

HUSBANDS IN SPACE

Countdown

by
Michael Cornetto

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COUNTDOWN

TEASER

EXT. MELK HIGHWAY - DAY

AUTOCATS zoom in both directions as they hover above the wide grass road. One orange coloured cat turns off at a dirt exit labelled CAPE CHARLOTTE OLDAGE PARK.

EXT. CAPE CHARLOTTE OLDAGE PARK - DAY

It approaches a massive wall. An ornate gate opens and the cat passes through it. A number of surveillance cameras swivel as it passes.

It is plunged into a dark forest. Its twin jet rails throw up parallel clouds of dust. An ELDERLY PERSON stands at the edge of the track and expectantly watches it pass.

INSIDE THE CAT

MARTHA AVERS(80) throws a tantrum in the passenger seat. She stamps her feet and bangs her fists against the dashboard.

MARTHA

No! You tricked me! I don't want to go!

ANDROMEDA STARMAN(10, Andy) mimics Martha from the back seat.

ANDY

...don't want to go!

CASSIOPEIA STARMAN(35, Cass) sits in the driver seat, her lips draw tightly together.

CASS

Andy, stop mimicking your grandmother!

ANDY

...mimicking your grandmother...
Can't help it, mum!

Cass forces herself to be calm.

CASS

I know you can't, but not now.
Put your ears on, dear.

Andy glowers at Cass.

ANDY

But mum, they hurt! Can't I...

CASS

Just do it!

ANDY

...do it!

Angrily, Andy taps the side of her head. She winces as two clear half bubbles appear over her ears.

She slumps in the back seat, staring toward the front, her hurt, angry eyes settle just above the seat top.

Cass rails at her mother.

CASS

She's having another attack. And it's your fault! Faith! You know the doctor told us loud emotional outbursts would trigger them, but you still insist on shouting. It's going to be eons before I can calm her...

MARTHA

You lied to me!

Cass smirks.

MARTHA

We're going to the holos you said but instead you took me to the park. How could you do that?

CASS

Would you have come if I told you we were going to the park?

MARTHA

Of course not!

CASS

Then I did the right thing.

MARTHA

You weren't raised to be dishonest, Cass.

CASS

I was raised to be responsible, to do my duty...

MARTHA

With honor...

CASS

...By any means necessary.

Cass hits a pad on the dashboard and the cat stops. She hits another pad and the scissor doors slice open.

CASS

Now get out of the cat, mum.

MARTHA

I won't.

Cass sighs.

INTERCUT EXT. CAPE CHARLOTTE OLDAGE PARK

An ELDERLY COUPLE sit on a bench nearby, but they stand as Cass exits the cat.

Cass nods at them then turns away.

The old couple seem disappointed. They slump back onto their bench. She speaks to Martha through the open door.

CASS

It's mandatory! Eighty years,
stay with peers.

She waits for a reply.

CASS

Everyone eighty years of age or
over must reside in an OldAge
Park. You know that!

Martha lowers her head.

MARTHA

I should have never written that
law.

ACT ONE

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. COUNCIL HOUSE THEATRE - DAY

A well lit television stage.

R2D2-like mobile electronic reporting devices, REPORTOs, fill the room, their remote journalist visible and active on their front monitor.

A small podium stands before the electronic audience. A banner with an insignia of an earth zooming through space fills the background behind it.

SUPER: 35 years ago.

A group of six, three men, three women, enter the stage and stand behind the podium. They pose with a smile.

Flashes of light come from the audience.

SUPER: Day 0: The Age of Innovation.

As the flashes die down, one man, CHARLES GUMM, steps forward. He tries to adjust the microphone on the podium but fails. He looks back at the group and chuckles.

CHARLES

Old tech.

They respond with laughter. This time, with a little elbow grease, he succeeds in adjusting the microphone. Then in all seriousness...

CHARLES

I would like to be the first to
welcome the earth to a new age --
Welcome Earth, to the Age of
Innovation!

He throws his arms up in a V. The flashes renew with a fury.

CHARLES

Innovation, you ask? Change. What
kind of change? Things work the
way they are now, why change? We
change because o-pop says the way
things are right now doesn't
work. As speaker for your new
government, I promise...

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS

A family sits in a small living room watching their **HOVERGLOW**, a flat television image that floats in the middle of the room.

The father smiles and rubs the son's head.

Charles Gumm is on the HG screen.

CHARLES

...That we will live up to our platform by providing maximum funding for scientific research to improve technologies...

The patrons in a crowded bar watch Charles on the HG above the bar as they sip their strange brew.

They clink their glasses in a toast.

CHARLES

...to expand our space exploration, to increase our agricultural and mining output and to balance our ecology. And all of these advances will be pointed toward one goal...

A man and his pregnant wife sit in a crowded hospital waiting room watching the waiting room HG.

The wife rubs her tummy.

CHARLES

...relief from overcrowding due to the burgeoning population of our planet.

Many images of Charles move in synch from HGs in the window of the TRONICS shop.

CHARLES

O-pop is eating our limited food, using our limited resources, polluting our air and filling our limited space.

People walk past the TRONICS shop on a very crowded smoggy street.

CHARLES

In the foreseeable future, with new technologies, these problems will no longer exist.

The exterior of a vegetable shop with meager choices. The entry line continues forever.

CHARLES

But right here, and right now it is most likely that we all will need to make some sacrifices in order to alleviate the symptoms.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. COUNCIL HOUSE THEATRE - DAY

Charles stands at the podium, five stand behind him.

CHARLES

As the first act of your new government, a task force will be set up to investigate O-pop and draft legislation to ease the burden it places on our society. I am pleased to announce that heading that force will be Councillor Martha Avers.

Charles looks back toward a YOUNG MARTHA AVERS(45).

CHARLES

Martha, step forward please.

Young Martha smiles proudly and takes a step toward the podium.

END FLASHBACK

INT./EXT. PARK - DAY

Martha sits in the front seat of the car. She frowns. Cass stands next to an open door.

CASS

It was brilliant, mum! The young need room to live. They need their chance...

