

SLIDERS

"Slidecage"

FADE IN

EXT. SKY - DAY

A gorgeous blue sky. Silence, then the THRUM OF ENGINES. A magnificent GOLDEN ZEPPELIN flies into shot, filling the screen with ornate beauty. The name on the bow: CHANDLER.

REMBRANDT (O.S.)

Now this is the life...

INT. CHANDLER HOTEL/ZEPPELIN - BAR - DAY

REDRESS of our Chandler Hotel set. The bar has no one in it, save our Sliders. REMBRANDT and MAGGIE sit by a picture window, watching the clouds drift by, sipping ice tea.

REMBRANDT

Drifting along, not a soul in this world who wants to do us dirt...

MAGGIE

Who'd have thought there'd be a Chandler in the clouds...

REMBRANDT

Yeah, well, on this earth the Hinderburg never blew up, so it's only reasonable you'd have a luxury hotel making the L.A. to San Francisco run.

MAGGIE

Reasonable?

REMBRANDT

Maggie, girl, I take 'em as they come...

QUINN (O.S.)

No, it's cosign over sign --

Rembrandt and Maggie look over to see QUINN and COLIN at a nearby table. The timer and a laptop computer before them, the laptop's screen displaying all manner of equations.

QUINN

Will you get your hands off the keyboard?

COLIN

We had a horse with a temperament like you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

QUINN
Yeah? Did it have a brother?

COLIN
No -- a burr under its tail.

QUINN
Well, don't ask if you can look...
You know, you're mighty cocky for
someone who's just learning this.

COLIN
Just let me adjust --

He reaches for the keyboard again. Quinn bats his hand away, trying to type in numbers himself.

QUINN
Quit it! Quit!

Maggie and Rembrandt hurry over.

REMBRANDT
Hold it! Hold on there!... You too
must be family, you sure fight
like it. How about you take a
minute to unwind, look at the
clouds?

Quinn leans back, focuses on Remmy -- contained excitement.

QUINN
I think we're close, Remmy...

REMBRANDT
You're kidding...

Quinn pushes a button on the laptop. The screen shows a diagram of the two microdots, spewing out numbers, which then combine into a complex scroll of numbers.

QUINN
By linking the microdots our
parents left us to the hard drive
and running a de-encryption
program, we've been able to
download the data. Now it's just a
matter of eliminating the
randomization protocols --

REMBRANDT
Doing the who to what?

COLIN
Separating the wheat from the
chaff.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

REMBRANDT

Oh.

QUINN

This final string should do it...

Quinn types. Immediately, the rows of numbers onscreen fall away to reveal one simple line of numbers: the coordinates.

COLIN

Yes...

QUINN

We've got it... The coordinates to get us home.

MAGGIE

You're sure? These'll take us to the world your parents came from?

QUINN

Where humans beat the Kromaggs and threw them off their world...

COLIN

Our real parents...

QUINN

And maybe the technology to save other worlds...

(to Remmy, weighted)

The world we came from...

REMBRANDT

Earth. The real one.

The others shoot him a look -- "real one," indeed...

REMBRANDT

I mean -- hell, you know what I mean! Push the button, Q-Ball...

Quinn starts inputting the coordinates into the timer.

QUINN

Ready to go home, brother?

Colin nods. Quinn hands him the timer, smiles.

QUINN

Then hit it.

Quinn stashes the computer in his knapsack. Colin pushes the button. The timer SHOOTs OUT A BEAM. The VORTEX appears. They leap through, Quinn with the knapsack.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Our guys SLIDE IN, get to their feet, look about. The place is futuristic in design but rundown. They're in a long corridor, lit only in patches, equipment lying about, wiring hanging from the ceiling. A feeling of chaos.

COLIN
This isn't quite what I was
expecting...

REMBRANDT
Hello! Hey! Where's the welcome
wagon?

MAGGIE
Let's just find the exit...

They move along the corridor, casting about. Rembrandt moves OUT OF SHOT.

QUINN
I don't see any door out...

Maggie takes a breath, notes:

MAGGIE
Air's got a metallic taste... like
it's processed...

QUINN
Yeah, but what's that tell us...?

REMBRANDT (O.S.)
(bleak)
It tells us we're a long way from
home...

ANGLE to include Rembrandt. He stands looking out a window. The others join him... and gape in surprise.

THEIR POV - OUT THE WINDOW

A barren, alien terrain stretches to the horizon, dotted with the ruins of strange buildings of nonhuman design. The NIGHT SKY is afire with weirdly-colored clouds, a tapestry of unfamiliar stars... and TWO MOONS in the sky.

OUR GUYS peer out worriedly, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. CORRIDOR - ON THE WINDOW - NIGHT

The same bizarre scene as before.

ON QUINN, REMBRANDT, COLIN AND MAGGIE

MAGGIE

We're not on earth...

QUINN

Yes, we are... it's just an earth very different from anything we've seen before...

REMBRANDT

But wait a minute, Q-Ball. What we heard about your homeworld isn't anything like this.

COLIN

Somehow, we've arrived at the wrong place.

QUINN

But the coordinates were right, I'm sure of it.

MAGGIE

Well, clearly something went wrong.

REMBRANDT

Man, go from ice tea and a comfy chair to this... Story of our lives...

MAGGIE

How long till we slide out?

Colin raises the timer in his hand to check... and freezes.

COLIN

Brother... we have a problem.

He shows it to the others -- its LED is frozen at 00:00.

REMBRANDT

The timer's not counting down.

Quinn takes it, tries to punch in some commands -- nothing.

MAGGIE

What's wrong with it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

QUINN

I don't know...

Suddenly, a soothing MAN'S VOICE issues from behind them.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Friends... over here...

Surprised, they turn in the direction of the sound.

QUINN

I know that voice...

Colin nods. He does, too, but -- like Quinn -- can't quite place it. They move toward a doorway.

CLAUDE (O.S.)

That's right... in here... There's nothing to be afraid of...

They enter...

INT. VIEWSCREEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Good...

As soon as they're all in, the door SLIDES DOWN, trapping them. They spin to face it. Rembrandt POUNDS on it.

REMBRANDT

Hey!

CLAUDE (O.S.)

Don't be alarmed... it's merely to afford us some privacy for your indoctrination...

MAGGIE

I don't like the sound of that...

A LIGHT behind them comes on, ILLUMINATING them. They turn to see that it's a BIG VIEWSCREEN. The kindly face of MICHAEL MALLORY appears. Stunned, recognizing the face, Quinn and Colin draw near it, the others following.

MICHAEL MALLORY

Welcome, newcomers... I helped to invent sliding, the method by which you've arrived here. My name is Michael Mallory...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

QUINN
Colin, it's our...

COLIN
Father...
(to the screen)
Father! It's Quinn and Colin!

MICHAEL MALLORY
(over the above)
This may well be disorienting to
you, as you were no doubt trying to
get to my world --

QUINN
(to Colin)
He's not here, it's just a tape.

MICHAEL MALLORY
-- but you have instead been
shunted here, by the Slidecage
mechanism.

MAGGIE
Slidecage?

MICHAEL MALLORY
Following the recent human/Kromagg
war, we have driven the enemy from
our world and cloaked it so they
cannot return, by these means. In
the interest of...

His image BREAKS UP, the sound GARBLES, it's all distortion.

REMBRANDT
Come back, give us the whole story!
Hey!

No response. Rembrandt HITS the edge of the screen with the
flat of his hand hard. The IMAGE restabilizes.

MICHAEL MALLORY
-- unfortunately cannot return you,
as it would pose a security risk...

REMBRANDT
Hah! Always worked with my old TV.

MAGGIE
Don't look like they're maintaining
their equipment...

QUINN
Sh...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

MICHAEL MALLORY

Your needs will be provided for, food and air and shelter. Do not tamper with the dispensing machines. If you attempt to venture outside, the toxic atmosphere will kill you. Other than these strictures, you are free to live by the rules you create... Make the best of this world. It is now your world... for the rest of your lives.

