BRIGHT NEW EDEN

Written by

ALAN HOWCROFT

ahowcroft7a7@gmail.com

Phone : 44 780 329 4777

WGA(W) Registration number : 2179337

FADE IN:

INT. EVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A modest but comfortable apartment.

EVE, late 20s, attractive, is seated in front of a mirror. She is using a fine instrument, which HUMS discreetly as it removes minor skin blemishes.

Super: "Boston. Three hundred and forty years in the future."

Super: "Advancements in transportation have led to social upheaval. Although the worst conflicts are over, progress has been inconsistent."

Eve is wearing a WRISTBAND, which has many functions. It is a common and important item of this era.

Eve sighs, and sets her blemish remover aside.

She scans around her apartment with dissatisfaction.

There is a subtle BLEEP and flash from her wristband.

Eve's fleeting tap-response shows easy and intuitive access.

EVE
Diane? Alright. I'll be down in a moment.

Eve checks her hair and outfit, and heads for the door.

EXT. APARTMENT BOULEVARD - DAY

Presentable apartments are banked on either side of a tree-lined street. There are no cars or garages.

DIANE, 20s, a work colleague with a warm and friendly manner, is waiting as Eve emerges from one of the doorways.

Diane smiles, but looks apprehensive.

DIANE
Sure you're alright for this? I thought of you soon as I heard.

Eve frowns, not sure how to respond.

DIANE (CONT'D)
You don't know? Your -- er -- great uncle? Alexander? He died. It's all over the place.

EVE
Oh, right. Him. My side of the family were estranged decades ago.

DIANE
Still a relative.

EVE
I never met him.

The two start walking towards a large SILVER RING at the end of the street. It has a grey surface, with a slight shimmer.

EVE (CONT'D)
My great grandma caused a rift. We were all cast aside. Well, everyone on her side of the family. Hurtful. I blocked him from my news feeds --

Eve's wristband emits a flash and BUZZ. She looks surprised.

EVE (CONT'D)
Huh! Right on cue. It's Clyde.

DIANE
I thought you'd split?

EVE
He calls from time to time. I'm not answering. He's no interest in me. Hopeless media addict. Probably wants an angle on that news.

DIANE
You really liked him --

Eve taps her wristband, and the call indications cease.

EVE
He's a shit.

Diane looks sad for her. The two walk on a while.

DIANE
Not been very lucky lately, hmm?

EVE
Millions out there, and what do I get? I should have found someone half decent by sheer chance.

Diane laughs, wants to lighten the mood, but Eve is frowning.

Diane shakes her head, and decides to change the subject.

DIANE
So, what's this one then?

The question is about work, but Eve's discontent has grown exponentially. It takes a moment for her to adjust.

EVE
Corporate event. Canapés and hors d'oeuvres. Some hot dishes.

DIANE
It says Kathcataran. Where the hell's that? Not that it matters.

EVE
Agency booking. A bit secretive. First off, we have to get to Alice.

At the end of the street, Eve and Diane walk through the silver Ring as if passing through a watery veil.

EXT. HOMETOWN HUB - DAY

Eve and Diane arrive in a circular area, bordered by many Rings similar to the one they have just stepped through.

The Rings are different sizes. Many bear the IANTHE CORPORATION logo, an arrow through twinned circles.

TOWNSFOLK are walking or hurrying around.

Without thinking, Diane turns towards the transporter Ring on the left. Eve looks puzzled, then smiles.

EVE
No wonder you're always late. It's through Los Angeles!

They both laugh. Diane spins around, and follows Eve towards a different transporter Ring, over to the right.

DIANE
They all look the same.

EVE
That was to makes them seem less daunting. Talking of which, I haven't asked you about Jennifer?

Eve looks over mischievously.

DIANE
Daunting -- ? Oh you! Yes, all going well. Really good.

Diane has a big smile. Eve smiles back, and gives her a hug.

The pair go through one of the largest Rings on this site.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY HUB - DAY

Eve and Diane arrive in an area like a main transport terminal. It is bordered by many Rings, some very large.

They begin walking. There is a general MURMUR of voices. An ANNOUNCER is speaking. Lights on their wristbands flicker.

TERMINAL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Keep auxiliary paths clear for those with reduced mobility. Maintain general flow. Ensure band passes are up to date --

The pair slap their wristbands, and the announcer fades out.

Opposite their arrival area is a line of automobiles, of various ages. They are museum pieces, on public display.

DIANE
Aren't they gorgeous! I love physical transports.

EVE
Wouldn't have liked to sit in one for two hours, to go fifty miles though.

DIANE
I'd like a ride in one, one day. Surely they went faster than that?

EVE
They built so many the roads got all blocked up. Here we are.

Eve and Diane reach one of the biggest Rings seen so far. It also bears the Ianthe logo.

No guards. People approach via an array of arches, which turn from red to green when ready for the next person. Weight of numbers mean queues have formed. Some arches are inactive.

Diane sighs, and looks over in frustration.

DIANE
At least physical transports had seats.

EVE
They get paid for this. What a mess! And still three more Rings to Alice.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - HEADQUARTERS - DAY

An open-plan office area. No desks or computers. The Ianthe Corporation logo is evident.

Super: “Ianthe Corporation Headquarters.”

EMPLOYEES are standing by viewers, chatting together, or reclining on comfortable seats. Wristbands CLICK and glow.

LILLE FERANE, 50s, is Ianthe’s elegant, and ruthless, C.E.O.

50s is her equivalent present-day appearance. In this future, her true age is well over 100. Dialogue and events will indicate increased longevity for her, and others.

Lille moves up beside GRANGER, 30s, a nervous executive.

Granger is monitoring a number of viewers simultaneously.

GRANGER
Queues building in Los Angeles again. And Cairo -- London --

LILLE
Did you get that contract set up? The one I mentioned last week?

GRANGER
For the caterer from Boston? Yes.

LILLE
Good. There are things I need to do. Manage as best you can. Keep those queues to a minimum.

Granger acknowledges, as Lille heads for a side-door.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Lille enters the Boardroom, which looks like a lounge in the middle of a greenhouse. An area of sofas and exotic plants.

Board member MAX, 60s, has a brooding and sinister manner. He is reclining on a sofa.

Lille wants to speak privately. She gives a sharp inclination of her head, and three employees head out immediately.

Lille takes a seat beside Max.

LILLE
She's on her way. We have to do this. We have government visitors arriving soon.

MAX
It's all set up. Once the instructions are sent, that's it.

He raises his wristband. They make eye contact.

Lille gives a big sigh, and an affirmative nod.

Max taps his band very deliberately with finger, then thumb.

EXT. ALICE SPRINGS HUB - NIGHT

Alice Springs is a little larger than Hometown Hub.

Eve and Diane emerge from a transporter Ring, and walk up to an obelisk.

When Eve puts her wristband against it, the words "ALICE SPRINGS" appear. Eve looks distant for a moment (a visual clue characters are linking into external networks).

INSERT: A flashing image of transporter Rings in a desert.

DIANE
Are we in Australia? I don't think I've been here before.

EVE
Yes. I'm trying to get my bearings. Kathcataran's through Ring 21.

RYAN, 30s, strikingly good looking, hears this.

RYAN
Kathcataran? Mind if I join you? I'm heading there too. I'm Ryan.

He puts his own wristband to the obelisk, then smiles across.

EVE
Hi -- Eve.

DIANE
I'm Diane.

Ryan nods respectfully, and the three touch band to band.

Ryan points towards a Ring on the opposite side of the circle, and they start moving towards it.

RYAN
Been there once before. I'm a technician. Helped to bring a new Ring in through the original set.

DIANE
What's it like?

RYAN
Kathcataran? It's boring. Nothing to see.

DIANE
Nothing?

RYAN
It's a construction site. Underground, I think. Possibly underwater. Can't tell. No windows or anything.

DIANE
Why do they want catering on a building site?

RYAN
That's what you're doing? The new Ring's going live today. Execs always want to be first through.

EVE
Someone's arranged a reception.

RYAN
Ah! With real chefs, and expensive foodstuffs? You know us workers have to get by on protein bars?

EVE
We're workers too, Ryan --

RYAN
They don't pay very well either. It's an Ianthe Corporation site. Mean, miserable bastards.

Eve looks uncomfortable at mention of Ianthe. Diane brushes her arm supportively, and the moment passes.

EVE
Well, I'll try to save a bit of something for you.

RYAN
I'll look forward to it.

DIANE
(whispers to Eve)
One door closes --

Eve cuts her off with a warning look.

The three arrive at a Ring signed "ALICE 21", and go through.

EXT. OUTBACK HUB - NIGHT

This is a small hub. Only three Rings. Muted light in the vicinity, and darkness beyond. A dog HOWLS in the distance.

DIANA
Woh! I've never been anywhere like this. It's spooky.

She moves towards the Ring to their left. Its grey veil gains the hologram of a SOLDIER. She speaks politely.

HOLOGRAM SOLDIER
Access is denied. Approach will be treated as hostile.

Red lights illuminate around the Ring, and lasers flash across the surface. The effect is intimidating.

Diane gasps, and steps back quickly. They are all alarmed.

RYAN
A warning. Left over from the old wars. It's so you don't wander into contamination zones.

DIANE
Let’s go back.

Eve shakes her head, and leads them to the Ring on the right.

EVE
That happens, on the periphery. We signed a contract. This is the Kathcataran Ring.

RYAN
This place might have been important one time. These are old Rings. Still in good order though.

The three approach cautiously, but pass without incident.

INT. KATHCATARAN RING TUBE - NIGHT

There is a transporter Ring at one end of a smart arrival lounge. Smooth white walls are subtly illuminated with color.

The area is tubular. There is a shrouded Ring at the far end.

Some tables, decorated with flowers, are set up, and a few WORKERS are milling around, as Eve, Diane and Ryan arrive.

Administrator HARLIE, 50s, an officious woman, strides up.

HARLIE
(to Ryan)
You’re late! Get started.
(to Eve and Diane)
Chefs! Your stuff’s through there. Get a move on. You have an hour before the guests start arriving.

Harlie ushers the women out through a side passage.

INT. KATHCATARAN SIDE TUBE - NIGHT

The passage ends at a heavy door. This opens into another tube, stacked with boxes and crates.

DIANE
Ryan seems alright?

Other than a quirky smile, Eve ignores this comment at first.

She recognizes her cool-boxes and food heaters, and scans them with her wristband.

EVE
Good. Everything's here.
(beat)
He'll be a like all the others.

Eve and Diane get to work.

They deploy folding tables, and bring out trays of shells.

Exotic foods are removed from containers. Some are placed in heaters.

LATER

The women smile warmly to each other, happy with the results.

Diane collects a food tray, and heads away. Ryan slips in as she is leaving. She smiles, opens her mouth to speak.

RYAN
Shh! I'm not supposed to be here.
Wow, that looks amazing.

Once Diane has gone out, Ryan pushes the door until it is almost closed.

He crosses to Eve, and smiles. Eve frowns warily.

EVE
Thought you were supposed to be managing the activation?

RYAN
Ah. No. I set fixings. My job's done. I'm starving. Any chance --

There is an EXPLOSION from the direction of the Ring Tube.

The door flies open. The blast knocks Eve and Ryan over.

Ryan gets up first, and dashes across to Eve.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Eve! Are you alright?

Eve groans. Ryan tries to help her get up.

Shaken, but unharmed, she shrugs him off.

EVE
What happened?

The two stand in shocked silence for a moment.

Ryan cautiously approaches the door. The passage beyond is smoky, and curves away.

Eve follows him through.

INT. KATHCATARAN RING TUBE - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan peer into the Ring Tube.

Everyone within is dead. Harlie has been eviscerated.

Diane's eyes are wide, but dull. Her limbs are splayed in awkward directions. One hand is still holding her tray.

The transporter Ring they came in through is destroyed.

Eve gasps in horror.

Ryan gulps, then steps a pace into the tube.

Smoke, and petals from the flowers are swirling around.

A fire is burning fiercely at the far end of the bay. The shrouded Ring down there has been utterly destroyed.

RYAN
A bomb? Must have been sent through soon as the new Ring was activated.

Ryan moves back. There is wind blowing now, as oxygen is sucked in. Smoke from the fire is getting thicker.

EVE
Oh Diane!

Eve goes towards Diane's remains, and kneels down beside her. She groans, and begins to weep.

RYAN
This place isn't safe.

Eve is too distraught to listen, or recognize the danger.

Ryan tries to give her time, but sees the smoke increasing.

He starts coughing.

RYAN (CONT'D)
We have to go.

Eve doesn't seem to hear.

RYAN (CONT'D)
We have to get away! The fire suppressors have failed --

Ryan tugs urgently at Eve's arm. She looks up, confused.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Or weren't installed in the first place. Come on. She wouldn't want you to die too!

Ryan finally gets through. Eve recognizes their peril.

The two of them move away.

INT. KATHCATARAN SIDE TUBE - NIGHT

Back at the side tube, Ryan looks for a door panel, but can't find one. He presses nearby protrusions with no effect.

Eve points to a long handle on the door itself, which Ryan takes, and rotates clockwise.

EVE
Why would anyone do such a thing?

Ryan gets the door fully closed, then simply shakes his head.

Eve looks down at her wristband. She swipes her hand over it frantically, and starts to show signs of panic.