Cass glances at Andy in the back seat.

CASS

Andy needs that chance.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. COUNCIL HOUSE THEATRE - DAY

The top lights on many of the reportos blink.

Martha stands at the podium, she points at one.

The remote reporter, EUKARYOTA SMITH (28, Eukie), speaks from the monitor on the front of her reporto.

EUKIE

Eukie Smith from the Cape
Charlotte Chronicle -- Miz Avers,
will this legislation, in any
way, involve quotas on birth
rates?

MARTHA

I want to introduce all of you to
someone...

Martha holds out her arms and beckons to someone off in the
wings. A very young baby is placed in her arms.

Martha glows.

MARTHA

This is my daughter, Cassiopeia.
Her name may be steeped in
antiquity but I've given that
name to her to represent the
future. A more scientific and
logical future. She deserves that
future and it is my duty, our
duty to provide her and every
other child on this planet with
one. The young need room to live,
they need their chance. As a
mother, I've no interest in
preventing births. As a matter of
fact, I intend to have another
child myself.

Flashing lights and murmurs from the audience. Martha
laughs.

MARTHA

Not just yet.
(more sober)
Not before I solve some of the
problems we face. The legislation
we are planning will concentrate
on using available space and
resources more efficiently. Will
we need to make sacrifices? As
Charles said, most likely. But
will Cass and any children to
come have their future? Most
definitely.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY

Cass stands outside of the cat.

CASS

It's your duty to give Andy that chance. Your sacrifice to make. The world outside of this park isn't for you anymore, it's for the young.

Martha glares at her.

MARTHA

I'm selfish now. Is that it? I've done more than my share of duty for this world!

(softer, pleading)

Please, I can stay with you. I won't be a burden. I'll make myself useful, take care of...

CASS

It's illegal, mum! Besides, there's no room, where on earth would I put you?

MARTHA

Rye will head into space and...

CASS

Rye isn't going anywhere, he has a desk job.

MARTHA

They all go into space, Cass. Your father, your brother -- Rye will follow, you'll see. You'll be all alone. Like I was. Like Trix was when Kirk left.

Cass looks worried.

INT. G.C. AMBASSADOR

A space ship cryogenics room. Frosted tubes that contain blurred humans connect the ceiling and the floor. Above each of the tubes are status readouts.

On the first readout the name LT. CIRCINUS "KIRK" AVERS (30, Kirk) appears prominently.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A journey though the ship shows:

- A small mess with modern looking tables and chairs
- A corridor with closed crew quarters off of it
- A fully stocked medical bay

BRIDGE

Full of more blinking lights, switches, buttons, consoles and monitors than you can shake a stick at.

At one end of the bridge is a large rectangular view screen which shows a star field. One bright yellow star shines in the foreground.

Below the view screen is a monitor which contains the following text:

COURSE: PROXIMA CENTAURI STATUS: ON COURSE

FUNCTION: LIFE SCAN PN2793A STATUS: IN PROGRESS

INT./EXT. PARK - DAY

Martha smiles conspiratorially from the front seat of the cat.

MARTHA

I can take care of the legalities, Cass.

Cass groans with frustration.

CASS

Stop trying to manipulate me! Rye isn't going anywhere. But you are, now get out of the cat!

MARTHA

I've so much left to give.

Different tact, Cass sits inside the cat.

CASS

And you can give it here, where you belong, with your peers.

Martha scowls at her.

MARTHA

You'll regret it if leave me here, Cassiopeia.

Cass ignores her.

CASS

You'll like it here, you'll see. It's climate regulated. They have gourmet feedings and luxury shelters. The best KEEPERS...

Martha shrinks back, Cass forms a sly smile.

CASS
You don't like KEEPERS, do you?

Cass moves her hand toward a pad on the dashboard.

CASS
Should I call a KEEPER to remove
you or are you going to get out
of this cat without their help?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Young Martha Avers looks with horror at a blueprint.

YOUNG MARTHA
What is this?

The geeky YOUNG DR. SILICATE dresses in a white smock.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
A Kinetic Elderly Empowerment
Policy Enforcement Robot, a
KEEPER.

YOUNG MARTHA
I never imagined...

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Beautiful, isn't it?

YOUNG MARTHA
It's horrible. There has to be
another way.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
I'm afraid there isn't, Miz
Avers. Your legislation needs
enforcement. KEEPERS are designed
to do just that. They need to
inspire fear. They are a
necessary evil.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY

Cass wiggles her finger in front of the pad. Martha grabs her arm.

MARTHA
Wait! I'll go.

Cass smiles impishly as Martha exits the cat.

Cass hops out of the cat and walks around to the back.

Martha watches her with growing irritation.

Cass opens a compartment and pulls out a medium sized suitcase.

CASS
I've packed a bag for you.

MARTHA
(sarcastic)
How thoughtful.

Cass walks around the cat to Martha and hands her the bag.

Martha snatches the luggage from Cass's hand, then Martha becomes quite dignified and business-like.

MARTHA
I trust you've thought of
everything I would need.

CASS
Of course.

MARTHA
My U.T.?

CASS
I had your bot pack it.

Martha nods. An awkward moment.

CASS
You'll be alright?

MARTHA
Of course.

Cass leans forward. Martha flinches. Cass continues forward, giving Martha a hug. Both are clearly uncomfortable.

CASSIOPEA
I'm proud of you mum.

She gives Martha a peck on the cheek.

CASS
Goodbye.

Then Cass turns and rushes toward the driver's door of the cat. A tear travels down the side of Martha's face, she wipes it away.

MARTHA
You'll visit, won't you?

CASSIOPEA

Of course.

Martha watches Cass wave as she enter the cat. Then she notices Andy who is staring at her from the back seat.

Martha wipes away another tear. Andy mimics her.

How could Martha have forgotten?

Martha hurries forward, reaching toward Andy as Andy reaches toward her.

The scissor doors slice down, barring their encounter.

Martha places her hand flat against the window. Andy matches it, touching Martha's hand through the glass.

Then the cat glides away.

Martha waves as it goes. Andy waves back.