The screen GOES BLANK. The door SLIDES BACK OPEN.

MAGGIE

For the rest of our lives...?

QUINN

It's a perfect system to keep their world safe, make sure the Kromaggs can't invade. Anyone who tries to slide to the homeworld ends up here instead.

(off the timer)

They must have some kind of damping field to render this inoperable.

REMBRANDT

You saying we've wandered into some kind of roach motel for sliders?

COLIN

But why would our parents cloak their world and not come get us?

QUINN

They tried to, but I was kept hidden from them... and you were lost, your foster parents dead...

REMBRANDT

Knowing those Magg devils, I can't blame your people for wanting to keep their world safe. It's just a damn shame we walked into it.

MAGGIE

So what do we do now?

QUINN

What we always do... beat the odds.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As they emerge, there's a distant HOWL, like a primal scream, followed by METAL HITTING METAL, then SILENCE.

REMBRANDT
Either we got some mighty big rats...

MAGGIE
Or maybe it's just us and the Kromaggs...

COLIN
I have never seen a Kromagg before.

REMBRANDT
When you do you'll wish you hadn't.

QUINN
Keep sharp, guys...

They edge forward cautiously. Colin hangs back.

REMBRANDT
Don't want to miss the party, farm boy.

COLIN
I was just thinking... back home they'd be rotating the crops, maybe holding a prayer vigil...
(a shy smile)
I'm glad I'm here...

Rembrandt claps him on the shoulder. They hurry after the others.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Maggie, Quinn, Rembrandt and Colin are scoping out the area. Quinn peers down the corridor, which seems to go on forever.

QUINN
The place is a real labyrinth... all we need is a minotaur...
(turns to Colin)
It's a beast with the head of a --

COLIN
We have that myth where I come from, too.

MAGGIE

is some feet from the others. She hears a SOUND from a nearby vent, moves to peer into it.

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CONTINUED

HER POV - IN VENT

Dark, stretching away. Dimly perceived, there's a MAN in it. He draws closer, still deeply shadowed.

MAGGIE

reacts, thrown -- as though having seen a ghost. Just then, there's a CRASHING and SHOUTS of a brawl, drawing near.

The man in the vent darts back into the darkness and away, gone. Maggie reaches out, stepping closer.

MAGGIE

Wait...

WIDE

Hearing the RIOT coming their way, Quinn calls to the others:

QUINN

Get down!

They duck into hiding. A beat, then a BRAWLING GROUP OF HUMANS AND KROMAGGS (around six in all) surge into the area from a side corridor. All are dressed in ragtag clothes. It's like a street rumble, fists and boots and rough weapons (neither side has guns or blasters, weapons are jerry-rigged from scavenged parts).

Rembrandt wants to join the fray, but Quinn holds him back, whispering:

QUINN

We see what the rules are...

The fight is nasty on both sides. The Kromaggs seem to be getting the upper hand. Two humans take flight down the corridor.

Rembrandt sees that the figure the Kromaggs are manhandling is a WOMAN. Without thinking, he emerges on the run, plows into the Kromaggs, allowing the Woman to escape. She runs off after the others.

But now the Kromaggs have Rembrandt. A blow from behind knocks him senseless, they drag him back the way they came.

Quinn, Maggie and Colin are after them in a flash, but the Kromaggs have passed through a doorway. Two wires protrude from the wall on the other side.

One of the Kromaggs touches the ends of the wires together, making a connection. In answer, the door slides SHUT, closing off our guys from Rembrandt and the Kromaggs.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

QUINN

Rembrandt!

DOWN THE CORRIDOR

Unseen by them, the Woman Rembrandt saved hesitates, watching them, then hurries off after her fellows.

QUINN

tries to force the door. No use. He shakes his head to the othes. Rembrandt is gone.

INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

Quinn, Maggie and Colin are hurrying in the opposite direction. Quinn points.

QUINN

There, in the dust, another track.

COLIN

You think these people will help us?

QUINN

I don't know, but if they can at least tell us the lay of the land... Maggie, you have any training in --?

He trails off, noting Maggie lost in thought.

QUINN

Maggie...?

MAGGIE

I'm sorry... For some reason, I keep thinking about -- Quinn, my husband... you're sure he died?

Quinn's surprised by this question here and now.

QUINN

Yes... He was killed by Rickman, I saw the body... Maggie, what --

MAGGIE

Nothing. A shadow in a vent. It's just all this talk of family and home and being so close...

COLIN

You thought you saw him?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MAGGIE

No. I saw a shadow. I imagined...
what I wanted.

They turn a corner, spy a MAN darting away.

QUINN

Hold it, we're friends!

They run after him, into:

INT. HUMAN STRONGHOLD - CONTINUOUS

A dark, steamy room, cluttered and lived in. Colin, Maggie and Quinn rush in -- then stop as they realize they're surrounded by a motley group of MEN and WOMEN. CLAUDE, the man they chased, strides up to Quinn.

CLAUDE

I know my friends... I don't know
you.

He slugs Quinn, who doubles over. Maggie and Colin try to come to Quinn's aid, but they're grabbed from behind and held fast. Claude is about to hit Quinn again, when the Woman Rembrandt saved pushes forward.

WOMAN

Wait... They were with the one who
saved me...

Claude relents, roughly pulls Quinn back up to a standing position. The others let Maggie and Colin go.

MAGGIE

Yeah... and thanks to that, he's
been taken by the Kromaggs.

COLIN

You must help us find him...

ALANA (O.S.)

It's too late...

The crowd parts, revealing ALANA (40s), dressed much as the others are... but clearly their leader.

ALANA

He's gone. Or will be, before the
night's out. You're going to have
to forget him.

QUINN

We're not about to do that.

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CONTINUED

ALANA
You're new. I'm sorry. You've
fallen into a very, very deep hole.

She move up to him. We get a sense of someone who, however
toughened, is just hanging on.

ALANA
The people you see here, we're all
that's left of over two hundred.
All the heroes are dead. All the
wonderful idealists... I lead.
They follow. We survive.

Maggie steps up to her, gets in her face.

MAGGIE
Well, two or three idealists have
just arrived... so if you survivors
could give us a road map of this
place --

ALANA
This isn't a joke -- we're in a
combat situation!
(forces control)
The last free-thinker we had was
caught. Tortured. Revealed our
location... Now you've found us,
You either join us... or die.

COLIN
How do we join?

MAGGIE
Colin...

COLIN
It's clearly the superior of the
two options.

Maggie turns sharply, eyes the crowd for the least
timid-looking, spies Claude.

MAGGIE
You. Yes, you.

QUINN
Maggie, no...

He's seen Alana's expression, but Maggie is already striding
for her target.

MAGGIE
No problem? Surviving by hiding
like a rat?

Claude shifts, uncomfortable.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

CLAUDE

Alana... Maybe she's got a point.
Maybe --

Rebellion. Disaster. Alana motions to her followers.

ALANA

Out. Now.

Men grab Maggie and start hustling her toward a rusted metal plate held flush against the wall by four bolts. Quinn and Colin try to help her, but they're grabbed and held, struggling. Others loosen three of the bolts, holding cloths to their noses and mouths.

As the plate loosens, NOXIOUS FUMES curl out along the edges -- toxic air leaking in. Our guys react big, realizing Maggie's about to be chucked into this lethal atmosphere.

QUINN

(to Alana)
Don't do this! She's got a temper,
give her time...

COLIN

We'll do what you say!

She comes up closer to them.

ALANA

I don't mind if you hate me.
There's no rule against that. But
don't let that blind you. This is
a desperate and unforgiving
situation.

She nods toward her men. They slide the plate aside on it's one remaining bolt, revealing a RAGGED HOLE punched in the wall, only dark, FOGLIKE VAPORS visible beyond. They quickly hurl Maggie outside, then slide it back down and hurriedly bolt it back tight.