EVE (CONT'D)
Ryan! There are no emergency signals. My band isn't connecting! It's not connecting to anything!

RYAN
Mine neither. The Rings can't carry coms traffic. We must be off-grid, somewhere very isolated.

EVE
What if we are underground, or underwater?

Ryan hates to be confined. He looks really scared.

RYAN
Oh shit. Oh shit!

Eve is not expecting such a strong reaction. It shocks, but also helps her to regain some composure.

EVE
We have to get out, and find a signal -- right?

This deflects Ryan's rising panic.

They hear a RUMBLE from behind the door.

Ryan takes a steadying breath, and nods.

RYAN
Better get moving.

The two head on along the side tube.

EVE
I've been to some water hubs. They have escape pods, in case.

The tube curves gently upwards, with no obvious openings.

They quicken their pace.

They find nothing but crates and boxes.

They pause for a moment, and look at each other.

EVE (CONT'D)
What the hell is this?

Ryan is equally baffled, lost for words.

They start moving again.

The two follow the tube's gradual ascent for some way.

Then they come upon another door. This one also has a lever.

Ryan rotates the handle. The door is heavy, but it opens easily enough.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Lille is looking at a viewer, which shows a distant solar system. She ignores the arrival of two Ianthe board members.

Max remains seated, but grunts a cursory greeting to each.

MAX
Wayne. Don.

WAYNE and DON acknowledge both in the room.

WAYNE
Max. Lille.

DON
Hi Max. Hi Lille.

Wayne, 50s, an irascible little man, remains on his feet, and paces about restively.

Don, 50s, powerfully built, stylishly dressed, sets down on a sofa opposite Max.

GRANGER (V.O.)
The senator and her representative are still waiting. They've been on hold for ten minutes.

The three board members glance worriedly at Lille.

Lille has her back to them. There is a hard set to her eyes.

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICES - PROJECTION CHAMBER - DAY

A chamber with few features, other than wall-mirrors.

Super: "Government Offices - Projection Chamber."

Senator CHARLOTTE KAGARON, 40s, is stabbing impatiently at her wristband. She is a hard and abrasive-looking woman.

She growls, and shakes her head with annoyance.

Solicitor FRANCINE FRAME, 30s, joins her. She is comparatively demure, yet disconcertingly composed.

Charlotte looks Francine up and down. She notes her smart claret-colored outfit with disdain.

CHARLOTTE
Where've you been? What is that?

Francine looks offended, but quickly recovers.

FRANCINE
I came as fast as I could. It's a Fabian Rex.

CHARLOTTE
Makes you look like an over-ripe tomato. You ready for this?

FRANCINE
I have everything I need.

CHARLOTTE
Including plugs for your nose?

FRANCINE
We're meeting with the board of Ianthe Corporation. Why would I need something like that?

CHARLOTTE
Because they're pigs, and I intend to deprive them of their trough.

Francine regards Charlotte with clear distaste.

FRANCINE
Aren't government agents supposed to legislate without bias?

CHARLOTTE
They've had it easy for too long. Now remember, ignore any posturing. Lille Ferane is the true power, and we don't have a happy connect.

Francine acknowledges. Charlotte smiles.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I was about to divert some routes to rival operators, but Alexander Ianthe's death provides a unique opportunity.

FRANCINE
My company are not prepared to --

CHARLOTTE
Relax, do your work. For now, I'm only going to loosen their bowels.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Lille finishes with the viewer, and turns to the other three.

LILLE
This could be a tricky one. Better let Don do most of the talking.

Don glances across to Wayne, who gives an indignant snarl, and shrugs his shoulders.

Don and Max now get calmly to their feet.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Are we ready?

All four executives are prepared. Lille taps her wristband.

GRANGER (V.O.)
Senator Charlotte Kagaron, and Ms. Francine Frame of the Law firm Frame and Dole.

LILLE
(Whispers to the others)
Remember, both dangerous, and the senator's about as reasonable as a rattlesnake.

A projection rises from an empty area in the centre.

Charlotte and Francine materialize into the room, and soon look as if they are physically present.

CHARLOTTE
You kept us waiting.

DON
Senator, you raised some important points. We needed to review practical implementations --

CHARLOTTE
What's there to review? The government can't afford travel disruption. Nor can you.

LILLE
Alexander's death was a shock, but he'd already detached himself from routine operations.

Charlotte affords Lille an especially venomous stare, which Lille treats with calculated disdain.

Don hastily proceeds.

DON
No appreciable issues. A smooth transition so far, I believe?

CHARLOTTE
Rings need replacing. Half your approach arches are out of action. There are delays and queues. You're losing your grip.

DON
These are temporary issues --

WAYNE
The network’s still functioning for heavens sake! What’s this about? Looking forward --

CHARLOTTE
You’d better hear what Ms. Frame has to say before looking anywhere. That’s what this is about.

Francine projects an image from her wristband. The Words “ALEXANDER IANTHE” appear beneath it.

As Francine directs their attention to the image, Lille looks momentarily wistful.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - BASEMENT CHAMBER ONE - DAY

A medium-sized chamber, which has four doors, equally spaced. There is a Ring and a table, both roughly in the centre.

Lille and Alexander emerge from the central Ring.

Lille is younger. The two walk arm in arm. Alexander Ianthe had been a very handsome man.

Lille seems uncertain. She looks back at the Ring they have stepped through.

ALEXANDER
It’s a private system.

He leads her towards one of the doors.

ALEXANDER (CONT’D)
This way. You won’t believe what you’re about to see. This is one of the most amazing --

Lille looks back again.

LILLE
Can’t we go later? I don’t --

Alexander ends her complaint with a passionate kiss. His hands slide over her hips, and he gropes her behind.

Lille returns his kisses, and gasps with desire.

YOUNG CHARLOTTE, 8, enters the chamber. She sees the pair, gasps with shock, and quickly hides behind the entry Ring.

Alexander hears, looks over, and sees a glimpse of clothing.

ALEXANDER
Charlotte! Come out from there.

A second later, young Charlotte emerges, looking contrite.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
What have I told you about these Rings? You're not to use them.

LILLE
She's seen us.

ALEXANDER
(whispers to Lille)
Don't care. She's not one of mine.
(to Charlotte)
Get back to your mother. Now!

Head down, Charlotte moves resentfully towards the Ring.

Before going through, she pauses, and looks back at Lille. Her eyes flash, full of hatred.

END FLASHBACK.

Lille's expression returns to neutral, but Charlotte is staring angrily at her.

Francine steps up beside the projected image of Alexander.

FRANCINE
My company was chosen to manage the will. Although drawn up a long time ago, it remains sure and valid.

Wayne scoffs at this, and coughs theatrically. Lille frowns across with disapproval.

Francine waits for Wayne to stop.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Stated intent, to pass his estate to surviving descendants.

WAYNE
We know. Problem is, he's got no one left to pass it on to.

LILLE
He out-lived them all.

DON
And the default is well established. Twenty percent to the Government. The rest distributed amongst current shareholders.

CHARLOTTE
How convenient then, that you should all have increased your holdings so substantially.

DON
We didn't influence the market --

CHARLOTTE
Smaller stakeholders have reps on the board. Why's there not a single one present? Because you four stand to gain a controlling interest.

DON
By an accident of fate, and shrewd acquisitions.

CHARLOTTE
By deaths and disappearances, going back decades. I don't believe in coincidences. Not when they always benefit the same people.

Charlotte stares accusingly at Lille.

Francine interrupts calmly but firmly. She closes the image, and paces between them.

FRANCINE
With respect, this meeting's about Alexander Ianthe's will.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, yes. Get on with it.

FRANCINE
Alexander had a sister. Gina. She distanced herself from the family over a hundred years ago, but he never rescinded her entitlement.

Lille and Max receive this news calmly. Don and Wayne look surprised.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Gina is dead, but she has a surviving descendant.

DON
If Gina cut herself off, her line has no further interest.

FRANCINE
Not the way it works. We've investigated in depth.

Don and Wayne are now starting to look concerned.

WAYNE
Are you saying she has a valid claim? Ridiculous!

FRANCINE
We know who the beneficiary is. Unfortunately she's currently off-grid.

LILLE
Do let us know when you find her.

Lille's nonchalance contrasts with Charlotte's harsh response.

CHARLOTTE
Be sure of it! She'll be under Government protection. Stands to inherit a fortune. Might be those who seek to do her harm.

LILLE
Indeed.

DON
Off-grid? It that by choice?

CHARLOTTE
We'll find her. The law provides --

Charlotte checks irritably. Francine supplies the detail.

FRANCINE
Twelve weeks.

CHARLOTTE
Sufficient time, considering the resources at our disposal. Until then, there will be no --

FRANCINE
Expired beneficiary default.

CHARLOTTE
That can't be applied yet. We'll be back once the search is complete.

LILLE
I'm sure we can all be patient until then.

CHARLOTTE
In the meantime, Ring operations are in your hands. A probationary period. Get it right. The government are reviewing licenses.

Charlotte sends Lille an evil stare, which she ignores.

The images of Charlotte and Francine begin to fade out.

INT. KATHCATARAN TRAVELATOR - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan reach a spherical room. Looped straps hang from the ceiling.

They look about in confusion.

RYAN
Can't see any way through here. We should keep moving.

EVE
Wait a minute. I think I know. Old technology. That's a screen.

There is a flat surface to one side. Eve touches it, and the TRAVELATOR IMAGE, a woman's face, smiles coldly at them.

RYAN
So how do you make it work?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
This is Administrator access only.

EVE
Looks like you talk to it.

RYAN
Ask it how we get out.

EVE
Where's the nearest exit Ring?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
This is Administrator access only.

RYAN
You just told us that!

Ryan is about to argue. Eve stalls him with a fierce look.

Eve thinks a moment about the words she uses next.

EVE
There’s been an accident.

The image continues to smile coldly.

RYAN
What’s wrong with her? She doesn’t give a shit.

Eve hushes him again, takes a deep breath, then speaks with surprising authority.

EVE
Initiate safety procedures. Immediately. Override off limit zones. These are Administrator instructions.

Ryan looks across as if Eve has spoken in a foreign language, but the image becomes less aloof.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Assessing -- Wait. DNA check -- Wait. Instructions -- accepted. Where would you like to go?

RYAN
Where can we go?

The image continues to smile at them, without responding.

EVE
We’d like to go up. To the top.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Observation terrace.

EVE
Yes, there!

Ryan spins around in surprise, as the door slides shut, and they are shifted slightly. A HUM also indicates movement.

Ryan checks his feet, and then looks hopeful.

RYAN
This is a physical transport? How did you know? About the screen as well? How to make it do that?

EVE
I studied tech and transport history at university. They're old safety protocols.

Ryan looks surprised.

RYAN
You went to university?

EVE
There were things I needed to know.

RYAN
Tech and transport?

EVE
It's personal. My ancestors were involved in the Twin Ring Revolution.

RYAN
No way! So how did you end up in catering?

The travelator makes a sudden change of direction. Eve is knocked off balance. She shouts with surprise.

Ryan manages to grab hold of her before she falls.

The HUM fades, and the travelator screen comes back on.

Eve and Ryan are holding on to each other in a fairly intimate way.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Signs of distress. Physical contact must be consensual. Penalties apply.

Ryan, shocked, lets go of Eve. He stands back, hands held up.

Eve quickly steps away.

EVE
Ah! No. It's alright. He was only -- Please, carry on.

The image appears to be making another assessment. It fades, and the HUM starts up again.

Eve and Ryan breathe a sigh of relief. They move to different ends of the travelator.

The two smile at each other briefly, looking more confused than embarrassed.

RYAN
What was that all about?

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Meeting complete, Lille, Max, Don and Wayne wait as the projections of Charlotte and Francine fade out entirely.

Don checks his wristband.

DON
Clear. They've gone.

WAYNE
Probationary period? What's she on about?

LILLE
She's set to chair the next licensing committee.

Lille paces around, agitated.

LILLE (CONT'D)
She was right about the other board members. I've been encouraging them to -- ah -- back off.

WAYNE
They'd do well to keep their noses out with that ogre on the rampage.

DON
Charlotte Kagaron's the most unscrupulous senator in government. What are we going to do? They will find that throwback.

LILLE
I doubt it. Max and I found out about her before she did.

Don looks surprised. Wayne lifts his arm, wristband proffered in Lille's direction.

WAYNE
You didn’t think to share that?

LILLE
Couldn’t risk an intercept.

DON
Have you taken independent action? A lead back would be disastrous.

LILLE
When news of Alexander’s death broke, we anticipated they’d use it as excuse for a deep audit.

WAYNE
So? We agreed to dispose of the most dubious assets.

LILLE
Yes, and sacrifice an outdated, but beautiful wonder. Which, by the way, I can’t believe I agreed to.

DON
That ‘wonder’ contains archives, and material that could be seriously embarrassing. Why’s it still under construction, even now?

LILLE
Hmm. We couldn’t stop the build without it looking suspicious.

DON
What do you mean?

Lille turns to Max, who has remained silent so far.

MAX
There’s been a terrible accident. Alexander’s last descendant was there. She won’t be coming back.

As realization dawns, Don and Wayne look shocked.

WAYNE
You -- it’s gone already?

LILLE
Records show she took a contract at a doomed construction site.
(beat)
Kathcataran’s been blasted. Wiped.

