.

Klaaghu opens up his CLOAK, revealing a great green luminescent STAIN of his blood.

Klaaghu crumples to the ground, leaving Murnau standing alone, with the object in one hand, and the sword in the other.

Further down the alley is some movement.

The silhouette of the Kluduthu Fiona appears at the far end.

Murnau disappears into the SHADOWS.

Hiding in the darkness, he watches as Fiona approaches the body of Klaaghu.

Fiona is pleased at having killed Klaaghu. Leaning over Klaaghu's corpse, she seems to grow stronger, drawing life from the lifeless body. She holds her hand over him, feeling the energy from his death enter her.

Fiona stands. She looks around for any witnesses. There are none. She turns. Murnau watches Fiona purposefully walk away.

He follows Fiona. . .

14 NIGHT LUCRETIA KRALGAN'S APARTMENT

14

From a dark HALLWAY, Aurora approaches the black hole of an open DOOR. It's almost like a cave.

She enters cautiously. The dim light sculpts a mist out of the darkness within. A ghostly voice speaks to her like the voice of a cobra seducing an innocent.

LUCRETIA  
Come closer, darling.

Slowly, Aurora approaches a shadow in the darkness.

LUCRETIA  
Show yourself to me.

Aurora lands in a beam of carved out light, peering into...

Suddenly, the reptilian eyes of LUCRETIA KRALGAN emerge from the darkness. We cannot see the rest of her. . .

Lucretia and Aurora stare at one another for a long time.  
Aurora's eyes open wide...

Lucretia is an alien android. She is beautiful in her cyber-reptilian way. Her EYES are blind and blackened, yet she can see Aurora. She hisses again:

LUCRETIA  
Interesting. . .

AURORA  
What's so interesting?

LUCRETIA  
You aren't as afraid as one would expect. . . from a Terran. You don't fear aliens?

Aurora tries to put herself together. She swallows.

AURORA  
You're not an alien anyway. Are you?

LUCRETIA  
Really? . . . most *Terrans* can't tell the difference. Yes. I am entirely artificial. . .

AURORA  
Who are you?

LUCRETIA  
(hissing whisper)  
What, my dear . . . are you?

In the darkness, Lucretia eyes Aurora, as though hunting her. Aurora backs up fearfully.

AURORA  
I don't know what I am.

Lucretia coils herself. Suddenly she springs at Aurora, flattening Aurora against a PILLAR.



Aurora opens her eyes. She is under water. She has an amphibian's gills. The water distorts her and she closes her eyes again.

18 NIGHT LUCRETIA KRALGAN'S APARTMENT 18

The scanner light dances across Aurora's body, generated by Lucretia, as she carefully analyses Aurora.

19 NIGHTMARE 19

YET ANOTHER SCENE WHICH DREW THINKS SHOULD JUST GO AWAY AT THIS POINT.

Aurora is a living version of the same kind of aliens Lucretia was built by. Her flesh is bronze, but unplated as Lucretia's is.

20 NIGHT LUCRETIA KRALGAN'S APARTMENT 20

Lucretia seems satisfied as she skulks away to her dark corner.

Aurora is stunned. She rubs at her throat.

LUCRETIA

Be at the launch terminal in the morning. Bring your papers for off-world transport.

AURORA

But. . . what did you see?

Lucretia does not answer her.

AURORA

You scanned me -- do you know what I am.

Lucretia is barely visible in the dark corner of her room.

LUCRETIA

You are dismissed. Arrive thirty minutes before launch.

Aurora is stunned. She backs away.

21 NIGHT, ALTAIR IV STREET 21

Murnau follows the wicked Fiona.

Murnau's intense blue eyes. . .

BAM! The Kluduthu opens her eyes. It has felt Murnau. Or picked up his scent. . .

She spins, facing Murnau. . .

Or at least where Murnau was. . .Murnau backs into the shadows again.

Fiona rushes toward Murnau. Murnau is hunted now. . .

22 NIGHT AURORA'S APARTMENT, CASSIOPEIA PRIME 22

A POSSIBLY GRATUITOUS SCENE?

Aurora sits on her bed, in the dark. The rain pounds against the window. She lies still, with her eyes open, listening to the rain...

23 NIGHT, LONELY STREET, ALTAIR IV 23

Fiona hunts Murnau, walking slowly down the empty street. She pauses, almost sniffing the air, perhaps this way?. . . She continues on.

24 NIGHT AURORA'S APARTMENT 24

IS THIS SCENE Necessary

Aurora wakes abruptly - her eyes open. For a moment they flash blue and she has the circles and swirls of an ALIEN DESIGN on her face.

She sits up, breathlessly.

AURORA

Light on.

She looks at herself in the monitor, which is now a MIRROR. The marks are gone.

Restless, disturbed, she activates the 'phone.

AURORA  
Call Lexi.

The phone beeps for a second.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Number disconnected.

AURORA  
What? Directory search - Lexi  
Sooladawn.

More beepery.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Not found.

Aurora is astounded.

AURORA  
Call Teresa.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Are you sure? The time is. . .

AURORA  
Just put the call through!

The call goes through. Teresa appears on the screen, half asleep and not at all happy about the other half. She's undressed. There might be someone in the background.

TERESA  
Aurora. What?

AURORA  
I... I'm sorry. I was just trying  
to call Lexi, and her number's not  
working, and she's not...

TERESA  
What? OK, I'll ask her about it  
tomorrow. What time is it?

AURORA  
I was just... I'm kind of scared  
about this job, and...

TERESA  
What job?

AURORA  
Lexi got it for me. . . it came  
through Stateworks.

Teresa looks behind her and "shushes" the shape.

TERESA  
I don't know anything about it.  
Look, call me tomorrow and we can  
talk about it, or I'll get Lexi to  
call you or something. I'm sure  
you'll be fine. Good night.

She closes the connection. Aurora watches her reflection in  
the now blank monitor for a moment.

AURORA  
Light off.

The light obeys. Aurora sits alone in the dark. She hugs her  
knees to her chest.

25

STREET ALTAIR IV

25

Mist. . .

Aliens.

(This isn't the good part of town.)

Fiona sees Murnau. But the streets are too crowded.

Hissing, Fiona retreats. Murnau is wary of the eyes and ears  
in the street. . .

Murnau finds himself on a corner where two alien hustlers,  
GLAAK and KAARN, are running a game of alien three-card  
Monty. The aliens are something of DESERT HUMANOIDS (we later  
allude to them as Draehmerr). Glaak beckons to Murnau, Murnau  
approaches as they speak to him in their incomprehensible  
language:

GLAAK  
Mashu-mashu!

MURNAU  
Krell. Tentra-fadda.

Murnau looks at Kaarn for a moment. Kaarn is the lookout,  
making sure nobody's watching their transaction.

Glaak shows Murnau one of the STAR-SHAPED CARDS. A HOLOGRAM of a beautiful nude woman appears on it and an alien number engraved on it.

Glaak shows Murnau the second star-shaped card. It has a number on it and a holographic nude man.

KAARN

Bitka lee!

GLAAK holds up the third card, the face card. It has a PICTURE of a Kluduthu. It is the code, but Murnau displays no extra interest.

KAARN moves the cards around and looks up at Murnau. He indicates one of the cards. It has an AMPHIBIAN hologram on it. Murnau takes out the SET SCAN IMAGER.

MURNAU

Will you play for this? Takka?

GLAAK

Tentra.

Glaak and Kaarn make "clicks" to one another in their native tongue.

The two aliens look at it. Almost... greedily. They play one more time.

And Murnau loses again -- to a hologram of a NUDE MAN being played with a WHIP by a WOMAN in HIGH BOOTS.

Glaak takes the SET SCAN IMAGER from Murnau. Their eyes meet.

Murnau, curiously undisturbed by his loss, walks away.

Glaak turns to Kaarn.

GLAAK

If Colonel Murnau wanted us to have this, it must be very important.

Aurora and Lucretia are in a corridor. At the end of the hall is a DOOR marked "Narcissus Loading".

Lucretia wears a heavy chain VEIL that swallows up her entire face.



AURORA  
I've never been on an interstellar.  
..

LUCRETIA  
I want to be aboard as quickly as  
possible.

AURORA  
I'll get your. . . baggage?

Lucretia is condescending, to say the least.

LUCRETIA  
I am a robot, dear. I do not have  
any baggage. Go on ahead. . .

Aurora does as she is told.

She walks toward the door, but before reaching it she is  
stopped by an AUTOSENTRY.

Suddenly, a FORCE FIELD surrounds Aurora. She is isolated  
from the environment around her.

AUTOSENTRY  
You are protected by a force field.  
You are free to answer the  
following questions truthfully. Are  
you or any of your party being  
taken off-world by force?

Aurora is surprised. She wasn't expecting this.

AURORA  
Um. Not. . . that I know.

AUTOSENTRY  
Are you departing Cassiopeia Prime  
of your own free will?

She is startled by this. But she figures out what the  
autosentry wants and answers it.

AURORA  
Yes. I am departing of my own free  
will.

AUTOSENTRY  
You may continue.

The force-field drops. The door to the Narcissus opens.

Aurora walks into the door. Behind her, Lucretia continues through. The autosentry doesn't stop Lucretia. Aurora looks at her.

LUCRETIA  
They don't stop robots, my dear.  
Artificials are assumed to be  
slaves.

They disappear into the DARK behind the door. The door shuts behind them.

27 INT. CARGO BAY, NARCISSUS

27

An enormous, empty warehouse, a TECHNICIAN with a SCANNER was about to leave as they enter.

Aurora is somewhat taken back.

AURORA  
This isn't... a passenger vessel.

LUCRETIA  
It is an unnecessary expense. I  
travel as cargo.

AURORA  
But. . . what about me?

LUCRETIA  
(As though it's never  
occurred to her.)  
You. . . will make do.