QUINN

No!!!

From outside, we hear Maggie CHOKING, BANGING on the hatch.

Quinn breaks free, rushes for the door. He manages to hold the others at bay long enough to start frantically loosening the bolts -- before being knocked unconscious.

ON COLIN

In anguish, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. HUMAN STRONGHOLD - NIGHT

Moments later. Quinn is just rousing. Colin is still held, though no longer struggling, looking at the sealed, silent hatch with despair.

Alana nods at the men holding him. They release him. She notes a tear in Colin's shirt, from the struggle.

ALANA
Your shirt is torn.
(to the others)
Take him to mend it... Then fetch
them soup and some bedding.

COLIN
Quinn...?

QUINN
It's all right...

Colin heads off with the men. The others disperse. Quinn moves to the metal plate, devastated, runs a hand along it. Alana comes up behind him, speaking more softly now.

ALANA
You'll be watched, under guard for
a time. I hope you come to a point
of acceptance....
(off his glare)
I know. It's a nightmare for us
all. But things are as they are.
And we need each other.

She starts away.

QUINN
What you did was cold murder.

She stops, turns. We see the strain in her, as though she's just holding on, that she hates what she has to do.

ALANA
She couldn't have lived here.
Not... someone like her. Trapped,
no way out, she'd have torn herself
to pieces... and taken some of us
with her. I've seen it many
times...
(beat)
But you... you're watchful, a
survivor... You'll adapt.

QUINN
I don't plan to stay that long.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALANA

We all say that, at first. But we'd been scattered too far, came rushing home -- too late. Now there's only here... and the enemy.

QUINN

The Kromaggs.

ALANA

The Maggs take one of ours, we take one of theirs... We open him up, leave him where he'll be found. We hold them off by terror.

QUINN

To fight a Magg, become one.

Her eyes flash anger. She turns, starts off.

QUINN

Wait...

(she turns back)

My friend... the Maggs could be torturing him. At least let us go.

Alana exhales impatience, starts out. Quinn lifts his knapsack, shows its contents, speaks rapidly, desperate.

QUINN

I have skills, knowledge... Maybe I could help us all get out.

ALANA

There is no way out!

(gets control, softly)

I'm sorry about your friend... I wasn't always... ice...

She heads off, then glances back, smiling, eyes tortured.

ALANA

Believe it or not, if I could trade place with your friend right now... I would.

She exits. Quinn watches her go.

INT. KROMAGG LAIR - NIGHT

Much like the human stronghold but with a barbarian design touch, lighting dim. MALE AND FEMALE KROMAGGS in thrown-together clothes busy themselves at various tasks, tending to rough-hewn hydroponics, etc. The Kromaggs we saw earlier drag Rembrandt in.

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CONTINUED

REMBRANDT

Lemme go, you stinking Maggots!
Let go of me!

KOLITAR (O.S.)

You humans are so loud, even when
you're not in pain...

KOLITAR surges through the crowd to Rembrandt. Big and broad, older. Though his clothes are not military, there is something grand and commanding about them... and him. His arm has a ragged bandage around it, with dried blood.

KOLITAR

I haven't seen you... New in town?

REMBRANDT

Yeah, not that it helped...
Everywhere I go, there you Maggots
are.

KOLITAR

I might say the same of you humans.

Rembrandt looks at the vats and plants. In spite of his loathing for the Kromaggs, he can't help but be curious.

REMBRANDT

What the hell is all this?

KOLITAR

A few of us had burrs, seedlings,
adhering to our clothes when we
were... trapped here. We make
our own garments, grow other
substances as best we can...

REMBRANDT

Sounds real homey...

KOLITAR

It is no life for a Kromagg... but
it is the life we have. Enough of
this.

(to the others)

Was he alone?

REMBRANDT

Nah, I had my R&B band with me.

KOLITAR

R and B?

REMBRANDT

Skip it, you're not gonna get
anything outta me, okay?

(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

REMBRANDT (CONT'D)
 You Kromaggs have already done your worst... I've been in one of your prison camps.

KOLITAR
 This is no prison camp... merely a prison.

(considering Rembrandt)
 If we let you go, you'd tell the humans our strength in numbers. If we took you in, you'd betray us... So what are we to do?

REMBRANDT
 You're gonna kill me... so how about we just get it over with...

KOLITAR
 Brave words... but foolish... Our Gods tell us that a death long endured secures a place in paradise.
 (to one of his men)
 Bring the knives.

Despite his bravado, Rembrandt can't help being afraid. The Kromagg hurries off. A thin VOICE PIPES UP:

KALDEEN (O.S.)
 Father, please, don't...

Rembrandt turns to see KALDEEN, a teenaged Kromagg, thin and frail, with bright alert eyes. He's in a homemade wheelchair, his body twisted.

KALDEEN
 Can't we just talk to him...?

KOLITAR
 Silence! You are a shame on my clan!

REMBRANDT
 You brought your son here?

Kolitar turns on Rembrandt, a murderous rage in his eyes.

KOLITAR
 No, he was born in this hell...
 Some factor of this place...
 radiation perhaps... makes
 conception virtually impossible...
 Kaldeen's birth was a freak... one
 that cost his mother her life.

The Kromagg appears with a wooden box, holds it out.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

KOLITAR
But enough of sadness and this
world...

He opens the box, revealing NASTY-LOOKING SCAVENGED-TOGETHER
BLADES. He selects one, turns to Rembrandt.

KOLITAR
Pain can be a kingdom all its own.

He draws near Rembrandt. Rembrandt's nerve falters. His
eyes fall on Kolitar's bandage.

REMBRANDT
That arm of yours... looks pretty
bad.

Kolitar's startled. He eyes the wound angrily.

KOLITAR
It was sustained in battle... it
burns in me...

REMBRANDT
Guess you don't have doctors around
here...

Kolitar gives a SHOUT of rage, rushes Rembrandt, throwing
him to the ground, pressing the blade to his throat.

KOLITAR
That foul slop from the human
processors... We're malnourished...
unable to heal ourselves...

REMBRANDT
My Mama had a remedy... from the
Bayou... might be able to make
it... and that arm wouldn't end up
killing you...

Kolitar's surprised -- and suspicious.

KOLITAR
You'd say anything to live.

REMBRANDT
I haven't lied yet... but if you
kill me, you'll never know.

A tense moment... then he lets Rembrandt up.

KOLITAR
Very well. But understand this...
you have only postponed your death.

Rembrandt looks him right in the eye, doesn't back down.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

REMBRANDT

We all of us die... only question
is when.

KALDEEN

sits on the periphery, watching Rembrandt, impressed.

INT. HUMAN STRONGHOLD - NIGHT

Two armed-to-the-teeth Guards flank the entrance. Colin
sashays up, nods toward the weapons on one's bandolier.

COLIN

These are quite ingenious in how
they are fashioned... I've been a
weaponsmith myself, perhaps we
might share crude technology...

The Guard just glares at him.

COLIN

At some later time...

He nods goodbye, hurries to where Quinn is lying some
distance off, bundled in blankets, back to the guards.

COLIN

They're heavily armed. I doubt
we'd prevail against them...

He crouches... and we see Quinn is using the bedding to
conceal that he's patched his laptop into the mainframe
computer and is busily typing commands. BLUEPRINTS OF ROOMS
AND CORRIDORS flash by on the laptop's screen.

QUINN

Well, whether we go around them,
over them or under them, we've got
to get to Remmy...

COLIN

If he still lives...

The despair in Colin's tone gets Quinn's attention.

QUINN

How you doin', bro?

COLIN

I don't know... I've never been
responsible for the death of
another before...

QUINN

You didn't cause her death.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

COLIN

I completed the equations that brought her here.

QUINN

Yes, and that's all... You couldn't know we'd get trapped here, or that the leader of this bunch would be homicidal... It wasn't your fault, get that into your thick head... Okay?

Colin doesn't respond. Instead, he looks to the screen.