WAYNE
Without further consultation? After years of keeping it inconspicuous?

DON
I don’t believe this! It was old, but still connected. There’ll be an investigation now.

LILLE
Anticipated. We installed a new Ring pairing, isolated from the grid.

MAX
Disabled safety systems. Took out both Rings together.

LILLE
It’s untraceable. And considering the link distance -- well, think --

WAYNE
Now you’re starting to make sense.

LILLE
Burying the name might be expensive, but not impossible.

DON
After so long. So much effort --

LILLE
It’s what you wanted! Hell Don! Second thoughts already? Don’t forget, I had a personal connect.

Lille has retained her composure so far, but there is a hint of real anger and emotion now.

Don lets out an exasperated sigh. His argument fades.

MAX
Going according to plan, I’d say.

INT. KATHCATARAN TRAVELATOR - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan shift. Their stances indicate deceleration.

The HUM of movement decreases.

EVE
Wherever it is, I think we're about to arrive.

The HUM fades out entirely.

Eve and Ryan look apprehensively across at each other.

The door begins to reopen.

INT. KATHCATARAN OBSERVATION TERRACE - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan step out from the travelator into a large tubular section, with windows from floor to ceiling. There is a smooth table before them.

They look out in astonishment.

They are positioned over a huge circle, comprised of white tubes. Some of the tubes are still under construction.

The sky is dark, and full of stars, and the curve of an alien planet can be seen, most of it above.

EXT. ABOVE BRIGHT NEW EDEN - NIGHT

A view from distance shows them to be on a circular structure, comprised of multiple tubular layers.

The structure is rotating gently, and orbiting a planet.

INT. KATHCATARAN OBSERVATION TERRACE - NIGHT

RYAN
Shit! What the --? Where the hell are we?

Eve touches the table. A screen slides up.

A model of the space-structure, and a woman's face appears. The KATHCATARAN GUIDE begins her introduction.

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Welcome aboard Kathcataran, assessment platform four, at exo-planet Six Seven Two.

RYAN
You've got to be joking! A planet?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Six Seven Two. Bright New Eden. Preliminary survey shows high system stability. Water to land ratio at sixty by forty per cent. Oxygen levels high, with --

EVE
You're platform four of how many?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Four.

EVE
So where are the other three?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
We are in geostationary orbit, tracking platform Three, with a 180 degree separation.

EVE
(to Ryan)
There's another one of these on the other side of the equator.

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Correct. Four were sent from Earth. Platforms One and Two did not survive the crossing.

RYAN
No? What happened to them?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
They did not survive the crossing.

RYAN
You already said that! I asked --

Eve looks at Ryan, and shakes her head vigorously.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Err, how far are we from Earth?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Four point three seven light years.

EVE
That's not possible.

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
It's an approximation. The actual distance is --

EVE
Stop! It’s not possible because we were there two hours ago.

RYAN
How would that make any difference? You go through one Ring, come straight out the other. Doesn’t matter how far apart they are.

EVE
Of course I bloody well know that! I even know why! The point is, it’s impossible for a Ring to be so far away. This thing would’ve needed three hundred years to even -- No!

RYAN
What is it?

EVE
Old technology. Decades in construction. Look at the size.

Eve steps away in dismay, and considers the implications.

EVE (CONT’D)
It gains optimum rotation. Gravity seems normal. Built by plastic extrusion. Workers can’t tell where they are --

RYAN
You mean the bastards build in space, but avoid paying people for the risk! And they only feed them protein bars.

EVE
Forget the fucking protein bars!
(to Kathcataran Guide)
Who owns this place?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Ianthe Corporation.

RYAN
Tell us something we don’t know!

The Kathcataran Guide looks confused.

EVE
Over-ride that. Tell us the Ianthe branch, title, and name.

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
That is classified.

RYAN
Big surprise.

EVE
Classified? Why?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
The executives deemed it so. In any case, that question is now irrelevant.

EVE
What do you mean?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
Fire from a hostile delivery is out of control. It’s catastrophic. Kathcataran will be destroyed in less than six hours.

The two look at the guide in shock and horror.

RYAN
You trying to tell us we’ll be dead in six hours?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
No.
(beat)
Life support fails in four.

Ryan looks unsteady. Eve supports him.

EVE
Are there other transporter Rings that link to Earth?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
There are no Earth Rings remaining on Kathcataran. There is only one operational Ring left.

EVE
What? Another Ring? Where?

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
But it is off limits.

EVE
We have to get there.

KATHCATARAN GUIDE
It is restricted because --

EVE
Tell us where the bloody thing is!

A complex map appears above the table. Eve and Ryan both quickly scan their wristbands across.

Eve's wristband soon CLICKS, and a green light flashes.

Ryan removes his arm before gaining a green.

They nod to each other, then make for the travelator door.

RYAN
Shouldn't we have let her say why it's off limits?

Eve is busy trying to work things out, and doesn't listen.

EVE
No internal Ring system. Physical transports. Screens. Even the obsolete rules on intimacy. This has been going for a long time. Must have left Earth at the start of the Ring revolution.

RYAN
So if the surviving Ring's not for Earth -- where?

EVE
Transfer to the other platform.

RYAN
You sure?

EVE
Has to be -- and that might still have a viable Earth Ring aboard!

INT. KATHCATARAN TRAVELATOR - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan enter and bring up the screen.

Ryan projects the map from his wristband towards it.

The image looks offended.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
I can't read that! It's incomplete.

RYAN
(crestfallen, to Eve)
This band's Ring-tech enhanced. I thought it must've completed --

Eve looks exasperated.

EVE
Ahead of mine? You didn't check?

She projects the map from her own wristband.

EVE (CONT'D)
Here. How about this?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
It's upside down.

EVE
For goodness sake! Can't you just flip your scanner?

Eve twists her arm to an awkward angle.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
That is a restricted destination. It is also currently unreachable, due to structural damage.

EVE
Well get us as close as you can!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Why?

EVE
Just do it!

The image gives an annoyed shrug, then fades.

The door closes, there is a HUM. Eve and Ryan are nudged sideways by initial acceleration.

The travel HUM increases. Direction changes become frequent.

EVE (CONT'D)
Be careful. We're being monitored. These things pre-date neural bands. Crimes to the person weren't so easily prevented back then.

The two find it difficult to maintain their footing, and keep apart, until it occurs what the ceiling straps are for.

They smile wryly, take hold, and become more stable.

Eventually the HUM subsides, the pair shift forward, and the image returns.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
We have arrived.

Nothing happens.

RYAN
Well? Open the door.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Access is denied.

RYAN
What? Why?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
This area is off limits.

RYAN
You just brought us here!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Your instructions, to bring you as close as possible to a designated location, have been fulfilled.

RYAN
Well then, we're all happy. So let us out!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Unable to comply.

EVE
Alright. There's been an accident. Initiate safety procedures. Immediately. Over-ride off limit --

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
I've already done that.

RYAN
So what's the problem?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Instructions contradict.

RYAN
No they don't!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
That was a contradiction.

EVE
It was an argument. There are over-rides in effect. Open the door.

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
This area can only be accessed by current executive codes --

RYAN
Codes? This whole place is about to blow! Stop messing around!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Unable to comply.

RYAN
Yes you are. You can comply by opening -- the bloody -- door!

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
Without the code, this transporter unit cannot provide access to zones defined as --

RYAN
What was the point of bringing us, if you won't let us out?

TRAVELATOR IMAGE
What was the point of coming, when you knew it was restricted?

Ryan gives an exasperated growl, and prepares further argument, but Eve interrupts.

EVE
(aside, to Ryan)
Ryan, we're used to systems that work. This one's not really cogent.
(to image)
Thank you. You have fulfilled instructions. Go to sleep.

The image appears to hear the aside, and looks indignant, but she fades out regardless.

RYAN
Why'd you do that?

EVE
To shut her up. Stop her taking us somewhere else. Or locking us out completely. These old systems have become a bit quirky.

RYAN
Well, that's great. Now we'll have to break the door down!

Ryan batters impotently at the door a few times.

His frustration soon subsides. He stops.

Eve tries to keep patient, and not be too condescending.

EVE
That might damage the structure. Let's try an over-ride.

RYAN
That could take forever!

Eve puts her wristband up against the screen.

EVE
Strong encryption for the era. Mine says seven minutes.

Ryan places his wristband to the same location.

RYAN
Eleven. Are you sure yours -- ?

Eve frowns severely.

EVE
Seven.

RYAN
Alright. Use yours.

Eve puts her arm back in place.

They both look at each other. They are very worried.

Both issue a simultaneous sigh. Ryan is first to speak.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Sorry I snapped.

EVE
You should be.

RYAN
Don’t know why I worry. It’s not as if I’ve anything to go back to. I suppose it’s different for you?

Eve looks sad. She whispers.

EVE
My apartment. No, not really --
(beat)
My friends.

Ryan shuffles uncomfortably.

RYAN
Eve. What if this Ring we’re heading for transfers to one of the platforms that didn’t survive?

EVE
I hadn’t thought of that. Shit. I only know the theory. You fix those things. It couldn’t, could it?

RYAN
It’s unlikely. If the platform was destroyed, the Ring’s twin would have been destroyed as well.

EVE
She said this one’s still operational --

RYAN
Yep, that’s right. She did. But if the platform was only disabled, and the Ring survived --

Whilst they consider this, Eve’s wristband CLICKS slowly.

Ryan tries to keep calm, but is starting to become agitated. The confinement here increases his concern.

Eve realizes, and tries to change the subject.

EVE
What about your family?

RYAN
What?

EVE
You said you’ve no one to go back to.

Ryan frowns, then gives a slight shake of the head.

EVE (CONT'D)
Parents? Partner?

Ryan struggles with this. He looks annoyed.

RYAN
Some friends. That's all. Are you always so nosey?

Eve looks hurt. Ryan sees, and apologizes.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Sorry. I didn't mean to be --

Ryan considers. He is very uncomfortable.

Eve waits. Her wristband CLICKS on.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I grew up in an institution. It was a bad place. They died when I was young. My parents.

EVE
Yeah? Mine too.

Ryan looks across. Eve stares back defiantly.

EVE (CONT'D)
Killed in an accident. My aunt took me in. She died two years ago.

A moment of connect. Ryan continues.

RYAN
I was married. My wife left me --

EVE
I'm not surprised.

Ryan breaks eye contact, and turns aside.

RYAN
She couldn't cope with the death of our daughter.

Eve looks embarrassed, and saddened.

EVE
Ahh. Oh.

RYAN
It’s not so long since I was released from another bad place. I needed money, very seriously. Dabbled in the shadow market --

EVE
You what?

RYAN
Faked assets. Sold things I didn’t own. Should’ve known better.

He shakes his head ruefully.

RYAN (CONT’D)
I was a chief-tech once. I’m lucky to get any kind of work these days.

EVE
This is hardly the best time to tell me you’re an ex-convict.

Ryan looks over, raises his arm, and his wristband glows.

A laughing girl, LAYNE, 6, is projected on the wall.

RYAN
Layne was happy, mostly, the short time she had.

An attractive woman, JACKIE, 20s, comes into view. She is blowing bubbles for Layne. Ryan smiles, but is clearly upset.

RYAN (CONT’D)
That’s my wife, Jackie. We couldn’t afford the therapy --

Eve speaks hesitantly.

EVE
I don’t --

RYAN
It was a rare hereditary disorder. The medics said they couldn’t cure everything, certainly not on our salaries. We did everything to raise funds. I went too far.

Ryan falls silent. Eve is unsure if she should respond, but Ryan has something to add. He decides to speak further.

RYAN (CONT'D)
In truth, I'm not sure how much of a difference the money might've made. But Jackie blamed herself. Six months after -- ahh -- well. She overdid the sleeper tabs. She didn't only leave me --

EVE
Ryan, I'm so sorry.

Both are very uncomfortable.

Dull, slightly faster CLICKS issue from Eve's wristband.

Ryan drops the image.

RYAN
Don't know why I showed you that.

EVE
Me neither.

RYAN
Haven't recovered. Can't seem to get it together these days.

EVE
I'm hopeless at consolation. Don't go for the 'gone to a better place' thing.

RYAN
Didn't think you would. Well. We're going there anyway --

EVE
Not if we work together. We'll get you sorted later.

RYAN
We have to get out of this first.

Eve's wristband CLICKS increase in frequency, then stop.

After a short wait, the door rolls open.

Ryan smiles at her.

He goes across to the opening, then steps back in alarm.

The area beyond is a tube, with many cables running along the sides. It is unlit, but appears to go straight up and down.

There is a ladder, comprised of protruding rungs, on the opposite side.

Ryan brings up a light on his wristband, and illuminates the central part of the shaft.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Woh! That's a hell of a drop.

Eve goes to the edge.

EVE
Yeah.

Neither are sure what else to say to each other.

Ryan paces away, and then back. He looks down.

RYAN
You could've warned me!

EVE
You could've let your band-map complete! It's a lateral spar, along the line of rotation. A long reach of apparent gravity.

RYAN
Like I said. A long way down.

EVE
A drone-maintenance shaft. It leads to the outer tubes. The ladder's a bygone precaution.

RYAN
No other way?

Eve raises her wristband, and projects the map they had taken earlier. She shakes her head.

RYAN (CONT'D)
It figures. Back door for caterers and criminals, right?

