

Superior Conjunction

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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A SPACE STATION slowly turns in the dark of space. On its side appear the FLAGS OF MANY NATIONS and the LOGO OF ISRA. Spelled out near the logo: "INTERNATIONAL SPACE RESOURCE AGENCY" and "MIDAS 1."

Super: November 2023.

Moving closer. Through a porthole on the space station we see a MALE and FEMALE INHABITANT standing face to face. They are in quite the intense conversation.

MOS, she delivers a lecture as he stands before her, nodding, blinking, taking it in.

She stops. He nods confirmation.

She grabs him by his jumpsuit. She pulls him close and lays a huge kiss on him.

Passion accelerates. They drop from view.

Continuing out in space, the ASTEROID BELT carelessly tumbles about.

Beyond the asteroids, JUPITER slowly turns in all his magnificence. On Jupiter's edge a SPARK-LIKE FLARE shoots out from the planet.

A comet-like streak is headed Jupiter's way. Impact. Another FLARE.

INT. MIDAS 1 LIVING QUARTERS

The man and woman seen through the window go at it; she's on top. They are...

CHET BELLOWS (35), a chiseled handsome pilot type. Obviously he's not opposed to following a woman's lead, though his ingrained command nature is always to be in absolute control.

GINA SPARKS, (33) a lovely woman whose long hair whips about in the frenzy. Even in the frenzied moment, her brilliance shines through.

An ELECTRONIC BEEP.

They ignore it, passion increasing.

The BEEP repeats.

She glances at a small electronic screen mounted on the bulkhead. She presses a flashing yellow box on the screen.

CHET
Mother?

GINA
Who else?

CHET
What's he want?

GINA
Shh!

She regains momentum and quickly... relief. He's not quite there. She rolls off, dragging a flimsy sheet over her, looking at the electronic screen.

CHET
I wasn't done.

GINA
Weird, isn't it? Even with our gravity neutralizer on, some things just seem to defy gravity.

CHET
Come back. He can wait.

GINA
You seem to forget, not only am I the brains onboard this station, I am the mining operations manager.

CHET
Oh so, it's about mining? If it's not something urgent like an incoming asteroid, can't it wait?

GINA
(motions O.S.)
Duty calls.

Gina exits the quarters.

Chet drops his arm over his eyes, heaving out a sigh. A beat. He sits up and reads the message. He hits a series of touch screen tabs, reading. His eyes widen.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina sits in front of a monitor. Her aqua jumpsuit, sports a crisp embroidered patch reading: "CDR GINA SPARKS." She leans back, clasping her hands behind her head.

Onscreen is MEL YOUNGER (58), Midas' Earth-based mission manager. He's got the look of a "cut no slack" executive with a scowl that confirms he's not in an ideal job or life situation. A cheap white short sleeve shirt and an ugly skinny tie, he could easily be living in 1962.

MEL (O.S.)

See, the thing is, the administration has been pummeled by the collateral damage issue. When air burst explosives scatter shrapnel, no telling who... or what might get hit. So now, it's back to contact ordinance.

GINA

And you're telling me this, why?

MEL (O.S.)

You need to reach out to Colonel Goldman and tell him to expedite.

GINA

He's not onboard. They left three days ago.

MEL (O.S.)

I know that. I want you to call him and tell him to expedite.

GINA

Like that will make their probe can fly faster? What?

MEL

We need asteroid ore... and we need it quick. The sample that arrived last month was perfect for the nose in those nasty contact explosion bombs. And there's a huge push to get more weapons produced on the triple double things being as they are down here.

GINA

Triple double?

MEL

You know what I mean.

GINA

You know we can't magically teleport the ore, don't you?

MEL (O.S.)
I do know that.

GINA
And you know it will be weeks in
transit once the ore is extracted.

MEL (O.S.)
Even with a photon rider sled?

GINA
Can't use that with the weight of
the ore.

MEL (O.S.)
Aren't they weightless in space?