Martha's eyes fill with tears.

MARTHA

Goodbye, Andy.

Martha stands in the middle of the road.

Silence returns to the park as the low hum of the cat dies away.

ACT TWO

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

ORION STARMAN (35, Rye) stands in front of a holomirror, a 3D image of his head floating over the sink. A towel is wrapped around his waist.

He flexes one of his many muscles as he tidies his hair. An off camera noise startles him.

RYE

Cass?

CASS (O.S.)

It's me, Rye!

Rye crosses to the door and looks out.

RYE

Where were you?

Cass pushes him out of the way as she enters.

CASS

Andy had a relapse.

Cass starts undressing.

RYE

Faith! She was doing so well.
What happened?

CASS

Mum threw a fit when I dropped
her off at the park.

RYE

Today -- Dogma! I didn't get a
chance to say goodbye.

CASS

I'm sure we haven't seen the last
of her -- can you help me with
this?

Cass is trying to undo her bra (some things don't change).

Rye fiddles with the catch mechanism.

Cass waits impatiently.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bag in hand Martha walks up the stairs.

The Elderly Couple on the bench LUCY(80s) and PAUL(80s)
watch her with an amused look.

Martha stops at the top of the stairs. She scans the area, then notices Lucy and Paul.

MARTHA
Where do I..?

PAUL
That way.

And he points toward a dark path in the wood. Martha glances at it apprehensively.

MARTHA
Through there?

LUCY
Yes, Councillor.

Martha smooths her hair, a bit embarrassed but flattered.

MARTHA
I'm not a Councillor anymore.

PAUL
You'll always be Councillor to us, luv.

MARTHA
Well, I..

LUCY
Yeah, we'll always remember you...

The sound of a stick breaking behind Martha causes her to spin on her heels.

ERIC(80s) stands there, he seems both fit and menacing.

Martha takes a step back from him.

ERIC
...as the one that trapped us here.

Lucy and Paul snicker behind her.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Rye struggles with the catch mechanism.

CASS
She didn't want to leave. She begged me to let her stay here.

RYE
Maybe you should have.

CASS
It's illegal!

RYE
Of course. It's illegal. But
couldn't she...

CASS
She could have but that isn't the
point. She wrote the E.E.P.. How
would it look if she didn't abide
by it...

RYE
There's more to life than
appearances, Cass.

Ryan tenses.

CASS
If there is then I don't see it.

He pulls the strap a bit too hard.

CASS
Ow!

RYE
Sorry!

CASS
I was joking, Rye!

Rye throws his hands up.

Cass turns toward him, her hands behind her back work on
the clasp.

RYE
It was an accident.

CASS
You used to be good at taking off
my bra.

RYE
Things change, Cass.

CASS
What's that supposed to mean?

RYE
It means...

He hesitates, trying to formulate what he is going to say
next.

RYE

Nothing. It means nothing.

He exits the bathroom.

Cass stands there perplexed as the back-strap of her bra pops open.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Eric stands menacingly before Martha whilst Paul and Lucy snicker behind her.

Martha holds her suitcase across her chest as if for protection.

ERIC

You're the one responsible for
all of our misery, Councillor,
and I'm going to give some of it
back.

He punches his fist into his hand. Martha looks to Lucy and Paul, hopeful. Instead...

PAUL

Misery loves

AND LUCY

Company.

And they snicker.

Martha turns back toward Eric.

She closes her eyes and is still for a moment. Then she nods. She relaxes, lowers her suitcase. She opens her eyes and stares directly at Eric.

MARTHA

Go ahead.

ERIC

What?!

She drops her suitcase and taunts him with her hands.

MARTHA

Go ahead. Give it your best
shot.

Eric isn't sure he like this change. He glances over at Paul and Lucy for guidance. They shrug.

MARTHA

It was a stupid law. I admit it. It has caused a lot of misery and I deserve to suffer for even thinking such an abomination should be made into law. So, come on -- do your best! Make me miserable!

Eric backs away.

MARTHA

What the matter? You can't do it, can you? Why? Because you're a stupid impotent little grunt! That's why. You thought you could terrorize me but...wrong! You didn't think I would know that you wouldn't be able to harm me -- did you? The KEEPERS won't let you -- will they? They want to reserve that privilege all for themselves. And now you want to know how I know this -- because I built the KEEPERS and I know exactly what is programmed into every single one of their intricate little circuits. Just like I know what's built into every one of yours...

Martha makes a sudden move. Eric flinches. She chuckles as she picks up her suitcase.

MARTHA

I know it won't make up for what I've done but I can get us out of here.

She pauses long enough for it to sink in.

MARTHA

However, I will need some help...

She flashes a broad smile at her speechless audience.

MARTHA

Any of you up to it?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Rye dresses whilst looking in a mirror. Cass tightens her robes and her lips as she enters.

CASS

I want to know what's changed.

Rye ignores her. Cass grab his arm and spins him around toward her.

CASS
What's changed?

Rye looks down.

CASS
Dogma, Rye, I thought you could tell me anything.

She's thoughtful.

CASS
You aren't dying, are you?

She feels his head. He pushes her away.

RYE
No! I -- uh

CASS
Goddard's mistake, just tell me!

He sighs.

RYE
Alright, um, I've been lying to you...

He shoots her a pathetic look.

Cass is horrified.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Many small tables are set up on a patio surrounded by woods. This is obviously a social area.

ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN sit, chat and play old-fashioned table games like checkers or cards.

Martha enters from the woods. She takes a deep breath, as she takes in the scene, then she smiles.

Everyone on the patio stops what they are doing and stares at her.

A STRONG ELDERLY MAN pushes back his seat and stands. He give Martha a threatening look as he takes a step forward.

Eric, Paul and Lucy rush in behind her.

Eric shakes his head at the Strong Elderly Man. The man stops.

MARTHA
 (to Eric)
 Where do I sleep?

Eric points across the patio to a lone pair of doors at the other end.

ERIC
 Through those doors, ma'am and then down.

He looks out over the angry faces.

