

DEATHCON SOLAR

by

WH Clark

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FADE IN:

VIDEO SIMULATION - ANTARCTICA - OZONE HOLE RESCUE PROJECT

A map of Antarctica shows the "OZONE HOLE" covering the entire continent. WACO (vague southern accent) narrates.

WACO (V.O.)

China is manufacturing banned Freon Twelve again. Here's the hard data collected by scientists in Japan and South Korea.

A map of China shows very high "FREON TWELVE" concentrations in northeast China near Beijing on Bohai Bay.

WACO (V.O.)

Freon Twelve obliterates ozone. That's why it was banned thirty years ago in Montreal. Surprise. The Ozone Hole is getting bigger again. Thanks, Red China.

Time-lapse images of the Ozone Hole since 2010, showing it growing in size in the last few years.

INT. ANTARCTICA - BAR & GRILL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

There's standing-room-only in a cozy double-wide-trailer-sized space. WACO (35, male, rugged) stands on a platform before a screen and a fading "BREAK THE ICE" neon sign.

WACO

Personally, I think it's a very unassertive solution. But, hey. If our hallowed military is powerless to do anything, who am - I?

ADMIRAL ASHRAY (65, stout, harsh New York City accent, parka with a USA shoulder patch) stands up.

ADM. ASHRAY

My aircraft carrier is parked out there in the bay, ready to monitor your experiment. And you're complaining?

WACO

You people should be in the Bohai Sea, threatening to blow up Beijing's Freon Twelve facility. Or at least telling people - about it.

COLONEL JINN (45, thin, intense, black commando duds, China flag shoulder patch) stands up.

COL. JINN

Full stop. Those are Chinese territorial waters. You have no right to be there. Much less -

WACO

Facilitate China destroying the goddamn Ozone Layer?

JAXX (55, thin, grizzled, Aussie) stands up between them.

JAXX

What's your solution, Dr. Waco?

Pressing a remote, Waco turns to narrate a simulation on the large screen behind him. A balloon rises from "MCMURDO SOUND" on the southern coast of Antarctica. There's an "EXPLOSION."

WACO

A balloon carries a load of ozone eight miles up. Explodes. Disperses the ozone to fill in the big hole.

A neon-colored chemical disperses over the continent, filling in the Ozone Hole. Over time, the dispersed ozone settles down. The size of the Ozone Hole shrinks.

JAXX

What kind of explosion?

WACO

A baby nuke. That's why the U.S. Space Command is here. The venerable Admiral Ashray.

Waco points toward Admiral Ashray. The audience is silent, wheels churning - whispering amongst themselves.

COL. JINN

I object. You first accuse China of violating the Freon Ban without evidence. Then you violate many international treaties to detonate a nuclear weapon over Antarctica.

(angry, to Adm. Ashray)
The South Pacific belongs to China.

Ashray is furious - gritting his teeth. Next to Ashray, Waco glares, too. Col. Jinn takes an angry step toward them.

Jaxx gets between them, holding his arms out like an umpire.

JAXX
White flag, you. We're in a D.M.Z.
(oozing calm, to Waco)
You're a regular at our Break the
Ice night, Dr. Waco. What is your
day job down here?

WACO
I - I've been fixing up the old
facility on the far side of Mount
Terror, studying how the Ozone Hole
affects the vision of the penguin
population. With that extra ultra-
violet radiation coming through.

JAXX
Great idea. Kudos.

People start to clap politely. But Colonel Jinn yells:

COL. JINN
Penguins? Now you accuse China of
killing loveable penguins? I object
to your offensive reasoning.

WACO
Objection denied. Until you
bastards stop building coal-fired
plants by the dozens. Hundreds.

Jaxx gets between Waco and Col. Jinn. They keep arguing.

COL. JINN
Bad logic. The west exports all
manufacturing to China. The energy
needs, with it. Then you make us
live in extreme pollution, and -

WACO
Just farm out your factories to
Africa. South America. They're
desperate for - good jobs.

OLGA (32, Russian, fit, Russia flag shoulder patch) steps up
to the podium and wedges herself between them.

OLGA
May I be the adult in the room?

Colonel Jinn stares at her, angry - furious.

Jaxx bustles into the verbal altercation, pointing to the
"BREAK THE ICE NIGHT" sign, talking loudly - voice booming.

JAXX
Special tonight, folks. Two
introductions - Dr. -

OLGA
Call me Olga. I - I have only a
clumsy P.R. advert.

Col. Jinn and Adm. Ashray start to object, mouths open.

JAXX
We have only one enemy down here.
Ignorance. Come on, Dr. Call-Me-
Olga - five minutes?

Olga smiles politely, hands Jaxx a CD disk - and he puts it
into a DVR - starts it. Images are projected on the screen.

OLGA
Deep water in Antarctica is at
freezing temperature or below.
Frigid water is giant sponge for
carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The simulation shows vast clouds of "CARBON DIOXIDE" (red)
being sucked in from the entire southern hemisphere by the
ocean around Antarctica, then transported very deep.

OLGA (CONT'D)
This absorption is why Global
Warming is not ten times worse.

The red CO2 reacts with the water and turns a neon yellow.

OLGA (CONT'D)
When carbon dioxide is absorbed in
water it turns into carbonic acid.

The neon yellow waters are carried by ocean currents to every
ocean in the world.

Tiny fish and shrimp die by the trillions.

OLGA (CONT'D)
Deep ocean currents carry this acid
worldwide, acidifying all waters.
It's an apocalypse of the oceans.

Waco claps. Nobody else does.

AWKWARD MOMENT

as Olga grabs her pack and starts to leave.

Waco claps LOUDER. Faster.

COL. JINN
Untrue. This is more global warming
propaganda. We imprison eco-
terrorists for saying less.

ADM. ASHRAY
Prison, hell. Firing squad. Boom.

Jaxx grabs Ashray and Jinn and hauls them to the exit.

JAXX
Don't you two ever show up here
again. Or I'll have you arrested.

ADM. ASHRAY
You should be throwing the Ruski
out. What they're doing -

Olga turns around and bolts out the door. Waco grabs his
parka and hurries out the door after her.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - MCMURDO SOUND - NIGHT

Olga hurries out of the small structure, heading toward a
ship at the pier a few blocks away. Flying a Russian flag.

Waco exits and hurries after Olga. It's a bitterly cold,
blustery night.

It's snowing now. Much harder. Visibility goes to zero.

They trudge through deep snow. Olga shivers badly, but Waco
is quite comfortable.

OLGA
I am impressed how impervious you
are to the bitter cold. Even I
require vodka to suffer it.

Olga stops. Turns her back to the wind. Pulls out a flask and takes a hit. She offers it to Waco, but he waves her off.

WACO

Don't drink myself - ulcers. Plus.

Waco opens up his park and reveals thick LONG JOHNS. He pulls out an electric cord. She studies the apparatus.

OLGA

You have. O.M.G. Electric long
johns. This is an outrage.

Olga steps back, deeply offended - then laughs up a storm.

WACO

I'm from New Orleans. Cold is the
mother of all my fears.

Olga wipes icy tears off her cheeks as he buttons up.

Waco stares at a red laser dot on Olga's forehead. He rushes her. Pushes her back. A SHOT RINGS OUT. Olga falls. Wounded.

A patch of red blood grows on Olga's left shoulder. Waco applies pressure to the wound. He yells.

WACO (CONT'D)

Help. Lady down. Help.

But his voice is muffled by the snow. A figure runs toward him, INEZ (22, female, Norwegian, small, fit). Waco lifts Olga in his arms.

WACO (CONT'D)

We need to get her to the hospital.

INEZ

After that soldier shot her?
They'll let her bleed out.

Waco looks around, confused and disoriented.

WACO

Which way's the pier? I saw an ice
cutter. Flying a Russian flag.

INEZ

The *Arktika*. Follow me. My
footsteps.

Inez runs away. Disappears into the blizzard. Waco follows her footsteps in the deep snow.

Waco reaches the gangplank of a Russian ice cutter. Inez has disappeared.

A Russian soldier on duty nearby hurries up. Another soldier comes. They hurry Olga up the gangplank.

Waco starts to follow, but they block him. Waco turns, head down, and plows into the blizzard.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - RESEARCH LAB - NIGHT

An ALARM goes off. A dark figure struggles out of a cot. His breath shows in the frigid air. A SMALL DARK ANIMAL scurries across the room, a pet of some sort.

WACO
Trouble in paradise.

Waco wears thick, fuzzy long johns with feet. He points a remote control at a giant TV screen.

SUPER: "A WEEK LATER"

Text scrolls across the screen: "Satellite out. Issue 666: Atmospheric Projectile. Fatal error. Help."

WACO (CONT'D)
Smart-aleck computer.

Waco PANICS - runs to a window and pulls curtains aside. A brilliant panoply of Aurora Australis dances in the deep blue canopy of the early-dawn sky.

WACO (CONT'D)
Zeppo? Relax, it's not time for
your eye meds yet.

There's no sign of Zeppo anywhere. Waco tugs on insulated pants, a thick parka, and arctic boots. He gathers some tools into a backpack and straps it on.

Waco grabs a bucket from the refrigerator, puts some food from the bucket in a bowl on the floor - then he steps over, opens an outside door, cringing from the cold, and heads out.

Small steps pit-patter across the floor to the food bowl.

EXT. ANTARCTICA - ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Waco steps into a windswept Antarctic landscape as the Southern Lights fade into a spectacular sunrise.

A bevy of penguins huddles in a group at the shoreline. They look up at the sound of his movements. Waco yells at them:

WACO
Good morning, Antarctica.

The penguins gather around as Waco feeds them small fish out of the bucket. He injects each fish with a neon blue fluid before he feeds it to them, often right out of his hand.

WACO (CONT'D)
Extra vitamins today. Lutein. C.
New R.X. Seems to be working to
counteract the U.V. radiation.

The penguins pause, intent on his voice: beady eyes staring.

WACO (CONT'D)
Sorry. No krill shrimps. Anywhere.
(quietly)
Dr. Olga's acidifying water is
killing the krill off faster than
we figured. She'll need data.

Waco pads over to the side of the building, wrenches a ladder out of a snowdrift, and props it on the side of the structure - right beneath a satellite dish.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Perched precariously on the icy roof, Waco closes a control box for the antenna and puts the tools back in his backpack.

WACO
The Russians would just give all
the penguins sunglasses.

He pauses to admire the view: rugged mountains, rough seas, clear skies - penguins running madcap into the ocean.

WACO (CONT'D)
That's not good.

Suddenly wary, Waco stands up - scans the horizon behind him: ARCS OF BURNING FIREBALLS streak across the sky a few miles away, leaving a trail of dark smoke.

The FIREBALLS IMplode into the icy tundra, raising clouds of billowing steam. Waco reaches into the backpack, pulls out a camera - points - but the phenomenon has stopped.

Waco slides down the ladder (feet on the rails) and rushes to the entrance. He opens the door in a mad rush, stops: a penguin stands there, then scurries out past Waco.