GINA
The big deal is entry into the Earth's
atmosphere. Come on, Mel. Forget
politics and remember some laws of
time and logistics... and science
for fuck's sake.

Chet enters the room in a glaucous jumpsuit. Captain's bars
are embroidered on the collar and his name patch reads: "Capt.
Chet Bellows, USAF."

Gina gives Chet a look, making scrunched up faces at him,
then back to the monitor.

CHET
Hi, Mel. How's Earth?

MEL (O.S.)
Just peachy. All the right fingers
are on all the wrong the buttons.
(frowns, with
implication)
How are you guys doing up there,
Chet? Things going good?

GINA
(intervening)
Wait? Are we going to war?

MEL (O.S.)
We don't know. Things are ultra-
tense down here. Yesterday Senator
Roman said that the Middle East should
be carpet bombed. He followed that
some joke about Aladdin's magic
carpet.

GINA

What a charmer. But he's not
President yet.

MEL (O.S.)

Only in his mind. Let's hope he
gets his ass kicked in the election
next year. He should have started
campaigning three years ago. Anyway,
the Middle Eastern leaders went
ballistic. That makes President
Wickman get all defensive and
apologetic and yield on important
strategic positions. He's in a tough
spot. When you have allies that
hate each other, it's hard to win.

(beat)

You can't win.

GINA

We should have nailed Iran when we
had a chance.

MEL (O.S.)

(lowers his voice)

Aren't you the hawkish one?

INT. MISSION CONTROL, EARTH - DAY

Mel sits at a cluttered desk decked out with monitors and
electronic gear on a raised platform that overlooks Mission
Control.

Mission Control is a semi-darkened room filled with computers,
monitors, space object tracking displays and a collection of
GEEK OPERATORS. Some operators wear headsets. Others wear
virtual reality helmets and work joysticks. All are crazy
busy.

GINA (O.S.)

Why are you whispering?

MEL

You never know whose listening...
especially on a secure net.

Mel pounds on a keyboard. He shakes his head, muttering,
finally coming up with a track of a SPACE CRAFT entering the
EDGE OF THE ASTEROID BELT. The legend on the monitor reads:
"Digger 1."

GINA

You looking at Digger?

Mel stares at the display. He scratches his cheek with a pencil, evidently not comprehending.

MEL
How much longer?

GINA (O.S.)
At this point they have to slow down,
you know.

MEL
Why? They know where they're going.

GINA (O.S.)
Jesus, Mel, is that your brain I see
sitting on your desk? Have you
forgotten that everything out here
is in motion? Just because you want
asteroid ore now, doesn't change
flight rules. It's not like air
traffic control. We can't just tell
the asteroids where to go and how
fast to move.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Chet chuckles, pouring himself a cup of something. He stares at a display similar to the one Mel sees. This one is far better.

With his finger, Chet playfully traces the trajectory of the Digger 1 in between the asteroid dots. He cocks his head to the side, evidently developing an idea as he chews on his lips.

MEL (O.S.)
Look, according to munitions experts,
asteroid ore is the perfect hardness.

CHET
There's a lot of things of perfect
hardness in space, just no time to
bring it all home.

GINA
(to Chet)
Shut up.

MEL (O.S.)
What?

GINA
Not you.
(thumb point)
Him.

MEL (O.S.)

We can't reach Goldman. He's on the other side of Mars from us and they're not connected to the T-E network.

CHET

There's an oversight.

GINA

(glances at Chet)

Okay. Okay. I'll hassle him. But you know how he gets. We don't want him choking under pressure.

CHET

It's going to be more difficult than getting Gimel through the eye of the needle.

MEL (O.S.)

Tell him to shut up.

GINA

(to Chet)

Shut up.

CHET

Is that an order?

MEL (O.S.)

Let me know what Goldman says.

GINA

Really? Is that going to help? You know it's going to be obscene.

MEL

Shit. I got to go. The Ares team has an issue.

Mel's off screen. The ISRA logo and the words International Space Resource Agency float about on the screen.

GINA

The Ares team always has an issue.