He is not being serious. Eve smiles.

EVE
Chefs and technicians. At least we don't have to go against the force. It will feel like going down.

Ryan looks dubiously into the shaft.

EVE (CONT'D)
A few hours. Ryan, we have to move. Come on!

She sets an area light on her own wristband.

Eve reaches for one of the rungs, but it is further than she had anticipated.

She is put off balance, and teeters at the edge.

Ryan pulls her back, and steadies her.

RYAN
I'll go first, alright?

Eve takes a deep breath, and nods.

Ryan reaches across, and grabs the nearest rung. He swings his body over, and gets his feet secured.

Ryan then reaches back, and helps Eve over onto the ladder.

INT. LATERAL SPAR - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan descend at a steady pace. Ryan leads.

A few small items fall past them from time to time.

Then something bigger drops down.

EVE
Shit! What was that?

They both look up, but see nothing but the tube and cables rising into distance.

RYAN
I think we should go faster.

EVE
Yeah.

The two increase their speed.

A number of medium sized items drop down in quick succession.

Something strikes Eve on the shoulder. She cries out, and temporarily loses her grip.

RYAN
This can't be right?

EVE
Can you see anything yet?

Ryan adjusts his wristband light, and focuses the beam downwards, but it only shows a continuation of the shaft.

EVE (CONT'D)
We ought to be nearly there. Keep going.

The two increase their pace down the ladder.

There is a flash from above, followed by an ominous RUMBLE.

RYAN
That doesn't sound good.

EVE
Hurry up!

They move now as fast as they are able.

Dust, and small items shower down. Larger items follow.

A human body falls past, but the two are concentrating on the ladder. They do not notice it.

Eve is struck again. She loses footing and slips a few rungs.

Ryan grabs her, and hauls her back in.

EVE (CONT'D)
Why'd you stop?

RYAN
There. Look -- there.

There is a door opposite, but as Ryan reaches for the handle, a burning section of debris drops by.

Ryan reels back.

The two remain as close up against the side as possible.

Many small burning items rush down past. Then more dust.

The dust clears. Ryan reaches again.

He gets the handle this time, but it doesn't shift.

He has to move back, as more debris falls down.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I can't get leverage!

They cast around urgently. Ryan notes a ledge, just below the door-frame. He points to it.

EVE
If you fall, or get knocked off --

RYAN
What choice is there?

At the next lull in falling debris, Ryan grabs the door handle, and steps across onto the ledge.

He has to flatten in, as a large burning piece falls by.

Ryan then takes the door handle, and heaves, but it only moves a short way.

Ryan almost slips off the ledge.

The two look across at each other.

EVE
Be careful.

Ryan nods. With a prodigious burst of strength, he heaves again, and the handle rotates fully.

The door CREAKS, and pushes outwards as it opens.

Ryan is knocked off the ledge. Eve cries out in horror.

As Ryan falls, he grasps desperately at the sides. He catches hold of the ledge, and twists to reach a cable.

He hauls on the cable.

The cable soon breaks loose, but gives him enough traction to heave a knee over the ledge.

Ryan scrabbles up through the opening.

INT. DOOR CHAMBER - NIGHT

Ryan reaches the door chamber, and looks back.

In the shaft beyond, Eve smiles, and gets ready to cross, but then she looks up.

With a sudden expression of fear, she flattens back in.

A large amount of dust and debris drop by, so much so that Ryan is now unable to see her for a couple of seconds.

When this fall subsides, only the ladder rungs remain.

Eve has gone.

Ryan looks horrified.

RYAN
Eve!

He goes to the shaft and looks around, then down.

INT. LATERAL SPAR - NIGHT

Eve is looking up, still clinging on, a few rungs below.

Ryan goes back into the shaft, and swings over to the rungs.

He moves quickly down.

Debris continues to fall. He is battered by small and medium-sized items.

Ryan reaches Eve, shields her, and helps her back up.

At the next lull, Ryan manages to heave both himself and Eve through the door.

INT. DOOR CHAMBER - NIGHT

Ryan releases Eve the moment they are through, and she falls clumsily to the floor.

Ryan turns straight to the door.

He rotates the inner handle, and gets the door closed again, as another big fall of burning debris goes by.

When Ryan looks back, Eve is hunched up on the floor, taking deep breaths, and coughing loudly.

RYAN
You alright?

Eve struggles to bring her coughing under control.

EVE
I'll be fine.

Ryan takes a look around. He can't see a way out.

Eve takes a shuddering breath, and steadies her breathing.

Ryan looks concerned, and offers his arm. Eve takes it without hesitation, and staggers to her feet.

EVE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

RYAN
Hey, don't. We're working together right?

Eve acknowledges, coughs a few more times, and then compresses a side-panel.

The rear section of the compartment begins to scroll open.

Ryan frowns at the panel. He hadn't yet noticed it.

Eve looks into the tube beyond, and her eyes go wide.

EVE
Oh fuck! What's that?

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Lille and Max are the only two still in the boardroom.

Lille is looking at a viewer, and has targeted a light, moving above a blue planet.

LILLE
Max, something's not right.

MAX
What do you mean?

LILLE
Kathcataran's still there.

MAX
We started a chain reaction. Safety bulkheads are disabled. Fire spreads according to rotation, and flow of oxygen.

LILLE
The core's protected. It contains a miniature com-ring. I've just made contact. She's still alive.

MAX
Total collapse takes a few hours. Is there a problem?

LILLE
She's made it to the outer tubes. Alexander had systems set to recognize his descendants' DNA. She gets priority access to things.

MAX
Where would she go?

LILLE
It's complicated. Max, trust me. There might be a way out for her. Is there any way we can accelerate the collapse?

MAX
I had something up my sleeve in case of emergency. We untether --

LILLE
I don't need the details. How long?

MAX
About forty minutes. But the result would be spectacular. Easily picked up by Earth monitoring. Wayne and Don will not be pleased.

LILLE
Never mind them. Let's get this finished.

INT. KATHCATARAN OUTER TUBE - NIGHT

From the opened door chamber, Eve and Ryan enter a new tube.

There is an old transporter Ring set up, a few meters distant, but something is evidently wrong.

Cautiously, Eve and Ryan draw closer.

There is a corpse hanging from the upper part of the Ring. It is charred, and merged into the metal.

RYAN
That's not the Ring we're --

EVE
No, the one we're heading for's in an adjacent tube, further along.

They look about. There are more Rings, in both directions, set further down the tube they are in.

EVE (CONT'D)
Where are we?

Eve is speaking to Ryan, but a screen flickers into life to one side. The SCREEN IMAGE speaks.

SCREEN IMAGE
Corrupted Ring archive.

EVE
What?

SCREEN IMAGE
Of the Ianthe Corporation. This is example one zero zero two.

RYAN
I don't get it. What is this?

EVE
One zero zero two? You have over a thousand?

SCREEN IMAGE
Yes. We have --

The image suddenly looks suspicious. She considers.

SCREEN IMAGE (CONT'D)
Do you have executive access?

EVE
How do you think we got here, if we didn't have the code?

SCREEN IMAGE
Code is now irrelevant. Do you have executive access?

RYAN
Of course we do!

SCREEN IMAGE
Assessing -- wait. DNA check -- wait. Assessing --

Ryan begins to back away. He looks worried.

The image smiles at Eve.

SCREEN IMAGE (CONT'D)
We have five thousand three hundred and twenty corruptions. Less than half have been identified.

Ryan is again surprised that Eve has been accepted. Eve is shocked by the answer. She stalls.

EVE
Ah. Five thousand?
(beat)
So answer the question.

SCREEN IMAGE
What question?

EVE
The one he just asked you.

SCREEN IMAGE
This is an executive level. His assessment failed.

Ryan is offended.

RYAN
What do you mean by executive anyway? Stuck up prima donna!

Eve shushes Ryan, and quickly places her hand over his mouth.

EVE
He’s with me. Treat him as executive.

SCREEN IMAGE
Security protocols do not allow --

EVE
Yes, they do. We have an incident. Safety procedures over-ride security protocols.

The image looks disconcerted.

SCREEN IMAGE
Well then. Physical contact must be consensual. Penalties apply.

Eve, exasperated, withdraws her hand from Ryan’s face.

EVE
Alright?

SCREEN IMAGE
His status is updated.

EVE
Good! Ask again.

Eve and the image look expectantly across to Ryan.

RYAN
Err -- what did I ask?

EVE
What is this?

RYAN
Ah! Right. What is this?

SCREEN IMAGE
This is example one zero zero two.
Construction material deficiency.

EVE
Explain?

SCREEN IMAGE
Usually results in link failure. In
this case the transit object
suffered incremental incineration.
Likely cause. Magnesium imbalance.

RYAN
Incremental incineration? Like,
they slowly burned to death?

SCREEN IMAGE
Ianthe Corporation have an
unparalleled record. Ring mishaps
are equivalent to one in twenty
five point three million transits --

EVE
Shut up. We're not interested.
(to Ryan)
Their early records were full of
lies and cover ups anyway.

They move on to the next Ring, a large one. No way past the sides, but no surface shimmer either. It looks clear.

EVE (CONT'D)
Disengaged?

Ryan indicates caution, and inspects a panel by the base.

RYAN
It's a false front. The surface
screen's an illusion. Makes it look
empty. I'll show you.

He puts his band to the panel, but his arm is knocked back by an unseen force.

The screen image by this Ring materializes. It is offended.

SCREEN IMAGE
You're not permitted to make adjustments! Codes are required.

Ryan points back to the previous Ring.

RYAN
Make your mind up! She just said they're irrelevant!

SCREEN IMAGE
Irrelevant for access, not for adjustment.

EVE
Well, give him the bloody codes then! He's an executive now!

SCREEN IMAGE
Oh. Yes -- alright.

Ryan is surprised again, but his band duly flashes and BEEPS.

He cautiously extends his arm back to the Ring panel. The illusion of emptiness is replaced by a familiar grey shimmer.

RYAN
It's still linked. I've returned it to standard transport surface. Now we drop the veil, and see through.

Lights ripple along Ryan's band. There is a ROAR, and the surface view is replaced by a maelstrom of lava and fire.

Eve and Ryan instinctively take a step back.

Ryan taps his band, and the grey shimmer returns.

SCREEN IMAGE
From a sacred temple. This Ring was disguised. It's surface revealed a shrine in the room beyond a door.

EVE
But when anyone passed through that door, it sent them to it's twin --

SCREEN IMAGE
On a satellite above a volcano, on Jupiter's moon Io. Apparently, even touching the shrine was forbidden. A test for the righteous.
(beat)
Thousands failed, before licensing disputes led to confiscation.

EVE
Why wasn't it destroyed?

SCREEN IMAGE
It was kept as an illustration of corrupt usage, and how dangerous this might be in the wrong hands.

EVE
It was already in the wrong hands! Bloody hell! What's worse, it's still active! How do we get by?

RYAN
Like this.

Ryan puts his band to the base, first left, then right side. There is a WHIRR, and three bolts lift up on either side.

A single central bolt still anchors the large Ring. Ryan pushes, and rotates it sideways, providing room to pass by.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Careful. This Ring has enhanced draw-through prevention. Keeps the heat out, but you wouldn't want to trip up here.

EVE
We're wasting time. Come on.

Despite the words Eve is impressed. She smiles, and slips by.

Eve heads towards the next Ring, further along the tube.

Ryan goes carefully by, and follows on. He frowns.

RYAN
She identified you as executive --

Eve walks briskly on.

EVE
Yes, I know.

RYAN
On a structure which has been traveling from Earth for the last three hundred years?
(beat)
I'm not completely stupid.

Eve is conflicted. She raises her arm.

EVE
We crossed bands. Didn't you even confer? Never wondered why the surname's missing from my profile?

RYAN
Could have been lots of reasons. I didn't want to be rude --

EVE
It's Ianthe.

Ryan stops walking. He looks stunned.

RYAN
What?

Eve stops as well. She speaks harshly.

EVE
I'm an Ianthe. I'm not rich, or anything. I'm not part of this.

She starts walking again.

EVE (CONT'D)
My great Uncle's the rich bastard who just died. My great grandma was the mad one. The one who gave it all up, and became a recluse.

RYAN
Still rich enough to go to University. I never was.

Ryan's words convey a touch more resentment than intended.

Eve sees this as an accusation, and is even more defensive.

EVE
She left funds for schooling and education! That's all. About as cruel as legacies get in my opinion.

RYAN
That's an Ianthe wristband --

EVE
Yes! I can't change who I am!
(beat)
Only what I do.

They reach the next corrupted Ring.

A sticky syrup oozes from the base, and ends in what looks suspiciously like a hand.

They pause briefly. The screen image materializes.

SCREEN IMAGE
Contamination zone Alpha Two Zero.

Eve moves hastily on. Ryan soon follows.

EVE
How do you think it feels for me, having to pass through their Rings every day? Having to accept their awful underpaid contracts?

RYAN
Same as for me, and everyone else --

EVE
I've far more reason to hate them! We were both born poor. Difference is, I shouldn't have been!

RYAN
What makes you so special?

Eve increases her pace. Ryan jogs a few steps to keep up.

EVE
I despised the stupid bitch!

RYAN
Your grandma?

EVE
Great grandma. I wanted to know why she did it. Actually, I wanted to go back and scream in her face.