Smiling, Waco watches ZEPPPO (small Gentoo penguin, orange feet and beak) scoot after the other penguins into the surf.

WACO (CONT'D)
Be careful out there. I saw a
killer whale the other day.

Waco shivers violently and hustles inside.

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - TONGA ISLAND - DAY

A "RUSSIA PEACE" ice-breaker tugboat cruises the deep ocean. ANYA (24, female, Russian) studies a radar scanner on the dash. (A third person, unseen, films these scenes.)

ANYA
Not a blip or bleep in the whole
south Pacific. This is spooky.

BORIS
Nobody wants to tangle with China.
(Chinese accent)
The South China Sea belongs to us.

BORIS (35, male, Russian) speeds up, ROARING through calm seas. They approach a remote island as the sun sets, putting the mountainous terrain in colorful silhouette.

BORIS (CONT'D)
A flash of light - did you see it?

Sunlight glares off a tall, shiny object jutting above the island terrain. Anya screws a zoom lens onto a video camera, stands up, steadies herself, and zooms in.

ANYA
Deserted. Abandoned, even.

He punches the gas - full-throttle ROAR.

BORIS
It's one of China's microwave
surveillance towers. They found us.

GUNSHOTS sound. A DESTROYER appears, heading for them at flank speed. Crew members scurry into action.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Send the video out.

Frantic, Anya works a communications console.

ANYA
They're jamming all frequencies.

INT. ANTARCTICA - ICE STATION TERROR - LAB/OFFICE - DAY

Waco is bundled up in an electric blanket and electric slippers, watching a wide-screen TV.

ON TV SCREEN - THE NASA CHANNEL

A close-in simulation of the "SUN" shows a turbulent surface, rocked by VICIOUS WAVES of liquid fire. Suddenly, a PLUME OF FIRE erupts like a gigantic TORNADO OF FIRE.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)
Solar superstorms are plumes of
geomagnetic energy that explode
from the sun.

A giant vortex of solar flux, dwarfing the first eruption, leaves the sun like a HURRICANE of intense ELECTROMAGNETIC FURY racing into the cold, dark void.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)
They're exponentially larger than a
solar flare.

In a 3D holographic simulation, vast amounts of raw data and tiny numbers morph into vivid reds, oranges, and yellows - a tornado of liquid fire impacting toward Earth.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)
The Carrington Event in 1859 caused
auroral displays all over the
world. In London, sparks started
wildfires. There were even fires at
telegraph stations.

Waco hits the remote, and the channel changes to "THE CONSPIRACY CHANNEL."

A graphic of "NO SHIPPING ZONES" covering the entire South Pacific Basin.

CONSPIRACY NEWS (V.O.)
Trade routes within the Antarctic
circle have all been diverted.
There's no official explanation and
a total blackout on the news.

Images of drones and advanced military hardware.

CONSPIRACY NEWS (V.O.)
Rumors have been circulating for
weeks that the U.S. is planning war
games to test their new A.I.
Terminator SKYNET system. Capable
of coordinating robots on land,
air, and sea, the LARS system can -

The signal is interrupted.

BACK TO SCENE

Waco watches a continuation of the earlier scenes from an
easy chair, a bowl of popcorn in his lap. He feeds bits of
popcorn to Zeppo.

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - TONGA ISLAND - DAY

Firing constantly, the destroyer gains on them. Anya zooms in
on the destroyer, flying a Dragon-esque flag.

BORIS
Godzilla.

ANYA
It's the Black Dragons.

The destroyer bears down on Boris and Anya.

BORIS (V.O.)
Every G.P.S. satellite has an
emergency frequency that lets you
upload an S.O.S. Hack them.

ARTILLERY SHELLS EXPLODE all around the ocean-going tug.

BORIS
They're onto us, Dr. Doom. Watch
your six.

The screen is SPLATTERED with fresh, bright-red blood.

The camera falls to the ground, to show the third person
who's been filming the action getting riddled with bullets.

BACK TO SCENE

Waco stares at the screen, frozen on the last bloody frame.
Zeppo darts into the shadows.

WACO
Chill, Zeppo. It - it's just
Hollywood blood.

Nice sheen, though - excellent
viscosity. Mangled body parts. Ouch
- ulcer acting up.

Waco stands up and searches into the darkness, opens a
refrigerator door - light, as he guzzles down a small carton
of "MILK." Then darkness.

Zeppo scoots behind a big filing cabinet.

WACO (CONT'D)
If all else fails. Trust. Your.
Ulcers.

Waco turns on overhead lights. The large space is partitioned
into an apartment, lab/office, and shop spaces.

WACO (CONT'D)
Majestic? Trace that signal.

Pensively, Waco watches Zeppo (in a large tub of crushed ice
and snow) crunching raw fish out of his bowl, famished.

WACO (CONT'D)
Half-starved. Dammit, less krill
every day in the ocean out there.

Waco operates the remote, and a block of text appears:

ON SCREEN: "BROADCAST FREQUENCY :(. . back at you . . . "

The readout steadies on a single number. Waco pulls out a
"RADIO FREQUENCY REFERENCE MANUAL" and flips through it.

WACO (CONT'D)
Black Dragons. Chinese Special
Forces. Internal security.
A long ways from home.

Waco snaps back to reality, focuses - rushes over, and grabs
the bowl away from Zeppo.

WACO (CONT'D)
Stop. I don't want you depending on
me for food. Just snacks.

Zeppo glares at him.

WACO (CONT'D)
Hey. It's not my fault all your
food is gone.

Flustered, Zeppo heads to an outside door. Waco follows him.

WACO (CONT'D)
 I'm gonna fix this. Real soon. Once
 we dump that ozone up there -

Waco opens the door against a gusting wind. Zeppo bolts outside. Seconds later.

Zeppo hurries back inside, shaking the snow off his shivering wings. He runs over and dives into his pan of ice. Waco stares outside at a strong blizzard, bending over in pain.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Ouch. Goddamn ulcers.

Waco gets back on the console. The giant monitor comes on.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Those giant meteors. Three. D.

A holograph of Antarctica around "ICE STATION TERROR," and the space above it fills the room. Faint arcs of light trace ballistic trajectories over the southern hemisphere.

Zeppo makes small sounds. Waco talks quietly to him.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Yeah, I see it too. Majestic - zoom
 on that object in the background.

The image shows two oblong satellites linked in series.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Identify.

ON SCREEN: "GRACE Satellite. NASA Experiment. Measures Earth's gravity field."

WACO (CONT'D)
 GRACE's trajectory history.

ON SCREEN: "Not available. Classified Above Top Secret. Majestic Trying to Hack Files . . . :(. . ."

WACO (CONT'D)
 NASA is public domain. Except.
 Access your files, Majestic. Plot
 GRACE history when it's inside our
 visual horizon down here.

A mass of short arcs appears on the screen.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Project those arcs into full orbits
 then isolate one orbit per month
 over, say - five years.

A series of satellite orbits around Earth displays, all
 passing over the South Pole.

WACO (CONT'D)
 What the hell are they looking for?

SUPER: "GRACE funding. Boeing. Raytheon. Space X. DARPA."

WACO (CONT'D)
 The Space Command didn't come down
 here for my Ozone experiment.
 (extreme paranoia, fear)
 They're testing their A.I. SKYNET
 system. Simulating World War Three.

Waco fires up a video console and keys in a password at a
 "NASA SECURE ONLINE PORTAL."

INT. ROSS SEA - USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

Admiral Ashray strong-arms Dr. KASHGARI (75, chubby, Uyghur
 Arab, glasses) away from a video display (showing the last
 frame of the Russia Peace video) and plants him in a chair.

Around Ashray are the STANDARD U.S. NAVY PERSONNEL with "US
 SPACE COMMAND" shoulder patches.

A COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER sits at his station nearby.

ADM. ASHRAY
 We traced that Russia Peace swift
 boat to the old submarine landing
 off Mount Terror. Now, talk. What's
 Dr. Waco up to over there?

A "RADAR DISPLAY" shows the Russia Peace swift boat's path,
 leaving Ice Station Terror. Crossing the South Pacific.

A Chinese destroyer takes up pursuit. Their paths intersect.
 The Russia Peace swift boat icon disappears.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
 Sir. Getting a FLASH signal from a
 Chinese destroyer. S.O.S. Lost all
 command and control. They report -
 (quietly)
 Static. Signal lost. They were
 tracking that Russian swift boat.

It - it's effing gone. Both of
them. Vanished in thin air.

Marine Corps GENERAL VOLK (55, male, Black, built like a
tank) hovers in the background, not happy with what he sees.

KASHGARI

The Russians dissidents were
delivering our new A.I. mainframe.
Majestic by name. She -

The RADAR TECH at the "DISPLAY TABLE" yells across the
bridge:

RADAR TECH

Sir? Attempted hack on the GRACE
files. Tracing. Ice Station Terror.
Confirmed. I.S.T. did the hack.

Ashray grabs Kashgari by the collar, shaking him:

ADM. ASHRAY

Your research station. Your lab
rat. His goddamn A.I. hacking our
classified government files?

KASHGARI

We programmed Majestic to be
curious.

Kashgari looks away, sullen and dark. The WEAPONS OFFICER
yells across the bridge.

WEAPONS OFFICER

Skipper? LARS is tracking on the
Majestic signal. Oh, crap. Drones
are powering up. Taking off.

They look out the forward bridge windows as a DRONE TAKES OFF
from the carrier deck. Kashgari is frantic.

KASHGARI

LARS? That effing system is active?

WEAPONS OFFICER

Drone E.T.A. Ice Station Terror ten
mikes.

RADAR TECH

Incoming from Ice Station Terror.

Ashray hauls Kashgari back to the video display:

ADM. ASHRAY
Find out what the hell Dr. Waco is
doing for LARS to paint a big red
target on his back.

Ashray turns to the Weapons Officer.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Take LARS offline. Immediately.
Recall that that goddamn drone.

Waco appears on the video screen in front of Kashgari.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - LAB/OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Kashgari appears on the video screen.

WACO
Pops. We saw fire arcs this
morning. Shooting stars but bigger?

Waco points to the holograph display behind him. He's very
excited and full of animated body language.

KASHGARI
Did you access the GRACE files? How
did you even know they exist?

WACO
The NASA documentary. Said those
swarms of shooting stars. They
happen right before a - a solar
superstorm. Here. Right - here.

KASHGARI
Get the hell out of that building.
Now. No time to explain. Just go.

The screen goes catawampus (brief image of The Bridge in the
background as the camera falls). The connection drops off.

INT. ROSS SEA - USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

Kashgari kicks the video conferencing tech - CRASH - Ashray
yanks him out of his chair.

WEAPONS OFFICER
Skipper? LARS is not responding.
It's in some kind of auto-defense
mode. It's asking for a higher
authorization to stand down.