COLIN

Have you detected a way out?

QUINN

Not yet, but get a load of this...

He types a command. A DRAWING OF THE SLIDECAGE TOWER appears.

QUINN

Slidecage mechanism, it's what's damping our timer and keeping us here... But when I try to access it's innards...

He calls up an area of data that breaks down into STATIC.

QUINN

Looks like someone tried to hack in, crashed the works...

(types a command,
nothing)

Nope... it's totally wiped.

Quinn returns to the parade of blueprints. The light from it shines on Colin's face, his expression grows reflective.

COLIN

When the influenza took my mother and father, I watched them gasping out their lives... and there was nothing I could do...

(beat)

I didn't ever want that feeling again.

Quinn turns to him again, says softly:

QUINN

Any time we give our hearts to anyone, in time they'll lose us or we'll lose them... It's the price of being alive.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

COLIN
That doesn't stop it hurting.

QUINN
No... it doesn't.

He rubs his brother's shoulder, Colin grasps his hand. A moment of connection. The blueprints continue to speed by. Quinn catches something out of the corner of his eye.

QUINN
Hold it, hold it...
(types command)
Go back.

An image of a CONDUIT freezes on the monitor.

QUINN
Yes... venting duct. Comes into this room... and re-enters the building here. Might be able to override the locking code. Only hitch, there's a stretch of it... here... that's open to the outside atmosphere.

COLIN
(alarmed)
But that's what killed Maggie...

QUINN
She didn't have a way back in, we will. It's only a few hundred feet.

The thought of Maggie's death is still fresh in Colin's mind. He shakes his head.

QUINN
Colin, Colin, look at me. Look at me. We can do this, we can...
(beat, gentler)
She'd want us to try.

Colin calms, looking at his brother... then nods.

INT. CONDUIT CENTRAL - NIGHT

Dark, we're in the walls, at some juncture that opens up to a larger space. Maggie lies bundled in rough blankets, unmoving. Then she GASPS, takes a deep breath and sits up.

She looks around, disoriented. It's coming back to her now, sliding to this world, being chucked outside... But how did she get here?

A SOUND behind her.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She turns to see A FIGURE, shambling toward her out of the darkness, misshapen, glinting metal. She shrinks against the wall, trying to get away.

The figure emerges from the darkness. It's a man in a weathered environment suit. He puts out a reassuring hand.

STEVEN

It's all right...

He lifts the visor... and we see the face of STEVEN JENSEN.

STEVEN

Welcome back from the dead, Maggie.

A flood of emotion overwhelms her.

MAGGIE

Steven...

(then she realizes)

You're walking... But how --?

(beat, sad)

You're from an alternate world.

You're aren't my Steven...

STEVEN

I don't know what you're talking about... but I guess it means you're not the one I lost, either...

MAGGIE

Dead...?

STEVEN

Missing, over the Gulf... the Mexicano pilots blew her out of the sky...

Just then, Maggie remembers Quinn and Colin and Rembrandt.

MAGGIE

I've got to get to my friends...!

She tries to rise, is seized with a fit of coughing. He rushes to her, helps ease her back.

STEVEN

Easy, easy there... you're not up to anything yet.

(smiles, shakes his head)

Such spirit, you're so like her...

Only now I'm here to help.

INT. KROMAGG LAIR - NIGHT

Rembrandt lies by a wall, chained to it. Kaldeen rolls up.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KALDEEN

It was smart what you did, to save
your life... made yourself useful.
It's what I do.

REMBRANDT

Go away, I don't talk to Kromaggs.

KALDEEN

I fix the replicators when they
break, the air handlers, too. Once
I even got into the computer,
downloaded the specs on the
Slidecage equipment, not that I
could read much of it...

(rolls closer)

My name's Kaldeen... What's yours?

Rembrandt eyes him balefully. This kid isn't gonna quit...

REMBRANDT

Rembrandt.

KALDEEN

(a laugh)
That's an odd one.

REMBRANDT

It's after a painter.

KALDEEN

Are you a painter, too?

REMBRANDT

No... I'm a singer...

KALDEEN

I've heard of songs... Are you from
the homeworld?

Rembrandt stiffens, gets a suspicious look. Is this a
Kromagg trick, sending a kid to question him?

REMBRANDT

Is this an interrogation?

KALDEEN

(surprised)
No, just talking...

He motions toward the Kromaggs on the other side of the
room, paying no attention to them.

KALDEEN

They don't talk to me...

Rembrandt feels pity for the kid, sighs.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

REMBRANDT
I'm not from the homeworld, never
seen it... and from the way it's
going, doesn't look like I will...

He looks at the chain, shakes his head.

REMBRANDT
When my Mama was dressing me for
kindergarten, I never expected to
wind up here...

KALDEEN
Tell me about your mother... I
never knew mine.

Rembrandt considers a beat, then speaking softly:

REMBRANDT
When I was little, Mama seemed
about a million miles tall...
Nights when the sky flashed and
stomped its feet, she'd hold me on
her rocker, all bundled up... sing
real low... and so, so sweet...

KALDEEN
What would she sing...?

Rembrandt thinks a moment then starts SINGING, low and
sweet...

REMBRANDT
(SINGING)
Sometimes I feel like a motherless
child... Sometimes I feel like a
motherless child...

Kaldeen listens to his first song ever, captivated. We PULL
BACK slowly, as the two figures become small in the shadowed
room, alone. The SONG CONTINUES.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE KROMAGG LAIR

Continuing to pull back in the dim corridor, as the SONG
ECHOES down empty halls.

REMBRANDT (O.S.)
A long way from home...

INT. HUMAN STRONGHOLD - NIGHT

In the distance, by the entrance, we see a woman bring the
Guards their dinner. They stand talking to her a minute,
not watching Quinn and Colin. ARRIVE at Quinn and Colin.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

They're all bundled up in blankets like before, but they've moved their spot. Seeing the guards distracted, Quinn turns to Colin:

QUINN

Now.

Colin runs a line from Quinn's computer to a nearby vent with a closed hatch. He attaches the line to the control panel, which shows a RED LIGHT.

Quinn types a command. The light changes to GREEN. The hatch SLIDES OPEN. Quinn hurriedly gathers up computer and line, stows it in his knapsack. He and Colin dive in, their absence not yet noticed. The hatch SLIDES SHUT behind them.

INT. CONDUIT - NIGHT

Quinn in the lead, crawling along, Colin behind him.

INT. CONDUIT CENTRAL - NIGHT

Maggie's sitting up, eating soup as Steven looks on.

MAGGIE

So you never had an accident and...
your Maggie never quit flying to
look after you.

STEVEN

When I lost you -- her -- I buried
myself in work, experimented... I
guess without caring... landed
here.

MAGGIE

And stayed hidden...?

STEVEN

In the conduits...

He indicates a ROW OF MONITORS set high along one wall, switching to various scenes of empty corridors and rooms.

STEVEN

I scavenged parts, set these up to
keep an eye on things...

MAGGIE

But why? If you're at all like the
man I knew, you might have turned
things around, made a difference...

He looks away, hurting. More gently, she adds:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MAGGIE

To cut yourself off, be so alone...

STEVEN

After you, there was nothing but
alone...

(sensing her
disappointment)

I guess I'm not that like him after
all...

She reaches out, takes his hand, comforting.

MAGGIE

I haven't thanked you, have I? For
my life...

The closeness makes him uncomfortable. He gestures at the
environment suit hanging on a hook.

STEVEN

I made myself an environment suit,
so I could explore the ruins...
Good thing, too, or I wouldn't have
been able to get you...

MAGGIE

I saw the ruins through a window
when I first got here.

STEVEN

Centuries old. From an advanced
race... not human... There's
nothing left of them but their
carved stones, a few devices...

He gestures toward some objects on an improvised work table,
-- bits of alien carving, stones with weird hieroglyphs,
some odd, weathered devices. He picks one up, then another.