RYAN
Is that why you studied -- ?

EVE
Tech and transport? Yeah. And truly realized how much better off I could have been, if she hadn't gone off on her stupid moral crusade.

They reach the next corrupted Ring, which has a billowing surface. There is a GHOST within. A shadow, which almost emerges into a person, then fades back down again.

GHOST
Can't get out --

They pause, and look at the Ring in horror.

GHOST (CONT'D)
Help me. I can't get out.

The ghost fades back into the Ring. A moment later it begins to emerge again.

Eve and Ryan are appalled.

Eve's frustration with Ryan subsides.

EVE
I also learned of Ianthe history. Killings, corruption, you name it. Not the kind of wealth anyone would want to be associated with.

RYAN
No? If I was rich Layne might have survived. I might still be married.

Eve acknowledges, tears in her eyes. They move on again.

Eve stops abruptly. She turns back.

EVE
Wait a minute.

RYAN
We can't do anything about it, and you said we should't waste time.

Eve shakes her head, and goes back anyway.

The ghost continues to plead for help.

When Eve approaches, the nearby screen activates.

EVE
Someone’s trapped here. Why can’t they get through?

SCREEN IMAGE
Simultaneous alignment malfunction, at the moment of transfer.

RYAN
Both Rings at once? Really bad luck.

EVE
Consequence of billions of transits. We’re so used to safety, we take it for granted.

Ryan notices a slim metal protrusion, left of the base.

RYAN
The lateral stability node’s disengaged on the left side. If the Rings aren’t aligned, it can create a kind of bubble --

EVE
A corruption within the entanglement. I get that. But why can’t it be fixed?

RYAN
This Ring could be. Its twin must be destroyed, or inaccessible.

SCREEN IMAGE
Correct. This one was an accident. It took many similar instances to perfect an oubliette.

This shocks and surprises both of them.

EVE
To perfect a what?

SCREEN IMAGE
Transit out unaffected. Return impossible. Applied to both Rings instantaneously, it becomes a trap.

EVE
Oubliette. Old word for prison. But for whom?

SCREEN IMAGE
Please be more specific. There are thousands of entities in the adjacent tubes, classed by category, and era.

Eve and Ryan are unable to speak for a moment.

EVE
And those ones weren't accidents?

SCREEN IMAGE
Is your interest in a political, social, or commercial entity?

Eve, still shocked, thinks, and has an idea.

EVE
Not sure. Inconclusive data. I will need to consider.

She presents her wristband.

EVE (CONT'D)
Full transfer. All imprisoned entities, all categories, all eras.

The image looks unsure for a moment.

SCREEN IMAGE
You want them all?

Eve says no more, but keeps her wristband in place.

The wristband begins to flash and BEEP. A few seconds pass.

SCREEN IMAGE (CONT'D)
Transfer complete.

EVE
Oh. And historic corruption status needs re-evaluation.

SCREEN IMAGE
All examples are preserved in situ.

EVE
Nevertheless, I'd like a copy.

SCREEN IMAGE
Why?

RYAN
How about because this place is about to blow apart, and wipe them out, you dumb --

Eve elbows him in the ribs. Ryan wheezes in shock.

EVE
We require a back-up archive.

Her wristband flashes and BEEPS again, whilst Ryan struggles to recover from her blow.

EVE (CONT'D)
(whispers to Ryan)
No bloody wonder you got caught trying to deal on the shadow market!

This next transfer takes a little longer than the first.

SCREEN IMAGE
Transfer complete.

EVE
Thank you. Well? Come along, fellow executive.

Eve gives Ryan a disarmingly beautiful smile, and strides briskly along the tube.

Ryan is still wheezing. He shakes his head, and follows on.

RYAN
You can't do anything. They'll all die when this place goes.

EVE
At least they'll be free. Can't do anything? What about finding some justice?

RYAN
You've been planning this, haven't you? So well educated, but still taking catering contracts --

EVE
Think I'd deliberately get myself stuck out here? On this? I didn't know anything about it.
(beat)
As for Ianthe Corporation, I've been waiting for an opportunity --

RYAN
Ah ha! Well, good. That Don Simmeron's a right bastard.

EVE
He's not the CEO. He's a front. Need high level clearance to get details, but from what I've heard, others are pulling the strings.

RYAN
Like who?

EVE
I don't know. We've got something here though. If we survive, I'm going after them with it. Don't care if it was once a family thing.

RYAN
You'll get trouble, and never pass their gatekeepers. There's no justice. Who'd listen to us?

EVE
Believe it or not, my ex is in media. Clyde Dandron. Conceited as hell, self-serving, self-obsessed --

RYAN
Good looking bastard?

EVE
Exactly. Like you.

Eve says this as banter, and Ryan is initially pleased, but then starts to consider. As does Eve.

EVE (CONT'D)
Except you're not a bastard, and he was kind of smart --

Ryan looks crestfallen. Eve hastily proceeds.

EVE (CONT'D)
In a different way. He definitely wouldn't have gone back into that down-tube to pull me out.

Ryan is struggling to follow her twists of opinion. Eve realizes, and quite enjoys it.

EVE (CONT'D)
He stood me up, and cheated twice. Not so smart, come to think of it. In fact, in terms of substance, you're the outright winner.
(beat)
Still. There's one redeeming feature. He'd walk through fire for a scoop like this.

RYAN
Yep? Huh! He sounds like a right nob! Would still be really tough to get anything over that lot Eve.

Eve keeps going, pleased to note a touch of jealousy.

Ryan strides on after her. He suddenly laughs out loud.

RYAN (CONT'D)
You're one hell of a catering lady!

EVE
You should try my prawn saganaki.

RYAN
Is that something you eat, or a smack in the face? Will I like it?

Eve responds by laughing in return.

INT. KATHCATARAN SIDE-PASSAGE - NIGHT

The two reach a side-passage, which aligns with Eve's map.

EVE
Looks right. Better check.

Eve opens a screen at the side, and directs her map to it.

EVE (CONT'D)
Does this lead to here?

SCREEN IMAGE
Yes. Airlock four. That transporter Ring's in the adjacent chamber.

RYAN
We'll make it! There's still a couple of hours before this place falls apart.

SCREEN IMAGE
That is no longer correct.

RYAN
What?

EVE
Explain?

SCREEN IMAGE
Kathcataran will be destroyed in twenty minutes.

Eve and Ryan look horrified.

SCREEN IMAGE (CONT'D)
An up-dated assessment. Reduced survival indications are due to --

EVE
We don't need the bloody details!

RYAN
Shit! Let's go!

They run frantically along the twisting side-passage.

They reach a door at the end, and stop before it.

There is a deep RUMBLE, and some shaking.

Ryan takes the handle, and rotates.

The door opens easily. They dash through.

INT. KATCATARAN AIR LOCK - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan reach a room, which has many packs banked up on the right side, a wall left, and a large door ahead.

Eve consults her wristband map. The Ring they are heading for is behind the wall. Searching, she finds a fine contour line.

EVE
It's through here.

RYAN
Sure?

She frowns, consults her map, then taps on the sides.

EVE
There's a portal here. Must be a panel or something to open it.

Ryan goes to the packs on the right. They are marked E.O.U.

RYAN
E.O.U.?

EVE
External Operations Units. That's what they used to call them.

RYAN
And now?

EVE
Spacesuits. Ryan -- get looking!

The whole area vibrates and makes rumbling noises.

A section of packs tumbles down, revealing a red panel, set back. There are black and yellow diagonal stripes around it.

Ryan pushes more packs aside to get at it.

RYAN
I've found the opening panel.

EVE
No wait! Don't touch that!

This comes too late. Ryan has already depressed the square.

A barrier drops across the door they arrived through, and the AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER appears on a screen over the large door.

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Emergency protocols are in operation. Executive access confirmed. Opening has been sanctioned.

RYAN
There you go.

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Please ensure your survival units are correctly fitted. Decompression will commence in four minutes. Airlock doors will open in six.

RYAN
What? No -- wait --

A dial on the side of the screen shows a graphic representation of the countdown in minutes.

EVE
Ryan!

Ryan is in a panic. He hits the square again, to no effect.

RYAN
Hey! Stop! We want that open -- in the wall there! Not these doors!

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Opening has been initiated.

RYAN
Shit!

Ryan grabs a suit, but can't work out how to open the pack.

Eve speaks up with all the authority she can muster.

EVE
External operations aborted! Cancel opening procedure immediately.

The Airlock Gatekeeper image looks confused.

EVE (CONT'D)
These are executive instructions!

RYAN
What are you waiting for, a bribe?

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Decompression in three minutes.

The area shudders again. More packs tumble down around Ryan.

Ryan extricates himself, then fumbles more desperately at the suit pack he is holding.

He still fails to get it open. He brings it across to Eve.

Eve searches frantically. She finds a recessed wall screen, which she activates, and a woman's face appears.

EVE
Open that portal! Now!

SCREEN IMAGE
The airlock doors are opening.

EVE
I already know that! It's an emergency you idiot! We don't have any suits on!

SCREEN IMAGE
You are advised to don appropriate protective apparel prior to --

EVE
Don’t give me a fucking lecture!

The portal starts to slide open, but then slides back again.

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Over-ride. Airlock must remain sealed at this time.

Ryan jams his still unopened pack into the closing aperture.

Pressure from the powerful door cracks the pack open, and various parts spill out over the floor.

Ryan snatches the parts up, and brings them over to Eve.

RYAN
Let’s get you sorted first. Quick!

The suit is now a useless tangle of material and complex elements. They realize there is no time to figure it out.

RYAN (CONT’D)
Eve, I’m sorry. I’m really sorry.

Eve looks over at the countdown dial. One minute to go.

Eve steps forward, grabs hold of Ryan very firmly, and starts to kiss him passionately on the lips.

Ryan responds briefly, then backs off. Eve keeps hold of him.

RYAN (CONT’D)
Hey! Whoa!

SCREEN IMAGE
Signs of distress.

EVE
Too right there are!

Eve starts to kiss Ryan again. This time Ryan is not so reluctant. Eve breaks off.

EVE (CONT’D)
(hissing whisper to Ryan)
Don’t look like you’re bloody well enjoying it!

SCREEN IMAGE
Physical contact must be consensual. Penalties apply.

EVE
She’s going to start decompressing this place in a minute! You can’t apply your penalties if we’re dead!

Eve kisses Ryan again.

Ryan has got the idea. He breaks off, and turns aside.

RYAN
Hey! Get her off me!

SCREEN IMAGE
(to Airlock Gatekeeper)
Rescind override. Priority protocol.

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
The airlock doors are opening.

SCREEN IMAGE
I already know that! It’s an emergency you idiot!

The Gatekeeper image looks affronted. There is a pause.

AIRLOCK GATEKEEPER
Operation aborted.

The Airlock Gatekeeper image disappears abruptly, and the left-side portal starts to roll open again.

Ryan looks at the Screen Image in wonder and surprise.

Eve quickly grabs Ryan, and drags him through the door.

INT. TRANSPORTER RING CHAMBER - NIGHT

A small room with a single transporter Ring. Some backpacks are stacked in a pile nearby.

They approach the Ring.

EVE
Is it safe? Think the other platform will be safe?

RYAN
What choice do we have?

Ryan snatches up one of the backpacks.

RYAN (CONT'D)
This looks like military issue.

There is a very deep rumble. The whole area shudders violently. The Ring looks about ready to topple over.

EVE
Ryan?

RYAN
Shit! Jump! Go!

Ryan rushes up to her, still holding the backpack. They clasp hands, and leap through.

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - SURFACE DEPRESSION - DAY

Eve and Ryan crash through the planet Ring into an area resembling a humid sub-tropical region of Earth. Thick vegetation, with a profusion of large ferns.

They tumble down a steep incline.

They are separated by the descent, and roll to a stop at the bottom of a deep dip.

Eve lays still for a moment, then hauls herself up onto her knees.

She is cut and bruised, but otherwise uninjured.

A TANU, a brightly colored creature, size of a cat, has stopped grazing. It is looking over, very surprised.

This individual has large eyes, and a distinctive red slash-like mark across it's face.

Eve is too astonished to react.

Another tanu, this one the size of a goat, moves across. It gently nudges the juvenile away, giving Eve a suspicious backward glance.

The creatures disappear into the undergrowth.

Eve looks about.

Ryan is approaching cautiously. He is also scratched and battered, but has no serious injuries.

He has a handgun, aimed at the receding creatures.

EVE
Where did you get that?

Ryan holds up the backpack he had grabbed, which is now open.

There is an EXPLOSION. They both duck, and cry out in alarm.

A blast of fire erupts from the Ring they have just emerged from, and it splits apart.

Burning pieces of shrapnel FIZZLE out in the damp vegetation.

Eve and Ryan huddle down together.

The dip shelters them from the blast.

When they look up, a huge bright light illuminates the sky.

The light soon recedes, but the sky continues to glow.

They watch for a while, without speaking.

Ryan’s shoulders slump.

RYAN
Don’t think we’ll be getting back home today.

EVE
I haven’t given up yet.

Eve begins to smile. She taps him on the shoulder.

Ryan is confused, then turns in the direction she is looking.

Up on the far side of the dip is an intact transporter Ring.

Eve and Ryan whoop with pleasure, and hug each other.