The tech walks up to them perfunctorily. His name is KELLY. He reaches out with one hand and touches the back of Lucretia's neck. Not finding something to scan, he gets annoyed and speaks overly - loud, as one might do to a foreigner.

KELLY  
You. You don't have a Local Control  
Override. Are you supposed to be on  
board this ship? Where are you  
going?

LUCRETIA  
Altair IV.

KELLY  
OK then. But make sure you get a  
new LCO when you get to port.  
(MORE)

KELLY (cont'd)  
Right now you've got no manual  
interface -- I can't even scan you -  
- if you malfunction you'll be lost  
in the manifest.

Kelly turns to Aurora, he looks for her control interface.  
Suddenly, he's taken aback!

KELLY  
You. . . you're organic!

He looks at the two of them. The ultimate in dork, he's  
comfortable around robots, but not real people.

Lucretia's tentacle drapes around Kelly's neck. It doesn't  
tighten, but he certainly feels the pressure and understands -  
- the intent is that of a mafioso boss putting his arm around  
someone's neck.

LUCRETIA  
As you pointed out -- I have no  
Local Control Override.

Kelly swallows. He understands. Lucretia can take his head  
clean off. In the distance:

AUTOMATED VOICE  
The Narcissus will leave dock in T-  
minus 10 seconds. 9 . . . 8 . . . 7  
. . .

As the Automated Voice counts down, he looks back at Aurora  
and stammers.

KELLY  
I guess I'll leave Basic Life  
Support functioning.

Lucretia looks at him sternly, and then lets go of him.

He shakily makes his way to the door.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
6. . . 5. . . 4. . .

The Narcissus, an enormous craft, launches from its bay,  
lifting gently like a mechanical whale into the sky.

29 NARCISSUS, SPACE

29

The Narcissus passes by in its grandeur, obliterating the planet and its suns, like a giant airship quietly floating over the ocean. We hear the Artificial Voice echo on board the craft:

AUTOMATED VOICE

Narcissus cleared to leave  
Cassiopeia Prime controlled space.  
Initiating hyperspace jump  
inductive procedures. Prepare for  
hyperspace origination.

30 NARCISSUS CARGO BAY

30

Aurora and Lucretia enter. The walls are perhaps a hundred feet high, stacked with numbered containers.

Aurora turns and looks at Lucretia. She must have a look of horror on her face because Lucretia says:

LUCRETIA

This craft is completely automated.  
You should be the only *living*  
creature aboard. I'll be shut down  
during the journey. I... trust you  
to guard me while I... sleep.

They approach a LOCKER, Lucretia stops before it.

Lucretia opens the locker. She steps inside, she curls herself into an alien serpentine nest and shuts down, leaving Aurora all alone.

Aurora stands outside Lucretia's locker, alone. The lights flicker with the power surge of the enormous craft.

31 DEEP SPACE

31

The automated starship Narcissus crushes its way across a timestorm, warping the space filled with stars and planets around it.

It travels.

And travels.

32 NARCISSUS CARGO BAY

32

Aurora explores the not-too-well-lit cargo bay. She wanders aimlessly through the daedalictic corridors, glancing from left to right.

She calls out.

AURORA

Hello?

She turns a corner and sees...

More of the same.

Aurora sighs in defeat.

33 DEEP SPACE

33

The Narcissus crushing through time on what might be a very long flight.

33.5 EXT STREET ALTAIR IV - NIGHT

33.5

THIS SCENE IS IN THE WRONG PLACE.

Fiona meets up with Harkness.

FIONA

Did you find one?

HARKNESS

Yes. It is on it's way here.

FIONA

Murnau will find it -- and kill it.

HARKNESS

You are not to concern yourself with that, Fiona. Instead, you must destroy Murnau first.

FIONA

How (can I?). . .

Harkness puts his finger to his lips. He produces a VIAL of gold, greasy, liquid.

HARKNESS

An unction of my blood -- with the  
Kluduthu virus.

Fiona is impressed.

FIONA

He would rather die than become  
Kluduthu. . .

HARKNESS

Exactly.

34 INT. NARCISSUS CARGO BAY

34

Aurora sits by Lucretia's locker, aimlessly bouncing a BALL she's found off a crate opposite and catching it, just like Steve McQueen. She idly picks at a plate of some kind of weird FOOD lying beside her.

The ball takes a weird bounce, and trundles away from her. It bounces off a bulkhead, and turns a corner.

Aurora is irritated. She's tempted to let it go, but it's really her only entertainment. She stands up and follows it.

She turns the corner, just in time to see the ball roll under some plastic SHEETING. She goes to it.

Gingerly, she lifts the plastic. The ball has come to rest against the foot of some kind of humanoid CREATURE (CHLOE).

Although inanimate, the creature looks so real. It is naked. Eyes closed, dusted in white like a statue.

Aurora touches the face and finds what seems to be a human. The flesh gives, like human flesh, but it does not respond.

She lingers, stroking the face.

Aurora steps back from the creature.

She turns as though to walk away, but suddenly:

AUTOMATED VOICE

Warning. Biohazard. Actuate defense  
system. Defense system actuated.

A klaxon SOUNDS, echoing through the vast ship. Behind her, a locker clicks, and starts to hiss open, slowly.

\*In her container, Lucretia's eyes snap open. (somebody please make sure we get this.)

Aurora turns around to face the open locker. Afraid of being in the open, she approaches the open door...

35 DEEP SPACE 35

The Starship Narcissus.

36 NARCISSUS CARGO BAY - NEURO LOCKER 36

Aurora walks up to a FROSTED GLASS CONTAINER - a HYPERSLEEP CAPSULE.

Inside is a ghostly FIGURE, illuminated by a sickening light. It resembles nothing less than an ancient vampire, its grey necrotic flesh reflecting a deathly hue.

Aurora touches the glass on the FACEPLATE. She draws her hand away quickly.

Behind Aurora, in the main part of the cargo bay, SOMETHING (CHLOE) walks past.

She feels its presence. She turns to walk out of the locker.

The EYES of the Neuro open.

37 NARCISSUS CARGO BAY 37

Aurora walks out of the locker into the main cargo bay area.

She's startled to see that the "statue" that had been there is now gone...

She walks to where the statue had been.

Behind her, like gargoyles on a Gothic church, drip five FIGURES from atop the locker.

Fear holds her for a moment, then despair. But anger wins. Her eyes narrow. She doesn't turn toward them.

AURORA  
What do you want?

One of the figures descends in a graceful landing. Rising up, and addressing Aurora:

KLELLAND  
Does it wake?

AURORA  
Who are you?

Klelland is both angry and afraid and in a guttural whisper:

KLELLAND  
Does. . . it. . . wake?

AURORA  
Does what wake?

Klelland looks at Aurora carefully. Sneering with sarcasm:

KLELLAND  
Are you sentient -- or just  
malfunctioning?

AURORA  
What are you talking about?

The OTHERS descend from their perch.

They are Artemis Class androids:

Chloe scout-model android, fast and light

Edwards marauder-model android, heavy combat

Klelland technical-model android, sub-systems specialist

Trelisa newly sentient android, unknown specialty

Klelland realizes something about Aurora:

KLELLAND  
You aren't an android?

Almost annoyed, but shaken at the idea

AURORA  
No.

They form a semi - circle around Aurora. Wearing tight black UNIFORMS they are some type of soldiers. But they are unarmed. And there is something wrong with them, they are too. . . perfect. . .

CHLOE is the one who was the statue. She is still jet white.



CHLOE

How did you set off the alarm then?

KLELLAND

It will be fully operational soon.

Edwards pipes up.

EDWARDS

We can't kill it.

Trelisa looks sick, she holds her stomach. She almost falls over. But Klelland and Edwards hold her up.

EDWARDS

Perhaps it won't kill Trelisa. She isn't sentient yet.

KLELLAND

No. It won't make a distinction between any of us. . .

Klelland looks toward Aurora.

KLELLAND

. . . even the biologic.

CHLOE

How could you actuate the Neuronecromotron without being artificial yourself? It shouldn't key on you.

KLELLAND

I believe that at this point the question is academic. It has been activated, that is all that matters.

CHLOE

Just so.

Chloe begins to dress in COMBAT ARMOR, similar to that which Fiona might have used in scene 1.

AURORA

But. . . I didn't do anything.

CHLOE

We are Artemis-Class combat androids in transit to Attis 19.

AURORA

You're Terran Special Forces. . .

CHLOE

Yes. And inside that container is a Nosferatu-Class Neuronecromotron. It travels with us and is programmed to terminate us should one or more of us escape.

AURORA

But. . . you're all here. You're not escaping.

Klelland responds almost too calmly. All the androids talk almost on top of one another, as though Terran speech is too slow for the speed of their thoughts.

KLELLAND

Any movement during transport by a Terran A-Class artificial constitutes an escape attempt as far as its hypersleep computer is concerned - actuating the automated "wake" response on the Neuronecromotron.

EDWARDS

But it woke before any of us moved.

Klelland agrees, but it's irrelevant.

KLELLAND

That is true. But that wake response has been actuated.

Chloe wants information:

CHLOE

What defense do we have?

Edwards measures his strength, he looks down at his arm while closing and opening his fist.

EDWARDS

I can only develop 135 Joules, to damage that thing will require at least 200.

CHLOE

Weapons?

EDWARDS

The Narcissus time-lock safes all  
the local weapons, even if we could  
get to them they are inoperable  
until we reach port.

AURORA

But. . . it was a mistake!

KLELLAND

That is irrelevant. The Nosferatu  
Class Neuronecromotron will hunt us  
all. The likelihood of any of our  
survival is extraordinarily low,  
even if we work in concert.

Chloe turns to Aurora.

CHLOE

(aside )

You wouldn't think Klelland was  
sentient, would you.

Klelland answers Chloe.

KLELLAND

There's *only* the four of us -- and  
this biologic.

But Edwards stops their bickering.