ADM. ASHRAY
 Authorization? F that. Fire
 everything we got at that drone.
 Cruise missiles. Scramble a jet to -

On an overhead TV display, the drone fires a cruise missile.

The MISSILE ARCS across the horizon. STRIKES a small cluster
 of buildings. EXPLODES in a crescendo of flames.

Another CRUISE MISSILE FIRES.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - LAB/OFFICE - NIGHT

Waco talks to the empty screen:

WACO
 That was rude. First-hand intel on
 the superstorm - and he hangs up?

There's a CRASH to the rear of the station, and half the
 lights in the room go out.

WACO (CONT'D)
 What have you done this time? Bad
 penguin.

Waco hurries to the rear of the station. Just as he
 disappears, there's a GIANT EXPLOSION. ANOTHER.

A stiff breeze clears the smoke quickly.

Waco's vague figure (holding Zeppo in his arms) stumbles
 through a haze of black smoke:

WACO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Thanks, Zeppo. You saved my life.

Waco hurries to an exit door and disappears in heavy snow
 outside.

INT. ROSS SEA - USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

Ashray grabs Dr. Kashgari. Throws him toward General Volk.

ADM. ASHRAY
 Why did he hack the GRACE files?

GEN. VOLK
 Back off, Admiral. It's not
 Kashgari's fault. It's that damn
 LARS system.

KASHGARI

Which seems to have locked us out?

They look out across the sea as a FIGHTER JET FIRES MISSILES to destroy the drone.

Just as the drone explodes, a CHINESE HELICOPTER approaches and LANDS on the carrier deck.

ADM. ASHRAY

Damn. It's Jinn. This didn't happen, okay? We were just testing the system. Full steam ahead.

Col. Jinn steps out and hurries toward the conning tower. Ashray hustles onto the bridge, leaving a worried Kashgari and Volk to stare down at Jinn's helicopter, powering down.

EXT. ROSS BAY - BALLOON LAUNCH TOWER - NIGHT

The sun hovers on the horizon in an endless sunrise.

There's a thick fog out to sea. Zeppo pops out of the ocean and slides to a stop near Waco.

They stand near a steel "BALLOON LAUNCH TOWER," next to a snowmobile towing a "NASA OZONE RESCUE EXPERIMENT" package.

Waco stares out to sea. The fog and smoke clears briefly, to show a giant aircraft carrier docked offshore.

Waco hurries to hide behind a wrecked pile of twisted steel and timbers.

The fog bank returns, the carrier disappears, and Waco scurries around to find food and a thick wool "EMERGENCY" blanket.

Waco plugs his long johns into an outlet on the snowmobile, then hunkers down on the side away from the carrier, and pigs out - sharing bits with Zeppo.

LATER

Waco removes a tarp from the "NASA OZONE RESCUE PACKAGE," a large crate sitting at the base of the tower. He takes a minute to catch his breath, staring at the wreckage of the research station.

WACO

Must have been another cluster of
asteroids. It's the solar
superstorm coming, for sure.

Waco opens a second "NASA HIGH ALTITUDE BALLOON" crate, hooks
it up to a "HELIUM" tank, and starts inflating it. As the
balloon fills, he hustles to hook it to a guy wire.

WACO (CONT'D)

The ozone will help block the solar
energy flux from blowing right
through the ozone hole.

Waco disconnects the tank and taps off the balloon with a
screw cap. He hooks up the "OZONE RESCUE PACKAGE" to the
balloon.

WACO (CONT'D)

It's now or never, Zeppo.

Zeppo pads up to stand near Waco. A dozen other penguins
appear on a ridge nearby to watch the balloon drift upward.

WACO (CONT'D)

I just hope Space Force sees our
balloon. They'll know what to do.

Waco steps back to watch the balloon rise against the
backdrop of sunrise.

He stares up at a thin layer of alto cirrus clouds above
dawn's early light. A brilliant rainbow forms in the thin
cloud cover.

INT. ROSS SEA - USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray stands on the bridge, staring at a gaggle of
people rigging up a complex machine out on the flight deck.
General Volk stands next to the admiral.

Colonel Jinn, in black fatigues, steps onto the bridge. The
admiral yells across the bridge.

ADM. ASHRAY

Weapons, charge the LARS to maximum
strength.

A tube-shaped armament deploys out on the flight deck.
There's a deep, VIBRATING HUM as the LARS powers up.

GEN. VOLK

What's going on, Admiral?

ADM. ASHRAY

NASA says we need eyes on the sun
to see if Dr. Waco was right about
the shooting stars.

GEN. VOLK

The solar flare? That's -

ADM. ASHRAY

The, er accident, destroyed all Dr.
Waco's data so we have to collect
it again. This is a science
mission, after all, right?

GEN. VOLK

We should let Dr. Waco know what's
going on.

ADM. ASHRAY

We lost contact. He has orders,
same as us. Deploy that Ozone Save
Experiment. End of discussion.

GEN. VOLK

Isn't about high time we stopped
assuming? Like, ANYTHING?

A holographic projection of the device shows on the bridge,
first in cross-section then in operation - displaying a real-
time view of Earth from multiple points in deep space.

COL. JINN

Sir? What is this we are seeing,
Admiral.

ADM. ASHRAY

LARS is short for Laser Ranging
System. We developed it to defend
against a swarm of enemy attack
drones.

GEN. VOLK

LARS is supposed to be down for.
Planned. Maintenance.

(quietly)

Or a shot through the head.

General Volk gets in Ashray's face - only to be bullied away.

ADM. ASHRAY

LARS is a real-time link to all
military and commercial satellites -
with or without their knowledge -
in the southern hemisphere.

It gives a 3-D view of the entire stratosphere.

COL. JINN

Sir? Where is Kashgari? Isn't this his creation? I would so like to converse with him.

GEN. VOLK

(whispering to Ashray)

What the F is he doing here? A China national? Special forces.

COL. JINN

NASA. Didn't you get their memo? China is deploying our own Ozone Save experiment to coordinate with NASA's. This will double our chances for a glorious success.

Suddenly the "REAL-TIME GLOBAL DISPLAY" isolates on the Pacific Ocean, showing a spaghetti of satellite orbits, all covering the Antarctic Circle.

ADM. ASHRAY

What the hell is that?

The Chief Engineer rushes to a console, pulling up displays.

CHIEF ENGINEER

It looks like the analysis Dr. Waco mentioned earlier, using GRACE to track down the shooting stars.

ADM. ASHRAY

But Ice Station Terror was destroyed. And Dr. Waco is -

An "UNKNOWN DRONE" drifts across the display.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Where did that damn drone come from? Weapons -

COL. JINN

Wait. That is China's Ozone Save experiment. We used a high-altitude drone for more precision.

(quietly)

China tech is always superior.

The "NASA BALLOON" appears at floor level, drifting upward.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
 Now. I see a balloon. It is heading
 straight for my drone. That is not
 in protocols.

CHIEF ENGINEER
 It's Dr. Waco's Ozone Rescue
 balloon. I knew that stubborn
 bastard would come through.

There's a bright green "LASER BEAM" in the holograph. FLASH.
 Abruptly, the drone and NASA balloon images disappear.

GEN. VOLK
 Who did that explosion?

All eyes focus on the LARS CONSOLE.

ADM. ASHRAY
 General, get our - guest - off the
 bridge.

GEN. VOLK
 My pleasure, sir. Effing pleasure.

COL. JINN
 Stop. It is not our green laser. We
 did not do this. You cannot push
 China around in this ugly manner.

GEN. VOLK
 File a dispute with our embassy in
 Beijing.

Volk grabs Jinn and hauls him to the exit, just as AN
 EMERGENCY KLAXON sounds.

EXT. ROSS ICE SHELF - NIGHT

Waco - feeding fish to Zeppo and some of his friends - looks
 up to see a flurry of FIRE ARCS TRACE across the sky.

WACO
 More fire arcs. Oh, God - they
 can't hit my balloon.

It's dark, a menagerie of shifting shadows in the landscape,
 the bright-colored Milky Way looming above jagged tundra.

DRY LIGHTNING SHOOTS across the sky and then fades away in a
 rainbow of neon-esque colors. Shades of vibrant colors
 reverberate through the high cloud cover.

THICK CONTRAILS arc out of the black cloud mass.

All around them, PROJECTILES IMPACT the landscape. CLOUDS OF STEAM ERUPT as multiple objects crater into the snow.

WACO (CONT'D)
Fire arcs, hell. That's debris from
an atmospheric detonation. Run for
cover.

Waco grabs Zeppo and hurries toward the launch tower.

They huddle under a thick metal plate and watch hundreds of debris contrails arc through the sky and then implode in the deep, dry snowpack.

A sudden flurry of windblown snow whites out everything.

EXT. USS INVITICUS - FLYING BRIDGE - DAY

Admiral Ashray stands on the balcony, one step outside the bridge, watching a vast thundercloud grow over Antarctica.

HELMSMAN (O.S.)
Skipper? The laser detonated our
nuke on NASA's balloon. Most of the
impact force went down. Straight
down. To the ocean surface.

Breaking through clouds and ocean spray, there's a glimpse of the sunset reflecting off a giant, white HIGH RISE TOWER ten miles inland from the wreckage of Waco's research station.

Ashray grabs a microphone, yells over the ship-wide intercom:

ADM. ASHRAY
Clear all decks. Rig for dark ops.
All hatches and portholes secured.
Make it so, people.

Ashray slams the microphone down, staring but not seeing:
Something in the foreground, a BUILDING WALL OF WATER.

CHIEF ENGINEER
Tsunami. Here she comes.

Ashray notices the swell rolling toward the carrier, a VERTICAL WALL OF WATER, growing - sweeping ICEBERGS in its wake. He runs toward the bridge, yelling.

ADM. ASHRAY
Left full rudder. Steady on bearing
two two zero. Flank speed.

INT. USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE

Ashray hurries onto the bridge. The HELMSMAN is frantic.

HELMSMAN

I can hardly steer. All those -

ADM. ASHRAY

Damn the icebergs. Full steam ahead.

The Helmsman makes a hard left turn, spinning the wheel, desperate. The carrier lurches, and the crew grabs on.

HELMSMAN

Engine room answers four bells, skipper. Steady on two two zero.

The Helmsmen struggles to maintain course.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - LAUNCH TOWER - DAY

Waco huddles under the canopy as the debris storm dissipates.

He goes to examine a large metal fragment. Zeppo pads along beside him to catch the crumbs spilling out of his backpack.

WACO

This one is from the NASA package we sent up. But.

(looking upward)

The balloon didn't get high enough to plug the Ozone Hole, not even close.

Waco studies carbon-black burn marks.

WACO (CONT'D)

This is a laser hit. Why the hell would they sabotage my experiment?

Waco looks upward, scanning the heavens.

EXT. USS INVITICUS - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

An angry sea pitches and rolls the aircraft carrier. Admiral Ashray chews out a ground crew for a frozen fuel line.