(to Chet)

And they're not the only ones.

Chet goes for the ignore, scanning video camera displays that monitor a CREW HIBERNATION QUARTERS filled with VERTICAL LIFE SUPPORT CYLINDERS.

Through a small window at the bottom of each of the cylinders upside down FACES of hibernating CREW MEMBERS appear peaceful in some sort of suspended animation.

CHET
I know. Mel can be a real pain in
the ass.

GINA
I wasn't talking about Mel.

CHET
You want to call Goldman or you want
me to?

GINA
You can. I'm hungry. You want
something?

CHET
Oh yeah. I do want something.

GINA
To eat?

CHET
Oh yeah.

Annoyed, she exits.

Chet moves to a console.

CHET
Digger One, this is Midas One.

Chet leans back to see if he can catch a glimpse of Gina.

GOLDMAN
Midas One, Digger One.

On screen a very tired looking COLONEL LEO GOLDMAN (46) appears. His eyes are red. Despite that, he looks disheveled. His jumpsuit is open, a sweat-soaked t-shirt underneath. His embroidered name is faded and can barely be seen.

CHET
Jesus, Leo, are you okay?

GOLDMAN
Yeah. Navigating this gravel field
is the absolute shits. Anyway, my
crew has issues.

CHET
Boy, that's going around. What kind
of issues?

GOLDMAN

There's a rumor they won't get hazardous duty pay while on the asteroid.

CHET

That's not a rumor. ISRA brass thinks that would be double-dipping. You're already getting flight pay for being out here, right?

GOLDMAN

Then send them out here.

CHET

I'm in the choir, my man.

GOLDMAN

Hell, at this point, rumors are more reliable than facts.

(beat)

What's up?

CHET

Mother wants you to expedite.

GOLDMAN

Tell mother to suck my...

CHET

It seems they need more of that ore the last mission sent back. And hey, they need it yesterday.

GOLDMAN

What's so Goddamn urgent?

CHET

It's the perfect hardness for contact explosion bombs. And the world is going nuts down there. They want to manufacture weapons like they're going out of style... to ward off hostilities. So it's a "we need it two days before yesterday" panic drill.

GOLDMAN

There's a concept. I wonder how that's worked out in the past.

CHET

No kidding. Do you have an ETA? I can buy you some time.

GOLDMAN

You know, if we were sure that the ore on one of these other asteroids was the same... or nearly the same... I could land in maybe twelve hours and start mining.

CHET

Yeah, boy, I hear you. Well, I'm not sure I'm willing to take that risk. If the ore gets back and it's not right... you know... it's a whole global security issue... and then how we failed it. I say stay with the plan. Mother wants it now, but mother can shit in one hand and want in the other and see which fills up first.

Behind Goldman a ruckus. TWO CREW MEMBERS get into a fist fight. Goldman gives it a look.

GOLDMAN

Fuck all. Digger One out.
(turning away)
Hey! Hey! You stupid fucks.

The screen goes back to ISRA logo.

Chet DRUMS his fingers on a console. He taps the monitor back to life.

He maps out a region of asteroids. Zooming in, he picks out a few.

One by one, he puts the cursor on different asteroids. Then, he types, "asteroid trajectory adjustment." The first two queries produce large red warnings on the screen. The third a yellow box.

He leans in, studying.

Gina sticks her head in the room.

Chet jumps, clearing the screen.

GINA

You're jumpy.

CHET

You're stealthy.

GINA

What are you doing?

CHET
Trying to see if there's an alternate
asteroid Digger can mine.

GINA
Don't fuck with the plans, man.

CHET
Yeah, yeah.

GINA
You going to eat?

Chet rises, giving the monitor screen a look. Back to ISRA
logo. He follows Gina...

INT. MIDAS 1 MESS DECKS

The Mess Deck is a small room with four tables with six places
each.

Nearby the high-tech oven and food prep area has everything
they need.

Gina opens the oven, pulling out two gourmet style dinners.
She places them on the table with panache.

GINA
You want wine?