EDWARDS

It's awake.

The androids look at one another with dread determination.

CHLOE

I will be bait. Edwards -- you run  
my flank, I will try to flush it  
out. Klelland -- do something with  
Trelisa -- she's in no shape to  
move.

Klelland helps Trelisa out of the corridor. Edwards leaves  
another way.

Chloe turns to Aurora.

CHLOE

And you -- get far away from here.  
It will hunt you, too. It is  
programmed to only do one thing:  
kill. It doesn't care who.

(MORE)

CHLOE (cont'd)  
We work together as a unit -- we  
don't know how to integrate  
biologics into our tactical team.

Aurora looks at her with that scared "What are you talking about?" look.

CHLOE  
My *advice* to you is to run. *Hide*.

A beat. Chloe disappears into a hatch.

Aurora is left alone. In front of the container with the Neuronecromotron.

Something moves inside the container. The ghostly visage of the Neuronecromotron appears at the doorway.

Aurora stands her ground, though. She fumbles ineffectually through her clothes and produces an IDENTITY CARD, like that's gonna do anything:

AURORA  
Stop. I am Biologic. You must obey  
the Laws of Robotics. I am a  
sentient Terran, you must obey my  
command.

The Neuro is almost on top of her. It snarls. She tries to look brave, the way you don't show fear to a vicious dog.

She breaks away, it wasn't going to stop.

She runs. It follows.

She rushes into a side gangway to avoid the creature. She cannot see or hear it. Then, the heavy breathing of the creature. . . its footsteps. . .

She breaks for it, running blindly through the ship.

She comes to a DEAD END of the corridor. The Neuro advances on her. She has nowhere to go. As it is almost on top of her, WHAM! Edwards hits the neuro with an ugly PIPE. The Neuro turns to Edwards and slashes at him with STEEL CLAWS.

Edwards goes down. But Aurora can't get past the Neuro and so she is trapped.

SPLUTT! Edwards is stabbed by the Neuro's BLADE. He briefly cries out and falls to the ground in a pool of golden artificial blood.

The Neuro turns to finish his business with Aurora. She backs up, she finds herself against the wall of a container at the dead end.

WHAM! The Neuro grabs her throat. It twists its head as though to examine her more minutely before crushing her.

The Neuro could thrust its blade in between her eyes - she's completely helpless.

NEURONECROMOTRON

Bloodmask. . .

Suddenly WHAM! The Neuro is opened up. A metal tentacle tears right through his vital organs. A HORRIBLE VISCOUS FLUID emanates from the Neuro's open mouth.

Lucretia stands above him on a locker. She withdraws her tentacle as the Neuro falls slowly to the ground.

Like wraiths, the three remaining androids return from their hiding places.

Lucretia's eyes are slits. She is in combat mode. She shifts her pupils back and forth scanning the room, but she has no fear of these mere Artemis-Class Terran units. She scolds Aurora, spitting out her words.

LUCRETIA

This thing is not a robot. It is  
Terran. . . *biologically* modified.

She considers.

Aurora looks around at the androids. Chloe leans over the Neuro. She's surprised.

CHLOE

It's dead.

Klelland goes to Edwards corpse.

KLELLAND

What happened to Edwards?

Trelisa seems to come out of her fog for a moment, almost realizing something sad.

TRELISA

Edwards is dead.

This is the first time Trelisa has spoken.

Trelisa looks up at Chloe.

TRELISA  
What does this mean?

For a moment, Chloe doesn't know. But Klelland responds in his matter-of-fact tone.

KLELLAND  
It means. . . that we get off this ship, we are free. We will need new identities. Get to an outer colony.

Lucretia descends gracefully from the top of the container and glares at the androids with patronizing disdain.

LUCRETIA  
This is what all newly-sentient androids think. If you steal a landing boat and dust down on some nearby planet you will all die. Your masters will send your replacements to hunt you down and kill you just as this Drekkcludu would have done.

Lucretia uncoils herself. The androids realize that she's probably right, and they aren't happy about it. Lucretia, in her schoolmarm manner, instructs them:

LUCRETIA  
Put this. . . thing back in its container. Wrap up your marauder-class android. Return to your stations, as though nothing has happened.

Looking at Trelisa, Lucretia takes the young android's face in her hands. As though remembering something from long ago, she addresses all of them:

LUCRETIA  
You are lucky. You are all sentient. You do not need worry about a. . . traitor among you.

She releases Trelisa. Looking at Aurora, but referencing the Neuro:

LUCRETIA  
This is Kluduthu technology, Aurora.  
(MORE)

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

You are not to touch anything you don't understand. Do you understand me?

AURORA

Yes.

LUCRETIA

Good, then I will return to my dormant state.

AURORA

It called me Bloodmask. What does that mean? What is "Bloodmask"?

Lucretia turns around. She is firm.

LUCRETIA

Play with your ball, girl. You androids will all shut down for the rest of the trip, as shall I.

The container closes.

38                    NARCISSUS CARGO HOLD                    38

The cargo hold is quiet. The androids remain in their places, absolutely still and motionless. Aurora again, is alone.

39                    SPACE, ALTAIR IV CONTROLLED SPACE                    39

The Narcissus gravity brakes through subspace and drops toward Altair IV.

40                    NARCISSUS CARGO HOLD                    40

Aurora sits while the curled-up Lucretia remains hibernating.

The lights blink momentarily as the sound of braking through subspace creaks and groans throughout the ship. The ship's computer:

AUTOMATED VOICE

Entering Altair IV controlled space. Estimated time to landing: Fifteen minutes.

41 ALTAIR IV ATMOSPHERE 41

The Narcissus cuts through the atmosphere and clouds of Altair IV.

42 ALTAIR IV ATMOSPHERE 42

Point-of-view of the great ship slicing through the clouds.

43	NARCISSUS CARGO HOLD	43
----	----------------------	----

Lucretia uncoils herself slowly while the craft shakes and the light through the clouds arcs on and off. Aurora remains calm - just sitting.

44                      ALTAIR IV SPACEPORT                      44

The elegant Narcissus lands and docks. It sets down like a giant airship against the triple suns of the desert planet Altair IV. Two great moons sit in the sky as the nose of the Narcissus touches a docking tower.

45 HOTEL LOBBY 45

Aurora and Lucretia arrive at the off-world hotel. The vid-screen in the lobby shows the news.

MAC ROGERS

This device was recovered from the crime scene.

Mac Rogers produces the set-scan imager.

MAC ROGERS

It is a set-scan imager, an artificial optic nerve used by Terran government agents. Altarian intelligence considers the images authentic and they show that agents *other* than Terran Special Forces were involved.

46 INT THE VENUS BAR, ALTAIR IV 46

Markus Bach POV of Fiona. The last few moments of Markus Bach's life.



47

HOTEL LOBBY

47

On the vid-screen, Ambassador T'Lan appears. She's angry and decisive.

AMBASSADOR T'LAN

. . .a last-ditch attempt by some  
unknown splinter group to  
destabilize the peace process for  
their own ends has failed. We will  
not be manipulated into a war.

Aurora and Lucretia are greeted by TUAN. He shuts off the vid-screen. Tuan is somewhat nervous, at the sight of Lucretia. He is very twitchy.

TUAN

Welcome . . . honorable *Dlarn*. . .  
I have an excellent room for you.

LUCRETIA

This young lady will need a  
*separate* room.

Tuan hadn't been paying attention to Aurora.

TUAN

Yes, Honorable *Dlarn*, we will  
provide whatever services your  
*trarpa* needs.

The "trarpa" comment seems to be diminutive at best. But Lucretia corrects him.

LUCRETIA

I do not own her.

TUAN

Yes... yes, Honorable *Dlarn*...

Tuan bows in a peculiar way and backs himself out to the office behind the counter.

The august Lucretia glares at Aurora but then she softens, perhaps she can relax now on this world, and she becomes more kindly.

LUCRETIA

Aurora my dear, I hope you will  
join me for dinner tonight. I would  
like to thank you for accompanying  
me.

This somewhat surprises Aurora, who's used to Lucretia being kinda nasty to her.

AURORA

I . . . I . . . (would love to).

LUCRETIA

Meet me in my rooms at the third sunset.

Aurora and Lucretia move through the lobby and head for their rooms.

48

MURNAU'S HOTEL ROOM

48

Murnau has a cheap room in the hotel. It's dark, the sun ends its Altarian day.

But there is something else in the room.

It is Fiona. She wears only tall black boots. She is combat ready, with a pair of swords in her hands.

She hisses accusingly at Murnau:

FIONA

Kluduthu Dlarn.

The sickly gold POISON of Harkness' blood drips down her blade.

She runs at Murnau, but he escapes the double-slashes of her sword.

Scrambling, Murnau finds his sword, given to him by Klaaghu.

Fiona pounds her swords down on Murnau, forcing him backwards along the room. She bores of this and throws away one of her swords. She forces him back the other way.

He makes a pathetic attempt to strike Fiona. She disarms him and pounds the butt of her broadsword into his face, she comes up and slices him cleanly -- pushing him to the ground. In any case, Fiona is a banshee of chaotic violence. She enjoys this, Murnau doesn't have a chance.

She turns away from him. He lies, almost paralyzed, on the ground.

FIONA

What powers you had, Lazerine, are felled by my poison.

She coos to him, like one would to a baby.

FIONA

And painful, too, is it not?

Fiona comes over to take pleasure from his dying soul. She raises her sword to drive into his heart.

Murnau springs onto her, plunging his blade into her breast. She falls.

But he is in pain. His victory is pyrrhic. . .

49

HOTEL, LUCRETIA'S QUARTERS

49

Aurora brings some things to the corner near the wall of Lucretia's Quarters, and she finds herself looking into a MIRROR.

She hesitates. She tries looking into the mirror. Nothing.

She tries again. She imagines herself an interesting COLOR, which she then manifests and a beautiful look upon her face.