ADM. ASHRAY

Steam. We need more righteous steam. Steam is power. Steam is vengeance.

Ashray paces in front of a few pilots, roaring orders at them with the force of a bazooka. General Volk watches nearby.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Nobody is to enter air space inside
the entire arctic circle. No
planes. No boats. No nothing.

Ashray grabs Volk and shakes him so hard his teeth rattle.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Stop them.

GEN. VOLK
Is this about that tower over Ross
Island? Something to do with LARS?

ADM. ASHRAY
(livid)
I don't know. But what I do know,
terrifies me. No - just - go.

Volk motions to a squad of Marines, and they hustle toward a USMC chopper, climb aboard, and start the engines.

The chopper lifts off, toting a giant snowmobile underneath.

INT. USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

Ashray huddles with his officers, the Chief Engineer, and Colonel Jinn around a video table, staring at a colorful topographic overlay of Antarctica.

ADM. ASHRAY
Audio masking is active. We can
talk without LARS hearing us.

CHIEF ENGINEER
LARS must have scanned the balloon
and detected a nuclear device. So
it took evasive actions.

COL. JINN
Stop. When we arrived and the drone
was destroyed by LARS, that was not
your war exercises. But of course
it wasn't.

They both stare at Jinn.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
Okay. We lost control of our
destroyer. We are running A.I.

war games as well. The Russian Swift Boat was perceived as a threat. We were unable to intervene in time.

CHIEF ENGINEER
War games aside, we got worse problems.

The Chief Engineer pulls up an image on a giant video screen at the head of the conference table:

A view of Ross Island from McMurdo Sound with Mt. Erebus to the left and Mt. Terror to the right (both quite close to McMurdo Sound).

CHIEF ENGINEER (CONT'D)
That nuclear explosion melted the ice cap, right on down to the ground level. Worse yet.

He zooms the image to show a tall manmade (narrow but many stories high) structure on the flank of Mt. Terror:

The tower is painted a dull white with edges like a stealth surface, but it's still visible if you know what to look for.

COL. JINN
O-kay. My subsequent question was to ask where you keep all the processing power to operate LARS.

ADM. ASHRAY
Code name ARKSTAF. Nicely buried year-round under ice and snow.

CHIEF ENGINEER
S.H.I.T. LARS is going to think we exposed its central core on purpose.

They turn to stare at the "LARS CONSOLE." Ashray whispers.

ADM. ASHRAY
We released two baby nukes to be delivered down here. Where's the second one?

CHIEF ENGINEER
Dr. Kashgari refused to tell anybody. Made us disable the entire surveillance grid for forty-eight hours while it was offloaded.

ADM. ASHRAY
Find Kashgari. See if he can
disable LARS the easy way. Move
out. I'll scramble a dozen fighters
for Option B. Kill. The. Machine.

Ashray shoves the Chief Engineer and Jinn off the bridge.

INT. USS INVITICUS - OFFICER'S MESS - DAY

The library is empty, but for Kashgari and the two MPs.

All eyes in the library turn to an "URGENT NEWS BULLETIN" on a giant TV screen.

ON TV SCREEN - NEWSCAST

NASA images of an explosion over the Ross Ice Shelf show a giant explosion.

The ozone hole expands all the way to the tip of South America - and beyond.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)
A giant explosion over Antarctica
has radically destabilized the
Ozone Hole. Worse yet, a giant
solar flare has been detected on
the surface of the sun. It's headed
our way. A flurry of shooting stars
happened two days ago. A precursor
event. Brace for impact.

A dramatic solar firestorm simulation shows a direct hit on the South Pole. The ice cap melts.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)
There's a fifty-fifty chance of a
direct hit on the south pole. If
that happens. Oh, hell - just watch
the simulation.

Oceans rise worldwide, shrinking coastlines by tens -
hundreds. - of miles. Coastal bays become veritable oceans.

BACK TO SCENE

With all eyes on the TV screen, Dr. K sneaks out of the room.

INT. USS INVITICUS - SIDE CORRIDORS

Kashgari bolts down a narrow hallway.

MP #1

Halt. You're under arrest.

Just then, a seaman opens a hatch at the far end of the corridor.

Kashgari runs right through the open hatch - into the arms of two MiB (MEN IN BLACK, Colonel Jinn's special forces commando types dressed in black fatigues), who wrestle him into handcuffs.

INT. USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

Admiral Ashray, the Chief Engineer, and the two Navy officers study a 3-D color graphic of the drone-balloon explosion projected by the LARS system.

FAT NAVY OFFICER

Can you tell from the energy signature what exploded?

CHIEF ENGINEER

Yes, sir. It was NASA's baby nuke. China's satellite wasn't nuclear-powered.

The Chief Engineer hands Ashray a computer printout.

The admiral scans it - yells across the bridge to the signalman.

ADM. ASHRAY

Send an Eyes Only flash to the Pentagon. China has nukes in orbit.

CHIEF ENGINEER

What? We just confirmed.

ADM. ASHRAY

Inform them that China's nuclear-powered drone rammed NASA's Ozone Recovery balloon. Deliberate sabotage. Act of war.

CHIEF ENGINEER

China just messed up the Ozone Hole. Brilliant. Sir.

The Chief Engineer salutes and hustles off the bridge.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

A helicopter sets down near what's left of Waco's research station.

Colonel Jinn and a dozen MiB exit the helicopter and fan out. Colonel Jinn yells at his men:

COL. JINN
Hurry. Find every last fragment of
our spy satellite stealth cameras.

Penguins watch from a ridge nearby.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
Damn. My little girl Elbys would
love to see these penguins in the
wild down here. Love to.

MiB move through the debris with Geiger counters, collecting fragments as they go.

Another MiB takes photos of debris.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
Careful. Leave everything else
intact. So we can Photoshop parts
of the U.S. Space Force attack
drone to prove it destroyed our
Ozone Save experiment.

Jinn spots a fragment with the NASA logo. He stops and stoops down to study it carefully. He looks upward.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
Horrors. The NASA drone rammed our
Ozone Repair balloon. Destroyed the
world's last hope for salvation.

Jinn stops the photographer.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
Enough. Send the pix to Beijing for
processing. Forensic evidence the
Yanks wrecked our ozone layer.

Jinn points, and the photographer runs back to their chopper.

ICE RIDGE

Waco struggles up the steep incline of a hill through deep, powdery snow. He stops: several penguins near the ridge see him and stop also.

Waco waits for the penguins to go about their business, and eases on up to the hill.

Waco eases over the peak of the steep ridge, looking down on the crash site. He watches Jinn and the MiB.

Waco pulls out a camera, zooming. SNAPPING sounds as a video rolls, punctuated to STILLS.

CRASH SITE

Jinn glances up - sees a flashing reflection from the ridge. He grabs a MACHINE GUN from an MiB and FIRES on the ridge.

COL. JINN

Kill. Kill 'em all - every last one. Fury on fire. NASA sabotaged our project. The U.S. Navy then tried to cover it up.

Jinn stops firing. Waits for the clouds of snow kicked up by the impacting bullets to settle.

ICE RIDGE

Waco ducks down. Snow EXPLODES all around them as Jinn's rounds IMPACT. Waco hunkers down, scared, watching as:

The PENGUINS bolt to the opposite side of the ridge away from Jinn, JUMP UP - and SLIDE DOWN the slope on their backs.

When the slope levels out, the penguins roll over and disappear into a pile of dry snow.

CRASH SITE

Jinn motions to the MiB, who run toward the ridge.

ICE RIDGE

Waco cringes as bullets zip all around. Silence. He peers over the ridge: MiB climbing up the hillside directly for his position. He panics - studies the penguin tracks:

WACO

See penguin. Do penguin.

Waco runs down the hill (ducking below the MiB's line of sight), jumps - sides down on his backside, following the penguin tracks downward.

As soon as the slope flattens, Waco rolls over, tumbles into the powdery snow - disappears under the snowpack.

The MiB reach the ridge - see nothing, and hurry back to the debris site.

HOURS LATER

Waco digs out of the snow and heads back up to the ridge.

He hunkers down (face down the snow; his white gear is good camouflage) at the sound of an approaching HELICOPTER, carrying a large load in a cargo sling underneath.

EXT. ROSS PLATEAU - ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Colonel Jinn sees a cargo chopper approach, hover nearby, and set down a large, armored, military-grade snowmobile. The snowmobile powers up and heads to the search site.

General Volk (flanked by several armed Marines) steps out of the snowmobile in a flurry of propeller-blown snow, as the chopper lifts off, banks, and moves away.

GEN. VOLK
Any sign of Dr. Waco?

COL. JINN
None. We traced the flurry of shooting meteors. Several impacted Ice Station Terror. Direct hits.

Jinn shows Volk his tablet, with a map of impact sites.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
LARS must have thought it was under attack. So it takes out the source, alias Dr. Waco.

Volk pulls out a satellite phone. He scans Jinn, head to toe.

GEN. VOLK
Rewind. We had that meteor map hours ago. What are you doing here, Jinn? You and your Black Dragons?

A BLACK DRAGONS HELICOPTER rips overhead, heading inland, a hundred feet above the ground, drowning out the conversation.

Briefly, Dr. Kashgari, bound and gagged, can be seen inside the all-black chopper.

Volk hangs up the phone, still staring at Jinn.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
No signal. I never trust anybody
with your kind of access. The kids
razz me about that all the time.
Never trust the Big Brains, Daddy.

Ignoring him, Jinn motions to his men - they board their
chopper and lift off, following the other chopper inland.

EXT. USS INVITICUS - FLYING BRIDGE - DAY

Admiral Ashray, talking into the shortwave, stares over the
ocean toward Ice Station Terror. Snow kicks up a storm as
Jinn's chopper lifts off over the debris site and heads
toward the WHITE HIGH-RISE TOWER.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)
No bodies, sir. No trace of their
current whereabouts, either.

ADM. ASHRAY
Search the coastline, Bull Dog.
Tracks, wreckage, trail sign.
Radiation. Find that second nuke.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)
Sir? Jinn was here, with his thugs.

ADM. ASHRAY
What the hell was he doing there?

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)
Seen Dr. Kashgari lately?

ADM. ASHRAY
Colonel Jinn said he was with you.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)
Oh, crap. His chopper just lifted
off. Headed for ARCSTAF.

ADM. ASHRAY
If I was under a deadly threat, I'd
sure want to eliminate all
firepower held against me.

GEN. VOLK (V.O.)
They're going after the second
nuke.

ADM. ASHRAY
Get a move on, Volk. We got a major
storm coming your way.

Ashray disconnects - stares at the phone, at the shoreline.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Waco watches as Jinn's helicopter lifts off and disappears in
a whiteout of blowing snow.

General Volk climbs into his snowmobile and moves slowly down
the shoreline. As soon as Volk slips out of view, Waco rushes
to the wreckage and searches, desperate.

Zeppo shows up - then several other penguins. They all start
rooting around for scraps of food, too.