ERIC
 But it might be better if we wait until...

Martha sets off across the patio.

The people she passes look none too happy, yet she continues to smile as she scans their faces.

Eric, Paul and Lucy bring up the rear shooting apologetic looks at those they pass.

Martha veers off to the left. Eric et al. look disturbed by this development.

Then she stops in front of JONAS WINEBERGER, an elderly gentleman who spits out his drink when she point at him.

Martha turns to Paul.

MARTHA
 Him. Bring him.

Then, without another pause, Martha continues on. Eric apologetically follows leaving Paul and Lucy with Jonas.

Paul scratches his head but Lucy is on the job.

LUCY
 You heard the lady, move it.

JONAS
 I will not!

LUCY
 Do I have to make you?

She grabs at him trying to pull him up.

JONAS
 This is an outrage! Unhand me!

LUCY
 Oh! So posh we are.
 (she mimics)
 (MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

Unhand me. Did you hear that Paul? Unhand me.

JONAS

How crude!

Lucy loses it and starts laughing hysterically.

Paul's had enough.

PAUL

Alright you two, can it.

JONAS

Beg yours?

PAUL

You heard me.

Paul and Jonas stare at each other tensely for a moment. Then Paul softens.

PAUL

Look, I don't know you from Adam but that lady, the one that fingered you. You know who she is?

JONAS

Councillor Avers?

PAUL

Right. And you know what she did?

JONAS

She wrote laws. Governed...

PAUL

And she approved every single bit of logic that goes through the brains of our friends the KEEPERS.

Jonas shudders. Then it sinks in.

JONAS

Really?

PAUL

Yep. She says she has a plan to get us out of this park. And I have to tell you. I believe her.

JONAS

She always was a sly politician.

PAUL

She's not a woman to cross,
that's for sure.

JONAS

What would she want with me?

PAUL

Don't know. But I'm willing to
bet that she thinks you can help
somehow with her plan.

JONAS

Intriguing...

PAUL

You want to get out of here don't
you?

JONAS

Of course, everyone does.

PAUL

Then here's what your going to
do. You're going to follow me to
her room and we're going to find
out how you can help. Okay?

Jonas thinks for a moment. Then he stands.

JONAS

Lead on sir!

LUCY

(sputters with laughter)
Sir.

Paul shoots her a dirty look.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Andy sits on the couch. Her transparent ears are on. Her
arms are extended out in front of her like a hoop. She
makes faces like a fish.

The HG floats in the middle of the room. A romance holo is
playing, a woman in the middle of a passionate kiss.

The HOUSE BOT, a boxy looking but buoyant robot, whizzes
by. Its dust attachment extended, it gives the table in
front Andy a good dusting.

Andy throws herself back on the couch and into exactly the
same pose as the woman on the HG, who now seductively lies
in bed.

A light blinks on top of the House Bot. As it rushes toward the kitchen, it passes a closed door. From behind that door comes a loud scream.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cass is the source of the scream and is she ever angry.

CASS
Two years?! How the faith could
you do this to me?! How could
you not tell me?

RYE
I wanted to. I tried so many
times but...

CASS
You promised you wouldn't...

RYE
Things happen, Cass.

CASS
But I trusted you!

RYE
I'm sorry.

CASS
Go to church!

RYE
I knew you'd react like this!

CASS
So it's my fault now...

RYE
I didn't say that!

CASS
But you im-puh-LIED it.

RYE
That's it! We can't discuss this
like adults if you're being
childish.

He turns to leave. He opens the door.

CASS
Wait! One question before you go.

Rye stands impatiently.

RYE
I'm waiting.

CASS
Did my mother know?

Rye raises an eyebrow.

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

In the extremely tiny bedroom, dressed in an elegant robe, Martha sits on the bed and uses her **Up Top** or UT which is a smallish computer display and keyboard that hovers in front of her.

She intently flips through screens of avatar sized pictures. Then she touches her finger to a picture that looks like Jonas Wineberger.

A screen comes up that has that same picture in the top corner surrounded by some text. At the top of the page, next to the picture, Jonas Wineberger is displayed in larger letters.

She leans a bit closer to the screen.

There is a knock at her door. She moves her finger in sharp downward direction and the display disappears.

She looks toward the door.

ERIC (O.S.)
That gentleman you requested is
here to see you ma'am.

MARTHA
One moment.

There is mumbling coming from the direction of the door. Martha feels her pockets, a moment of panic then relief as she pulls a small scrap of paper from her pocket. She crumples the paper then rubs it against each of her wrists.

MARTHA
Alright. You can send him in.

Martha sticks the crumpled paper into her robe pocket.

The door opens.

ERIC
You can go in.

Jonas strides inside with his hand extended and his smile wide.

JONAS
Miz Avers. What a pleasure to
meet you.

Martha stands and grasps his hand. There's not much room so they are standing quite close together.

MARTHA

The pleasure is all mine, Mr. Wineberger. And please, call me Martha.

JONAS

You know my name?

MARTHA

We've met before.

JONAS

Oh? When?

MARTHA

Caponomic Conference in twenty-five. You were chairman of triple F, I believe.

JONAS

First and Foremost Funds, correct.

(he smiles)

That's amazing. How could you possibly remember...?

MARTHA

When I saw your face, it just all came back to me.

JONAS

I'm surprised you could still recognize me.

The heat is building up between them.

MARTHA

You're still as handsome as ever.

JONAS

Coming from someone as beautiful as yourself, I am quite flattered.

Martha fidgets.

MARTHA

I would ask you to sit but these rooms, they're very small.

JONAS

Cosy would be a much better term.

MARTHA

Uh, yes, cosy.

She clears her throat. They both try to make some space but Martha loses her balance. Jonas catches her. They stare into each other's eyes, his arms around her.

MARTHA

I suppose you're wondering why I brought you here.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Rye's eyebrow is raised. He stares at Cass.

RYE

I don't know. She might know. Why?

CASS

It was something she said to me -- at the park. I've got this feeling she's behind this somehow.

RYE

I see. I can't make my own decisions, right? Is that it?