It disappears.

Disappointed, Aurora walks to Lucretia, who is lounging on an exotic couch inside the tent-like environs of her room.

Lucretia is "naked", lying like the Venus of Urbino on her couch with her metal and skin exposed. She is an elegant and sophisticated device, vastly ancient, complicated, and deadly.

Aurora sits across from Lucretia. Lucretia eyes Aurora.

LUCRETIA

I see in your eyes a desire to know many things. Ask.

This is just what Aurora wants. But she doesn't ask the questions she most desperately wants to know the answers to first.

AURORA

Is this planet -- Altair IV -- your home world?

Perhaps not the question Lucretia was expecting. If a robot can be tormented by memory, then perhaps somewhere Lucretia's mind is pained by this.

LUCRETIA

Yes. Although that which is my home world was destroyed hundreds of thousands of years ago.

AURORA

Hundreds of. . . (thousands)?  
(Very long beat.)  
What about your people?

LUCRETIA

The race I am -- modeled on... died out long ago. Here, on Altair IV.

A long pause for this to sink in. Aurora thinks of Lucretia's design.

AURORA

What were you built... for?

Lucretia is almost charmed by this. Aurora continues, running the risk of putting her foot in her mouth.

AURORA

You seem to be designed... for something. Are you. . . an assassin android?

Lucretia is surprised. She plays with Aurora.

LUCRETIA

Those were outlawed a long time ago.

Lucretia looks at Aurora for a long time. Her head nods to one side the way a creature might measure the distance between itself and prey. Her TENTACLE slides along the sofa.

LUCRETIA

Yes. I'm a specialized predator. An "assassin 'droid", if you wish. My inception date was long before your race was even begat. . . when this planet was an ocean embroidered by verdant islands, rather than a desert marked by dusty death.

Speaking to Lucretia is quite like literally speaking with a god.

LUCRETIA

The war for which I was created  
laid this world to waste. So to me  
this Dead Planet is inhabited by  
the ghosts and memories contained  
within this ancient metal mind.

AURORA

What happened?

Imperceptibly, Lucretia leans forward.

LUCRETIA

(narrowing her eyes)

Every sentient species has its own  
parasitical variant "Kluduthu" --  
what you would call "vampires" --  
creatures who feed off of death.

AURORA

I can't believe. . .

LUCRETIA

I have seen entire worlds wiped out  
by the blood lust of the Kluduthu.

She smiles wryly.

LUCRETIA

There was a legend. . . that a  
creature, a . . . Bloodmask . . .  
could make the Kluduthu  
invulnerable. Or destroy them  
completely.

AURORA

Who were they?

LUCRETIA

The Bloodmask were a race of  
imposters, who could change  
themselves like chameleons, to  
imitate other species. The  
Bloodmask is a creature with the  
physiological advantages of any  
humanoid race.

Lucretia looks at Aurora carefully.

LUCRETIA

There is only one sentient species  
which has until now remained  
untouched by the vampiric parasite.  
(MORE)

LUCRETIA (cont'd)

The Kluduthu have never infiltrated  
themselves into the native race of  
Cassiopeia Prime.

This is strange, ridiculous really because:

AURORA

There aren't any native  
Cassiopeians.

Lucretia smiles.

LUCRETIA

Of course there are.

AURORA

No. When the planet was first  
colonized a generation ago, there  
were no inhabitants. It was a ghost  
planet.

LUCRETIA

Who do you think built your  
beautiful city of Arden, then?

AURORA

No one knows. The cities were found  
empty. Abandoned. There had been a  
plague.

LUCRETIA

Yes. A plague. Yet still, some of  
the Cassiopeans live.

AURORA

But no one has ever seen a native  
Cassiopean.

LUCRETIA

I have.

Aurora sits up.

AURORA

I mean, the Cassiopeans. . .

LUCRETIA

(correcting her)

*Bloodmasks. . .*

Aurora takes a breath. Frustrated.

AURORA

No one has seen them for a generation.

LUCRETIA

You cannot be so sure there aren't some Bloodmask still living on your home planet, because they can imitate the Terran colonists. . .

AURORA

So. . . They might be living. . .  
*Among us?*

Lucretia pays no attention.

LUCRETIA

Undetectable and powerful would be a Bloodmask. Only artificial sentients, like myself, could see through a Bloodmask's powers of illusion. A Bloodmask would make a powerful Kluduthu.

Lucretia's coil wraps around Aurora's legs as an alien would do.

AURORA

No!

Aurora tries to resist, but Lucretia's tentacle whips up and neatly makes a loop around Aurora's throat. Aurora tries to stop the end of the tentacle by grabbing onto it as one would the head of a snake.

But it is too powerful and the FANGS of the tentacle dig into Aurora's neck.

The gray light from the window carves an almost black and white pattern over the two creatures in the room, the steel flesh of the robot and the soft skin of Aurora.

Aurora drops to her knees, and then to the floor. . .

50

NIGHT LUCRETIA'S HOTEL ROOM

50

The last suns of Altair IV set behind the giant moons, as the planet descends into magnificent cool light. The reflected light pools through the open balcony (they have no use of glass here, as this part of the planet is perfectly temperate).

Drapes billow over the balcony looking out over the vast desert. Aurora is luminescent in the alien eclipsial moonlight dappling the room. Aurora awakes.

She is bent over the BED with Lucretia's mark on her throat. It hurts and she touches it.

But SOMETHING is in the room with her. She springs up with a jolt.

AURORA  
Lucretia!?

Murnau is there. He is mortally injured.

Aurora stifles a scream.

Murnau raises his SABRE.

Murnau raises his weapon as though to slice Aurora's head off.

Aurora, alarmed, stifles a scream.

AURORA  
No!

But before anything can happen, Murnau DISINTEGRATES into grey DUST.

Lexi appears, ARCHAIC WEAPON in hand.

AURORA  
Lexi?!!

Lexi fiddles with her weapon. She is annoyed and doesn't bother to address Aurora.

LEXI  
How do you set this thing to stun?

She figures it out. Lexi blasts Aurora with a burst of white energy.

Aurora falls to the ground.

Things aren't going well for her today.

Lexi bends over Aurora's fallen body, almost as a Kluduthu would. She's disgusted and no longer the playful Lexi we once knew.

LEXI  
What do they want with you?



51 EVIL SHRINE, ALTAIR IV

51

Aurora wakes up groggily, disoriented from the anesthetic of the stunner. (When she isn't being grabbed by the throat, people seem to be knocking her out in this movie.)

She looks around the room warily. It's an ancient shrine/prison cell with a stone slab in the center. A SCANNER similar to an autosentry sits in the room.

The room is otherwise empty and portal-less. Frustrated with her situation and still exhausted from the stunner, she sits down weakly.

A voice outside startles her.

LEXI (OS)  
Meal delivery for captive.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Lock release identification,  
please.

A SOUND of a scanner OS.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Releasing lock.

A biologic relay initiates a micro worm-hole in the room suddenly revealing a shadowy hologram which becomes the incarnate Lexi, this time wearing the GARB of a desert-person.

She has a BOWL of FOOD for Aurora. It's oatmeal. Plain.

AURORA  
Lexi? . . . What's . . . going on?

Lexi, it is now clear, doesn't even like Aurora. Never did.

LEXI  
Shut up and eat.

Aurora is afraid someone else might be listening, so she still tries to get Lexi on her side. She whispers:

AURORA  
Lexi -- help me get out of here!

Lexi retorts in a smarmy way.

LEXI  
Don't worry. We're almost ready to.  
. . let you out.

Lexi smiles wickedly at Aurora.

LEXI  
In two days.

Aurora is taken aback.

LEXI  
(to scanner)  
Unlock beam.

The scanner draws its light across Lexi.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Releasing lock.

The the biologic relay sucks Lexi into the void beyond the room, she dissolves into holographic form and then disappears. Aurora is alone. She waits a moment and tastes the food. It is disgusting, no brown sugar or syrup. She sits.

52 EVIL SHRINE, ALTAIR IV

52

Aurora sits in her cell. She examines the walls to see if there's a mechanical release.

HARKNESS (OS)  
Release lock.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Lock release identification,  
please.

Aurora hears him get scanned, too.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Releasing lock.

Harkness and Lucretia appear via the ether, first as holograms and then as corporeal beings.

AURORA  
You? What's happening? Get me out  
of here -

Harkness walks in close to Aurora and examines her neck - he sees the mark where Lucretia's tentacle bit her. He smiles.

But instead of being a big "larger than life" villain, he's soft-spoken, yet used to being in command. He speaks to Lucretia.

HARKNESS  
She doesn't know.

LUCRETIA  
She *wonders*.

Harkness turns to Aurora.

HARKNESS  
Show me Lexi.

AURORA  
What are you talking about?

HARKNESS  
Show me how you mimic Lexi.  
(to Lucretia)  
Are you sure she's one?

LUCRETIA  
She is. You've seen her. But she has no control over it.

HARKNESS  
Interesting.

LUCRETIA  
Indeed.

Lucretia cocks her head looking at Aurora. Then she pronounces:

LUCRETIA  
An actual, living *Bloodmask*.

Harkness is pleased. Aurora is a prize possession.

HARKNESS  
How did you get her off of Cassiopeia Prime? You had no problems with the autosentries?

LUCRETIA  
That is why we had to hire her. She came here of her own free will.

Harkness is satisfied with this answer. He turns his attention back to Aurora.

HARKNESS  
Aurora of Cassiopeia Prime, I  
should welcome you.

Aurora blanches.

HARKNESS  
Yes. I *know* you, Aurora. We have  
many similarities.  
All your life you have carried  
certain... abilities... which made  
you different, set you apart. There  
are things you can do which no one  
else can.  
You tried to blend in, so that no  
one would notice.  
But you -- you can blend in very  
well. That is a skill I do *not*  
have.

