

e p o c h

p i l o t
" s t e p f o r w a r d "

b y
a n d r e w j a m e s
c a r t e r

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EXT. SPACE

A star-scape littered with debris from a battle...

A man speaks, his voice distorted electrically-

SATURN (V.O.)
On January 1st 2058-

A pure-white, cylindrical ship eclipses the debris-

SATURN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-mankind left Planet Earth-

Ripples pass through the translucent shield over the hull-

SATURN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-escaping certain annihilation.

The name of the ship moves into view: "SOLARIS"-

SATURN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That was the single greatest
mistake-

An explosion rocks the ship-

SATURN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-in the whole of history.

A small, black craft speeds through the shockwave-

INT. SOLARIS, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The room shakes with each new explosion. Concentric rings of consoles surround the central command station and-

ALEXANDER COLE

Admiral, early-50s, greying at the temples. His expression grim, yet perfectly composed. Uniformed.

TWO LIEUTENANTS operate the nearby consoles. All wear gauntlet-consoles on the left forearms-

COLE
-Vent the atmosphere - do
whatever you have to - just stop
that fire spreading!

LIEUTENANT #1
Yes, sir!

LIEUTENANT #2
-Oxygen critical! One minute -
probably less!

Cole presses a finger to his gauntlet-

COLE
You hear that, Nikos?!-

EXT. SOLARIS, HULL - CONTINUOUS

The bombardment continues. Explosions silent. In a deep scar in the hull floats-

ANNA NIKOS
Captain. Late-40s. Blonde. Weightless. Helmet and gloves over her uniform. Slight Australian accent.

She is stretching a cable across the scar; repairing a connection. Dozens are already fixed. Three remain-

NIKOS
Almost done!-

INT. SOLARIS, CORE - CONTINUOUS

NIKOS (V.O.)
(radio)
-Just let me work!

The ship's axel - a confined yet immensely long cylindrical room. At an internal airlock-

DIETER VARICK
Commander. Mid-40s. Shaven-head. Rugged. Stocky. Slight German accent. Weightless-

He smiles at Nikos' response and moves around the wall. He takes hold of a robust handle and pulls it outwards-

Clunk - the lock disengages. Around the room, five others are similarly unlocked. Finger to gauntlet-

VARICK
Last one, sir-

INT. SOLARIS, CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

VARICK (V.O.)
(radio)
-Standing by.

An immensely long corridor. A squad of crew sprint through a bulkhead doorway, bringing up the rear-

AMELIA XANTI
Commander. Mid-40s. Hispanic. Slight Peruvian accent. Breathing deep in the low atmosphere.

She activates her gauntlet-

XANTI
Likewise. We're clear-

Xanti slams her hand onto a wall-panel - closing the door-

EXT. SOLARIS - CONTINUOUS

One of the alien ships makes another run on Solaris-

It fires into the shield again and again. One shot breaks through, tearing apart the hull-

A scrap of wreckage is thrown from the explosion. It passes through the shield and disintegrates-

Another explosion tears apart the hull-

INT. SOLARIS, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The Bridge shakes-

LIEUTENANT #2

O2s gone... We've got what's left
in the air... and that's not much-

Cole presses a finger to his gauntlet-

COLE

Nikos-!

EXT. SOLARIS, HULL - CONTINUOUS

Nikos takes hold of the last damaged connection-

COLE (V.O.)

(radio)

-we're out of time!

Another blast sends a huge scrap of metal spinning along the hull towards her. She hasn't seen it-

INT. SOLARIS, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A brief burst of static comes through the radio-

COLE

...Nikos?!

INT. SOLARIS, CORE - CONTINUOUS

Varick's expression grows concerned. His breathing laboured-

COLE (V.O.)

(radio)

...Nikos?!

INT. SOLARIS, CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Xanti leans against the wall. The surrounding crew are the same - all struggling to breath-

COLE (V.O.)
 (radio)
 ...Anna, respond!