CHET
Always. Anything critical on the op
schedule tonight?

GINA
If there was anything critical on
the op schedule tonight would I offer
you wine? You know how you get.

Chet sits, sniffing his food as Gina pours wine.

Setting glasses on the table she sits. A long look at Chet.

CHET
What?

She raises her glass.

GINA
To good decisions.

CLINK.

CHET

And let's hope President Wickman and other world leaders are in on the toast.

GINA

Let's hope. Sounds testy down there. Just wish mission control wasn't reacting in a typical inane manner.

CHET

How so?

GINA

We have to hustle up and get asteroid ore down to them. Three weeks to mine, four weeks to ship, then decon the ore for a week. Then maybe in another month they can have weapon tips made. Two months plus. By that time they could have blown Earth to Kingdom Come. What's the hurry? Can they be out of weapons already?

CHET

They'll be fine.

GINA

What makes you so sure?

CHET

Ever hear of the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Gina shrugs. Nope.

CHET

My grandfather used to talk about it... a lot.

Another shrug.

CHET

It seemed to be one of the psychological cornerstones of his life. Anyway back in the middle of the last century, Russia gave Cuba nukes. Recon photos showed the missiles being installed and everyone in the U. S. went ape shit because evil Russia's birds were only a hundred miles away. Turned into a nasty showdown between Kruschev of Russia and President Kennedy with Cuba's Castro as the pawn.

(MORE)

CHET (CONT'D)

The world almost got blown up. It got right to the eleventh hour fifty-ninth minute and several seconds. But sanity finally prevailed. Because someone made a decision as to which diplomatic cable to ignore and which one to answer.

GINA

Yeah, well that was fine back in the good old days. We don't do cables anymore. Not only that, ever since the asshole religious zealots hijacked our politics I don't think there's a cool head to call upon for calm anymore.

CHET

Maybe not.

GINA

Hope everyone is praying.

CHET

That's so freaking ironic.

GINA

What?

CHET

You just said asshole religious zealots took over politics and now you want people to pray for political sanity.

GINA

Right. I forgot. You're agnostic.

CHET

And you're an atheist.

GINA

Sort of. I mean it is kind of hard to believe all that religious crap out here isn't it? I mean out here... in the middle of space... away from the mundane bullshit of life on Earth... it's... it's... you know what I mean, right?

(checks for reaction)

Anyway, I just can't wrap around the silly literal shit.

(MORE)

GINA (CONT'D)

Think of how different it would be if they could have done Carbon testing back in the days of the Old Testament. Um, folks I hate to break it to you... the Earth is more than six thousand years old. They still can't decide if Jesus was married or not...

CHET

Or if and how Mary was a virgin. Think how different it would be if the aliens stuck around and wagged their gnarly fingers a little longer at stupid Earthlings.

GINA

Right. That's what we need to bail out the political insanity on Earth. Aliens. There may be a lot of stars in the Universe but that's pretty far-fetched. All these years and still nothing.

CHET

Wait. You can't think Earth is the only life... in all this Universe?

GINA

Why would they be interested in us? That's what I mean.

CHET

Because we're a threat... need a good talking to.
(with a wink)
Maybe a spanking.

GINA

(ignores the innuendo
with a shrug)
I don't know if there would be enough alien civilizations for all the wagging fingers it would take to put the people of Earth back in line.

CHET

Right there.

He finishes his wine and goes for more.

CHET

Well, we might as well enjoy our last few days.

GINA
What do you mean last few days?

CHET
Once Goldman gets the asteroid staked out, we'll be waking everybody up and we won't have a moment's peace... or time for ourselves. Asteroid ore logistics. Crews in and out.

GINA
We'll be home for Christmas. Just in time to celebrate.

CHET
Sure we will. We'll get extended. They haven't even launched our shuttle yet.

(long look at Gina)
So you're telling me that once we get back on Earth that you and me... we'd celebrate together?

GINA
That depends.

CHET
On what?

GINA
On if you behave yourself between now and then.

CHET
Behave myself how?