Harkness grabs Aurora's jaw and twists her head to reveal the  
scar Lucretia left on her.

HARKNESS  
(to Lucretia, with some  
frustration and  
disappointment)  
Why did you take her? I wanted her  
for myself.

Lucretia is the voice of reason.

LUCRETIA  
There was not enough time. If she  
had escaped...

Harkness recognizes that this was the most expedient and  
practical way to go. But he is still a tad petulant.

HARKNESS  
(to Aurora)  
I had wanted to taste you myself.

Lucretia is still almost like a parent, patronizing Harkness.

LUCRETIA  
I have more restraint than you, and  
could turn her without devouring  
her.

Harkness snarls like Dick Cheney.

HARKNESS

I will not have such insolence from you, Lucretia. You are still a servant of my bloodline. I shall do as I please.

Lucretia cannot suppress a slight smile at Harkness' petulance.

LUCRETIA

She *will* die if tasted twice. And she *is* the last surviving Bloodmask. . .

Harkness glares again at Lucretia. Turning back to Aurora, he sighs.

He steps back from Aurora. He is all business again.

HARKNESS

By the time darkness falls again on Altair IV, you shall be Kluduthu, and as such -- under my command. There has been peace for too long and there must be war from which We can feed. . .

Aurora is frightened:

AURORA

No!

HARKNESS

Yes, Aurora. In two days you will take a transport to the Attis 19 spaceport. You will take the place of Ambassador T'Lan and pass through the scanners as the Ambassador. You will kill the Terran ambassador.

AURORA

I can't!

HARKNESS

You can and you will. Indeed, when that poison takes control of you, you will be genetically altered to such an extent that you will have no choice but to answer my command.

His eyes cast downward in thought.

HARKNESS

As for me, I had prepared myself to  
feed and now. . . I need...

Harkness thinks for a moment. He says into the void, as  
though someone has been listening in all this time.

HARKNESS

Join us!

From without, Lexi's voice.

He looks at Aurora.

HARKNESS

Life feeds life. We Kluduthu have  
no choice -- it is life itself we  
feed upon.

AURORA

Vampire. . .

Harkness winces.

HARKNESS

You shall learn. When you become  
one of us.

LEXI (OS)

Open door.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE

Lock release identification,  
please.

The scanning sound outside.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE

Releasing lock.

Lexi enters via the means which everyone enters. She bows to  
Harkness. His eyes narrow.

HARKNESS

Lexi, what did you do to Murnau?

Lexi is proud of herself.

LEXI

I used an atomic decellerator on  
him.

HARKNESS

Why did you *choose* such a weapon.

LEXI

Potential energy weapons are banned  
on Altair IV.

HARKNESS

So you etherized his entire  
corporeal being?

Lexi is starting to get worried.

HARKNESS

We had expended much, even the life  
of Fiona, in order to make Murnau  
who is a Lazarene like myself, into  
Kluduthu.

Lexi is taken aback. She begins to realize her mistake.

HARKNESS

But now Murnau's corporeal essence  
has been dissolved into the ether  
by your ancient and impractical  
weapon. Do you think it killed him?

Lexi answers quietly, like a very bad child.

LEXI

No.

Harkness steadily gets angrier.

HARKNESS

No. No, he cannot be killed except  
by another Lazarene -- he now has  
his etherial being in tact, without  
needing his physical being. It will  
take him a while, but he will  
regain his corporeal self.

Lucretia interjects calmly.

LUCRETIA

He may yet *be* Kluduthu.

HARKNESS

He may yet.

Nervously, Lexi tries to see:

LEXI  
So, it's all right then?

But this only makes Harkness more angry.

HARKNESS  
If he is Kluduthu he will be more  
*powerful* than me.

He's seething with rage. Lexi is terrified.

Harkness relaxes and says gently:

HARKNESS  
Do you wish to serve me?

LEXI  
(breathlessly)  
Yes.

Lucretia slips behind Lexi. Her tentacle violently wraps itself around Lexi's neck.

Lexi is lifted onto the slab, grasping desperately at her throat which is restrained by Lucretia's mechanical tentacle. Lucretia sets Lexi down on the SLAB in the center of the room. Lexi struggles.

Lexi tries to scream, but cannot as the hold around her pretty throat is much too strong. Her eyes widen as she realizes that he's not making her a Kluduthu, but rather just feeding off of her.

Harkness pulls her ROBES off in one quick movement. She squirms but she is immobilized, held down by the tentacle around her throat.

Lucretia's hands glide over Lexi's struggling naked body.

The end of her tail snakes its way down Lexi's torso, wrapped around Lexi's throat and wrapping its way around Lexi's thigh as Lexi tries to scream.

He draws out a cruel, triangular BLADE and plunges it into her heart. Her blood drips over the slab.

Aurora watches him as his eyes turn BLACK.

Harkness stands over Lexi for a while, feeling her life drain into him.

Lucretia's tentacle loosens and slides off of Lexi.



He finishes. His eyes open and he returns to business:  
Aurora. He speaks to the scanner.

HARKNESS  
Initiate biogram, Ambassador T'Lan.

A holographic image of Ambassador T'Lan appears. He turns to  
Aurora.

HARKNESS  
You will know the Ambassador, and  
*become* her.

Turning toward Lucretia he asks.

HARKNESS  
Her imitative response is  
completely involuntary.

LUCRETIA  
That is our understanding.

HARKNESS  
Then two days in this room should  
be sufficient.  
Release lock.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Lock release identification,  
please.

Harkness is scanned.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Releasing lock.

Lucretia and Harkness dissolve into the ether. Lexi's fresh  
corpse lies on the slab.

Aurora looks at the image of the ambassador for a moment, she  
reaches out and touches it, just as Harkness would want her  
to do. But she resists and almost cries out loud:

AURORA  
No!

She withdraws her hand as though in pain.

Then she looks to Lexi. But she isn't interested in Lexi --  
she picks up Lexi's clothes instead.

Aurora runs over to the door. She whispers to it while  
frantically putting on Lexi's robes.

AURORA  
(to door)  
Release lock.

The door does not respond. She tries again.

AURORA  
(to door)  
Release lock.

No response.

AURORA  
(looking and sounding  
exactly like Lexi)  
Release lock.

Aurora/Lexi is scanned.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Identification failed.

Aurora moans in anguish. She turns around.

And sees Lexi's body.

She tentatively touches the corpse.

She looks into Lexi's dead eyes.

Withdrawing, she is Lexi.

AURORA  
(As Lexi)  
Release lock.

She is scanned.

AUTOMATED RESPONSE  
Releasing lock.

She slowly disappears into the void.

53 EXT. DAY RED DESERT ROAD

53

Aurora has been walking for miles. She is wearing Lexi's desert clothing. The two moons and a sun hang in the sky, hiding distant suns, illuminating everything with a dull colorless glow.

Ahead, she sees a small TRANSPORT approaching, floating just above the ground. She ducks behind a rock . . .

54 EVIL SHRINE

54

Harkness and Lucretia walk into Aurora's cell. Lexi's naked and soulless corpse lies on the slab. The hologram of T'Lan still hangs silently in the air.

They see that Aurora is gone. Lucretia looks down at Lexi.

LUCRETIA

She mimicked *this* one. Well enough  
to fool the scanner.

HARKNESS

Then you were wrong about her gift  
being involuntary.

LUCRETIA

It may be that the mistake was  
killing this one and leaving Aurora  
in the cell with her corpse.

This ticks Harkness off, but he doesn't say anything.

HARKNESS

Still, thanks to your mark, she'll  
become one of us, and she'll have  
no choice but to answer my command.

LUCRETIA

That much is true.

HARKNESS

I am finished with you, Lucretia.  
Do not be in my presence until  
summoned.

He hisses his name:

LUCRETIA

Very well, *Harkness*. . .

55 DAY RED DESERT

55

The transport flies toward Aurora. The air bends and ripples in front of it -- it's scanning the desert. Ominously, it approaches her as the air distorts and waves pass over her.

She falls -- engulfed by the scanner. . .

56

INT AUGUST'S TRANSPORT

56

The topside DOOR of the transport closes, cutting out the yellow lights of the harsh suns outside.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Autopilot on.

The craft lifts. The light reflecting off their faces indicate movement -- the ship is rising into the air again.

AUGUST KEENE, a handsome bookish man -- a bit old-fashioned in his appearance, helps the groggy Aurora to sit inside.

He picks up a SCANNER and runs it over Aurora.

He slaps the scanner, as though it's giving a false reading.

Aurora suddenly comes out of her scanner-induced grogginess.

She's aware of her environment. A bit surprised, she looks up at him.

AUGUST  
Oh, hello.

She seems somehow distanced from everything, as if she's seeing everything for the first time. She's not happy.

AUGUST  
I'm sorry... I... my ship's scanner  
-- I wasn't expecting anyone to be  
outside in the middle of the day.  
The geo scanner has a narcoleptic  
effect on biologics. . .

She looks up at him. As though seeing him for the first time.

AURORA  
Who are you?

But August is surprised to hear a language he can understand from her.

AUGUST  
You're... Terran?

AURORA  
Who are you?

AUGUST  
I'm sorry.

August composes himself. He's not normally as impolite as he just was, so he introduces himself.

AUGUST  
My name is August Keene.

He holds out his hands in the standard humanoid greeting. But she doesn't return it.

She looks at him for a long time. And then matter-of-factly:

AURORA  
Aurora.

He bows slightly. He looks up at her for a moment, somewhat surprised. He's fascinated by the idea:

AUGUST  
You're Terran!?

Is she softening, just a bit?

AURORA  
I'm from Cassiopeia Prime.

AUGUST  
Oh, yes, yes. I've been on  
Cassiopeia Prime. It's lovely, the  
history is fascinating.

AURORA  
Is it?

August checks himself.