STEVEN

This can record thoughts... This
disrupts energy fields...
(looks off, thoughtful)
Sometimes, I'd wonder... the last
one of them... alone, looking out
at the night... did he hope someday
he'd be back with the ones he
loved...?

He turns to look at Maggie. We see uncertainty in her face.

INT. CONDUIT - NIGHT

Crawling, Quinn and Colin come to a closed hatch. Quinn
touches the control panel by the hatch, looks to Colin.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

QUINN

Ready?

Colin nods. They take several quick, deep breaths, then hold it. Quinn keys a command on a panel beside the hatch.

It SLIDES OPEN -- beyond lies a further length of conduit, SWIRLING TOXIC ATMOSPHERE within. They crawl forward as fast as they can, as the hatch closes behind them.

We MOVE WITH THEM in the tight, hellish space, as the poison air swirls about them. Colin starts to falter, Quinn grabs him, helps pull him along, determined. They MIST GROWS THICKER until they're lost from sight.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CONDUIT CENTRAL - NIGHT

Maggie notices one of the images on a monitor shows Quinn and Colin struggling through the conduit.

MAGGIE

Oh my God, it's Quinn and Colin...

STEVEN

That conduit, it's not far...

INT. SLIDECAGE ROOM - NIGHT

ON THE SLIDECAGE TOWER, all cool electronics, lights blinking, HUMMING with power. A HATCH pops open -- Quinn and Colin slide out, coughing, catching their breath. Quinn SLAMS the hatch shut. Colin looks around, sees the Tower.

COLIN

Where are we?

QUINN

In the belly of the beast... That runs the Slidecage effect.

Colin walks toward it, in awe.

COLIN

Amazing...

QUINN

stands some feet behind Colin. Suddenly, he spies something on the ground in front of Colin, looks alarmed.

QUINN

Colin, no!

He grabs up a tool, throws it past Colin toward the Tower.

ON THE SLIDECAGE TOWER

As the tool reaches a point mid-air a few feet from the Tower. There's a FLASH and the tool is DISINTEGRATED.

ON QUINN AND COLIN

As the smoke clears. Colin looks at Quinn in wonder.

COLIN

How did you --?

QUINN

A line of ash, there on the floor.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Colin looks.

HIS POV - ON FLOOR

A fine line of ash is scattered along the outer edge of where the invisible forcefield lies.

BACK TO QUINN AND COLIN

ALANA (O.S.)
I thought you understood...

They turn to see that Alana has entered with several of her people, all armed.

ALANA
That man whom the Maggs caught, who revealed where we were... do you think he just lost us our homes?
(steps closer)
Some of us arrived with children... there were over forty. Our great pride had been, against all odds, we'd kept them safe... until that day.

Quinn dives at the men, trying to get to the exit, Colin following his lead. They fight but are subdued. Alana comes up to Quinn.

ALANA
The one who betrayed us was strong, like you. He called me a little tin dictator, laughed when I said he might crack... I let him go. I did.

She looks toward the Slidecage Tower.

ALANA
Sometimes, our people come here to end it... I'm told they don't feel a thing.

Our guys react in horror, realizing her intent. They struggle like mad, to no avail. Expression tormented, she nods to her men, who start manhandling Quinn and Colin head-first toward the invisible forcefield.

Suddenly, a RAY BEAM SHOOTs from behind them, HITTING the forcefield, DISTURBING it, shutting its HUM off momentarily. CRIES OF SURPRISE from everyone.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
That was a warning shot.

WIDE

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Steven has entered with Maggie, who holds the HARMONIC DISRUPTOR aimed at the forcefield.

STEVEN
We don't want to have to use it on
any of you...

MAGGIE
Drop your weapons and let them go.
Now.

Alana nods to her men. They drop their weapons and release Quinn and Colin, who quickly gather the weapons and hurry to Maggie and Steven. Quinn notes Steven.

MAGGIE
Introductions later... C'mon.

They start backing out, Maggie keeping the Disruptor aimed at Alana and her men to keep them back.

ALANA
Wait.

She moves closer.

ALANA
A weapon like that... we could turn
it against the Maggs, be safe at
last...

MAGGIE
Here's a life lesson for you,
lady... People you've murdered
aren't that willing to strike a
bargain.

ALANA
All right, then. If I'm in the
way, kill me.
(off her people)
Why make them pay?

Silence -- our guys are thrown.

ALANA
Please. These are good people...

She gives a feint smile. An eternity of weariness.

ALANA
I just can't do this any more...

MAGGIE
The answer's no.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

QUINN
Hold on, Maggie... We need to get
Remmy back. If this weapon --

STEVEN
It's not a weapon...
(takes it from Maggie)
It doesn't work on people, just
energy fields. I'm sorry.

ALANA
You were bluffing!

MAGGIE
You work with what you've got...

Alana glares. Our guys hold the humans at bay with their
own weapons. Colin's looking at the Disruptor, thoughtful.

COLIN
Could that device be set for a
longer duration?

STEVEN
I think so, yes.

COLIN
If it could render the forcefield
harmless...

Quinn considers it, then shakes his head.

QUINN
Without the specs, we'd still be
lost...

STEVEN
The Kromaggs have them... I've seen
it on my monitor.

COLIN
(to Quinn, excited)
We could dismantle the Slidecage...

Quinn's thinking, sees the possibility. Alana's people
MURMUR to themselves.

MAN
Is it true? Could you really get
us home?

QUINN
Yes...

ALANA
What makes you think you could beat
this, when all the others couldn't?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

QUINN

Their name wasn't Mallory... I'm
the son of the man who built this.

Murmurs from the crowd. Even Alana's impressed.

QUINN

But I'll need you...

ALANA

To attack the Kromaggs.

QUINN

To make a truce.

Alana's stunned, as is Maggie.

MAGGIE

Quinn, you're not seriously
thinking of trusting her?

QUINN

What's the alternative, Maggie? We
take her hostage? Her people come
after her, what do we do, kill her?
Kill them all? It has to stop,
someone has to stand for sanity!

ALANA

We can't let the Kromaggs back on
our world...

QUINN

It's just a small number. We'll
keep them under guard, slide them
back to their people...

(off her hesitance)

I don't like the Kromaggs either.
I've lost friends to them... but
either we find a way to work with
them, or we all die.

QUINN

(beat)

It's a chance to go home. Can
you understand what that means...
or are you too dead to remember?

ALANA

They'll never agree to it.

QUINN

That's not what we're talking
about... Do you?

A long beat. She looks at her people, their hopeful, urging
faces, and then...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 5

ALANA

Yes... You have my word.

MAGGIE

Oh right, we're supposed to rely on that. How about we just chuck you out in the methane?

QUINN

Maggie...

WOMAN (O.S.)

She's telling the truth...

The Woman Rembrandt saved comes up to them.

WOMAN

I've known Alana twelve years. She never breaks her word...

Maggie's about to protest, but the Woman cuts her off with a look.

WOMAN

Your friend gave his life for me... I wouldn't lie to you.

Maggie sees the truth in her eyes, says nothing. Quinn walks up to Alana.

QUINN

How do we get word to the Kromaggs?

INT. KROMAGG STRONGHOLD

CLOSE on Kolitar's arm, which now has Rembrandt's poultice tied to it. Rembrandt's pulled it a few inches to inspect the wound. The room is dark, lit only here and there by weak lamps.

REMBRANDT

Wound's not looking half-bad...

WIDEN to reveal Kolitar and Rembrandt, who is still chained to the wall.

KOLITAR

I feel the death force receding from it... We Kromaggs have nothing like this -- what do you call it?

Rembrandt ties it back in place.

REMBRANDT

A poultice... I figure there's a whole lot you Kromaggs don't have... empathy, mercy...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KOLITAR

And what of your humans' treatment of us? How many millions died as slaves building your pyramids, your canals spanning continents?

REMBRANDT

I don't know a thing about that... All I know is you Kromaggs spread death and destruction wherever you go.