GINA
In every way. Nothing sneaky. Nothing sleazy.

Chet gives a "who me?" look.

A FLASHING SCREEN on the bulkhead catches Gina's eye. She pulls out a mobile device and checks a message.

GINA
Damn.

CHET
Damn what?

GINA

The computer reports that three objects have impacted Jupiter in the past twelve hours.

(reading)

Now determined to be the result of debris from a collision in the Kuiper Belt. Indications are multiple significant mass objects might enter the far side of asteroid belt.

(look at Chet)

We are advised to be on high alert.

CHET

As if we can do something about it. When the solar system wants to play billiards...

GINA

We're behind the eight ball. Gotta go talk to Mel.

CHET

Have fun with mother.

Chet watches Gina depart. He gets up, clears plates and grabs a fresh bottle of wine. We follow him to...

INT. MIDAS 1 HIBERNATION DECK

Chet slips in between two hibernation cylinders and plugs a electronic device into the bulkhead. It looks like an iPad, but it's a potent computer.

He pours a glass of wine and goes to work on the computer.

CHET

Okay. What if I redirect an asteroid, and shoot it toward Earth? Not too close... just close enough to scare the shit out of every one... and unify nations in defending against an external threat? Would the global bickering stop? Could nations cooperate against a common threat?

(sip of wine)

Why are rhetorical questions so hard to answer?

(another sip of wine)

Which one of you buggers can I sacrifice in the interest of human kind?

Chet leans closer to his device, squinting.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina sits at the console in conversation with Mel.

GINA

I think if we put that much data into our computer we'd freeze it up. Not only that... it'd take days.

MEL

Probably. We're trying to get some time on the UC mainframe. The pre-collision orbits should already be in there. Meanwhile...

GINA

I don't like the sound of that... should. There are still a lot of unknowns out there... here.

MEL

We don't even know how many objects are entering the asteroid belt. There's so much junk in the impact region, the asteroids are blocking observation.

GINA

The Ares crew will be out there soon.

MEL

Let's hope... and let's hope in time.

GINA

Yeah. Let's hope.

MEL

Anyway, you need to reposition the station. We're hashing out the numbers. We'll transmit them within the next couple of hours.

GINA

Reposition where? Do you have a ballpark idea?

MEL

You're going to move back closer to Mars... near as we can tell.

GINA

Near as we can tell? So, what? I'll look for them in two days?

MEL

Yeah. That's what we need... a comedian.

GINA

Comedienne.

MEL

Whatever. So here's the deal.

GINA

Let me guess. There's not going to be a shuttle sent to relieve us... at least not anytime soon.

MEL

And she's psychic, too. No. Not in the short term.

GINA

Can you define long term?

MEL

And there's one more thing. When you reposition with Mars, Earth will be at superior conjunction, we're going to be out of touch for a few days.

GINA

What will I do without you? We'll just use the T-E system.

MEL

Solar activity is kicking up. Lots of it. Likely it'll be unreliable.

GINA

And that's not all... define a few days.

MEL

Probably five, depending up where you reposition. Could be longer. When we clear on the other side, we expect to hear that Goldman's crew has some material enroute.

GINA

I love a man who's expecting. That's so open-minded. Totally evolved.

MEL

Why don't you go do something useful like keep that yahoo Chet out of trouble? How are you guys doing, by the way?

GINA

(frustrated sigh)

How do you think we're doing? We're doing what people do when they have no alternatives... and are forced into confinement with one another in extremely hazardous circumstances. We cooperate and treat each other with civility and respect. Something you guys down there ought to try.

She switches off the video session.

GINA

Asshole.

(singsong)

How are you guys doing, by the way?

INT. MIDAS 1 HIBERNATION DECK

Chet finishes a glass of wine.

FOOTSTEPS.

He pulls his computer from the wall and hustles out from hiding, just as...

Gina enters, surveying the scene.

GINA

Do I have to get another bottle from the galley?

CHET

Only if you want some.

GINA

What? Were you masturbating?