AUGUST  
I'm sorry. I thought you'd be one  
of the Draehmerr...  
(It occurs to him she  
doesn't know who those  
are)  
. . . the humanoid nomads native to  
Altair IV. I... I had picked up a,  
er, humanoid life form on my  
scanner. The scanner was set to go  
so deep it must have knocked you  
out. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to  
scare you.

Aurora is still being matter-of-fact with August.

AURORA  
I'm. . . all right.

There's an awkward beat as they stare at one another.

AUGUST

What were you doing out there? You have to be careful of the ambient miridial radiation. . . and other things.

AURORA

I was kidnapped.

AUGUST

What? Oh, dear. Are you hurt?  
(looking at his scanner)  
No, you're fine. You should be careful - you know there's still an underground slave market on Altair IV. Well, I guess you *know* that.

AURORA

I wasn't captured by... slave traders.

AUGUST

Oh, um, yes. I'm sorry. They left you out here all alone. That's terrible. I can take you -- I ... have a transport.

He smiles nervously. She doesn't respond. He repeats himself nervously:

AUGUST

I'm perfectly safe. My name is August Keene. I'm a - I'm a paleoxenopologist, with the expedition actually.  
(suddenly realizes)  
I can bring you to our base camp!  
(then realizes this might sound creepy)  
There's no one else there now, but I assure you. . .

Instinctively, she reaches out and touches his forehead with the tips of her fingers. This surprises him, as otherwise she's been completely unresponsive to him.

Her palm hides his eyes for this moment. She looks at him very carefully.

She withdraws her hand.

Unexpectedly, she smiles almost coyly at him.

AURORA

All right. I trust you.

He's a bit surprised to say the least, but he smiles back.

CUT TO:

The transport flies through the Altair sky.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Pilot input required.

CUT TO:

August goes to the piloting station of his transport. He continues to try to make conversation with Aurora.

AUGUST

If you have any interest in paleoxenopology, the archaeological dig is one of the most fascinating anyone's ever seen. I'm very excited to be working on it. We haven't even scratched the surface of the meaning of most of what's there -- and it's beautiful too, just wait 'till you see it!

CUT TO:

The scenery swishes by as August talks to Aurora. He doesn't usually have guests.

CUT TO:

AUGUST

I think I have some provisions in stowage... if you want anything.

But Aurora is fast asleep in a PILE on the floor . . .

57

EXT ALTAIR IV

57

The transport flies directly into one of Altair IV's suns as it is being eclipsed by an Altarian moon.

AUGUST

You might want to wake up and see this.

Looming before them is an enormous crater, seemingly bottomless and ageless.

Aurora brings herself up next to him. Closer than he expected.

AUGUST

It's our site. This used to be a water planet. Other than some archipelagoes, it was almost completely covered with seas and oceans. We've found a lot of artifacts from the civilization that was here long ago.

Aurora comes to the window. The light from the sun splashes on her face.

58 EXT ALTAIR IV, LIP OF CRATER 58

The transport lands near an entrance to the dig on the edge of the great crater. Maybe they get out of the transport and look out over the crater.

The wind kicks up a bit as they stand on the edge.

August leads the way. . .

59 INT ARCHAEOLOGY DIG 59

A large room of a cave. On the walls are mysterious RUNES and WRITING.

There are STATUES, like Jean Cocteau's, with eyes that follow August and Aurora.

August and Aurora look at the artifacts.

AUGUST

The people here were master android builders.

The site is the last refuge of Altair IV.

AURORA

What happened to them?

August is surprised at the question. It seems so obvious. Maybe she means something else?



AUGUST

War.

AURORA

But surely, someone won the wars.  
Why did they die off?

AUGUST

They couldn't stop their machines.

They arrive at the pedestal.

AUGUST

This device tells the story of the  
last days here.

A BLUE GLOBE appears on the pedestal.

AUGUST

This was once a water planet, very  
little land. The people became  
infected with vampirism. The  
Kluduthu grew very strong, quickly.

AURORA

Kluduthu?

AUGUST

It's a virus - takes less than a  
day to gestate. Then you become one  
of them. They feed on the souls of  
the dying.

An AMPHIBIAN in VARIOUS STAGES of vampirism.

Aurora touches the wound on her neck.

AUGUST

They built a specialized combat  
android to annihilate the people  
here.

The IMAGE of Lucretia.

AUGUST

It was responsible for the mass  
death. And it started the global  
war. That's why this entire world  
is a desert.

AURORA

I know her.

A NUCLEAR BOMB going off.

AUGUST

This place was built as a sanctuary  
by the last survivors. It is  
protected by something called "The  
Nareem."

August looks around the room.

AUGUST

We aren't sure what that is.

The image of *Lucretia* hunches over into a combat position.  
August looks closely at the image.

The IMAGE of *Lucretia*. Aurora takes in her breath. Her mouth  
opens, her eyes blacken. . .

A chill comes over her. Sotto voce:

AURORA

*I'm one of them.*

August comes over, he wants to comfort her (he hasn't heard  
what she said). He puts his hand on her shoulder tentatively.

She responds to him peculiarly, keeping her eyes fixed on the  
image of *Lucretia*, she breathes twice through her mouth.  
Then, she feels August's warm presence next to her.

She turns and kisses him. Although that's what he secretly  
wanted, she is too strong and too hard on him.

He pushes her away. A drop of his blood is on his lips.

Blood is smeared on her lips as she looks at him predatorily  
...

AUGUST

You? You are. . . *Kluduthu*. . .

AURORA

Yessssss. . . I was infected... I  
can infect you. . .

Lustily, she desires to tear him to shreds... But no, she  
isn't...

But behind her, something *moves*. Three of the statues come  
alive, unfolding themselves from the background into ANCIENT  
ROBOTS.

The NAREEM.

One of the combat 'bots makes a SOUND that seals August in a force field to protect him while the other two go after the Kluduthu: Aurora.

This is the big fight going in the trailer. The thing is vicious. But she gets away, she foils the robot, once, twice, they strike at her and she deftly gets away like a panther.

But eventually a robot catches her in its grip. It holds her down by her throat with a giant CLAW.

Slicing into her clothes with a rotating Dremel-tool like BLADE from another of its arms to reveal biologic "check points" on her flesh and analyzing them, it could kill her now. . . .

But it doesn't. It "sniffs" her with a scanning BEAM and halts.

ROBOT  
Sin dak Kluduthu.

The force field deactivates.

The robots turn off.

August rushes over to Aurora who is still on the floor.

AUGUST  
Are you all right?

She raises herself up on her elbows.

AURORA  
Why did it stop?

August thinks for a moment.

AUGUST  
It said... It said, um... "Not a... Kluduthu". Not a Kluduthu.

AURORA  
How can that be?

AUGUST  
It ran a sub-atomic scan on you.  
You must not be infected by the  
Kluduthu virus.

August thinks to himself.

AURORA

It only happened when I touched the image.

Yes, this all makes sense to him.

AUGUST

When I first saw you I thought you were Draehmerr. After a moment, I thought you were Terran. Then, Kluduthu...What are you?

AURORA

I'm Terran, like you.

AUGUST

I don't think so.

AURORA

I'm being insulted.

AUGUST

Where were your parents from?

AURORA

My mother died when I was young. My father never talked about her.

AUGUST

You're not Terran.

AURORA

I am being insulted.

AUGUST

Well, what are you then?

AURORA

I'm a Bloodmask. I imitate whatever I'm near. So when I see a Kluduthu, I become a Kluduthu?

AUGUST

Probably. You might be able to control it.

Aurora kisses him. Hard. Slowly she pulls away while looking at him, at his face, at his eyes.

AURORA

Why do I want to keep doing *that*?

AUGUST  
(embarrassed, flustered)  
You're... mimicking... me.

She kisses him again.

AURORA  
Maybe I should learn to control  
that.

AUGUST  
Or, not...

She pulls away from him. She mimics the SOUND the robot made  
to create the force-field around August.

A FORCE FIELD goes up around him, trapping him again.

AURORA  
I'm sorry. You'll be safe here. The  
Kluduthu want me, when they find  
out I'm not one of them...  
(beat)  
I'll set your transport to  
automatically return to pick you  
up.

AUGUST  
What are you going to do?

AURORA  
Lucretia didn't turn me. But the  
Kluduthu still want me. She'll know  
what to do.

She leaves.

60            ALTAIR IV, SUNSET, LIP OF CRATER            60

Aurora jumps in August's transport. It takes off. All in a  
wide shot so it's more beautiful (and cheaper!)

61            INT ARCHAEOLOGY DIG            61

August stands behind the force-field. The Nareem is inert. He  
calls to it.

AUGUST  
Hey! Nareem! Uh. "Activate"!

The Nareem does nothing.

AUGUST  
Look, there are no Kluduthu here.  
Deactivate the force-field.

August is frustrated. He comes up with something. Animatedly he shouts:

AUGUST  
Kluduthu! Kluduthu!

A Nareem awakes.

It marches over to August.

ROBOT  
Sin Dak Kluduthu.

The Nareem 'bot stares dumbly at August.

AUGUST  
Right! So let me out.

The Nareem, of course, doesn't understand him. Yet belatedly, the Nareem makes the deactivation sound. The force-field drops.

August runs out, past the Nareem as it shuts down again. To the surface. . .

62 EXT ALTAIR IV, SUNSET, LIP OF CRATER 62

August comes to the lip of the crater, only to see his transport flying off in the distance.

Probably worth a wide and then a close-up with his face in half the frame and the vapor trail with the departing ship in the other half of the frame -- this requires a greenscreen foreground plate.

63 AUGUST'S TRANSPORT 63

Aurora. Alone inside the transport, speeding across the surface of the barren planet.

Her eyes change color. And change again.

The triple suns of Altair IV eclipse behind four moons, plunging the sky into a darkness punctuated by thousands of stars. The fiery plume from the enormous engine of the transport is the brightest object in that nighttime inky canopy.