KOLITAR

We are adversarial races... Whenever there are rival species vying for the same land, the same food, the same shelter, the fitter survives... It is the way of things.

REMBRANDT

God's will...

KOLITAR

What's that?

REMBRANDT

It's what my Mama used to say about anything bad, it's God's will... Well, maybe that's so with a hurricane or tidal wave, but when it comes to people I figure we got a say in what we do...

KOLITAR

You're an optimist... but you're still chained to that wall.

REMBRANDT

Look... the war's over. I've done you a good turn. How about you let me go?

KOLITAR

The war continues here, in microcosm... We cripple them, they cripple us, neither gaining advantage... year after year...

He hauls Rembrandt up close, by the chain.

KOLITAR

As soon as I am well, you will die... with my thanks.

He shoves Rembrandt aside, exits out of frame. Rembrandt gets back up, rubbing his arm.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

REMBRANDT

Now that's a comfort...

Kaldeen rolls up to him, extends a bowl.

KALDEEN

I brought you some food.

Rembrandt grabs it ravenously, slurps some down.

REMBRANDT

Bleh! What is that?

KALDEEN

It's from the food processors...

REMBRANDT

Yeah, but processed from what?

(stops him)

Don't tell me...

KALDEEN

I heard what my father said...

REMBRANDT

Looks like pretty soon I'm gonna be
Magg chowder...

KALDEEN

That will make me very sad.

REMBRANDT

Yeah, well, it won't do a whole lot
for my mood, either... I gotta find
some way out of here.

KALDEEN

You're chained to a wall.

REMBRANDT

I know I'm chained to a wall, I
gotta get unchained...

(sudden idea)

Hey, Kaldeen... how'd you like to
be useful to me?

INT. ANOTHER CORRIDOR

A KROMAGG scavenges wire from a wrecked wall panel, casting furtive glances about. Suddenly, a WEIGHTED NET drops down from above, snaring him. He struggles helplessly, terrified.

WIDEN to reveal Quinn dropping down from the open overhead panel, followed by Alana. He bends to the Kromagg, as Maggie, Colin and a couple of Alana's men join them.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

QUINN

Tell your boss we need a truce.
There's a way we might get out of
here. All of us. But only
together...

(beat)

Bring the human and the schematics
to room with the Slidecage
equipment. Understand?

The Kromagg nods. Quinn whips the net off him.

QUINN

Go.

He doesn't need to be told twice. He takes off at a run and
is gone.

INT. KROMAGG LAIR

CLOSE on the Kromagg, as he's SMACKED across the face and
goes down hard. WIDEN to reveal Kolitar, enraged, having
just struck him. He's flanked by several of his men.

KOLITAR

Truce? Do the humans take me for
a fool? Traps within traps... Oh,
to have all of them dead and an end
to it!

OFF IN A CORNER - ON REMMY

Where we last saw him, unnoticed by the others, drowsing.
Suddenly, Kaldeen is there beside him. Rembrandt stirs.

REMBRANDT

Kaldeen...?

KALDEEN

Sh... Here.

He presses a key into Rembrandt's hand.

KALDEEN

Hurry, while they're not looking...

Rembrandt quickly unlocks the chain.

REMBRANDT

Come with me. This isn't any kind
of place for you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KALDEEN
(thrown, scared)
Live with the humans? I couldn't.
I -- I --
(forces calm)
I'll be fine --

Rembrandt doesn't like it, but nods.

REMBRANDT
Okay, then... You watch out for
yourself.

He hurries off.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE KROMAGG LAIR

Rembrandt's just emerging when a KROMAGG BRUISER just coming back spies him and tackles him, knocking him down. He draws his blade and is about to kill Rembrandt!

ON THE DOORWAY TO THE KROMAGG LAIR

Kaldeen is there, watching this, alarmed. And then he does an extraordinary thing -- his head goes down and his eyes roll up, showing white, as he concentrates...

CORRIDOR - ON PIECE OF DISCARDED MACHINERY

Lying on the ground. Suddenly, it moves... then takes off through the air.

ON REMBRANDT AND THE KROMAGG BRUISER

The machinery STRIKES the Bruiser, knocking him down and out. Rembrandt's amazed, having it seen it fly through the air on its own.

WIDE

KALDEEN
Run!

Rembrandt starts off, but just then a SECOND KROMAGG -- having been drawn by the commotion -- rushes out of the lair after Remmy. Kaldeen grabs him, tries to stop him. The Kromagg starts beating on Kaldeen. Seeing this, Rembrandt can't run off. He turns and dives at the Kromagg, tackling him. But by then, other Kromaggs have appeared. They leap on Rembrandt and subdue him.

INT. SLIDECAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Quinn, Maggie, Colin, Steven, Alana and several of her men stand waiting. Steven shakes his head.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

STEVEN
We'd have heard something by now.

ALANA
I'm sorry, Quinn... I told you they
wouldn't listen.

QUINN
Right.

He turns and starts out the door, walking purposefully.

COLIN
Where are you going?

QUINN
Never send a postcard when you can
say it in person.

MAGGIE
We're on it.

She and Colin head after him, Maggie grabbing up a
mean-looking weapon. He turns on her.

QUINN
I fly solo on this one, ace. That
goes for you, too, bro.

MAGGIE
Not a chance...

QUINN
It's our only chance. Think about
it... You know I'm right.

She does, too... and also knows it's almost certain death.
A beat, her looking at him, not wanting to let him go.

QUINN
Don't say, "Be careful." I hate
that.

She smiles, touches his cheek.

QUINN
(to Colin)
Keep her out of trouble while I'm
gone.

Colin nods. Quinn turns and heads toward the door. Alana
overtakes him.

ALANA
What you're doing... it's suicide.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

QUINN
Nothing changes... till you make
it change.

And then he's gone. Maggie looks after him worriedly.

ON STEVEN

Watching Maggie, noting the depth of her feeling for Quinn.

INT. KROMAGG LAIR

Kolitar stalks angrily before the Kromaggs who recaptured Rembrandt. They're scared shitless. Other Kromaggs flank them. Off in a corner, Rembrandt's chained to the wall, Kaldeen sitting in his wheelchair by him.

KOLITAR
Mighty Kromaggs, and a frail human
nearly bests the lot of you!

ON REMBRANDT AND KALDEEN

They speak quietly so as not to be heard by the others. Kolitar continues to rant to his men.

REMBRANDT
That big piece of machinery, you
moved it with your mind...

KALDEEN
The mutation that made my body
different made my mind different,
too...

REMBRANDT
Do they know?

KALDEEN
No... They'd want me to use it to
kill people... I-- I couldn't...

FAVORING KOLITAR

Still reaming out his men.

KOLITAR
He corrupts you as his kind
corrupted our world, corrupt
everything they touch! But worst
of all...

He storms up to Kaldeen and Rembrandt, glaring at them.

KOLITAR
He corrupts my son!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He draws a big knife, moves in toward Rembrandt.

KOLITAR
Arm or no arm, human... you die
now.

KALDEEN
Father, no!

QUINN (O.S.)
Offhand, I'd say we're all dying
here.

The Kromaggs spin, to see Quinn standing in the doorway.
They rush toward him en masse. He holds his hands out
empty.

QUINN
I'm unarmed.

KOLITAR
Search him.

He nods toward one of his men, who roughly pats Quinn down.

REMBRANDT
Quinn! What the hell are you doing
here?

QUINN
I got to missing those loud shirts
of yours. You okay?

REMBRANDT
Except for being beat on, chained
up and fed lousy.

KOLITAR
You are a comrade of this one, a
recent arrival.

QUINN
Yeah, and so far I can't say I'm
impressed with the accomodations.

KOLITAR
Why are you here?

QUINN
I sent a message and got no answer.

KOLITAR
That was your answer.
Regrettably, you did not heed it...
In my culture, we have warrior
fools, mad ones who can walk
through flame untouched.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

KOLITAR (CONT'D)

It is our way to do them no harm...
Sadly, this does not extend to
humans.