CHET

No. I'm saving myself for you.

(off a silly grin)

What did mother want?

GINA

We have to reposition because of the incoming debris.

CHET
So I was right about no incoming
shuttle anytime soon.

GINA
Yeah. Does it make you feel good to
be right?

CHET
Where are we repositioning?

GINA
Closer to Mars.

CHET
During the superior conjunction?
We'll be out of contact with Earth.
I saw the solar activity report.
Did you know contact through the T-E
satellites will likely be shit.

GINA
Right again on the conjunction. I
didn't know about the solar activity.

CHET
Well, you can't be expected to read
everything.

Gina surveys Chet suspiciously. She notices there's no more
wine. She heads off.

GINA
(over her shoulder)
I'm getting some wine. You gonna
finish what you started?

She exits.

Chet pumps his fist. Yes!

INT. MIDAS 1 LIVING QUARTERS

Chet and Gina are tangled up, doing the deed in an
otherworldly manner.

Chet gets there. She's right with him.

After a moment to wind down, Gina laughs.

Chet shakes his head, going for more wine. They're both
tipsy.

A KLAXON ALARM SOUNDS.

Gina jumps up. Without making an effort to dress, she heads to a computer screen.

GINA
Shit! Let's go. Goldman's ship.

Gina throws on some clothes.

Chet scrambles. It's a race to dress and get to the bridge.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina settles into a chair, donning a headset.

GINA
Digger, Midas One. Do you read?

She puts the audio on speaker. STATIC.

Chet fights with a computer. Doesn't help to be drunk.

GINA
Digger One, Midas One. Return.

STATIC, then...

GOLDMAN (O.S.)
...Digger... axial control...

GINA
Say again axial control.

CHET
Got video.

GINA
Are they stuffed?

Chet's monitor relays a camera feed on the Digger space craft.

ON THE MONITOR: Space spins and twists at a dizzying rate.

CHET
Oh man. So totally fucked.

Gina tears her eyes away and back to comms.

GINA
Leo, if you can hear me... reverse thrust on aft rockets. Lower your landing struts.

GOLDMAN (O.S.)
Cannot comply... axial...

ON THE MONITOR: Asteroid dead ahead. Closer and closer the capsule tumbles.

 CHET
Shit! Look out!

STATIC.

The monitor shows impact. Static stops.

Chet and Gina stare at the monitor. It's filled with cross talk.

Silence, then...

 GINA
Mel? Are you there?

 MEL (O.S.)
Yeah.

 GINA
Did you get that?

 MEL (O.S.)
Yes. Telemetry reported they took a hit from some uncharted fragment... and... well, you know the rest. We need to get you backed up into safe space. Very soon.

 GINA
Define soon.

 MEL (O.S.)
Not sure.
 (over his shoulder)
Hey, hurry the hell up over there.

 GINA
Do you have any coordinates for us?

 MEL (O.S.)
Not yet. Why don't you split the distance between your current position and Mars?

 GINA
 (to Chet)
Great. By gosh and by golly. Good thing we have a lot of space.

Gina leans forward, squinting at monitors in Mel's background. News reports show warfare.

GINA
Is there fighting down there?

MEL (O.S.)
No. Every one here is calm.

GINA
I mean with Iran and the rest of them.

MEL (O.S.)
There was a preemptive attack on Iran in the last hour.

GINA
We did that?

MEL (O.S.)
Israel. Everything has been completely quiet since then. Was only two missiles, though.

GINA
Jesus. Only two? What did the President say?

INT. MISSION CONTROL, EARTH - NIGHT

An aide comes up behind Mel, handing him a print out and highlighting something with his finger. Mel nods.

MEL
Nothing yet. I suspect he's changing his pants.
(beat)
Look. You probably have a few hours before you have to reposition.

GINA (O.S.)
I love the sound of probably.

MEL
Why don't you get a little sleep and go for it clear-headed?

GINA (O.S.)
You saying I sound drunk?

MEL
You look drunk.