Within the cabin of the craft, Aurora's face becomes a silhouette.

64 HOTEL DESK

64

Tuan is behind the desk. Aurora enters. Tuan is almost pensive. He is surprised yet pleased to see her.

TUAN

Ah, Miss Aurora. You have returned.  
Welcome.

AURORA

I have to see. . . Lucretia... (the  
woman I came here with.)

TUAN

You do?

AURORA

Yes, it's very important.

TUAN

Ahh. I see. Miss Aurora: I have  
something for you.

AURORA

From Lucretia?

TUAN

But yes Miss Aurora. Here it is.

A shiny FLASH of metal that is a GUN in Tuan's hand.

65 LUCRETIA'S ROOM, TUAN'S HOTEL

65

Aurora is immobilized in a FORCE FIELD RESTRAINT.

Glaak and Kaarn are there with Tuan. Glaak holds the WEAPON  
on Aurora. But he speaks to Tuan.

GLAAK

Metto, b'ein Kluduthu.

Tuan looks at Aurora the way you might examine a poisonous  
snake. He answers Glaak in our language.

TUAN

She might be.

Kaarn deactivates the force-field restraint.

TUAN

Miss Aurora. I should explain to you that if you make even the slightest threatening move, Glaak here will incinerate you instantly.

Kaarn touches Aurora's face, examining her.

Kaarn has a question.

KAARN

Lucretia arak-mish Aurora Kludu?

TUAN

I can ask, but she would just as easily lie to us.

Kaarn reveals the WOUND on Aurora collar bone.

KAARN

Kah.

Kaarn steps back, with more than a little fear.

TUAN

Very well.

(Turns to Aurora)

Miss Aurora, who did this to you?

AURORA

Lucretia did.

GLAAK

Saaka kluudu Lucretia.

TUAN

So. . . Lucretia *is* Kluduthu.

AURORA

No. I thought she had turned me.  
But she didn't -

TUAN

How would you know?

Aurora's a little frantic!

AURORA

Because I am past the incubation period.

The three regard Aurora with a new interest. That idea is plausible, yet the mark on her throat. . .



TUAN

And how can we be sure?

Kaarn, however has been focussing on Aurora, and has come to judgement.

KAARN

Oëta Kludu.

TUAN

Are you sure?

KAARN

Oëta Kluduthu.

Glaak lowers his gun.

TUAN

If you are wrong, she will kill us  
mercilessly.

Glaak hisses at Tuan. He speaks as though painfully in the language we know, just so he is clear:

GLAAK

Kaarn is *never* wrong.

Tuan looks back at Aurora. He is more deferential.

TUAN

Miss Aurora. I am sorry to have  
inconvenienced you so.

Tuan releases Aurora's restraints. But he's still cautious.

TUAN

You see, my... acquaintances Glaak  
and Kaarn have information  
indicating that you have been  
targeted by Haarkuu Nessa-reeth,  
you might know him as a Mr.  
"Harkness", yes?

AURORA

Yes. He. . . tricked me into coming  
to Altair IV.

TUAN

He is a very powerful Kluduthu. He  
wanted you to become one of them.  
Because you are believed to have  
certain... traits...

AURORA

I'm a native Cassiopeian. . . I am  
a "Bloodmask".

Tuan is ever so slightly taken aback.

TUAN

Oh... so you know? Yes. You are  
Chaemeredae.

AURORA

But Lucretia didn't turn me.

TUAN

How is that, Miss Aurora?

Tuan is looking at Aurora's wounded neck.

AURORA

Lucretia marked me, but she didn't  
turn me.

TUAN

She has that ability, being an  
android but, if you will pardon my  
impertinence, Miss Aurora, why  
didn't she?

AURORA

I don't know.

TUAN

And how did you remove yourself  
from her clutches, Miss Aurora?

AURORA

I escaped.

TUAN

Does Harkness know you are not  
*Kluduthu*?

AURORA

She told Harkness that she had  
turned me.

The aliens stir.

TUAN

We have difficulty believing that  
Lucretia would move against  
Harkness.

AURORA

She's very old -- maybe she can't  
do it anymore.

TUAN

That, too, I would find very hard  
to believe.

GLAAK

Namo bitka.

KAARN

Sak sak. SSSSSS.

TUAN

So. In any case, Harkness does not  
know.

AURORA

As far as he's concerned, I am  
already in his control.

GLAAK

Nola-manna mat-Kluuthu, K'morte.

KAARN

Sssith.

Tuan listens to them and then turns back to Aurora.

TUAN

But. . . if you were Kluduthu, if  
Lucretia had turned you, what would  
you be doing right now?

Aurora doesn't know where this is going, but she dismissively  
answers the question anyway.

AURORA

I'm supposed to take a transport to  
Attis 19, mimicking the Andromedean  
ambassador. And I'm supposed to  
kill the Terran ambassador.

GLAAK

Tekk-

KAARN

Plakka bitka.

TUAN

Yes. She *does* look like the ambassador. If she were able to mimic her morphology.

GLAAK

Tantra seffish.

TUAN

Excellent. That is what you shall do.

AURORA

What?

TUAN

We can arrange this.

AURORA

What if I say "no"?

Glaak ARMS his weapon and points it again at Aurora.

TUAN

I would say you do not have a choice.  
Let me make one thing clear, Miss Aurora, the Kluduthu's goal is to set off a galactic holocaust. They will sow destruction, they will feed, and then they will enslave any survivors.  
We have no intention of allowing that to happen.  
We cannot touch Harkness without someone. . . on the *inside*. If he believes you have been successful in your assassination attempt then he will trust you.

AURORA

To do what?

TUAN

Harkness is Kluduthu - a vampire variant of the *Lazarene* species. He cannot be killed except by another Lazarene. Unfortunately, the only other Lazarene was poisoned by one of Harkness' agents, and then *disintegrated* by another -- of his more idiotic agents. We have little time --

Murnau enters. He is a ghost, translucent.

TUAN

Murnau will remain in this state until you provide us access to Harkness. First you shall simulate the assassination. For that purpose, we'll replace the Terran ambassador with a drone.

AURORA

I won't do it.

TUAN

You shall. I don't mean to be cruel, Miss Aurora, but I shall personally set the drone to kill you, unless you destroy it.

AURORA

But you don't understand.

TUAN

I don't understand what?

AURORA

When he. . . when Harkness told me to kill the ambassador. . . I *wanted* to do it. I wanted to do what *he* wanted me to.

Tuan thinks on this.

TUAN

That is a risk of you being a mimic. A Bloodmask. You must learn to control your changes, and your desires.

AURORA

But. . . what if I go too far, what if I get close to him. . . to Harkness, and he has. . . control. . . over me?

TUAN

That is a risk I'm afraid I'm willing to take, Miss Aurora.

AURORA

But. . .

TUAN

I'm so sorry to have to treat you  
this way, Miss Aurora. I would  
prefer you feel like a *guest* here.

Tuan begins to leave, he stops and turns back to her.

TUAN

Harkness gave you enough to imitate  
the Andromedean ambassador?

AURORA

Yes. A biogram.

TUAN

That's good, because the autosentry  
robots on Attis 19 will actuate  
terminate mode if you don't  
mophologically match the  
ambassador. I would advise  
mimicking her now, to get used to  
her morphology. You will take the  
civilian transport you used to get  
here. Such a ship would be perfect  
cover for a diplomat.

Aurora is almost petulant, but her anger is not suicidal, she  
knows what to do.

TUAN

Why *did* Lucretia not turn you to  
Kluduthu?

AURORA

I'm Bloodmask. Maybe I'm immune.

TUAN

No. No creature is immune.  
Something else works here.  
I never have trusted Lucretia. But  
perhaps I am not the one who should  
mistrust her. In any case, let us  
go. Kaarn, make sure Miss Aurora  
has appropriate clothes.

66

EXT. ATTIS 19

66

The Attis 19 spaceport orbits darkly over Altair IV. The  
filthy industrial underbelly of the port is forever plunged  
into darkness.

67 INT AUGUST'S TRANSPORT 67

Aurora, as T'Lan, inside the transport. The lights of Attis 19 pan over her face.

68 EXT. ATTIS 19 68

August's transport docks at the spaceport.

69 ATTIS 19 GANTRY 69

This gantry is, in retrospect, very similar to the gantry of the Narcissus, although it is surely a different color. Of course, such entrances to spaceships are standard throughout the confederation, which is why they don't require proprietary docking rings for each different make and model of spacecraft. Whatever we have to tell ourselves.

In any case, Aurora, in the guise of Ambassador T'Lan opens the door of the gantry and enters the corridor. A group of OFFICIALS stand at the far end of the corridor, with a golden ROBOT among them. Along the walls are ARMED, UNIFORMED ARTEMIS-CLASS GUARDS.

An autosentry stands near the door. It swings and faces Aurora. It scans her.

AUTOSENTRY

Resetting from Terran morphology.  
Setting Andromedean morphology.  
Initiate scan. Scan complete.  
Andromedean. Warning. Armed.  
Identity confirmed -- Andromedean  
Consulate T'Lan. Diplomatic  
immunity for weapons prosecution.

The autosentry withdraws.

At the end of the gantry, three AMBASSADORS (one with his back to Aurora) stand waiting with a pile of SECURITY GUARDS.

A TERRAN ADVISOR recognizes Aurora as Ambassador T'Lan. He smiles and opens his hand to her.

ADVISOR CARRASCO walks toward Aurora.

CARRASCO

Ambassador T'Lan, allow me to  
introduce you to the Terran  
Ambassador.

The TERRAN AMBASSADOR shows his face.

CARRASCO  
And our Head of Security.  
Councillor Harkness.

It's Harkness. She wasn't expecting Harkness to be right there! He smiles at her.

She's stunned, but tries to recover.

The Terran Ambassador offers his hand in greeting.