WACO
Food. Anything we can eat - dried
produce, canned, boxed. Loose.

He stares inland:

A GIANT STORM approaches from the mountains, a WHITE OUT of
wind-blown sand that quickly covers the entire horizon.

The penguins dive into the ocean.

Frantic, Waco finds a ripped-up old fishing boat hull, props
it up, crawls underneath, and drops the top down over him.

INT. USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Ashray studies the flight deck as JET after JET RIPS off the
flight deck, STEAM CATAPULTS purging STEAM into the frigid
cold. He looks up as the Chief Engineer enters the bridge.

CHIEF ENGINEER
No sign of Dr. Kashgari, sir.
Apparently, Jinn and his special
ops types absconded with him.

ADM. ASHRAY
Enough already. I'm going ashore.
You have the con, Sparky.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Flight Ops? Prep a chopper for
shore duty. Yesterday.

Ashray pulls a chain off his neck (elaborate key on it), hands it to the Chief Engineer, grabs his gear, and leaves.

INT. ARCSTAF - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Two MiB and Colonel Jinn, all three wearing night-vision goggles, muscle Dr. Kashgari down metal stairs. They're inside a sky-tower structure - which encloses a full-scale exploration drilling rig.

The ground around the rig is dug out forty feet so that when you enter the enclosure from the surface, you're high up on the derrick - stairs lead down to the rig floor.

They pass the derrick floor and go below the rig, stairs spiraling down into the bedrock.

COL. JINN

Simple. Tell us what you know, and you live to see the family ones.

As seen through the goggles, everything is yellow-red.

KASHGARI

I am Uyghur freedom fighter. I know the things evil men do. You will kill myself anyway.

COL. JINN

Where? You have the second nuclear device down here. Where?

KASHGARI

Who's asking? You or LARS?

They reach the bottom of the stairwell.

COL. JINN

Where? We know you have been near to this place since the delivery. We have records. From our many spy satellites. Where?

KASHGARI

If you know it, LARS does too.

Frantic, Dr. K takes his glasses off and scrapes the frames against a gold ring on his hand, apparently a nervous habit.

COL. JINN

Die. Open. Open or die.

KASHGARI

Open it yourself. Hidden away down here, under a mile of snow - there are no locks.

Jinn motions to on MiB, who goes to open the door. He clamps two hands on the bank-vault wheel.

A SURGE OF ELECTRIC CURRENT VAPORIZES the MiB.

COL. JINN

Unlock. There are no locks. Go ahead, you lying bastard.

In a fit of rage, Jinn throws Kashgari at the door. He's VAPORIZED to ASHES.

COL. JINN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Search. Sift the ashes. He must have had the vault access codes.

The MiBs root around in a blind panic.

MIB #1

Sir. I have something. Inscribed on his glasses frame.

MiB #1 hands Jinn Kashgari's glasses. Jinn holds them up to the light.

COL. JINN

Damnation. It's only a glasses lens prescription. We go to Plan B. The young scientist. Find him. Now.

Jinn hurries up the stairs, followed by the MiB.

INT. ICE STATION TERROR - STORM SHELTER - DAY

Waco's buried alive under the snow pack. He pulls out a satellite phone and turns on the light. He's trapped.

He tries to push the boat cover away but it's too heavy. He tries to dig out under the edges, but the snow is packed and frozen. He maneuvers to see the screen and dials a number.

WACO

Dr. Olga? Is this doc Olga?

INEZ (V.O.)

No. I am Inez. Olga was medivaced back to Sydney. You sound very strange, like in echo chamber.

WACO
 Trapped. Unable to escape. I'll
 text you my G.P.S. location. Come,
 please. It's urgent.

INEZ (V.O.)
 Come? To where? How?

Waco opens a GPS app and texts her coordinates.

WACO
 Signal strength -

The signal is lost. Waco's in the dark. Shivering. He crawls
 up into a tight ball and goes into deep meditation.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - STORM SHELTER - DAY

Several penguins show up in the now blizzard conditions,
 rooting around the site for shelter. Zeppo sees Waco's
 footsteps in the snow - follows them to the overturned hull.

Zeppo circles the hull then buries into the snow at the edge
 of the boat. Several other penguins go down the same rabbit
 hole. The storm closes in: WHITE OUT.

THE FOLLOWING DAY

A rugged snowmobile pulls up to the wreckage. Inez hops out,
 carrying a satellite phone.

She pulls a telescoping rod out of the snowmobile, extends
 it, and begins poking it down into the powdery snow -
 studying her GPS coordinates on the phone all the while.

She HITS a solid THUMP, runs back to the snowmobile, grabs a
 shovel, and starts digging.

She reaches the top of the overturned boat, then grabs a rope
 to pull it over with the snowmobile. Slowly she pulls the
 boat away, then runs to see:

Waco's there, crawled in a ball, covered in ice. Zeppo is in
 his arms, and the other penguins are huddled around them. The
 penguins take one look at Inez and startle away.

Inez pulls the snowmobile up next to him, gets an electrical
 extension cord, and plugs it into Waco's electric long johns.
 He still hasn't moved a muscle.

She gets "EMERGENCY BLANKETS" out of the snowmobile, sits Waco up, and wraps him in the blankets. Frantic, she rubs his arms and legs and extends them to work out the stiffness.

Finally, Waco opens one eye, then the other. She kneels beside him.

INEZ

Do not move. Conserve your energy.
I will get hot energy drink to put
inside your belly. Yes?

Waco blinks and tries to open his mouth. She cups her hands over his face to warm him. When she pulls away he can smile.

She runs back to the snowmobile, sets up an "EMERGENCY STERNO STOVE," and heats snow, adding a dried energy mix. She hurries back to him with a thermos and holds a cup to his lips.

He takes one sip, then another - working hard to swallow.

LATER

Waco sits inside a snow dugout, sheltered from the wind, warming his hands in front of a small fire. He's alert and still eating - everything she gives him.

LATER

Inez urges Waco onto his feet.

Waco's unsteady, feeling a lot of pain in his legs, and resists.

INEZ

You must stand. You must walk. This
will get blood circulating. Your
heart cannot do all this work.
Large leg muscles must help. Okay?

She puts his arm around her shoulder and walks him around their campsite, around and around.

She steps away so he can move on his own. He's wobbly at first, but perseveres, going faster and faster.

INEZ (CONT'D)

You keep moving. I will go and set
up camp for the night.

WACO

Inside the ice pit. They must not
see I'm alive.

INEZ

Speaking of alive. You're welcome.

She hustles back to the snowmobile and pulls out a tent,
sleeping bags, and sets up camp. It's dark now, and they move
into the small tent to get out of the wind.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

There's enough light from a full moon that their outlines are
visible inside the tent.

WACO

I thought they evacuated everybody,
from the whole damn continent.

INEZ

They did. Yes. The *Arktika* left
just after you called.

WACO

You should have gone, too.

INEZ

Gone where? This is my home. I had
a stuffed penguin as a small girl.
No Teddy Bears in our house.

(quietly)

No father to tuck me in, either.

Waco nods off, a smile on his face. She reaches over and
feels his forehead - frowns deeply.

Inez zips open her sleeping bag and wraps it around his bag,
then crawls into the bag beside him, cuddling up for maximum
warmth.

HOURS LATER

Waco's eyes open. It's light outside now - and Inez is in the
sleeping bag with him, on top of him, arms clasped around
him. Eyes wide, he wiggles his arms and legs.

Inez wakes up - sees him, then scurries out of the sleeping
bag and turns away, shy and embarrassed.

INEZ
You have a good temperature now.

WACO
Don't go. I still feel really cold.

She turns, afraid - then sees his smile, ZIPS up her parka, and scoots outside, trying not to smile.

EXT. ICE STATION TERROR - DAY

Waco exits the tent to see Inez rooting around for food. It's a brisk, windy day.

WACO
Eat whatever you can find until
you're stuffed to the gills. It's
much more efficient for the body to
store energy as visceral fat.

INEZ
Yes, I know cold survival. I am
from Norway.

WACO
Doing your graduate research?

They grab armfuls of wood and burnables to stoke the fire in the snow pit, gathering close to feed the fire:

INEZ
Dr. Olga was my professor at
university in Moscow. Ocean
ecology. The *Arktika* has been down
here since the Ukraine war started.

They hunker close to the fire to soak up the heat.

INEZ (CONT'D)
They transformed the *Arktika* into a
university on the water.

She builds up the fire with the last of the wood pieces.

WACO
From Norway to Antarctica is a
stretch.

Waco kicks snow into the fire, dousing the flames.

INEZ
I have been a teenager here. Then
my father disappeared.

He worked at the old Ice Station
Terror. It was abandoned until you
arrived.

(quietly)
And now I fear I will never know
what happened to him.

They hear VOLK'S SNOWMOBILE returning.

WACO
Hurry. Follow me. Keep your feet in
my footsteps. We don't want them to
know anybody survived.

They shoulder their backpacks and head up to the ridge then
hunker down below the sight line.

INEZ
Just don't expect me to share my
body heat with you again.

Inez picks up the pace. Waco fades back.

MINUTERS LATER

Inez and Waco scoot back down the ridge to the wreckage site.
It's foggy offshore, and the aircraft carrier isn't visible.

INEZ
If they don't find your body, they
will assume you live.

WACO
Then they'll interview witnesses,
discover I left the club with Dr.
Olga - seen at the *Arktika*. Who has
a Norwegian grad student. Who is
now presumed missing.

INEZ
I will be made your F.B.I.'s Public
Enemy Number Two.

WACO
So, we're a team. Hurray for the
home team. Welcome aboard.

Suddenly a PENGUIN POPS out of the water onto the shoreline.
He spots Waco and Inez. Everybody stops cold.

WACO (CONT'D)
Zeppo? Is that you, little buddy?

The penguin stares at Waco. Stares at Inez. Stares at Waco again - then flaps his arms like crazy.

WACO (CONT'D)

Zeppo.

Waco runs toward Zeppo, grabs him - hugs him.

INEZ

You would not be alive but for
those penguins sharing their body
heat with you in that boat shelter.

Waco squats down beside Zeppo and scratches the top of his head playfully. Soon they're surrounded by hungry penguins.

INEZ (CONT'D)

Oh, my. He's so cute. Look - it's
the whole Happy Gang.

WACO

It's not a bunch, a gang, or even a
flight. It's a raft of penguins. A
waddle if they're on land.

Inez stifles a smile.

WACO (CONT'D)

And there are twenty million cute
little Zeppos in Antarctica.

Zeppo falls on his back and lets Waco scratch his belly.

INEZ

What's wrong with his eyes? Why is
he squinting like that?

WACO

Decades without any ozone to block
out the sun's U.V. rays are making
them go blind. Zeppo couldn't even
see to fish when I found him.

Waco feeds Zeppo snacks from his backpack.

INEZ

Twenty million? All going blind?

WACO

I've developed a supplement to
strengthen their eyes. Except - if
the U.V. destroys the krill shrimps
- who's going to stop that?