CASS

You think you're making your own decisions but your not. She's pulling the strings.

RYE

And you're being paranoid.

CASS

She's been like that for as long as I can remember.

RYE

It wasn't her, Cass.

CASS

I think it was.

RYE

It was my decision. It was something I wanted to do.

CASS

So you think, Rye. So you think.

Cass skittishly glances about the room. Rye stares at her oddly.

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Jonas stares into Martha's eyes as he holds her.

JONAS

Somehow, right now, why I was brought here doesn't seem to matter.

MARTHA

I need you, Jonas.

Jonas is breathy.

JONAS

I need you too, Martha.

Jonas leans forward and kisses her. Martha's eyes open wide. Then she shrugs and gives into the passion.

They fall back onto the bed. Jonas rolls on top of her and she pushes him off.

MARTHA

This is happening too quickly.

Jonas is embarrassed.

JONAS

I am so dreadfully sorry. I thought...I'm not certain what I thought.

He attempts to stand, but Martha pulls him down again.

MARTHA

Don't go...

JONAS

I don't understand. I...

She strokes the side of his face with her open palm. And he closes his eyes. He swallows hard. This time she is breathy.

MARTHA

I need you Jonas.

Jonas seems unable to control himself, his face draws nearer hers. His lips part. She stops him with a well placed hand when he is inches away.

MARTHA

But first you must do something for me.

JONAS

Anything Martha. Anything. Just name it and it's done. Just name it.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cass is staring into space. Rye walks up to her and snaps his fingers in front of her face.

RYE

Cass?

No response. He tries again. This time she blinks.

RYE

Cass?

She stares straight at him.

CASS

Why aren't you ready?

RYE

I..uh...

CASS

The guest will be here in...What time is it? Goddard! They'll be here in fifteen centihours. Hurry up!

Cass runs toward the bathroom.

RYE

Cass?

She turns and taps her foot.

CASS

Yes?

RYE

Are you alright?

CASS

Of course. I'm just so far behind with my preparations. I...

RYE

You're not angry?

CASS

Angry? About what -- dropping my mum off at the park today? Hardly!

She chuckles. Rye looks at her queerly.

Cass still taps her foot.

CASS

Is that all?

Rye's not sure what to make of all this but he nods.

CASS

Good. Then get ready!

And she enters the bathroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Martha sits up in bed, Jonas holds her close, his mouth to her ear. She giggles then pushes her shoulder against him.

MARTHA

Come on, now.

He whispers in her ear. She types on a transparent floating keyboard. Passterisks (password asterisks) fill a line on the screen. Then she turns to him.

MARTHA

Is that it?

Jonas nods. She smiles and presses a button on the keyboard. The word TRANSFERRING appears on the screen. Underneath a numeric counter zooms upward at a rate so fast it blurs.

She moves her finger downward and the screen disappears. Then she laughs and throws her arms up in the air. She turns to Jonas and settles her arms around him.

MARTHA

Jonas, you are brilliant.

JONAS

And you are beautiful.

MARTHA

And I am all yours.

They kiss and flop back onto the bed.

ACT THREE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Andy, Cass, and Rye sit on the couch watching a nature documentary about birds on the HG.

Andy flaps her arms, Cass seems to enjoy it except for the occasional arm she has to push out of her way, and Rye doesn't watch the HG at all. His eyes are glued on Cass.

The doorbell rings. The House Bot putters by. Cass and Rye stand.

CASS
They're here.

Andy still flaps her arms. Cass taps Andy's ear and the transparent bubbles disappear.

CASS
To bed!

ANDY
To bed!...Faith!

Rye and Cass wear an expression of shock. Andy joins them then wrinkles her face.

ANDY
Sorry, it slipped.

CASS
We'll forgive you this time.

ANDY
...this time.

Andy kisses Cass on the cheek. Cass squeezes her tightly. Then lets her go.

CASS
Now off to bed.

ANDY
...to bed.

Andy heads off to bed. Cass straightens her dress.

TRITICALE AVERS(35, Trix) enters, she looks flash, dressed in black-sequins. She throws her arms up to make a stunning entrance, then looks around with disappointment.

TRIX
Where is everybody?

CASS
You're the first.

TRIX

Always the first to arrive and
the last to leave -- alone -- as
usual. Oh well, it's good to see
you.

CASS

You too, Trix.

Cass and Trix hug. Then Trix turns her attention to Rye.
She holds her arms out to him.

TRIX

And where's my hug, Rye?

No response. He wears a worried expression and seems
somewhere far off. Trix glances at Cassiopeis who shrugs.

TRIX

Rye!

His head snaps toward Trix.

TRIX

Doesn't your most beautiful
sister-in-law get her welcome
hug?

RYE

Of course.

And they hug.

TRIX

That's just like men. Always off
in space when you need a hug.

Cass stares at them with one eyebrow raised and a frown on
her lips.

INT. G.C. AMBASSADOR

On a monitor, the following text.

COURSE: PROXIMA CENTAURI STATUS: ON COURSE

FUNCTION: LIFE SCAN PN2793A STATUS: IN PROGRESS

Then it changes:

COURSE: PROXIMA CENTAURI STATUS: ON COURSE

FUNCTION: LIFE SCAN PN2793A STATUS: COMPLETE

And changes again:

COURSE: PROXIMA CENTAURI STATUS: ON COURSE

FUNCTION: LIFE SCAN PN2793A STATUS: COMPLETE

RESULTS: LIFE DETECTED ON PN2793A

--- INITIATE DIRECTIVE LF01 ---

And again:

--- LF01 STARTED ---

COURSE: PN2793A STATUS: ADJUSTING

FUNCTION: SENTINEL STATUS: ANIMATION

SCENARIO: POSSIBLE THREAT

--- ENTERING SECURE MODE ---

CRYO ROOM

The readout on the first frosted tube changes and it now reads: LT. CIRCINUS "KIRK" AVERS and on the line below it LF01 - ANIMATE SENTINEL.

The COMPUTER speaks in a calm voice.