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - DISCOVERED TRANSPORTER RING - DAY

Eve and Ryan struggle up a steep incline.

They ascend through massed foliage, sometimes needing to use thick vine-like tendrils for support.

It is a hard ascent, despite both being fit and motivated.

The young tanu climbs alongside, stalking, keeping its distance. Powerful claws make its ascent look easy.

Smaller creatures scuttle out of its way. The tanu ignores them, but observes Eve and Ryan with great curiosity.

Eve and Ryan are breathing heavily when they reach the top.

The transporter Ring is set back from the edge of the dip, and is well-secured in stable rock.

Eve and Ryan give a sigh of relief, and walk up to it.

A hologram of a soldier appears. She speaks politely.

HOLOGRAM SOLDIER
Access is denied. Approach will be treated as hostile.

Red lights illuminate around the Ring, and lasers flash across the surface.

Eve and Ryan look at each other in horror.

Pull back to reveal Eve and Ryan in a vast forest. Tiny dots in a huge landscape of mountains, lakes and oceans.

There are no roads, towns or cities anywhere.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - BOARDROOM - DAY

Lille and Max are looking at a viewer.

The little light moving above a blue planet glows fiercely, and then blinks out.

MAX
That’s it. She’s gone.

Lille taps at her wristband a few times, and frowns.

LILLE
No. She wasn’t there when it went. She got off. Someone else did too.

MAX
How? The other platforms sent out never reached orbit --

LILLE
In fact, Kathcataran’s twin did, but it was annexed by a hostile faction, and they stopped communicating. There’s no link between them.

MAX
So if not to another platform, where?

Lille shakes her head, paces away, then back.

LILLE
You might find this hard to believe, considering the terrible animosity between us later, but Alexander and I had been lovers.

MAX
That was hardly a secret Lille.

LILLE
No? Well anyway, he had a place where we could get together in private. Turns out it wasn't just for me either --

MAX
You could never trust Alexander.

LILLE
He also had a private Ring system, off the grid. In the basement, a very special link. Straight to Bright New Eden.

MAX
How's that possible?

LILLE
From Kathcataran. An old-fashioned lander made a Ring link with the surface. He had a new set brought in through that.

MAX
Shit.

LILLE
There were defenses. It's not easily accessible, and the planet's a hard place to survive.

Lille paces. Max waits.

LILLE (CONT'D)
But here's the real problem. Those defenses weren't put in place by just any government agent. They were set up by the woman I replaced as his lover.

Max looks worried.

MAX
Who?

LILLE
Louise Kagaron. Senator Charlotte Kagaron's mother.

MAX
Fuck.

LILLE
Charlotte's from a first marriage. She was eight when it happened. She felt Alexander had betrayed them both. All because of me.

MAX
No wonder she's on our case.

Lille doesn't have a response. She shrugs.

MAX (CONT'D)
If Charlotte has any recall of this place, or starts looking into things --

LILLE
Exactly. Can't let her reach Eve first. Or the other survivor.

MAX
I'll assemble a team.

LILLE
No. Alexander made it very hard to gain access, which might help delay Charlotte. But it means I have to get them.

MAX
I'm not going to wait around doing nothing whilst you go off alone. We put bad things on Kathcataran. Who knows what they might've seen?

LILLE
Max, I'll do what's necessary. You contact the others. Let them know what's happening, and come up with a contingency, in case.

Lille and Max make eye contact. Both look determined.

As soon as Max nods assent, Lille peels away.

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - DISCOVERED TRANSPORTER RING - DAY

A few hours after their arrival, Eve and Ryan have set up camp near the discovered Ring.

The backpack is open. There is a first aid kit, a selection of tools, and a few provisions.

They have erected a tent between two sturdy tree-trunks.

Eve is seated on a stone, staring contemplatively into a small fire they have made.

Ryan comes up with kindling for the fire, and places it down.

RYAN
I found these.

He drops some items which look like large fruit gourds.

Eve hardly acknowledges.

However, the young tanu emerges immediately from a clump of vegetation, its ears pricked in the direction of the fruit.

Ryan shrugs, and flicks one of the gourds across.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Want one? There you go.

The creature backs away, then sniffs the gourd suspiciously.

It appears surprised, snatches the gourd up, then disappears back into the undergrowth.

RYAN (CONT'D)
He seems to like it.

EVE
Will you stop that?

RYAN
Stop what?

EVE
That! I'm trying not to like you so much.

Eve looks across.

EVE (CONT'D)
We're not going to survive this.

Tears are running down her cheeks. She wipes them away.

EVE (CONT'D)
We'll never see our friends. Never see anyone again.

Ryan smiles reassuringly.

RYAN
We'll be alright. Someone's bound to come through eventually.

EVE
You think so? No human footprints.

Ryan frowns, then offers her a flask.

RYAN
I found water as well. It's safe.

He passes his arm over the flask. His wristband glows green.

Eve ignores the flask. She picks up a piece of kindling, which is the same shape as the makeup tool in her flat.

EVE
Don't suppose you found a blemish-remover out there?

She waves vaguely at their scratched and bruised faces.

Ryan looks awkward, then smiles when he realizes it's an attempt at humor.

RYAN
Not yet.

He paces around the camp area, and tries to stay positive.

RYAN (CONT'D)
The temperature's alright --

EVE
No sign of anyone having been here for ages. I think it's abandoned.

RYAN
Don't give up. I never went to school much. Virtual learning for me, but some of it stuck. The old bosses failed. Didn't some of them try to get rid of your ancestors?

Eve smiles up at him, despite looking very fragile.

EVE
Surprised you remember. Yes, one of them even survived a bomb.

RYAN
There you are then. History on your side! You will too.

EVE
It wasn't long after he discovered Ring-link technology.

RYAN
The best invention ever.

Eve gives a derisory humph, and throws her bit of kindling onto the fire.

EVE
They knew back then it would lead to terrible upheaval. I wouldn't be here if he hadn't survived, but that discovery ruined everything.

RYAN
Are you serious? Eve, I tell you now, I'm really glad he survived.

He sits down beside her.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Really glad.

This is from the heart, but Eve misses the compliment.

EVE
There were good systems. Physical transports. Not only for freight and stuff. For everyone.

Eve suddenly looks really sad.

EVE (CONT'D)
Travel was romance and fun once. Diane always wanted to ride in an automobile.

She gives a few deep sobs, before regaining her composure.

Ryan doesn't know what to say to console her. He reaches out, and they clasp hands for a time.

EVE (CONT'D)
Ring technology put millions out of work. It led to war, and terrible losses. Dragged us back. We should be so much more advanced by now.

RYAN
You really believe that? I thought there were viruses and dangerous intelligent computers and such? Hardly anyone even knew their great grand-parents.

EVE
We live longer. We're healthier. Medical's improved, still not perfect. But other tech faltered.

RYAN
Not all of it.

EVE
No. But real innovations? Everything stalled. Even basics like construction and finance.

RYAN
Don't know much about those, but transporter Rings gave me a job.

EVE
You might've been an airplane pilot, back before. Better pay.

RYAN
Maybe, but you can't un-invent things just because you don't like them.

EVE
They used to say that about the internet.

RYAN
The what?

EVE
Never mind.

Eve sighs. Ryan gently puts his arm around her shoulders.

They look out over the distant canopy in silence for a while.

RYAN
Beautiful.

Eve frowns up at him. Ryan looks disconcerted.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Never seen such a landscape. I think I'll get some rest.

Pull back to a view of the forest.

As the light slowly dims, CALLS and CRIES of various creatures increase.

INT. FRANCINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A darkened bedroom of reasonable space and luxury.

Francine is disturbed from sleep by an urgent BUZZ and flashing lights from her wristband.

Francine rouses herself, and the room lights slowly come up.

A projection of Charlotte materializes into the room.

CHARLOTTE
I can't see you.

FRANCINE
I'm in bed. I was asleep.

CHARLOTTE
An event's been detected, by a com-Ring telescope in Centauri.

FRANCINE
You woke me up for that?

CHARLOTTE
There's an old Ianthe space project out there. It's been taken down.

FRANCINE
So what?

CHARLOTTE
Isn't it obvious? Our visit spooked them! They're in a panic --

FRANCINE
Can't this wait till morning?

CHARLOTTE
No.

Ominous shadows appear on either side of Charlotte's image, bearing rifle-like weapons.

FRANCINE
What's this?

CHARLOTTE
Insurance. Lille's heading out somewhere, and I think I know what she's up to. I might be in a position to arrest her tonight.

FRANCINE
What? Whoa! Wait a minute, you can't just arrest the CEO of a major corporation! Not without --

CHARLOTTE
Get over here!

The projection fades. Francine slaps her wristband a few times, mainly in exasperation.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - DISCOVERED TRANSPORTER RING - DAY

Alexander is looking at the beautiful vista all around.

Young Lille is with him. She doesn't seem comfortable.

ALEXANDER
Isn't it wonderful?

LILLE
Timber. Oil. Minerals. Metals.

Alexander looks across at Lille, and realizes she is serious.

ALEXANDER
Is that all you see? If we take too much, we could lose everything.
(beat)
Anyway, it's not safe to stay here more than a week.

He looks sad.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
Can't you enjoy it for what it is?

LILLE
What do you mean, not safe?

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - DISCOVERED TRANSPORTER RING - DAY

Ryan is asleep in front of the tent. Eve is settled comfortably beside him. She looks drowsy.

Eve peels the skin back from one of the fruit gourds, and tentatively takes a bite.

She looks surprised, and takes a bigger bite.

EVE
This is delicious.

Ryan shifts, and snores.

With a low GROWL, the red-slash juvenile tanu creeps slowly up. Curious but hesitant, it moves towards the fire.

Eve becomes alert to its presence, and sits up.

EVE (CONT'D)
Careful! It's hot!

The tanu moves back, startled. Its big eyes narrow.

EVE (CONT'D)
Hot!

Eve throws some drops of water onto the fire, from her flask.

Steam hisses and rises.

Eve points. The tanu notes this.

It continues to approach, but more hesitantly.

Close to the fire, it pulls back, and sends a brief SNARL.

Eve laughs quietly.

EVE (CONT'D)
You're welcome. Here, have another.

She rolls one of the fruit gourds across.

The tanu edges forwards again, takes the gourd.

It considers her for a moment.

The tanu moves up on Eve's side of the fire, settles down beside her, and begins to eat.

The tanu seems to enjoy the heat. Before long, it is PURRING similar to a cat, but much deeper.

Eve hesitates, but then cautiously gives a few strokes along its back. The PURRING increases.

EVE (CONT'D)
I've just made friends with an alien.

On her other side, Ryan gives a grunt.

Eve shrugs, and settles back again. She begins to fall asleep.

HOLOGRAM SOLDIER (O.C)
Access is denied. Approach will be treated as hostile.

Eve snaps awake.

Keeping low, she shakes Ryan's arm, then hushes him as he wakens with a groan.

The two stare across at the Ring, where the red lights have illuminated, and powerful lasers flash their warning.

One of the adult tanus prowls back and forth, in the lengthening shadows.

The juvenile rises from beside the fire, and edges its way towards the Ring.

A second adult arrives, bigger than the first. The pair greet each other with SNARLS. They look fiercer in the twilight.

After a final check around, these two leap through the Ring.

The juvenile tanu makes a plaintive CRY.

The biggest of the adults leaps back, grabs the juvenile in powerful jaws, then returns through the Ring again.

The warnings subside.

EVE
How? Are the defenses human specific?

RYAN
More likely as you said. Abandoned. The warning still works, but it hasn't energy left to fire!

Both suddenly look hopeful.

EVE
The big one came back safely. Are we going to go for it?

RYAN
What've we got to lose?

Ryan snatches up the backpack, and they approach.

They hesitate as soon as the warnings start up.

Despite their fears, they clasp hands, and pass through.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - PLANET RING ENCLOSURE - NIGHT

Eve and Ryan arrive in a moderately-sized chamber.

Dim lighting. The area looks to have been abandoned.

Ryan brings up the light on his wristband.

One of the adult tanus leaps from the darkest corner, and HISSES ferociously at them, baring jagged teeth.

The second adult backs it up, HISSING, coming in from a different side.

Eve and Ryan cry out in shock.

They leap back, then face the threats.

Ryan clumsily aims his handgun.

The juvenile issues a high pitched WHINE.

The adults stop short, and back off a little, still HISSING.

EVE
The pup. They're warning us off.

RYAN
Probably think this is their cave or something. What should I do?

He has the weapon alternating between the creatures.

EVE
Whichever you fire at, the other will get you. Lower it, keep moving back. Maybe dim that light.

Eve and Ryan retreat to the opposite side of the chamber.

Ryan's band-light dims.

The tanus still look dangerous, but now the juvenile moves up between, and HISSES ferociously at the adults on either side.

The adults seem surprised, but start to calm.

EVE (CONT'D)
Are they communicating?

The adults cease their threats, and withdraw to their corner.

Ryan sighs with relief, lowers the handgun, and looks around.

Still cautious, they speak with hushed voices.

RYAN
Any ideas?

EVE
No. Worrying thing. Can't see any doors. It's as if it's been sealed.

RYAN
It doesn't look like Kathcataran. Think this is the other platform thing?

EVE
I don't know --

A tiny blue flash lights up on her wristband.

EVE (CONT'D)
See that? My band detected something.