INEZ
Just you watch me.

More penguins show up, and deftly maneuver to get some food.

The penguins approach Inez, too.

She feeds them, carefully.

INEZ (CONT'D)
They like me. Trust, too. This is
an amazing adaptation. For both us.

WACO
Harsh as this environment is, they
learn real quick who their friends
are. They don't forget, either.

Inez looks like she's about to cry - feeds the penguins.

INEZ
You do things to me. Nobody does
things to me. No. Body.

WACO
We'll make this right, Kiddo.

Zeppo spots a fishing net in the wreckage and stands on it,
poking his beak into it - then staring at Waco.

WACO (CONT'D)
He wants to go fishing.

INEZ
Fish. Yes. He is so correct. We
need the protein. Very urgently.

They fish the net out of the debris and head toward a long
pier.

FISHING PIER

The 200-foot pier juts own to just beyond the ice pack.

While Inez tosses the net at various locations, Waco studies
the pier - kneels down at the very end, knocking crusted ice
off: Multiple thick rebar rods jut out from the concrete.

INEZ
I would play with Papa on this pier
in the summers when there was no
snow. Now they have destroyed it.

Inez has caught half a dozen large fish. They head back toward the land. Waco is pensive - and very concerned.

WRECKAGE

Waco builds a small fire then scales and guts the fish for roasting on stakes over the fire. Inez pokes through the wreckage, inspecting steel columns, and concrete floors.

AN HOUR LATER

Inez joins Waco when the fish are ready, and they break fast.

WACO

I don't mean to - pry.

INEZ

Papa disappeared during a project construction. All records of what they were building non exist.

WACO

That massive pier? Didn't need that much infrastructure to build Ice Station Terror.

INEZ

No. The construction was inland. Many workers. Giant machines. Whole ships full of steel arrived at the port. Even a few submarines.

Zeppo and his friends show up and pick at the bones and skin Waco and Inez have set aside.

WACO

If you hadn't run off that night, I would have invited you over.

INEZ

To be bullied for associating with the evil Russians?

WACO

They don't bother you.

INEZ

I am the local orphan, moping around for alms and informations.

The penguins stiffen up - back away - staring at the sky. The penguins scurry away and dive into the ocean.

Waco backs away too, suddenly wary - looking every which way. He pulls Inez into a hiding place.

Seconds later, two military HELICOPTERS ROAR overhead, heading out to the aircraft carrier at anchor offshore.

WACO
Excellent. A bearing to follow.

INEZ
Follow? Where? We're in the middle of a vast - polar hellscape.

WACO
Come on, sister. Their landing zone isn't far away. Ice didn't even melt off their engine fairings.

Inez stands resolutely in his way.

INEZ
I do not follow your orders - nor that of Gentoos, even smart ones. We need plan. Objective. Yes?

She grabs his arm and they huddle around the fire, building it up with random scraps of wood.

Inez draws a map in the snow between them, beginning with two snow mounds for the two mountains upon whose slopes they sit.

INEZ (CONT'D)
We have a diamond-shape geography. Two volcanoes, Terror and Erebus. McMurdo is on the other side, and we are at the other peak.

Waco scrapes a straight line from their location to a point on the flank of Mt. Erebus (the side facing Mt. Terror).

WACO
Here's the bearing they were on.

INEZ
That is the very long way around to reach McMurdo -

WACO
One thing's for sure, we can't stay here. Go get your gear and your snowmobile, and I'll try to find more food. Okay? Good plan.

She nods and scurries away.

HALF AN HOUR LATER

Inez returns with her ride. Waco grabs his backpack and jumps in. He plugs his long johns into the outlet.

WACO

You're very confident, considering where we are. Risking everything to rescue me here. Zeppo. The gang.

INEZ

I have searched this area many times, in all manner of weathers.

WACO

When your father was around? Never followed him to the work site?

INEZ

I - I once saw something that way, seemed like a mirage. Odd structure poking above the spring ice melt.

She cranks up the snowmobile and moves out. They maneuver around rolling snow-covered hills, past stark stone outcroppings - vast lakes of frozen desolation.

INEZ (CONT'D)

He was not that good a father. I only wish to know if he abandoned me or if there was an accident.

WACO

Nobody abandons a child, not in this environment.

INEZ

I was not a good daughter, either. But, yeah, I long ago decided he met with violence. Like Olga.

As she maneuvers the rugged landscape, Waco scans the environs with binoculars. Their elevation increases all the time, as they climb the saddle between the two volcanoes.

WACO

Nobody just shoots a scientist, even a Russian one.

INEZ

Our research is controversial. It is the one thing Global Warming deniers fear the utmost.

Inez spots a large group of albatrosses nearby, slows down, pointing. Waco studies them with the binoculars.

WACO

Six species of albatross down here.
Tough buggers. Not tough enough.

The big birds suddenly take flight, and careen down the slopes toward the ocean.

Waco jams a foot on the gas, grabs the snowmobile wheel, steers toward a ridge, and crashes it into a snowbank, covering it in powdery snow.

INEZ

First the penguins. Now them? These
are not good early warning systems.

Waco grabs armfuls of snow and covers everything up - the snowmobile, Inez, and himself.

WACO

You don't live down here.

INEZ

Sure I do. Although not in total
solitude. I think maybe you must
have mental problems.

WACO

My psych profile says I am a non-
violent sociopath.

INEZ

The violence or the socio part?

Reluctantly, she helps him bury the snowmobile.

INEZ (CONT'D)

I had to do that psych test to
remain down here, too. I studied
for weeks so I could ace it.

WACO

Nobody aces a psych test.

INEZ

Even still, I required a waiver.
(quietly)
An obsession bordering upon rage -
for what happened to Papa.

Abruptly, a U.S. NAVY helicopter ROARS overhead and streaks inland. They dive headfirst into the snow.

As the chopper moves away, Waco digs for the binoculars and follows it's flight.

The chopper hovers over a TALL ABSTRACT STRUCTURE with stealth angles, located on the side of Mount Erebus. Waco hands her the binoculars, pointing.

WACO

That's it. What I saw. Look.

She looks, but the chopper has raised a cloud of snow.

INEZ

I see only snow storming.

She lowers the binoculars, studying his face:

INEZ (CONT'D)

However. I do believe the expression of stark terror on your face. We will go there.

They clean up the snowmobile and get underway.

LATER

Inez steers the snowmobile toward a large crater with gaping, razor-sharp teeth jutting upward - and pulls to a stop. She gets out and paces around the snowmobile.

INEZ

Get some good circulation going in the legs. Otherwise, frostbite will set in. Now. Hurry. Chop-chop.

Waco gets out and walks around, too.

She spots a giant bird soaring above, pulls out the binoculars to watch - then zeros in on a spectacular cloud formation over the mountains.

WACO

Albatross. Lenticular clouds. beautiful place. Pity it has to be so damned cold.

INEZ

Same with my Norway. The cold keeps it from being crowded with billions of hungry, desperate peoples.

Inez does a series of jumping jacks - Waco follows her lead - then they stop and stretch their limbs.

INEZ (CONT'D)
You're warming up for a mad dash to
study the craters. Why risk this?

WACO
Everything out of the ordinary down
here is important.

INEZ
Isn't it obvious? They're impact
sites from fire-arc meteors.

WACO
That was before that big blizzard
hit the other day. Those craters
are still active. Hot.

INEZ
Mt. Erebus is active volcano.

Waco hurries away to investigate the closest crater. Inez
remains behind, huddling against a stiff wind. He yells back
to her:

WACO
Edges thick with ice, years of ice.

Waco pads through knee-deep snow to another, much larger
crater. He climbs up a sharp incline, culminating in a deep,
black void. His footsteps avalanche ice into the chasm.

He scans the horizon - pulls out binoculars - zeros in on a
cluster of man-made structures in the distance:

WACO (CONT'D)
Dr. K set me up. All he wanted to
do was expose that place. Dammit.

He takes a perilous step closer to the precipice.

WACO (CONT'D)
He had no intention of plugging up
the Ozone Hole. Of saving the
penguins from extinction. Damn him
to hell and back.

He takes a step closer to the abyss - slips. Inez reaches out
to grab him, struggling mightily to haul him out of the icy
abyss. They collapse on the tundra to catch their breath.

WACO (CONT'D)
You followed me? Pretty good
tradecraft.

INEZ
Nonsense. You were laser-focused on
that crater.

Waco hands her the binoculars, pointing.

WACO
That's where the choppers went.

She stares at ARKSTAF in the distance.

INEZ
I too have felt betrayed. Whole
endless years of it.

He stands up and takes a step toward the crater. Then another
-

WACO
Not your whole life's work. Your
friends. Your - world.

She hauls him back by the scuff of his parka.

INEZ
Melodramatic turns me off.

They trudge back to the snowmobile through snow flurries.

EXT. ROSS ICE SHELF - DAY - LATER

A hundred yards from a looming icy ridge, the snowmobile runs
out of gas.

They dismount, grab their backpacks and gear, and head toward
a SHEER WALL OF ICE.

INEZ
We should not have done
thsightseeinging detour. We need
the fuel for our snow buggy.

WACO
They aren't craters, Inez. They're
volcanic vents, newly melted from
below. Run silent, run deep. That's
where the evil lies down here.

The hear a SOUND and look back to see the snowmobile SINKING
INTO THE SNOW.

WACO (CONT'D)
If not for running out of gas, we
would be in that crater now.

INEZ
We must reach that place. Before
nightfall. Bad guys or not, we are
coming.

They dig into the sheer wall of ice.

They end up climbing a steep incline of FROZEN GRAVEL AND
ROCKS.

Halfway up the incline, they pause in a shallow cave to catch
their breath.

INEZ (CONT'D)
All this gravel and loose stone. It
is none of it natural.

She studies his face.

INEZ (CONT'D)
But this does not surprise you.
Which is even more not natural.

They sit, snacking - staring out at the bleak landscape.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Unless you were already scared
witless - what you said, Dr.
Kashgari. Lies. Deceit. Malice.

Waco swallows hard and shakes off his rage.

WACO
I know what all this loose gravel
and rock is. Cuttings, from a deep
drill well. That's what the white
tower I saw is. Drilling rig.

INEZ
Papa was an exploration drilling
engineer.

WACO
And Dr. K was a geologist. Always
dreamed of tapping the geothermal
energy of a volcano.

Waco gets up and heads out of the cave, and they begin their
slow climb up the steep incline of the cliff.

INEZ

Why the secrecy in all of this?
Shooting Olga. Destroying Ice Statin
Terror.

WACO

Eliminating loose ends?

Waco and Inez reach the top of the sheer wall.

They look down upon a small city built like igloos and rugged geodesic domes, blending in with the landscape. There's no sign of people or even recent occupancy.

INEZ

The military were coming here.

At the far end of the cluster of buildings is a tall, white obelisk-shaped structure encased in concrete, with stealth

WACO

So where are they? They should be
here, waiting to ambush us.