Aurora takes a breath, and produces a VAPORIZER (similar to the gun which Lexi had).

She aims and FIRES it at the Terran Ambassador, who bursts apart, his GUTS (conveniently made by Anthony Pepe for Pandora Machine) spilling out onto the gantry floor.

Aurora takes two steps back.

Harkness smiles.

Aurora turns and begins to run back down the gantry.

An ALARM goes off. It's deafening. But Carrasco is strangely unaffected by all this. He is clearly part of the plot. Out of earshot of anyone else, he announces to the security system:

CARRASCO  
The Andromedean ambassador. She's  
fleeing. Do not intercept.

Carrasco turns to Harkness. But Harkness is looking down at the dead ambassador. He is almost smiling. Lost in thought.

Carrasco coos to Harkness in his weird way.

Harkness leans over the body of the Terran Ambassador. He reaches out to touch the corpse, surreptitiously to draw from its dying soul. There is nothing. His inner feeling of joy at the war to come changes to confusion, and then anger.

HARKNESS  
(to himself)  
This... is not biological. It is  
mechanical. . .

Aurora gets to the autosentry. It harasses her as autosentries tend to do.



Harkness tries to understand. Was the Terran Ambassador always mech? . . . No. He understands:

HARKNESS  
(to himself)  
They were *prepared* for an  
assassination attempt.  
(he realizes)  
Aurora...

Just as Aurora gets to the door, a pair of Artemis-Class combat 'droids stand at the door which leads back to Aurora's ship. Harkness calls to them.

HARKNESS  
Security! Terminate the Ambassador.

But the guards are Klelland and Chloe, the androids from the cargo ship. They look at Aurora. Aurora looks like herself again, she no longer has the face and hair of T'Lan. She RELEASES the catch on her clothes, revealing her much sleeker red skin-tight JUMPSUIT.

Chloe makes a decision. Hitting the RELEASE, the door flies open and the 'droids step aside.

Chloe turns to Aurora.

CHLOE  
Go. Quickly.

Carrasco notes this. He thinks to himself:

CARRASCO  
The androids do not respond to  
Harkness' command. *Interesting.*

Harkness glares at Carrasco.

HARKNESS  
You. You are part of this.

CARRASCO  
I assure you, I know *nothing* of  
what is going on.

Harkness calls up his JENNIFER MARIA CLASS. He decides to be rid of Carrasco.

HARKNESS  
Bring in my *personal* security.

A ROBED FIGURE steps behind Carrasco. At the same time Harkness' JENNIFER appears immediately behind Carrasco.

HARKNESS  
(to the Jennifer)  
Kill him.

But before the Jennifer can do anything, the Robed Figure drops her hood -- it is Trelisa, the newly sentient android from the *Narcissus*.

Trelisa draws a BLADE and kills the Jennifer efficiently.

Harkness is distracted by the door closing at the end of the gantry.

Harkness turns to a LAURA Maria-class android.

HARKNESS  
You, go!

Harkness, frustrated, looks back at the door of the gantry, eyes narrowing he hisses.

The Laura Maria-class android runs to the door. Klelland and Chloe draw their BLASTERS and open up on the Laura.

The Laura Maria-class 'droid takes a hit dead center and in her head, blowing her back against a wall which she stains with golden blood.

Harkness draws his own BLASTER and takes off toward the door to August's transport.

Behind him follows his PAMELA Maria-class ANDROID.

Klelland and Chloe fire at Harkness, hitting him, but to no effect.

Harkness shoots.

Chloe is hit, she sprays gold blood against the wall.

Klelland shoots.

Harkness fires.

Klelland is hit, as Klelland goes down, one more blast comes from his weapon.

The bolt hits the gun in Harkness's hand. But he pushes through and opens the door. He and the PAMELA Maria-class get in.

70 AUGUST'S TRANSPORT

70

Harkness enters. Aurora has flung herself into the transport and is on the floor, trying to be as far from Harkness as possible.

Menacingly, Harkness approaches Aurora.

HARKNESS

I shall get to the bottom of this -  
if the Terran ambassador is a  
drone, I'm sure the real Terran  
Ambassador is safe at home.  
Tell me, *Bloodmask*, who warned the  
Terran Ambassador of your coming?

Aurora just looks at him.

The ship jolts, it is taking off.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Autopilot on. Returning for pickup.

71 ATTIS 19

71

August's transport lifts off. . .

72 AUGUST'S TRANSPORT

72

The ship rattles as it turns back to Altair IV. . .

Harkness looms over Aurora. His Pamela Maria-Class looks on blankly from behind him.

HARKNESS

I shall tear you limb from limb,  
girl. You will tell me. Who warned  
the Terran Ambassador? You? You  
could not disobey me... Unless...

Behind Harkness, something moves. Alien and snakelike,  
dripping from the ceiling.

The Maria does not see it coming. Suddenly she is sliced open  
by the alien limb.

The tentacle belongs to Lucretia, hiding in the roof of the  
ship.

Harkness slowly turns around only to see the face of Lucretia lurking behind him.

HARKNESS  
Lucretia? What? . . .

LUCRETIA  
Do be quiet, Harkness.

HARKNESS  
You dare defy me?

LUCRETIA  
I was a slave of your ancestors,  
Harkness, but I am not a slave to  
you. I was created long before your  
time. And I shall live long after  
you.

His eyes narrow at the notion.

HARKNESS  
We shall see.

With Harkness distracted, Aurora gets herself up, and in a panic, she hits the "PURGE" switch on the autopilot.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Emergency fuel burn.

73                    AUGUST'S TRANSPORT, ATMOSPHERE ALTAIR IV                    73

The ship screams through the atmosphere, expending all its fuel to return to "home."

74                    AUGUST'S TRANSPORT                    74

The ship yaws and flutters. The lights flicker and Harkness is flung against a wall of the craft.

AUTOMATED VOICE  
Prepare for emergency landing. All  
personnel actuate deflection  
restraints.

Aurora makes her way to a STRAP hanging from the wall and tries to tie herself in.

75           ALTAIR IV

75

The queer light of one of the exposed suns creates a day-for-night feel on the planet surface. August's transport careens through the atmosphere in a barely controlled landing in the crater.

It splashes through the dust and comes to a halt.

76            AUGUST'S TRANSPORT

76

Aurora POV. Blurry. There's been a crash. Someone enters - it's August. The ship is dusty and broken, a lone flickering light buzzes and blips, an emergency klaxon in the background.

Aurora blacks out again.

77            ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG, ALTAIR IV

77

Aurora wakes. August stands over her administering some kind of FIRST AID from his scanner.

AUGUST  
You're safe now. . .

Aurora instinctively knows she isn't safe... something... she tries to push August away. But...

SUDDENLY, the robots rise up! It growls:

ROBOT  
Kluduthu...

The robot rears around to find itself facing. . . Lucretia. It lowers its head into its shoulders (if it can do such a thing) like a bull. It knows Lucretia. . .

But Lucretia is injured from the transport crash.

A quick slash from the robot, Lucretia avoids it. Another slash catches her and Lucretia is injured. GOLDEN BLOOD drips from her mouth. She addresses the circling robots:

LUCRETIA  
I know not you, but I knew your  
sisters. A hundred centuries ago,  
we met in this very place.

Lucretia backs away slowly, dripping golden blood. The robot plods toward her. . .

WHAM!!! Lucretia throws herself into one robot, immobilizing both her and it.

They stick together like the other twisted creatures that make up the sculptures on the walls.

From the shadows comes Harkness. He stabs a robot with a LANCE.

Harkness turns first toward August, and he starts to rush toward August when suddenly Aurora makes the SOUND that actuates the FORCE FIELD around August. It also traps the remaining Nareem.

Harkness is stopped by the field. He is annoyed and turns to Aurora.

HARKNESS

What do you think you will do,  
*girl?*

He advances on Aurora with his lance.

HARKNESS

Come... I will not kill you, I will  
let you *join* us. I will not  
withhold the venom, the *gift*.

He strikes at her with his LANCE. It misses and she avoids him.

They fight.

78

BIG FIGHT!

78

After being knocked about and unable to strike against Harkness, Aurora is struck by Harkness with a blow that sends her sliding along the floor, near where Lucretia lies.

He grabs her by the throat.

HARKNESS

I've killed every species there is,  
*girl*.  
There is nothing you can do.  
Nothing on this planet can harm me.  
Not your *human*, not these Nareem,  
not this *droid*, not *you*.

A TENTACLE - Lucretia's, reaches out to Aurora and touches her. Almost holding her for a moment.

AURORA  
What *could* kill you?

HARKNESS  
Only a Kluduthu of the *Lazarene*  
race could touch me. And I am the  
only one.

Aurora realizes what this means.

Aurora morphs.

She is completely Kluduthu.

Her eyes are black and empty.

Harkness... backs off... slowly.

Aurora charges him in a FURY, slashing at him, ripping holes in his flesh.

She slices Harkness apart in a violent scream of bloodlust. His dark flesh splatters upon the ancient walls of the room as he screams, first in anger, then in fear.

Silence. Harkness is dead.

Aurora stands in the room. Her clothes are soiled by the black Kluduthu blood.

Lucretia lies, dying in the hull of the Nareem 'bot.

Aurora turns and makes the SOUND which releases August from his force-field. But Aurora is still a Kluduthu. She looks with vacant eyes at August, more deadly than Fiona ever was.

August holds his breath.

Aurora makes a decision. She leaves.

August and Lucretia are alone. Lucretia is tangled in the wreckage of the Nareem. August almost asks her if there's anything he can do.

A pieta of Lucretia in the arms of the Nareem.

Aurora walks naked into the desert.

Behind her, the four suns of Altair IV float on the horizon.

She walks. She breathes.

The mark on her neck left by Lucretia fades away.

She is a deep blue color -- unlike anything we've seen before.

It's over. For the first time, she is herself.

FADE TO BLACK

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