They seize Quinn roughly. Kolitar moves closer with the
knife.

KOLITAR

For your courage, I'll give you
your choice of deaths...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. KROMAGG LAIR - CONTINUOUS

Kolitar, holding the knife, hauls Quinn up by the front of his shirt.

QUINN
Hold it! Aren't you curious why I asked you to bring him and the schematics...?

KOLITAR
A non-sequitur to confuse me. You humans are full of such tricks...

QUINN
It's not a trick! I think I have a way to slide us all out of here... but to do it I need the schematics that you've got.

Kolitar unhands him, surprised.

KOLITAR
How do you --?
(suspicious glance)
Kaldeen...

KALDEEN
No, Father, I didn't tell him...

KOLITAR
Then how --?
(to Quinn)
Perhaps you are a wizard...

Quinn moves in close to him, pressing his point.

QUINN
I knew coming here would probably be my death, but I did it... for friendship, and also because I didn't want to live the rest of my life here.
(pointed)
Do you...?

Kolitar hesitates, swayed. But then a new thought comes.

KOLITAR
You would slide us to the homeworld, where humans hold sway... We would trade one prison
(MORE)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

KOLITAR (CONT'D)

for another.

QUINN

No, once we get there, we'll slide you back where you came from. I guarentee you safe passage.

REMBRANDT

(Kolitar)

You're not gonna get a better offer this week, buddy. If I was you, I'd take it.

Kaldeen rolls up to Kolitar.

KALDEEN

Father, Father, we could leave this place...

A beat, as Kolitar considers. Then he turns to Quinn.

KOLITAR

Very well, you may have the schematics.

Quinn nods, relieved. Kolitar grabs him hard by the wrist.

KOLITAR

But we come with you, human... to make certain you do not leave without us...

INT. SLIDECAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie, Steven, Colin, Alana and twos of her people wait for Quinn. Maggie's pacing with impatient.

ON MAGGIE AND STEVEN

MAGGIE

I don't like it... He's been gone too long.

STEVEN

It hasn't been that long... I've got this funny feeling, I think he'll be okay. He's got brains and guts... I like him.

(looks at her
meaningfully)

He's just the sort of man I'd want you to choose, if something happened to me.

She starts to protest, not wanting to hurt him. But he stops her, says gently:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

STEVEN
It's okay, Maggie... You went on
with your life, that's what the
living do...

ON ALANA

Colin's studying. She turns to him, questioning.

ALANA
You keep looking at me...

COLIN
It is a puzzle to me... You care
about your people, you seem to have
a good heart... yet you commit such
cruelties...

It surprises her. Her eyes grow hard, perhaps ashamed.

ALANA
To lead, you have to do things you
don't want to.

COLIN
I haven't seen much... only a few
worlds... and yet I can't believe
that's true.

She softens again, looking inward at her own lost days.

ALANA
Cherish your innocence...

WIDE

As Quinn, rolled sheaf of schematics in hand, enters with
Rembrandt.

QUINN
Hail the conquering hero.

Everyone reacts, Maggie running to them, followed by Colin,
Steven, Alana. Maggie embraces them, overjoyed.

QUINN
Quinn! Remmy, oh Remmy!

REMBRANDT
Didn't think you could get rid of
this face, did you?
(to Colin)
How the crops hanging, farm boy?

COLIN
(perplexed)
Crops don't hang, Rembrandt...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

REMBRANDT
(ruffles his hair)
Stay as sweet as you are!

STEVEN
(to Quinn)
Did you bring the schematics?

QUINN
Yeah... and, uh...

He looks nervously back toward the door... where Kolitar enters with Kaldeen and the other Kromaggs, who eye the humans warily.

Alana and her people freak, start to reach for their weapons. Quinn puts his hands up, speaks to both groups.

QUINN
We're cool, we're cool here! It's time out, understand -- or no one gets anywhere!

Both the humans and the Kromaggs relent... but neither likes it. Quinn nods, speaks more quietly.

QUINN
On my world, there was a man, Benjamin Franklin, who said, "We must all hang together... or we most certainly will all hang separately."

Kolitar nods.

KOLITAR
Wise words... Are you sure he was not a Kromagg?

Quinn smiles.

ON MAGGIE, STEVEN AND REMBRANDT

Rembrandt's looking at Steven.

MAGGIE
It's not my Steven...

REMBRANDT
I'm sorry, Maggie...

Kaldeen rolls up.

REMBRANDT
This is my friend.

Kaldeen beams at that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

ALANA

takes Quinn aside, glaring at the Kromaggs in B.G.

ALANA
What is this?

QUINN
It was an all or nothing deal...
I'm sorry, they insisted.

Maggie joins them, listening.

ALANA
Then I insist on all my people
being here...

MAGGIE
Great idea, put a match to the
powder keg.

ALANA
It's just to keep them honest.
(to Quinn)
Say yes, or all bets are off.

Quinn doesn't like it, but sees she means it.

QUINN
Do what you have to do... but keep
your word.

ALANA
As long as they keep theirs.

She nods to one of her men, who exits to fetch the others.

ON STEVEN

Spreading the schematics out on a table, Colin, Kaldeen and Rembrandt looking on. Quinn and Maggie join them. Quinn addresses Kaldeen.

QUINN
I understand from Rembrandt you're
the one who downloaded the
schematics...

KALDEEN
(flattered, shy)
I didn't understand everything...

Quinn smiles at him warmly.

QUINN
Walk us through what you can...

Kaldeen smiles back, thrilled.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

ALANA

stands some feet off, eyeing the Kromaggs darkly. The Man we've seen before sidles up to her.

MAGGIE

You said we could never make peace with those monsters.

ALANA

We can't... stay watchful.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SLIDECAGE ROOM - NIGHT

All the humans are there now, as are all the Kromaggs. We're PANNING the two armed groups standing waiting, eyeing each other with hatred. A very uneasy truce.

ALANA

glares at Kolitar.

KOLITAR

You would burn me with your gaze, woman...

ALANA

I'm seeing the ghosts of all you've slaughtered...

STEVEN, QUINN, MAGGIE, REMBRANDT AND COLIN

Facing the lighted Slidecage Tower, some feet off. We hear the DISTINCTIVE HUM OF THE FORCEFIELD (but don't see it). Kaldeen sits in his wheelchair some feet off, watching avidly.

The HARMONIC DISRUPTOR is set atop a tripod, aimed toward the field. Steven's fiddling with its controls, making some last adjustments. Rembrandt casts a nervous look at the humans and the Kromaggs.

REMBRANDT

We got the Sharks and the Jets here... better get a move on.

STEVEN

The dissonance frequency has to be just right... Ah.

He pushes a button on the DISRUPTOR. It LIGHTS UP, its TIP GLOWS, pointed at the Tower. It gives its own HIGHER-PITCHED SOUND.

ON THE TOWER

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The FORCEFIELD gives of a FLASH and is gone. The HUM is silent. We hear only the SOUND of the DISRUPTOR (which CONTINUES until it's knocked over in a few minutes).

ON QUINN, STEVEN, MAGGIE, COLIN AND REMBRANDT

STEVEN

The forcefield should be off.

REMBRANDT

There's a world of difference between should and is...

Quinn tosses an object toward the Tower. It falls harmlessly to the floor, unsinged.

QUINN

Okay...

He strides toward it, Colin following. Rembrandt and Maggie hang back, keeping an eye on the crowd. Steven stays by the Disruptor, operating it. Alana and some of the others try to follow, but Steven waves them off.

STEVEN

Stay back... too many bodies might disrupt the field.

BY THE TOWER

Colin helps Quinn open an access panel on the Tower, revealing circuitry and a keyboard input panel.

COLIN

It's like the schematics.

QUINN

Let's see what the maestro can do...

He starts inputing commands. As he does so, the frequency and pattern of lights on the Tower changes.