A tiny blue flash now lights up on Ryan's wristband.

RYAN
Mine too! We're still off-grid, but something's close. They're trying to establish a new link.

EVE
To where?

The lights in the chamber suddenly come up brighter, and a projection rises a little way over on one side.

A human form resolves into the shape of Lille Ferane.

LILLE
I've been wondering if anyone was going to make it through to here.

The adult tanus HISS at the image. Lille looks shocked.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Charming.

The light gets brighter. Wall systems start up.

Eve's expression indicates she has begun to recognize Lille.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Shoo! Out you go!

Lille gesticulates at the creatures, and fires a laser-like warning from the edge of her image.

The tanus don't react unduly to the laser, but are very uncomfortable with the increased light.

Eventually, the brightness becomes unbearable for them.

All three tanus slink away through the transporter Ring.

Despite their threats, Eve and Ryan are sad to see them go.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Those are tanus. They're omnivores. Can be predatory. They're the biggest, and probably most dangerous animals on the planet. How did they get in here?

EVE
Your warding system failed.

LILLE
Ah. Well, it has been a long time. I had to engage a backup generator to even get the lights on.

Eve scans the image with her wristband.

EVE
(whispers to Ryan)
It's a projection. She's real.

LILLE
I was coming to look for you. Seems you've saved me the trouble.

RYAN
Who are you? Where are we? What is all this?

LILLE
So many questions! Very well. I'm Lille Ferane. You're back on Earth, in the basement of a mansion, which once belonged to Alexander Ianthe. I used to live here.

She gestures dismissively towards the transporter Ring.

LILLE (CONT'D)
And that was his secret gateway to 'Bright New Eden'.

RYAN
We thought we were trapped.

LILLE
You were very lucky to escape Kathcataran. Everyone else is dead.

It is the first time Eve and Ryan have had to confront this. They exchange looks of remorse, and shake their heads.

RYAN
We wouldn't even have made it, if not for Eve's --

EVE
We suspect the destruction was deliberate. You know about it?

LILLE
Sadly, yes. So, you came through the executive loops? You must be Eve Ianthe. Your great uncle and I were -- close -- at one time.

RYAN
Close? Like what? I mean --

LILLE
We were lovers. I was still taking precautions at ninety.

Lille reminisces about that.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Perhaps I shouldn't have been so cautious.

EVE
How do you know who I am?

LILLE
All in due course. Let's extract you first. Not as straightforward as you might think. The early visitors didn't survive a year.

RYAN
What?

LILLE
Tanus are not the most dangerous things on Bright New Eden. You've been exposed to a fatal mix of microbes and viruses. One reason it could never be properly exploited.

RYAN
This just gets worse.

LILLE
Alexander visited frequently. We fell out over it. Fortunately for you, his decontamination facility was state of the art.

EVE
Tell us it's still functioning?

LILLE
Guess we'll soon find out.

Lille taps her wristband. There is a GRINDING noise behind, followed by a fall of dust.

A panel slides open. Lille indicates the way.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Through there please. Remove everything but your wristbands.

Eve whispers urgently as soon as the projection has faded.

EVE
Ryan, she's an Ianthe executive. Be careful what you say.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - DECONTAMINATION CHAMBERS - DAY

Eve and Ryan enter a small space, which has a garbage chute by the access door.

A series of compartments, divided by glass panels, begin to WHIRR and power up beyond.

Ryan takes a deep breath, then shoves the backpack down the chute. The handgun soon follows.

The two look awkwardly at each other for a moment, but maintain eye contact. A deep and genuine connect.

They begin to remove their clothes.

They don’t get very far. Both reach urgently for each other. They hold, and kiss passionately.

Their kiss is interrupted by a sudden blast of steam.

They laugh ruefully, and continue to remove their clothing.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - BASEMENT CHAMBER ONE - DAY

Lille is waiting in person, by the table, in the chamber she was seen with Alexander during the first flashback.

Eve and Ryan arrive through one of the doors, dressed in light-weight cotton kimonos.

LILLE
Seen more of each other than you were expecting?

EVE
You can drop the innuendo.

RYAN
Scrubbed raw! Good job they don’t have to use needles any more.

EVE
We have questions --

Lille draws a handgun, and aims it at the two.

LILLE
As many as you like. First, you need to take those bands off, and place them over there.

Lille points towards the table. Eve and Ryan are astonished.

Lille's voice sharpens, and her eyes narrow dangerously.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Now! I'm not inclined to murder, not at all, but I won't hesitate to use this thing.

Eve and Ryan realize her threat is genuine. They remove their wristbands, and place them down.

Lille ushers the two of them away, then collects the wristbands.

LILLE (CONT'D)
I always thought my problem was being too trusting. You're ten times worse. Astonishing.

RYAN
What? Are we still infected?

LILLE
Do you think there's the slightest chance I'd be standing here, if your decontamination failed? No. It's much simpler. I couldn't get at these until you came through.

Lille's wristband begins to flash and CLICK.

LILLE (CONT'D)
You could have made a general link, if you'd waited a bit longer. Let's see now. There was some very sensitive material on Kathcataran.

Her eyes go distant for a moment.

Insert: Flashing images of captive humans and damaged Rings.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Hmm. More than I was expecting. A great deal more. At least you didn't get the chance to spread it.

She takes a breath. She looks dangerously composed.

LILLE (CONT'D)
Oh well, guess I am a murderer after all.

Lille brings her weapon up. Eve and Ryan shrink back, but Lille doesn't get to use it.

Two soldiers leap through the transporter Ring.

SCAR, 30s, has a wound running from scalp to jaw. He is big and aggressive. BONNIE, 30s has blonde dreadlocks. She is lithe and fast. Both bear a variety of weaponry.

A DEEP RIPPLE, as Scar immediately fires an energy-rifle.

A momentary shimmering around Lille leaves her paralyzed.

Scar strides across, and snatches Lille's gun, whilst Bonnie drops into a crouch, checks and covers, rifle at the ready.

Bonnie signals all clear. Scar nods back towards the Ring.

Charlotte and Francine step through, and head for Lille.

CHARLOTTE
You're not the only one who has access, bitch.

Charlotte snatches Eve and Ryan's wristbands from Lille's paralyzed hands, and passes them to Francine.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(to Francine)
We'll do the legal stuff later.

Francine takes the wristbands and shrugs.

FRANCINE
Whatever you say.

CHARLOTTE
(to Lille)
Surprised? Coming here was a mistake. You led us straight to the evidence. Exactly what we needed.

Lille looks frightened. She struggles to speak, but the paralysis has affected her vocals.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
What? Get used to it. Don't think anyone's going to hear much from you anymore.
(whispers to Lille)
My mother loved Alexander more than anyone. I knew this place alright. You deserve this.
(to the soldiers)
Take her away.

Scar and Bonnie manhandle Lille towards the Ring.

Charlotte approaches Eve and Ryan, who wait in dumbfounded amazement. Her antagonism switches to concern.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
That must have been frightening for you, but we needed to let her reveal her intentions.

FRANCINE
Not to mention ensure the decontamination had worked.

Charlotte glances angrily across at Francine.

RYAN
Who the hell are you?

EVE
She's Senator Kagaron. The government's transport guru.

CHARLOTTE
Pleased to see someone checks the news feeds.

EVE
Not that. I know because you offer big rewards to anyone finding evidence of Ianthe corruption.

CHARLOTTE
I do?

EVE
Well, not directly. I traced it back to you --
(beat)
From the shadow market.

Eve glances at Ryan, who returns a look of wry amusement.

Francine on the other hand, is surprised, and very annoyed. She frowns at Charlotte, who smiles back, unperturbed.

CHARLOTTE
Pretend you never heard that.
(to Eve)
You'll need to be more discrete.

Lille manages a pathetic whimper, as the soldiers drag her through the Ring. It catches Ryan's attention.

He notices a subtle change after they pass. A slim metal node rises, and protrudes from the left side of the base.

Ryan is about to remark, but Charlotte is proceeding.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Charlotte Kagaron, as you've ascertained, and this is Francine, my legal representative. So, you've been seeking financial rewards, hmm? Well, you're about to get more than you ever dreamed possible.
(to Francine)
Like to tell them the good news?

FRANCINE
You mean, the news that starts 'Luckily, someone died'?

CHARLOTTE
Get on with it.

FRANCINE
If you insist.
(to Eve)
Alexander Ianthe, your great uncle, never rescinded your great grandmother's claim.

Francine waits, but her words do not mean anything to Eve.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Consequently, as his only surviving descendant, that makes you the sole inheritor of his estate.

Eve begins to turn pale.

RYAN
He was the rich bastard right?

Charlotte points at the Ring, although Lille has now gone.

CHARLOTTE
That woman, Lille Ferane, is one of four Ianthe board members, who invested heavily in you remaining unknown, or being disposed of.

FRANCINE
Whilst Senator Kagaron's government merely wanted to stop them from obtaining control of the world's pre-eminent Ring travel operation.
(beat)
Which of course they now can.

A touch of sarcasm. She raises the confiscated wristbands.

RYAN
Can we have them back?

CHARLOTTE
We need to retain all the evidence.
(beat)
Lille was their CEO, instrumental in the destruction of Kathcataran. She's ruined many lives.

She leads them across, and gestures towards the central Ring.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
A private system. Lille thought she was safe, but we placed a deflection across its twin.

EVE
A deflection?

RYAN
A second Ring set directly over another. Isn't that supposed to be illegal?

CHARLOTTE
Well, that depends who you are. It's amazing what administrative license allows --

FRANCINE
Providing you have sufficient motivation, few scruples, and access to unlimited resources.

CHARLOTTE
That's enough.

Francine is abruptly silenced. Charlotte's subsequent smile is disingenuous.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I need to investigate this place. This will take you to Ops. You'll be briefed on your inheritance, and get state of the art band replacements. A good day, by and large. Francine, if you please?

Francine steps up beside her, as Charlotte indicates to Eve and Ryan that they should pass through the Ring.

Ryan puts an arm out to prevent Eve from stepping through. Eve looks confused.

RYAN
The lateral stability node's disengaged.
(beat)
Like on that prison Ring? Happened after those three went through.

Charlotte is surprised Ryan has noticed, and feigns anger.

CHARLOTTE
Not on my instructions.

RYAN
Your Ops placed the deflection. Who else would be blocking return?

Unnoticed behind Charlotte, Francine scans the Ring with her wristband, and looks horrified.

CHARLOTTE
Ops sometimes take security too far. I'll tell them to --

Francine takes two quick paces forward.

FRANCINE
(to Charlotte)
Let's see who looks like an over-ripe tomato now!

She shoves Charlotte in the back.

Charlotte, completely off guard, is pitched forward, and thrust violently through.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Keep back. The deflection's been replaced. The new link's to a contamination zone. Unsurvivable.

EXT. CONTAMINATION ZONE - DAY

Charlotte staggers out into an area of rubble and shriveled plants. Ominous clouds roll by, beyond shattered buildings.

She cries out, and turns back toward the Ring behind, but meets an invisible barrier.

There is no way through. At first she shows frustration.

Then she realizes the extent of her danger, and starts breathing hard.

She slaps frantically at her wristband, but gets no response.

She searches for escape. Nothing but devastation all around.

She stares down at her hands. The ends of her fingers are starting to turn a deep purply-red.

The discoloration spreads up her arm.

Charlotte screams, and begins pounding wildly at the Ring.

The discoloration on her arms darkens further, and reaches her face, which reddens and distorts.

Pain becomes agony.

Charlotte gives a shriek, as veins bloat and burst.

A moment later, she collapses to the ground.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - BASEMENT CHAMBER ONE - DAY

Eve and Ryan are struggling to keep up with events.

Ryan points at the Ring Charlotte has been shoved through.

RYAN
If it’s unsurvivable, you’ve just killed her!

FRANCINE
Hmm. She won’t be missed.

EVE
She was a senator. You’re in big trouble.

FRANCINE
Am I? She’d cordoned this chamber against external influences. Her ambush was illegal. Ops will be falling over each other to cover up.

EVE
What about us?

FRANCINE
I trust you’ll have the sense to keep quiet.

Francine returns the wristbands to Eve and Ryan.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Here. Take them.

A shocked pause.

Eve and Ryan slip their wristbands back on.

Francine waves towards the Ring.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Check. You'll find nothing wrong. But I'm carrying an expensive upgrade. It penetrates the veil, without having to lift it.

Francine reveals a delicate wristband. She touches bands.

Eve and Ryan look at the transporter Ring again.

With Francine's shared link, they see into the contamination zone. Shattered buildings, dark clouds, and a dark pool spreading from Charlotte's blighted remains.

Both appalled, they take a further step back.

Francine leads them across to one of the doors.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
She didn't tell you the Government stands to gain twenty percent from your demise, did she?

RYAN
I thought she was trying to help us?

FRANCINE
She wanted evidence. To discredit the Ianthe board, and get a big slice for herself. She'd have blamed them for your disappearance.

Francine turns back, and instinctively lowers her voice.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Whoever replaces her will do the same. I might've wound up there with you!

She takes a last look back at the Ring, and shudders.

Then she looks shocked. Eve and Ryan turn as well, and see the Ring is beginning to glow red.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Re-setting to military mode. Linking back. Run!

Eve, Ryan and Francine dash through the door.

They shut it, as Scar and Bonnie leap through the Ring.