They scoot toward rugged stairs leading down from the wall they're on. They reach the street level and stone paving stones.

WACO (CONT'D)

They used the cuttings from the
well to build the wall.

Inez jumps when a TORRENT OF STEAM shoots upward in a mini-tornado, freezing into a terrifying ice sculpture.

INEZ

Ouch. Damn near cut me in half,
that jet of steam did.

WACO

Feels like we're walking into a
minefield. Protecting -

Inez jumps again when a cloud of water vapor from the VENTING STEAM JETS upward.

INEZ

What? A tower hidden completely
under ice and snow?

Inez clings to Waco's arm like a scared child. He tows her around as he inspects the steam vents and other curiosities.

WACO

This whole area is built on solid rock. The steam wouldn't jet like that otherwise.

Inez jumps as SHARDS OF ICE carried by wicked gusts of wind rip around them and SHATTER on the ground. Waco smiles as she huddles close.

WACO (CONT'D)

Is nature a bitch or what?

Waco chuckles and leads the way into the compound.

Cranes are frozen in mid-action, hoisting giant Lego-type blocks of ice spit out by a huge machine, assembling them into a vaulted igloo over an intersection of two streets.

INEZ

Giant igloo structures built out of ice blocks. Using surface tension as super glue - brilliant.

They move ahead, treading with extreme caution.

LATER

Waco and Inez exit an ice tunnel - right into the path of a second giant machine that eats ice and snow on the front end and spits out a nice, smooth tunnel on the other end.

WACO

Frequent, violent lava flows leave giant lava tubes all over this wretched plateau.

Waco grabs his stomach, bending over in pain.

WACO (CONT'D)

Damn, ulcers kicking up a storm.

They study the tall concrete looming ahead, pausing near one of the massive concrete fins supporting the superstructure.

WACO (CONT'D)

That's an extremely robust structure. The side struts are against internal pressure. Not at all needed for outside forces.

INEZ

We must get out of this weather.
Find a place to shelter for the
night. We'll worry more later.

Inez runs ahead, dodging the random STEAM VENTING.

WACO

Slow down, Inez. You're running
through a minefield.

She stops, horrified.

WACO (CONT'D)

Good girl.

She gets behind Waco and pads along following his footsteps.

They hear a VEHICLE APPROACHING and run to hide in an alley.
It's General Volk and his mega-snowmobile.

General Volk exits the vehicle and ambles through the frozen
igloo city, an AIDE (35, short, bald) at his side.

GEN. VOLK

Looks like my little girl's Lego-
toy town. Time warp. Except legos
don't come with baby nukes.

A HELICOPTER LANDS nearby. Admiral Ashray gets out of the
chopper and hurries toward Volk. They exchange salutes.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Abandoned their vehicle just
outside ARKSTAF, sir. Drifting snow
covered their tracks after that.
Good bet they came here to shelter.

ADM. ASHRAY

Get your infrared and radiation
scanners fired up. Find them.

GEN. VOLK

Already on it, sir.

Volk points upward as a USMC helicopter lands and Marines
exit, fanning out over the compound.

Volk hands Ashray a folder. The admiral scans it.

ADM. ASHRAY

What about LARS? We pulled the plug
on the Inviticus. However -

GEN. VOLK
Search with extreme prejudice.
Assume LARS is still active here.

Waco and Inez, hiding in a nearby cluster of ice-block buildings, observe them from afar - eavesdropping their conversation.

ADM. ASHRAY
You sure Colonel Jinn came here?
Colonel Jinn represents Red China.
We can't just go and accuse them of
- anything.

GEN. VOLK
This is where you earn your rank.

They lose their footing. A few slippery steps later.

Ashray stops, suddenly afraid. His boots are ankle-deep in water - a flowing stream, covered in a thin mist.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
That nuke musta woke the volcano.

Ashray and Volk struggle to keep their footing on the packed ice and wet snow. Waco yanks out his SATELLITE PHONE, punches keys.

Ashray's PHONE RINGS. He looks at the screen.

ADM. ASHRAY
Trace this call.

Volk nods, pulling out a heavy-duty TABLET. He motions and Ashray puts the phone on SPEAKER, talking:

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
How the fuck did you hack my phone?
Where the hell are you? Turn
yourself in and -

A video plays - Jinn and the MiB searching the debris site.

WACO (V.O.)
They're setting you up, admiral.
They're fabricating forensic
evidence proving you sabotaged
their Ozone Save Experiment.

The video zooms on Jinn and his MiB removing fragments from the site and rearranging the rest. Ashray shares the video with General Volk.

GEN. VOLK

I told you that bastard Jinn was up to no good. Your judgment is shot. Hello? Afraid of China. You should recuse your command. Sir.

The video call breaks off. Ashray and Volk step through water, breaking through thin ice layers here and there.

ADM. ASHRAY

I never found nuclear weapons when we took down Saddam Hussein. Not gonna happen again. Just not.

GEN. VOLK

You're obsessing on that nuke worse than my teenage girl and her stupid dark-Gothic phase. Hello? Solar disaster? We'll be burnt toast.

A black CHOPPER LANDS across the plaza. Colonel Jinn and his MiB dismount. They head toward Volk and Ashray.

INEZ

I don't like their body language. Partners in conspiracy.

WACO

Who cares? We need shelter. Run.

Waco and Inez scurry away.

In the corner of his eye, Ashray spots motion: Waco and Inez just as they disappear. Ashray yanks out his service revolver.

ADM. ASHRAY

It's them. Go. Get them.

The MiB run after Waco and Inez, weapons drawn. Ashray and Jinn hurry after them, doing an end run.

Waco and Inez are boxed in. MiB on one side, Ashray and Jinn on the other. Waco points toward a narrow alley to the side that none of them can see.

WACO

Run.

Waco makes a mad dash for the alley. Inez runs straight at the MiB.

Inez makes a running leap in the air, twists around, and KICKS two MiB to the deck.

In one swift motion, she grabs an MiB machine gun and tosses it into Waco's surprised hands.

INEZ
Wall of steam.

Waco stares at the weapon, his hands adjusting automatically - aims at the ground and empties the full thirty-round magazine into the frozen ground, in a jagged line across the alley.

The MiB duck away from the gunfire. Inez breaks free, runs to Waco and they scoot down the alley.

As the MiB follow, they hit a WALL OF INVISIBLE STEAM. It severs arms, legs - heads. Leaving a gory pile of body parts.

LATER

General Volk and his aide supervise Marines bagging body parts. They pause to watch Ashray and Jinn leave.

GEN. VOLK
Have the Inviticus send the rest of my Marines. ASAP. Heavy armor, too. I'm gonna have to relieve Ashray of command. He won't go without a fight.

EXT. ARKSTAF - CHEMICALS COMPLEX - DAY

Waco and Inez disappear into a small refinery of tanks, pipes, and towers at the base of the ARKSTAF spire.

They head for a steel-vaulted entrance door to a small geodesic dome, marked with an ALBATROSS and "ARKSTAF."

Waco SLAMS his shoulder into the door, hits - and falls right on through. They hurry inside, out of the frigid wind.

INEZ (O.S.)
Took you long enough to fire.

WACO (O.S.)
Nice moves.

EXT. ARKSTAF - MAIN GATE - DAY

A MARINE SERGEANT (30s) spots Waco and Inez just as they disappear into a small geodesic dome through a side door. He pulls a sat-phone out to make an urgent call.

INT. ARKSTAF - COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Waco and Inez walk through a dome-shaped space outfitted as a library/movie theater/dining hall/computer lab.

INEZ

What is LARS? They are afraid of it
because it is here?

WACO

It's an artificial intelligence.
Powers their army of drones.

She stops. Stares at Waco.

INEZ

A.I. That's it. The shot on Olga.
In the middle of a blizzard and
with zero visibility.

WACO

Sure. An A.I. I can see that.

They stop at a metal placard with an evacuation plan of the building.

Waco points to the building title, in bold.

WACO (CONT'D)

ARKSTAF. Arctic Seismic Techtronic
Analysis Facility. Like that really
explains anything.

INEZ

An A.I. powered by a baby nuke?
That would work. Completely isolate
off the power grid. Impregnable.

Inez studies the building plan.

INEZ (CONT'D)

There are six levels below us. Who
needs a baby nuke, if you have
geothermal powered by an active
volcano?

WACO

Got any food left? My stomach is
killing me, here.

Inez holds up her empty backpack. Waco cringes and moves around to study the books, computers - snack area. He opens every cabinet, but there's not a trace of food anywhere.

INEZ
May I borrow your sat-phone?
Perhaps the Arktika is still in
range.

Waco pulls out his SATELLITE PHONE, extends a small antenna,
and hands it over to her.

WACO
Dial six six six to access any
nearby network.

Inez falls back, dialing, listening, translating:

INEZ
Mailbox recording. Warning.
Military quarantine. Communication
blackout.

Inez spots a pool of moisture at the base of a large wall
mirror. She pulls off her glove and feels the wall.

INEZ (CONT'D)
It's warm. I'll take it.

She SLIPS, bracing one hand on the wall - a HIDDEN DOOR
springs open. She falls into darkness.

The mirror/door eases closed behind her. Waco doesn't notice
she's gone.

EXT. ARKSTAF - DAY

Volk's giant snowmobile heads into the refinery complex.

A SQUAD OF MARINES exits and hustles inside. The Marine
Sergeant, carrying a military-grade tablet, directs his men.

MARINE SERGEANT
Short-range infrared scan says
they're on the move - fast.

The Marines fan out, searching.

INT. ARKSTAF - COMMUNITY CENTER

The Marine Sergeant paces through the geodesic-domed space as
his men fan out, searching everywhere.

MARINE SERGEANT
Steady hot signal now - come on,
it's getting stronger. We're close.

Waco moves into an adjacent space, muttering to himself:

WACO
No food. No fuel to keep the body
warm. Systems shutting down.

Waco stops. He looks around, investigating a menagerie of commercial kitchen equipment.

WACO (CONT'D)
Why not leave canned goods? Dried
produce. Unless - the whole purpose
of the facility has been
accomplished already. Say what?

Across the space - the Marines hear his voice, and rush that way, drawing their weapons.

They spot Waco. He panics - BONA FIDE paranoid PANIC.

WACO (CONT'D)
Inez? Where the hell -

He spots her footsteps in the thin film of condensation on the floor and follows them to the wall mirror.

He feels around the mirror, presses a recessed panel - a mirror panel springs inward - he falls into the dark space.

The mirror door eases closed behind him.

Seconds later, the Marines reach the spot - searching.

INT. ARKSTAF - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Waco stumbles into darkness. He puts his SATELLITE PHONE into smart-light mode: Inez is right there, hands on hips, angry.

INEZ
It's about damn time.

She pulls a flashlight from her backpack to light their way.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Everything is out-of-whack down
here - volcanos - snow. - puddles
of water in sub-zero temperature?