COMPUTER

Indirect circuits shutting down.
Physical ident required for
communications. Ten, nine,
eight...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Martha lies in bed next to Jonas. He snores. She stares at him, but something is weighing heavy on her. She sighs.

Carefully and quietly so as not to wake him, she gets up and dons her robe. She glances at him once more, with a troubled look, then she exits the room and enters the

CORRIDOR

She scans the area. Eric is asleep in a chair next to her door. She smiles down at him, then she tiptoes down the quiet hallway.

From behind her...

LUCY

Olay d'amour

Alarmed, Martha spins and shushes Lucy.

LUCY

That stuff's illegal, you know.

MARTHA

(whispers)

I know.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

And I don't want everyone to know. That's why I'm being very quiet.

LUCY

(whispers)

Sorry.

MARTHA

How did you know?

LUCY

I can smell it.

Martha sniffs her wrists, worried, then she shrugs.

MARTHA

I can't smell a thing.

LUCY

Use it often enough and you'll learn the smell.

Martha nods her understanding.

MARTHA

I have no intention of using it again.

LUCY

Uh-huh. Where have I heard that before?

MARTHA

It's true. I got what I wanted.

LUCY

I bet he did too.

MARTHA

He seemed to enjoy himself.

Martha smiles, remembering.

LUCY

But he's going to have a few regrets in the morning, eh?

MARTHA

Let him deal with them then. I've got to go wash off.

She turns to leave.

LUCY

Um. Since you're not going to be using it no more, you wouldn't mind sharing the leftovers, would you?

Martha takes a crumpled paper out of her robe pocket.

MARTHA

There's not enough for another use.

Lucy holds out her hands eagerly.

LUCY

In the right hands there would be.

She shrugs and hands the paper to Lucy.

MARTHA

You're welcome to it then. Enjoy!

Lucy sniffs the paper and smiles deviously.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The party is in full swing. A cosmos-politon group of people chat in groups while gentle but alien cocktail music plays.

The House Bot makes its rounds serving odd looking but colourful cocktails.

Rye has his worried eyes on Cass whilst he talks to GANYMEDE JONES (30s, Nym) in a quiet corner. She stands quite close, her dark skin shines in the artificial light.

NYM

You told her?!

Rye nods grimly.

NYM

I thought -- how'd she take it?

RYE

Not well.

Nym glances over at Cass. Cass is laughing.

NYM

She doesn't seem upset.

RYE

That's what's bothering me, Nym.

NYM

What? That she isn't upset?!

RYE

Something's not right about it.

NYM

You worry too much, Rye. Maybe she's let go of you already. Maybe it's just your ego that can't deal with...

RYE

It's not like that. It's creepy is what it is. It's like she's pretending I never told her.

NYM

Maybe that's how she needs to process it. Let her pretend it never happened. In a week she'll have to face up to it, but we'll be long gone and you won't even have to know how much she suffered.

Rye looks at Nym blankly.

NYM

She's doing you a favour, Rye.

Rye glances

ACROSS THE ROOM

Cass chats with POLY ASTER (50s) who dresses 20th century retro.

CASS

And she was kicking and screaming, it was pathetic.

POLY

Throwing a fit doesn't sound like her at all.

CASS

It isn't -- you think she's up to something. What? Tell me?

POLY

We're talking about a woman who changed the world once, she was always an inspiration to me ...

Cass grimaces.

POLY

... there's no reason she
couldn't do it again. Change the
world. She always seems to have
something or other up her sleeve.
I wouldn't put...

Cass takes a sip of her drink and she glances

ACROSS THE ROOM

Nym presses up against Rye as she whispers something in his
ear. Everything twists and warps.

BACK TO CASS

Cass stares into a troubled space.

POLY (O.S.)

... anything? Don't you agree,
Cass?

Poly stares at Cass.

POLY

Cass?

Cass frowns as she looks at her.

POLY

Don't you agree?

CASS

Yes. She's a zealot! Let's hope
the KEEPERS live up to their name
and that she rots in there.

Cass downs her drink.

CASS

Excuse me, I need another drink.

And she walks off leaving a shocked Poly.

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS: CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Martha rubs her hands together as she exits the ladies.

She walks down the quiet hallway. Eric is still sleeping
near her door. She smiles.

A whirring sound from behind her, she looks over her
shoulder. Nothing.

A few more steps. That whirring sound again. This time it's
louder. Martha looks out toward the past...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. THEATRE - DAY

Young Martha Avers sits in the audience with other DIGNITARIES including Charles Gumm in a small theatre. Young Dr. Silicate stands on the stage and recites a very rehearsed speech.

A "VOLUNTEER" stands nearby on stage with an ARMED GUARD next to him.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Distinguished Councillors and others. Today we will be seeing a demonstration of the Kinetic Elderly Empowerment Policy Enforcement Robot or KEEPER. The KEEPER was designed to provide maximum care and support for our needy elderly friends whilst discouraging them from any rebellious and cantankerous behavior -- through intimidation.

A whirring sound comes from off stage. Young Dr. Silicate smiles and turns toward the wings in a rehearsed manner.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Ah! Here comes our KEEPER now.

A shadow cast by the KEEPER creeps up behind Young Dr. Silicate. It looks something like an upside down spider perched on a tripod.

The audience gasps.

The Volunteer takes a few worried steps away but the Armed Guard stops him.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
No need to worry. KEEPERS are friendly, aren't you K-POD-371?

A dark gray steel KEEPER speaks in a robotic but calming voice somewhere between male and female. Its smooth spherical face has dual reflex lenses for eyes and an electric arc in a tube as a mouth. It whirs as it waves its mechanoid appendages that end in various attachments.

K-POD-371
I am your friend.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
See. And not only is it well versed in the subject of psychology. It can also provide medical care...

Mechanoid arms containing attachments for medical care raise whilst the rest lower. There's a large needle, a blood-pressure cuff, among others...Whir.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Landscaping...

Shovel, chainsaw...

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Janitorial...

Broom, dustpan...

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
And Enforcement.

Handcuffs, whip...

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
When not in use the attachments
can store in it's base.