Scar and Bonnie open fire, and blast the door away.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - BASEMENT CHAMBER TWO - DAY

Eve, Ryan and Francine race down a twisting corridor.

EVE
They're not falling over each other to cover up.

FRANCINE
They're not regulars. Charlotte must have set a revenge bounty!

They go past a protruding section, and cry out in alarm, as it is BLASTED by heavy fire. They keep on running.

Part of the ceiling behind them collapses with a great CRASH.

This temporarily obstructs their pursuers.

They pass through an opening, and reach a sparse chamber. It has four transporter Rings set up in the corners.

Francine quickly scans all four, and selects one.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
This is connected to the main grid. The others aren't. Go. They'll come for me first.

She heads for a second Ring.

EVE
Where's that one go?

FRANCINE
Can't tell. Private system. A long way. Maybe another space project.

Beyond the blockage, Scar and Bonnie keep firing.

There are BANGS from the chamber opening, and dust comes through. All three look back in alarm.

Ryan rushes up to the private Ring Francine has indicated.

RYAN
They'll come back for us anyway.
I've a better idea.

Ryan puts his band to the base, first left, then right side. There is a WHIRR, and three bolts lift up on either side.

Ryan twists his band, and three stability nodes fire up on either side. Another twist, and main central bolt comes free.

The surface shimmer fades out.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Help me! Don't let it fall over!

They rotate, and begin to roll this Ring towards the opening.

Beyond the blockage, Scar and Bonnie fire again.

Another BANG and RUMBLE from the corridor. The Ring wobbles precariously.

EVE
Quick! They're breaking through.

They get the Ring in place. It entirely covers the entry.

Beyond the blockage, Scar and Bonnie combine more substantial weapons, and take aim.

Ryan drops the central bolt, a moment before a big BOOM.

Dust swirls all around. The Ring rattles alarmingly.

Eve and Francine rush to steady it.

They all look up. The obstruction has been blown clear.

Ryan fires the stability nodes back down. This brings back the grey shimmer. A swift adjustment to the base panel dissolves it once more, leaving the surface clear.

A moment later Scar and Bonnie break through the dust.

The soldiers see their targets in the chamber beyond, but not the repositioned Ring. They open fire with devastating force.

Eve, Ryan and Francine leap aside, and fall to ground.

Scar and Bonnie charge through the opening.

EXT. ALIEN SHORE - NIGHT

Inhospitable terrain. Jagged rocks, and steaming pools.

Scar and Bonnie rush forwards a few paces, then stop. They take in the environment. See their blast marks on the rocks.

They look at each other in shock.

They turn for the twinned Ring they have unwittingly passed through, and race desperately back towards it.

Bonnie leaps.

INT. ALEXANDER'S MANSION - BASEMENT CHAMBER TWO - DAY

The central bolt and stability nodes fire upwards as they are again disengaged from the recently moved Ring.

Ryan removes his wristband from its base.

Eve, Ryan and Francine hurl the Ring over.

As it topples, Bonnie’s upper body emerges through.

She twists desperately, fires indiscriminately, and narrowly misses her targets.

The Ring CRASHES down, and bounces along the floor.

The Ring sparks as it is severed from its twin. Bonnie slips back, but not far. She is decapitated. Her head rolls aside.

The three are breathing hard.

They struggle to regain some calm.

As they do, they look one to the other.

Ryan recovers first. He points to the Ring indicated earlier.

RYAN
That’s the one back on the grid?

FRANCINE
Yes. Mute your bands, and limit use. You’re not out of danger yet.

EVE
What are you saying?

FRANCINE
The government wants you dead. Considering the amounts involved, and the interests at stake, they won't tolerate your survival.

Francine's composure is already returning. She paces across, and regards Bonnie's severed head with indifference.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Ianthe won't give up either. I've figured a way around it, if you're interested?

RYAN
How can we trust anyone after this?

FRANCINE
It will come down to judgement. My solution keeps you alive. You really haven't any other options --
(to Eve)
Oh -- I get a slice of your inheritance as well.

Francine smiles. She turns abruptly, and strides off through the grid Ring.

Eve and Ryan exchange a glance. Both decide at the same time. They follow Francine through the Ring.

INT. EVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The dining area of Eve's apartment.

Super: "Two days later."

Eve and Ryan are seated at table, finishing what was clearly a substantial meal. Their cuts and bruises have gone.

EVE
What did you think?

RYAN
Delicious. You were right. Prawn saga -- nnn --

EVE
Saganaki. It's Greek. Traditional.

RYAN
I've never tasted anything like it.

EVE
Really? You mean that?

RYAN
Best thing I've ever eaten!

She laughs at the exaggeration, and playfully backhands him across the shoulder. She still looks pleased.

EVE
You've done well haven't you? Not said anything about our adventure.
(beat)
Alright, I know you've been holding back. So look -- yes. It's sorted.

RYAN
And when she said you've no other option, she was right?

EVE
Seems so.

RYAN
What did you agree to in the end?

EVE
The government gets forty. Twice what they'd receive if I was dead. Francine's law firm gains exclusive rights. She gets two percent of Alexander's estate as well.

RYAN
Sounds like a lot to have given away.

EVE
Still leaves me way better off than I was before. And alive.

RYAN
I suppose. Honestly, I'm surprised she only went for two percent?

EVE
Francine's smart. She reckoned any more, and she'd start to face the same problems I'm running into.

RYAN
Security? I noticed the goons in the street.

EVE
I'm hoping that becomes less of a feature. I'm starting to have my doubts.

RYAN
I've been watching the news. Seen bad things. The Ianthe board claim you're a fraud. They have power --

EVE
Yeah, they're after me. They've blocked the payment, and launched a judicial review.

RYAN
What's the point of that?

EVE
Stalling for time, whilst bribing the decision-makers. It won't work.

Ryan, concerned, wants to say more, but can't find the words.

EVE (CONT'D)
The amount I'm relinquishing guarantees engagement. The government can't back off.

Eve rises, and extends her hand. Ryan takes it.

EVE (CONT'D)
They'd lose too much. Come, I've something to show you.

Eve picks up her glass, and leads him away from the dining table. Ryan collects his own glass and follows.

They settle into a comfortable sofa, in a side section, and set their drinks aside.

Eve taps her wristband, and a wall-viewer opens.

EVE (CONT'D)
I only got this today. Francine set it up. It's being broadcast on all prime news media in about an hour.

RYAN
You get exclusive access?

EVE
Yeah! Who'd have believed? Anyway, well, you'll see --

She laughs. A second tap brings up a frozen image of CLYDE, a handsome man in his mid-thirties.

EVE (CONT'D)
That's my ex!

RYAN
That's Clyde? He stood you up! Cheated! Why choose him?

EVE
We knew he'd run with the story, no matter what.

RYAN
That because of your personal connect?

EVE
No! Well, perhaps partly. More because he is a spoiled rich nob!

Eve gestures, and the frozen image of Clyde becomes animated.

INT. IANTHE CORPORATION - HEADQUARTERS - DAY

An open-plan office area. The Ianthe Corporation logo dominates as ever, but now the area is clear of employees.

Clyde is reporting, trying to keep his excitement in check.

CLYDE
This is Clyde Dandron, with another exclusive for Vee-Gee news. I'm embedded with Police November, in Ianthe Headquarters.

At the boardroom door, his style becomes more serious.

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Following the sensational arrest of Lille Ferane, for corruption and misgovernance, we're here to --

The boardroom door bursts open, and two burly POLICEMEN emerge with Max in hand.

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Max! They've arrested Max Veranu!
(to Max)
What do you have to say to all the people who demand safe transit?

Max glowers at Clyde, but says nothing as he is taken away.

Another Policeman emerges a moment later with Don in tow.

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Don Simmeron as well! That's three board members. Something very substantial's going down today!
(to Don)
What's your response to the allegations? The world is watching!

DON
There's been a huge mistake.

He looks fiercely at Clyde.

DON (CONT'D)
And those involved will suffer! Believe me, they will pay a price!

Clyde looks intimidated.

He then notes a third board member being brought out.

Two police flank the diminutive figure of Wayne.

CLYDE
Incredible! Wayne Raan! The entire senior board's been arrested!
(To Wayne)
Mister Raan. Does this mean you've been as corrupt as we've been reporting the last forty years?

Wayne breaks free of his minders, and leaps at Clyde.

A severe head-butt knocks Clyde to the ground.

WAYNE
Report that you bastard!
(whispers to himself)
Then sue me, if you want to see how it really works.

Wayne is grabbed back, and dragged away.

Clyde is shown groaning and spluttering on the ground. He is incapable of continuing. The news ANCHOR speaks over.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
This story will continue as details come to light. There are allegations of incredible --

INT. EVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eve closes the viewer. She is laughing.

EVE
He didn't mean to be such a part of the drama.

She stops laughing, and sits back.

EVE (CONT'D)
He's fine, by the way. I checked. A bit sore, but secretly, he's loving the attention!

RYAN
I'm pleased.
(beat)
We brought evidence, and it was acted upon. Unbelievable! So with those pirates out the way, I take it the path is clear?

EVE
Yeah!

Eve is aware of the implication. She looks contrite.

EVE (CONT'D)
If I'd had this sooner, I might have been able to change things for Layne, and maybe --

Ryan stalls her.

RYAN
We would never have met. And you can't change the past.

He shakes his head sadly, then looks across and smiles.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Hey, you're about to become the world's richest woman.

Eve smiles seductively. She moves in closer.

EVE
Makes me more attractive, hmm?

RYAN
Maybe. For people like Clyde.

Eve gives a mock downhearted little look.

RYAN (CONT'D)
For me, it's irrelevant. I loved you right from the start.

EVE
I know. Don't want to get your hands on my money? How about this?

Eve begins to kiss Ryan on the lips.

Ryan responds enthusiastically.

Their kisses become passionate.

They roll on the sofa. Eve gasps. Ryan pauses.

RYAN
Physical contact must be consensual. Penalties apply.

Eve laughs.

EVE
Shut up, and get on with it!

Eve drags at Ryan's trousers. Ryan is raising Eve's skirt.

Their breathing becomes ragged as the clothes are discarded.

Eve and Ryan make love.

EXT. BRIGHT NEW EDEN - DISCOVERED TRANSPORTER RING - DAY

Eve and Ryan emerge from the Ring on the ridge, back into Bright New Eden. They are both carrying backpacks.

Super: "A few years later."

Ryan takes a look around. He looks uncomfortable.

EVE
Ryan, I promise. The risk from bio or infection is minimal. Alexander was exaggerating.

RYAN
Lots of other risks though.

Eve drops her backpack, takes a few steps ahead, a deep breath, then turns with a smile.

EVE
Free! I hated being poor. But I hate being rich as well.

RYAN
You're doing good things. Can't do anything if you're poor.

EVE
How ungrateful must I sound? Truth is, I can't stand being encased in security, and liked only for my unearned fortune! Not including you in that, by the way.

RYAN
Pleased to hear.

EVE
Real wealth's so restrictive!

Ryan enjoys her happy demeanor, but he is not convinced. He glances back at the Ring.

EVE (CONT'D)
We'll go back soon enough. I want to be free for a while!

The vegetation near Eve suddenly shudders, and splits.

The red-slashed tanu bursts out in front of her.

He is now fully grown, and of formidable size and appearance.

Eve is shocked. Ryan looks alarmed.

RYAN
Wow! It got big!

The tanu shows a fearsome set of teeth, and circles confidently around them.

It SNARLS ferociously, then bounds into the undergrowth.

Eve looks back to Ryan, unsure what to do.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I didn't think we'd need a weapon.

EVE
Well, good.

Ryan removes his backpack, and fumbles it open.

RYAN
But there is one in here somewhere.

No sign of the creature now, but he still looks concerned.

Ryan’s hand clasps hold of something.

He draws it out, and brandishes a blemish remover.

EVE
Nice thought. Let’s threaten him with a change of complexion!

They both laugh. Then Eve, suddenly serious, shakes her head.

EVE (CONT’D)
We’re the intruders here.

They begin to move cautiously, back towards the Ring.

The tanu breaks again into the open, cutting them off.

It has one of the gourds they gave it when it was young.

It drops the gourd at their feet, then settles back, looking pleased with itself.

Eve and Ryan are astonished, and very moved.

The tanu nudges the gourd towards them. Gives a little PURR.

RYAN
You remembered?

EVE
Thank you!

Eve collects, and hugs the gourd. She has tears in her eyes.

Ryan relaxes. He puts the backpack down.

RYAN
Well. Who would have thought?

Ryan puts his arm around Eve. They hug each other.

The tanu moves forward, and bends its head towards them.

Eve carefully strokes along the head and neck.

The tanu PURR’s again, and Eve laughs happily.

EVE
Kindness, they understand. Not money. Not the horrors we'd bring.
(beat)
Think that's why Alexander kept it to himself? Think we should do the same?

RYAN
Who knows? I think we should keep it safe.

EVE
We moaned about his wealth and exclusivity. Are we being hypocritical?

RYAN
It's better than the alternative.

EVE
Fine then. It stays secret.

The tanu PURRS even louder.

Pull back to reveal Eve, Ryan and the tanu in a vast forest. Tiny dots in a huge landscape of mountains, lakes and oceans.

There are no roads, towns or cities anywhere.

FADE OUT.