GINA (O.S.)
I'll contact you after we reset.

MEL
That'll be great.

GINA (O.S.)
We'll be fine.

MEL
Yeah. Wish I could say the same. I
gotta get on the reports... after I
call some next of kin.

GINA (O.S.)
I'm sorry. Leo was a good man.

MEL
Kind of you to say. Are you guys
okay?

GINA (O.S.)
Little stunned, that's all.

MEL
Yeah. Here too. Midas Control,
out.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina turns to Chet. There's nothing to say.

INT. MIDAS 1 LIVING QUARTERS

Gina slips under the covers.

Chet stares at a locker.

GINA
You gonna sleep?

CHET
Don't think I can.

GINA
Won't even try?

CHET
I need to sit with myself awhile.

GINA
(suspiciously)
Okay.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Chet types on the computer. He pulls up a field of asteroids
in view. One by one, he clicks on them.

Yellow and red boxes pop up. Finally, a box pops up that's green.

Leaning forward and reading through a yawn, Chet rubs his chin.

CHET

Hello there, Antigone. How would you like to become a potentially hazardous object?

He goes to a separate console and lifts a protective cover over a toggle switch.

Above the switch, a small plate reads: "Asteroid Laser Intervention System.

Below that plate, a larger plate reads: WARNING! Presidential Authority required."

Chet does the combination on a small safe. He pulls out a WHITE ENVELOPE WITH RED LETTERS reading: "TOP SECRET, LASER ACTIVATION CODES."

He tears it open and dumps the contents on the console. A RED ENVELOPE WITH BLACK LETTERS drops in his lap. It reads: "Presidential Over-Ride. For use in Global Catastrophe Only."

Chet opens that envelope, pulls out a code card and types the code into a console.

CHET

Please God, don't let me fuck this up. Antigone, I don't need any Greek tragedies added to my heaping plate of *karma*. You hear me, girl?

As he does, his elbow slips the red envelope off the console. It drops, sliding mostly under equipment. Only a smidgen sticks out.

EXT. MIDAS 1

From the side of the craft a laser cannon extends from the space station. It oscillates for a beat, settling on a fixed spot. A tube extends out even further.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Chet types in the coordinates of the asteroid. He stares at the screen for a long beat.

He hits "Enter."

CHET
God speed, Antigone.

EXT. MIDAS 1

The LASER FIRES.

The beam races into space, slipping in between several asteroids... then slamming into an ASTEROID.

The asteroid explodes, fragments flying.

The core spins off wildly, colliding with a nearby body. A chain reaction of asteroid collisions follows.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Chet smiles with satisfaction as the screen reports: "Target Acquired."

O.S. FOOTSTEPS

Chet quickly types commands to clear the screen and shoves envelopes and code cards back inside the safe. He gives the door a shove. The safe does not completely close.

EXT. MIDAS 1

The laser withdraws into the space station.

Not far away, the core asteroid fragment tumbles inconspicuously from the asteroid belt.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina enters the bridge.

Chet shifts suspiciously. He notices the safe's door. He taps it with his foot, COUGHING to cover the noise as it closes.

Gina looks at the computer. Nothing to see. Just the floating ISRA logo.

CHET
Couldn't sleep?

GINA
What are you doing?

CHET
Nothing.

GINA
Why are acting so strange?

CHET
Strange? Strange how?

GINA
Oh... how shall I say it? You have the look of a guy whose been on the monitor doing something he shouldn't be doing. You know... on the prowl.

CHET
Couldn't you sleep?

GINA
(shakes her head no)
And neither could you. What are you doing, lining something up for when we get home?

CHET
Told you. They're not sending a shuttle anytime soon. I was checking to see if there is any available craft being prepped at the New Mexico base.

GINA
So that's a yes?

CHET
No.

Staredown.

CHET
That's a no. I swear to you I am not trying to line anything up for when we get home.

Chet steps closer to her, reaching.

She holds up a hand. Stop.

CHET
You don't believe that I want to be with you when we get home?