All the attachments but two, one on each side, fold into the triangular base. The KEEPER now looks like a triangle with two arms and a ball on top, roughly humanoid. It whirs as it spins 360 degrees.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
The entire operation of one
OldAge park can be handled by a
small staff of KEEPERS. As you
can see, they are the ultimate
administrator. Are there any
questions before we continue with
our demonstration?

The Volunteer watches the audience with hopefulness. Martha, raises her hand. The Volunteer is pleased.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
Yes, Madame Councillor?

YOUNG MARTHA
Is there anything you can do
about the way it looks?

YOUNG DR. SILICATE
We are currently researching
various skins. I'm sure we will
soon find one that is properly
aesthetic for the context in
which it will be used.

Martha blinks, confused.

END FLASHBACK

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS - CORRIDOR

Martha blinks, then opens her eyes wide. That whirring sound comes from behind.

She panics. She rushes down the corridor.

Eric wakes, he beckons toward Martha to hurry it up.

Martha runs. The whirring becomes louder, the KEEPER closes in.

Martha slams her hand against her door, the whirring right behind her.

MARTHA
(out of breath)
Open! Goddard's mistake, open!

She slams her fist against the door. Eric grabs her hands, she struggles with him.

ERIC
Calm down! Ma'am, Calm down! They know.

It registers, Martha stops struggling but she is still panicked. She still breathes heavily and quickly. Then a shadow comes over them and they both stare wide-eyed at its source.

K-POD-499 is wearing its skin, an expressionless nurse. Two large reflex eyes stare forward, unmoving lips part to show electric arc teeth, a blocky triangular white dress with a red cross emblazoned on it reaches to the floor and two impossibly thin and bony-looking arms reach out - one arm ends with a clamp, the other with a syringe.

The syringe approaches Martha.

K-POD-499
Please explain why you are in the hallway?

MARTHA
I-uh

She looks at Eric.

ERIC
She's new here. I helped her find the toilet.

K-POD-499's eye, focuses on Martha.

K-POD-499
Martha Avers?

Martha nods.

K-POD-499
Martha Avers?

Martha is at a loss.

ERIC
You need to speak.

K-POD-499
Martha Avers?

Martha shakes.

MARTHA
Y-Yes. I'm Martha Avers.

K-POD-499
I detect elevated adrenalin
levels in your blood. Please
explain why you are anxious?

MARTHA
No. I'm fine.

K-POD-499
You can confide in me. I am your
friend.

MARTHA
Really. There's nothing wrong.

K-POD-499
No reason provided for elevated
adrenalin levels. Diagnosis.
Anxiety. Treatment. 10cc's
Ambivol.

K-POD-499 squirts a bit of liquid from the syringe as it
moves it closer to Martha.

Martha shakes her head and backs against the door.

K-POD-499 opens its clamp as it moves the clamp toward
Martha's arm.

K-POD-499
Remain steady. This will not
hurt.

Eric grabs K-POD-499's arm.

K-POD-499
Please do not interfere with
treatment.
(MORE)

K-POD-499 (CONT'D)
Interference with treatment
requires punitive action. This is
your first warning.

Another arm comes out of K-POD-499's side. This one looks like a Taser and some juice arcs between its electrodes just to prove it.

Martha is alarmed but Eric holds the clamp arm firmly. K-POD-499 focuses his attention on Eric.

K-POD-499
This is your second warning.

ERIC
She's nervous because this is her
first night here.

K-POD-499
This is your last -- reason
acquired -- treatment cancelled.

Eric lets go as K-POD-499 retracts its arms.

Both he and Martha seem relieved.

K-POD-499
Return immediately to your
respective rooms. I will be
happy to provide assistance if
you are unable to comply.

ERIC
We are able to comply.

K-POD-499
In that case...

One more focus on Martha.

K-POD-499
Have a restful evening and
welcome to OldAge.

The KEEPER whirs off down the corridor.

Martha touches Eric on his arm.

MARTHA
Thank you. I would never have
gotten through that if you
weren't here.

ERIC
All in a days work, ma'am. But
there's just one thing bothering
me?

MARTHA

What?

ERIC

Why didn't you know what to do? I thought you knew everything about the KEEPERS.

Martha sighs.

MARTHA

I saw one kill a man once.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. THEATRE - DAY

The Volunteer is held in the clamp of the dark gray steel K-POD-371. He struggles, he's near tears. The Armed Guard watches, his gun ready.

VOLUNTEER

Please Doc, it's hurting me.
Tell it to let me go. Let me go!

K-POD-371

This is your second warning.

Many attachments float up and down on K-POD-371s arms.

YOUNG DR. SILICATE

At the end of the third warning a mild electric shock will be administered to incapacitate the resister.

The audience watches with interest. K-POD-371s attachments flail about.

VOLUNTEER

Please someone, help! I don't want to be here! I didn't agree...

K-POD-371

This is your final warning.

A buzzing sound then blood spurts as the business end of a chain-saw bursts through the Volunteer's back. The Volunteer screams in an unearthly way.

Young Martha turns her head away. There are murmurs from the audience.

END FLASHBACK

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS - CORRIDOR

A tear forms in Martha's eye. Eric throws his arms around her. Martha isn't quite sure what to make of it.

ERIC
That must have been horrible for
you, ma'am.

Martha nods her head against Eric's chest. Eric runs his hand along her hair. Martha covertly sniffs her wrist, then shrugs.

MARTHA
Call me Martha.

She closes her eyes and smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cass downs another drink. She nearly topples over. Rye watches her from

ACROSS THE ROOM

And Nym watches him.

RYE
She's getting drunk.

NYM
At a party, in her own house. Let
her!

RYE
It's not like her.

NYM
Then maybe it will do her some
good.

RYE
Maybe...

But he doesn't look convinced.

ON THE SOFA

Trix sits against MITOSIS XENOS (30s, Mite) on the sofa, her hand is on his knee. She's a bit sauced.

TRIX
...spacemen are always so
handsome and fit. I think that's
what attracted me to my husband.

MITE
Kirk was a good looking guy.