ON THE HUMANS AND THE KROMAGGS

Watching this, heartened, distracted for a moment from each other.

ON REMBRANDT AND KALDEEN

REMBRANDT

Pretty soon you'll be seeing blue skies, white clouds...

Kolitar, seeing Rembrandt talking to Kaldeen, scowls, wheels his son away.

BACK ON QUINN AND COLIN

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Quinn stops inputing commands, looks troubled. (Our guys are out of earshot of the others.)

QUINN
 Uh oh, we've got a problem...
 (off readout)
 According to this, if I disable the system, slide everyone to the homeworld... the system stays off.

COLIN
 You mean, the world wouldn't be cloaked any longer...

QUINN
 The Kromaggs could just waltz in and invade it.

They look at each other, knowing the only thing they can do.

COLIN
 Then there's no going home...

QUINN
 Not for now. I'm sorry...
 (beat, typing)
 But there might be one other thing I could do... rig a feedback loop... using the slide signatures in our bodies, it would ship all of us to where we just came from... and anyone else who tried to slide to the homeworld.

COLIN
 No more Slidecage...

ON KOLITAR AND KALDEEN

Both watching the Tower. Kolitar murmurs to the boy:

KOLITAR
 Soon you will be with your kind... They will tend to you, heal your broken body... and you will be a Kromagg warrior to make your clan proud...

Kaldeen reacts with alarm... then comes to a decision. He wheels deliberately away from his father, up to Rembrandt. The words pour out in a torrent.

KALDEEN
 I want to go where you go, I don't want to be with the Kromaggs anymore!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

KOLITAR
Human! What poison have you worked
on my son?!

KOLITAR
(ignoring him, to
Rembrandt)
Please, please let me stay with the
humans!

Kolitar storms up to him, in a rage,

KOLITAR
Kaldeen, you are my son! You will
do as I say!

To punctuate his point, he draws his dagger -- perhaps not
even intending to use it, just that his blood is up.

ALANA

some distance behind him, sees him drawing his knife,
assumes it's to kill Rembrandt. She shouts to the others.

ALANA
Betrayed!

She pulls her own knife and lunges forward.

MAGGIE

turns in time to see this.

MAGGIE
No!

She dives toward them.

WIDE

Maggie's too late -- Alana stabs Kolitar in the back. With
a GRUNT, he goes down. Alana raises her arms high, bloody
knife in one hand.

ALANA
Kill them! Kill them all!

And the bloody brawl is on, humans and Kromaggs, grappling
to the death, with fists, knives and other weapons.

Steven is knocked down by a Kromagg, the Disruptor toppling
over, out of commission.

ON THE TOWER

There's the FLASH of the FORCEFIELD SNAPPING BACK ON, then
it's invisible again, only the DISTINCTIVE HUM telling us
it's on, trapping Quinn and Colin within its boundary.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

Colin lunges forward to aid Maggie and the others, but Quinn holds him back.

QUINN
Colin, no! We're inside the
forcefield!

WIDE

Rembrandt rushes to Kaldreen to protect him.

Alana continues her attack amid the chaos... Kolitar rises up behind her, not dead. He spins her around, stabs her in the heart.

KOLITAR
Retribution...

She crumples dead.

Steven is on the ground, half-conscious. A Kromagg rushes to kill him. But then Maggie is there, taking the Kromagg down, saving Steven.

Suddenly, Kolitar grabs her hard, his blade at her throat. The other humans and Kromaggs continue their battle all about them. Kolitar calls out to Quinn:

KOLITAR
Human! Send us to the homeworld!
Now! Send us or she dies!

Quinn watches in horror, uncertain. Rembrandt is frozen, too.

MAGGIE
Don't do it, Quinn!

QUINN
Maggie...

Kolitar tenses, readying to kill her.

KALDEEN

seeing this, comes to a decision. His head tilts down, eyes rolling up as he concentrates...

A KROMAGG BLADE

lies on the ground nearby, discarded. Suddenly, it SHUDDERS and MOVES with telekinetic force.

FAVORING KOLITAR AND MAGGIE

As the blade flies to its mark -- lodging in Kolitar's heart. Eyes wide with surprise, he GASPS... then falls dead, releasing Maggie.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 5

KALDEEN

sits in his chair, grieved.

Father... KALDEEN

WIDE

Maggie looks down at Kolitar's body, perplexed.

How--? MAGGIE

(soft, moved) REMBRANDT
It was Kaldeen...

The brawl is continuing. Quinn SHOUTS to the combatants:

QUINN
Stop it! Stop! Your leaders are
dead! There's no victory here,
we'll only kill ourselves!
(beat)
Or we can go back where we came
from, all of us, an end to this
hell... Let it end!

He's starting to get through to them, some are stopping,
others slowing...

QUINN
You have forgotten what it is to
live... honor yourselves and those
you've lost... Stop...

Silence descends, all have stopped fighting. They breathe
hard, eyeing each other

QUINN
Good, that's good...

Steven stands, a little shakily, rights the Disruptor, turns
it back on, aimed at the Forcefield. As before, there's a
FLASH and the HUM is gone. Maggie moves to Steven, to make
sure he's all right. Rembrandt hurries to Kaldeen, who
seems in shock.

REMBRANDT
You okay?

Kaldeen blinks his eyes, then focuses on Rembrandt, nods

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 6

sadly.

QUINN
(working on the Tower)
Almost got it... Another minute,
and it'll all send us back to where
we most recently came from.

Kaldeen looks at Rembrandt, startled. Rembrandt picks up on what he's thinking.

REMBRANDT
Hold on there. What about Kaldeen?
He's from here.

Colin and Quinn exchange a glance as it sinks in.

COLIN
He has no sliding signature...

QUINN
(sick about it)
I... can't alter the parameters
without crashing the whole system.

Kaldeen understands what that means. Resigned:

KALDEEN
It's all right...

REMBRANDT
No way, it's not all right.
(to Quinn)
What're you saying? We're just
gonna maroon him here?
(to Kaldeen)
We're not leaving you alone!

Kaldeen rolls closer to Quinn and Colin, drawing Rembrandt with him. Maggie has joined them. Kaldeen speaks in a low tone, so that the Kromaggs can't hear.

KALDEEN
My father was right... humans and
Kromaggs are born enemies, bent on
killing each other. Maybe someday
it won't be that way, but it is
now. They must be kept apart...
(off the Tower)
This will need someone to monitor
it, keep the defense net
operational...
(to Rembrandt)
I've always been alone... but now
I'll be of some use.

Rembrandt looks into his eyes... then nods.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 7

MAGGIE

sidles up to Steven. They look at each other a long beat.

MAGGIE

I never got to say goodbye...

She hugs him hard, tears in her eyes, free. They break the clinch, Steven still holding her shoulders.

STEVEN

Be happy, Maggie...

She nods, then looks over at Quinn. Ready.

QUINN

(to the crowd)
Take a last look round. In a minute, your horizon's gonna be a whole lot wider...

KALDEEN

Safe journey.

REMBRANDT

We'll be back for you... that's a promise.

Quinn keys in the final sequence. There's a BLINDING FLASH, accompanied by the SOUND OF THE VORTEX.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHANDLER ZEPPELIN - DAY

ON rolling clouds, pure beauty.

COLIN (O.S.)

Not home yet...

We PULL BACK to reveal Maggie, Rembrandt, Quinn and Colin, looking out the window of the Chandler Zeppelin Bar, seated, with drinks.

COLIN

But there's room to breathe...

ON MAGGIE AND REMBRANDT

Rembrandt gazes out, expression melancholy.

REMBRANDT

Blue skies, white clouds...

MAGGIE

What are you thinking about?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Lost friends... REMBRANDT

She nods, gives a sad smile.

Yeah... MAGGIE

She puts an arm around him. We PUSH past them, until the clouds and blue sky FILL FRAME, as we...

FADE OUT.

THE END