GINA
I don't believe you want to be only with me when we get home.

CHET
Ah! So you're jealous... when there's nothing... absolutely nothing to be jealous about.

GINA
Don't make this about me.

CHET
It is about you. You're the one
stalking me to see if you catch me
in some sort of act of wrongdoing...
whatever that might be.

GINA
The options are plenty, pal. And
you're the one being stealthy.

CHET
How else am I gonna get a birthday
party planned for you?

GINA
Really? You're going to go with
that?

Chet nods yes.

GINA
Well then, fuck you, Chet.

Gina storms out.

Chet lets out a breath. He listens a beat, then pulls up
the asteroid plot. He scans it. Satisfied, he shuts it
down.

EXT. SPACE

The asteroid fragment core tumbles and tears through space.

As it passes Mars, dead ahead in the distance a COMMUNICATIONS
SATELLITE, T-E5.

INT. MIDAS 1 LIVING QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Chet sleeps.

Gina ZIPS up her jumpsuit, giving him a look. Her jaw is
set and she's shaking her head no. But then, she softens.
The slightest smile as she covers him with a blanket.

GINA
(softly)
I wish I didn't love you, you jerk.

INT. MIDAS 1 BRIDGE

Gina sits at the console. She pings Mel.

As Mel comes on screen, he looks up at something, assessing.

MEL

Surprised you got through. We're just about ready to disappear. Remember... while we're gone you probably won't be able to use any of the T-E birds for comms. So don't panic if you can't reach us.

GINA

Yeah, okay. The damn Sun picked a good time to go active.

MEL

Had some huge eruptions yesterday. Looks like we're in a double hump solar maximum. Should screw up the satellites big time... and likely for a while.

GINA

Great. I hate double humps.

MEL

Tell me about it. So. Everything okay? You guys doing good?

GINA

I got something to ask you...

MEL

Did you reposition?

GINA

Not yet.

MEL

So what?

GINA

All things considered... I hate to ask. But are you aware of any unauthorized searches by Chet?

MEL

Unauthorized searches?

GINA

Yeah. You know...

MEL

We only see the communication routed through here.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

I guess that's only about forty percent of what he can access. You could try hooking into T-E5.

GINA

The satellites keep records?

MEL

Not like a record. More of a log.

GINA

No content?

MEL

No. Only the notation of a communication.

GINA

Hmm. Of course, not while the Sun's going nuts.

MEL

What are you really asking? We don't have much time.

Gina flushes, her hand going to her forehead.

GINA

No. I mean is he... like... surfing...

MEL

Surfing? You mean for like porn?

GINA

(totally embarrassed)

No. Not at all.

(beat)

You know... like trying to line something for when he gets back.

Mel checks some stuff on his computer.

MEL

No.

GINA

You're sure?

MEL

(annoyed)

I'm sure. But I have no idea why you're asking me.

GINA

Well...

MEL

You got anything else? We're going to lose signal in about ten seconds.

GINA

Nope. I'm good. See you in a few days. And from our new location.

Behind Mel a news monitor, buried among rows of technical monitors, bears a flashing RED KHYRON: "Missiles in Flight."

Gina clicks off the call, not noticing. She leans back in the chair, hands behind her head, tapping her foot with annoyance.

MONTAGE: MUNDANE ON MIDAS

- Gina and Chet silently eat lunch in the galley.
- Gina runs routine diagnostics.
- Chet sits with his computer in the hibernation quarters, working away.
- Gina wistfully looks out a window. Mars shines brightly, backlit by the Sun it blocks. She sighs.

INT. MIDAS 1 FLIGHT CONTROL DECK

Chet takes notes on cylinder readings on the hibernation deck. He gets down on his hands and knees, peering into the window near an occupant's face.

Gina walks in.

GINA

Yoga?

He scrambles to his feet. He considers a word, but walks to a master control panel, pretending to take readings.

Gina gets down to look in the same window.

Inside, a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN upside down, in hibernation.

Gina gives Chet a look. He ignores her, continuing on with recording readings.