Trix looks shocked, then she smiles broadly.

TRIX

And you even have the same
interest in men that I do. What
do you say we --

Trix moves her hand up his leg toward his crotch. Mite seems uncomfortable with the situation but he doesn't seem to be hating it.

A hand grabs Trix's and pulls it off Mite's leg.

It's ISOMER KUMAR (30s, Omer) and is he pissed off. He throws Trix's hand away.

OMER

Vetoed.

MITE

Aw, hon.

OMER

I don't want you to have sex with
her. Period.

MITE

But we agreed...

OMER

...That I get veto power. Well,
vetoed!

TRIX

Now wait just a minute. Don't I
get a say in this.

OMER

No!

(to Mite)

Come dance with me. Please...

Mite gives Trix one last apologetic look as Omer pulls him up off the couch.

Trix pouts, her eyes tear up a bit. She looks skyward, trying not to cry.

TRIX

I miss you Kirk.

INT. G.C. AMBASSADOR - CRYO ROOM

Kirk Avers tube has defrosted somewhat and his nude muscular body can be seen through the glass. His eyes snap open.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Poly stands next to EUGENICS WHITE (30s, Eugene).

POLY

We've already encountered many lower forms of life. It's only a matter of time before we find sentient life?

EUGENE

I certainly hope not.

POLY

But it's fascinating. Wouldn't you be interested in talking to an extraterrestrial? Don't you want to find out what they're like? What they think? What they eat?

EUGENE

They probably would want to eat your face.

POLY

Now why would they want to do that?

EUGENE

Because having this conversation is giving me those same urges.

And he takes a big bite out of the air in front of Poly. Poly step back, onto Trix's toe.

TRIX

Ow!

POLY

Sorry!

And Polly moves away. Trix continues her discussion with BUTYL LI (30s, Ty).

TRIX

Now where were we?

She puts her hand on his knee. He is very calm and it is difficult to tell exactly what he is thinking.

TY

We were discussing the implications of spirituality on the defined limits of space.

TRIX

Right. Go on, Ty.

She slips her hand a bit higher up his leg.

TY

The theories of Wang Li state that space is infinite and that spirituality is beyond infinity. Therefore either space does not encompass spirituality or...

CASS (O.S.)

Dance with me! Come on...

And everyone looks at her. She's trying to pull Mite into her dance but Mite is trying to politely decline. Omer is furious.

CASS

It's easy. I'll lead!

ACROSS THE ROOM

Rye watches tight-lipped.

CASS (O.S.)

Just put your arms around me!
Come on!

RYE

That's enough!

And he steps forward. Nym catches his arm.

NYM

But..

Rye pulls away.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Cass has her arms around Mite's neck, she's smothering him in sloppy kisses. He tries to pull away. Omer looks like he might throw a fit.

CASS

What's the matter? Don't you like...

And Rye pulls her away.

CASS

Hey!

RYE

That's enough, Cass.

CASS

Oh it's you.

She yanks her arm out of his.

CASS
Don't you dare touch me!

He grabs her arm again.

RYE
(to everyone)
I think we should call it a
night. It's been...

CASS
Call it a night? No faithing way!

She pulls away from him again.

CASS
No way is anyone going until they
hear what...
(to everyone)
Everyone, I have an
announcement...

RYE
Our friends need to get home,
Cass.

Rye shoots a worried look to Nym. And Cass rails into him.

CASS
Just like you to be considerate
of everyone else! Like you were
considerate to me when you told
me you were leaving!

RYE
Cass, I...

A few of the guest turn slightly away, embarrassed. Other
watch with sympathy.

CASS
Don't even try to apologise to me
you son of a zealot! You should
have apologised two years ago.
Two years ago! When you started
lying to me. It's too late, now!
Rye. Too late!

Rye lowers his head.

CASS
That's right. For two years this
monkshole has been telling me
he's been working at a desk job!
But guess what. He hasn't!
(MORE)

CASS (CONT'D)

He's been training for a deep space mission. And to top that off he's leaving next week! Nice of him to wait until today to tell me all of this. And the worst of it everyone in this room probably knew, except me of course.

Trix is teary, she shakes her head no.

CASS

My own mother knew! How could you do this to me?

She dissolves into tears and crumple to the floor. Trix runs over to her and comforts her.

INT. G.C. AMBASSADOR - CRYO ROOM

Kirk's tube opens. Kirk rubs his arms as he unsteadily steps out. He scans the room with suspicion. The other tubes are still frosted.

KIRK

Computer? Why am I the only one awake?

He waits a moment for an answer.

KIRK

Computer?

EPILOGUE

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

All the guests have left. Trix sits on the floor and consoles Cass, who lies with her head buried in Trix's lap.

TRIX

They're gone honey and I think
it's time you got some sleep.

Cass sits up, her eyes red from crying.

CASS

You're my best friend Trix.

TRIX

And you're mine too, sweetheart.

CASS

At times like these you really
need a best friend.

TRIX

I could never have gotten
through...

She pauses and swallows.

TRIX

...Kirk leaving without you.

CASS

I helped you didn't I.

TRIX

You did.

CASS

I need your help now.

TRIX

And I'm here for you sweetheart.

CASS

We need to stop, Rye. We can't
let him leave. I can't have that.

TRIX

We can try, honey, but I don't
think you're going to be able
talk him out of it.

CASS

Talk? The time for talk is over.
Now is the time for action.

Cass looks determined and crazed. Trix just looks worried.

INT. OLDAGE LIVING QUARTERS: MARTHA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Martha seems preoccupied when she enters sporting a sort of school-girlish grin. Jonas lies quietly on the bed. She gives him a melancholy look.

She walks over to the bed and gives his toe a quick wiggle.

MARTHA

Time to wake up, Jonas.

No response. She shakes his leg.

MARTHA

Time to wake up, Jonas.

Harder.

MARTHA

Jonas!

Panic. She hurries over to the side of the bed, shakes his arm.

MARTHA

Jonas, wake up!

She takes his pulse. She can't find it.

MARTHA

Faith!

THE END