INT. SOLARIS, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

As Cole awaits a response, #2 slumps over his console. Cole hurries, stumbling, to take #2's station-

COLE
 Damage Report!-

But #1 is unconscious too. Cole tries the comms again-

COLE (CONT'D)
 Nikos... Respond.
 (pause)
 Dammit, Anna... Respond!

Cole moves towards #1, gripping the consoles for support. He slips-

SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

- 1) SPACE: the alien ships continue their assault on Solaris-
- 2) BRIDGE: Cole hits the floor on all fours-
- 3) SPACE: the assault continues-
- 4) CORRIDOR: Xanti slips down the wall, unconscious-
- 5) SPACE: Solaris' engines take a pounding-
- 6) BRIDGE: Cole tries to stand; only rolling onto his back-
- 7) SPACE: explosions rip apart Solaris' hull-
- 8) CORE: Varick floats in zero-gravity. Unconscious-
- 9) SPACE: Solaris' engines begin to flicker erratically-
- 10) BRIDGE: Cole's eyes close-
- 11) SPACE: The entire rear-section of Solaris explodes-

THE EARTH FROM SPACE, DAYSIDE (OPENING TITLES)

Nightfall moves from the right (East) to the left as two letters slowly rotate into view on each side. The sun moves behind the Earth and flares-

Leaving black letters on white-

e p o c h

INT. FACILITY, INTERVIEW ROOM

A windowless room with two black chairs on either side of a black table. The walls and ceiling are matt-black, even the door. The floor is gloss-white.

Cold, blue light comes from thin, glowing bands at the edges between the walls and ceiling, and around the door.

Cole sits in one chair, his back to the door. He wears a white jumpsuit. His expression is stern, unreadable.

The door opens and in walks-

EMILY CARPENTER

Commander. Late-20s. Very short red hair. She wears black, plated body-armor - similar to the uniforms on Solaris.

She walks to the other chair, but does not sit...

CARPENTER

Good afternoon.

Cole pauses briefly, studying her-

COLE

Good afternoon.

CARPENTER

Your name? For the record.

COLE

Admiral Alexander Cole.

As she sits-

CARPENTER

And do you know what time it is, Admiral?

COLE

No.

CARPENTER

And yet I said "good afternoon".
And you believed me.

Cole stares back. Unreadable, studying-

COLE

No. I didn't.

INT. FACILITY, OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An adjacent, unlit room. A window looks into the Interview Room through one of the apparently solid walls. Two men look on-

SATURN

Admiral. Full-body armor - its plates are edged with gold and include a mask which electrically distorts his voice. A scabbarded sword hangs at his hip.

RICHARD BECKETT

Captain insignia. Standard, black armor. Face-mask. Sword.

BECKETT

Well?

SATURN

Not yet...

INT. FACILITY, INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CARPENTER

What happened on the 28th of August, 2016?

After a long, studying pause-

COLE

Where am I?

CARPENTER

Please answer the question-

COLE

Since you already know the answer-

EMILY

-Do I?

Cole pauses. Stern. Trying to figure her out.

COLE

Everyone knows that answer.

CARPENTER

Humor me.

COLE

No.

(pause)

The last thing I remember, my ship was under attack. We were losing oxygen. Now - Where am I? What happened to my crew?

Carpenter leans back, annoyed. She hesitates...

CARPENTER

You are in a facility for your recovery.

COLE

I feel fine.

CARPENTER

Good to hear.... Yet you were deprived oxygen for a considerable length of time. We need to make sure you suffered no lasting brain-damage.

COLE

And my crew?

CARPENTER

Admiral, please. I'm not at liberty to discuss anything more than my task demands. You will be kept under observation for a matter of days while we assess your condition. The more you cooperate, the quicker this period will pass.

Cole's eyes narrow - he's not buying it. He leans back in his chair and folds his arms - still studying her, biding his time...

Carpenter leans forward again, ignoring his demeanor-

CARPENTER (CONT'D)

What is significant about the date of August the 28th, 2016?

COLE

It's the day they discovered Ragnarok.

CARPENTER

Which is?

COLE

The black-hole that ripped apart the solar system 55 years later.

CARPENTER

And April 5th, 2024?

COLE

You've got to be kidding me...

CARPENTER

-April 5th, 2024?

COLE

-The day I was born.

CARPENTER

January 1st, 2048?

Cole tenses. His expression changing to anger.

CARPENTER (CONT'D)
 (knowing, pushing)
 Is there anything specific about
 that day, Admiral?

Off Cole, grim-

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAWN

A small military convoy drives off-road through the desert -
 troop-transport wagons and jeeps. Rock music is playing.

SUPER: Mojave Desert, Utah, USA // January 1st, 2048

INT. TRANSPORT WAGON, REAR - CONTINUOUS

TWO SOLDIERS (#1 and #2) and four young men in jump-suits
 (cadets) sit on the benches. One cadet is a young Alexander
 Cole, now in his mid-twenties. Alongside him are-

ARTHUR "ART" JACOBSON
 Mid-20s. Untidy brown hair. Slim build. Boyish good-looks.

JAMES DONNELLY
 Mid-20s. Tall. Black hair tied in a pony-tail. Pasty.

EDWARD THOMAS
 Mid-20s. Short-cropped blond hair. Well-built and handsome.

#1 and #2, wearing desert camouflage, sit silently at the
 very back of the wagon. #1 holds a small rucksack.

The cadets each wear a black jumpsuit emblazoned with their
 flag of origin - Art's Canadian, the rest U.S. They are in
 the midst of an animated debate-

ART
 (to Donnelly)
 Oh no. Not you too?-

THOMAS
 -Why not?

ART
 It's just too... obvious.
 Everyone says Antarctica -- but
 it's freezing, there's no way to
 get the materials there-

DONNELLY
 -Oh, come on! : Neptune.

COLE
 Siberia's hardly the same-

THOMAS

-Solaris. Mercury. Jupiter -- all
being built in deserts-

COLE

-Again - Hardly the same-

DONNELLY

(calming)

-Okay, okay... Alex. Your theory?

COLE

I... haven't got one.

The others pause, unsure whether he's joking.

ART

...You can't say that. Everyone
thinks something!-

COLE

What's the point? We'll never
figure it out. Do you really
think they'd be building it
anywhere we could guess? If the
Hand ever found out...

He tails off, unwilling to finish the sentence...

THOMAS

...They'd do a "Venus"?

Art's mouth thins. He looks away. The others don't notice-

DONNELLY

(shrugs)

Venus backfired.

THOMAS

Backfired? They destroyed one of
the lead ships of the fleet -
killed thousands of people.

COLE

True - but once the smoke cleared
recruitment more than doubled the
world over. And now the Venus is
closer to completion than any
other ship in the fleet.

DONNELLY

And it's almost twice the size of
a standard Ark.

THOMAS

One-point-five... but I get your
point.

DONNELLY

Okay, Alex, so you don't have a theory on Terra. What about the academy?

COLE

I don't see the point.

Donnelly shakes his head, smiling in disbelief.

THOMAS

I bet they're both in the same place.

COLE

So we're going to Antarctica?

DONNELLY

Could be.

COLE

I'm hoping we're there already - anything to avoid more "first-class" transport.

THOMAS

We're supposed to be at the North American Rendezvous-

DONNELLY

-And no one knows where that is either.

COLE

Who says the Rendezvous isn't at the academy? There's cadets from all over the world - it's got to be at one of the Rendezvous.

THOMAS

Unless we're going to Antarctica.

Thomas and Donnelly burst into laughter. Cole smiles despite himself... and notices Art's silence-

COLE

...You okay?

Art was miles away. He smiles awkwardly-

ART

...I hate this song.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT, UTAH - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

The convoy rolls on. Ahead of the them - a compound surrounded by a massive, concrete wall.