WACO
It's an amazing, intricate balance -
and the nuke upset everything.
Once our volcano wakes up, this
base will be history.

Inez holds back a silent scream.

INEZ
Please do not remind me we are in
an active volcano. This rankles me.

She starts to freak out. Waco sits her down on a stack of loose stone blocks.

WACO
Breathe. Breathe deep. Good. Now
focus. Forget about all the
existential danger.

She breathes - then jumps up - focused, furious. - pushes him down the corridor ahead of her.

INT. ARKSTAF - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - EXIT DOOR - DAY

Waco and Inez stop at a yellow "DANGER" door.

INEZ
I knew that already.

Waco grabs his stomach, convulsing.

WACO
More dizzy flashbacks, broken
pieces of why all of this seems
familiar to me. No energy.

Waco pushes her through the door, grabbing his stomach.

INEZ
I could have saved some food for
you. The Gentoos we fed.

WACO
This corridor leads to some kind of
central nexus.

Waco takes a sharp left at an intersection.

INEZ
Screech. Being an extreme loner
sociopath must be really stressful.

Waco lags behind, studying scratch marks on the wall.

WACO
Dried blood. Looks maybe like
letters. Come.

She studies the figures under the light of her flashlight.

WACO (CONT'D)
It says. Allah-ladin?

INEZ
Allah and Aladdin. He's walking us
to the next clue.

WACO
Except. Why lead us when he could
have just called? Flashing back to
our video call. That wasn't his
NASA office in D.C. He was on a
navy ship.

Her flashlight traces shiny new electrical conduits along the
top of a side wall.

INEZ
New electrical service? In this
crummy old building? Now we're
getting somewhere.

The conduits lead to a massive metal door. They inspect the
hinges and seams with their flashlights.

WACO
Suddenly I feel a lot lonelier than
I ever knew. Dr. K was my only
connection to the outside world.

EXT. ARKSTAF - DAY

General Volk and Admiral Ashray are in a heated discussion
just outside the ARKSTAF HIGH-RISE TOWER.

An aide hands the general a tablet. Volk scans the tablet
screen.

GEN. VOLK
Eyes Only message from the
Pentagon. Finally, somebody is
being reasonable.

Volk shows Ashray the tablet.

ADM. ASHRAY
Evacuate. ASAP. Who are they
kidding? Just let them get away
with this nuke heist? So not. Not
again. Not me. No, sir.

GEN. VOLK

I know obsessing when I see it.
Teenage girl gulping down energy
drinks like soda, prepping for a
dark-thirty rave? That's you.

INT. USS INVITICUS - BRIDGE - DAY

All eyes are on a giant video monitor.

GIANT TV SCREEN - NEWSCAST

A 3-D COMPUTER SIMULATION on LARS shows the sun exploding in
a pillar of fire, engulfing Mercury on "Day 1," Venus on "Day
2," and then heading directly for Earth on "Day 3."

NASA NEWS (V.O.)

On Wall Street, the markets are in
free fall. Technology derivatives
have gone off a cliff.

A view of the South Pole shows the ozone hole dwarfing
Antarctica.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)

Stocks are losing a trillion
dollars in valuation per hour.

The solar superstorm (a comet-shaped blob of molten plasma
from the surface of the sun) impacts the south pole.

NASA NEWS (V.O.)

It's financial Armageddon.

Abruptly, the screen is full of static.

NAVY OFFICER

All long-range communications are
out. It's the solar superstorm.

EXT. ARKSTAF - DAY

General Volk runs after Admiral Ashray across the central
compound toward a command tent being set up by Marines.

He grabs Ashray and points toward the dark, chaotic sky.

GEN. VOLK

We need to get the frack out of
here. This whole continent is gonna
melt when the solar storm hits.
DEFCON Zero?

ADM. ASHRAY
Not until I find those two kids.

GEN. VOLK
Our orders are to evacuate. Screw
the nuke - the damn kids. Orders
are orders. We effing evacuate.

ADM. ASHRAY
Shut up and color.

GEN. VOLK
Are you acting in mutiny? Treason.

Ashray stiff-arms Volk aside, hurries toward Colonel Jinn,
and they head toward the ARKSTAF HIGH-RISE TOWER. Volk yells
after them:

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
Who cares about finding them?
They'll blow sky-high anyway when
the solar storm hits.

INT. ARKSTAF - STAIRWAY - DAY

Waco pushes open a heavy metal door, and they enter another
corridor. This one angles down at a steep incline.

WACO
Another silent door. More
engineering extraordinaire.

INEZ
Perfectly silent hinges? Engineered
high-rise? Geodesic domes.

The corridor dead-ends in a stairwell. Waco starts down the
stairs, setting the satellite phone on light mode.

INEZ (CONT'D)
At least we'll be safe down here
when the solar storm hits.

A BAT zips by them, exiting the stairwell - then another and
another. Inez cringes - stops, terrified.

INEZ (CONT'D)
They think you blew up the nuke to
expose their secret base.

WACO
Hey, this wasn't my plan. I'm as
much a pawn as you. Dr. K did this.

A flurry of bats jets past them. INEZ SCREAMS. She stays behind as he heads on down the stairs.

INEZ
You're leaving me? Up here? All
alone? Wait. I hate bats.
(terrified)
More bats. All kinds. Flying low.

WACO
It has to be warm down there,
tropical warm. A whole ecosystem
with bugs, vermin - bat food.

INEZ
Stop this obsessing over food.

Waco disappears down the stairs, waving off the random bat.

INT. ARKSTAF - STAIRWAY - BOTTOM LANDING - DAY

Waco takes the last few steps, following the shiny electrical conduit to the bottom and a landing.

INEZ (O.S.)
You found something? Waco?

Waco reaches the massive, steel-reinforced door with a bank-vault locking wheel.

INEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'll be nice. Considerate. Just.
Come. Back. Here.

Waco shines the smart light on the walls, revealing thick, black soot from intense flames.

INEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How the F did you trap me up here?
Please. Don't leave me. Alone.

Waco sifts a pile of ashes in front of the vault door. He finds a gold wedding band and reads the inscription.

WACO
Arabic writing. Oh, God.

Waco pulls Kashgari's metal glasses from the pile of ashes. He stares sadly at the glasses, gently cleaning the lenses.

WACO (CONT'D)
You coulda trusted me.

Waco reaches out to open the vault door. The hair on his arm stands up as if from static electricity.

WACO (CONT'D)
I thought you wanted to save the penguins. This whole grandiose geothermal energy fantasy.

Gently, he taps the door. ELECTRICITY leaps up Waco's arm. He staggers back in great pain. He stares at text on the door:

WACO (CONT'D)
Volcan Lab? What's so important to protect that - high voltage.?

Waco collapses on the floor, drained, shivering in waves. He stares at the vault door, talking to Kashgari's glasses.

WACO (CONT'D)
Unless. Maybe your plan wasn't to save the penguins at all - but the planet. From a solar superstorm.

Violent TREMORS shake the stairwell.

INEZ (O.S.)
Earthquake. We've got to go. Get your sorry bum up here. NOW.

Waco gathers himself together and stumbles up the stairs through the darkness.

EXT./INT. ARKSTAF - ASHRAY'S HUMVEE - DAY

The sun is low on the horizon. Admiral Ashray and Colonel Jinn drive toward the ARKSTAF high-rise tower.

COL. JINN
Admiral? Does your Marine Corps general know what's going on here?

ADM. ASHRAY
Cut the crap, Colonel. We're onto you.

Ashray makes a hard left and runs right into an ice tunnel. He shows Jinn Waco's video clip.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Why did you blow up NASA's balloon?

COL. JINN

Ozone? Atom bombs? Carried aloft by
Pentagon tech? Organized by NASA
scientists? Oops. America just
wrecked the goddamn ozone layer.

ADM. ASHRAY

The bigger the lie, the easier
people will believe it. Big. Lie.

COL. JINN

Maybe. But you destroyed our Ozone
Rescue experiment that would have
stopped Noah's Flood two point oh.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ICE TUNNEL - DAY

A military convoy of winterized Humvees turns into a tunnel,
racing toward Ashray's vehicle.

Ashray hits the brakes with a RIOTOUS SCREECH and turns the
wheel hard right.

The convoy ROARS past them, inches from a head-on collision,
leaving a whirlwind of blowing snow and ice in its wake.

ADM. ASHRAY

It's working. My media believes me.
Your media believes you.

COL. JINN

Indeed. Who would ever think that
we are secretly in collusion over
the ARKSTAF project? It's the
perfect obfuscation.

ADM. ASHRAY

So we're agreed?

COL. JINN

Certainly. We must find the nuke
before it blows this place to
heaven's gate.

INT. ARKSTAF - STAIRWAY - TOP LANDING - DAY

Groping in the dark, Waco reaches the top of the stairs.

WACO

Inez, you there?

She turns on her flashlight, shines it in his blinking eyes.

WACO (CONT'D)
I - I found Dr. K. A pile of ashes.
His wedding hand. I mean, band.

INEZ
Oh, God. They killed him? But why?
What the F was he up to here?

Waco shows her Kashgari's glasses: he stares, in total shock.

INEZ (CONT'D)
You're no sociopath. Look at this
horror you feel at Dr. K's death.

WACO
Pops, he was my. my only friend.

INEZ
Here I am, now. You can touch, but
please do not squeeze.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Waco and Inez hustle down a hallway.

INEZ
Focus. Focus on saving the
penguins. Waco? Penguins.

Outside a wall of windows, they see bright lights in the
assembly area.

A platoon of MiB, led by Colonel Jinn and Admiral Ashray,
runs toward the building.

WACO
Zeppo's been a good friend, too.
Sure he has. The best. All his
penguin buddies, too. My family.

Waco and Inez run down the corridor.

EXT. ARKSTAF - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Jinn glances at the windows: he gets a clear view of Waco.

He grabs a grenade launcher, shoulders the weapon, and takes
aim at Waco.

COL. JINN
Zap. Up blows the - young rebel.

Ashray struggles to wrestle the weapon away.

ADM. ASHRAY
Wait - we need him. He can lead us
to the nuclear device.

Jinn breaks free and FIRES. The rocket blows a hole in the building. The MiB rush to enter the facility.

COL. JINN
Boom. Fire in the hole. He will
find it sooner if he is afraid.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDOR - DUSK

Waco and Inez hurry down a hallway, illuminated only by snowed-over skylights above.

Waco searches every nook and cranny, frantic, erratic.

WACO
Explosives. Look for anything that
goes boom.

An EXPLOSION, then footsteps at a dead run behind them.

INEZ
They do not aim to kill. They are
driving us to -

WACO
Find the second nuke for them.

Waco and Inez disappear into a side corridor.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray and the MiBs stalk the corridors, searching every room. Colonel Jinn un-shoulders a machine gun and FIRES A FEW ROUNDS into every large crate as they pass it.

COL. JINN
Yes. Rats always scurry away from
loud sounds. We will roust them.

ADM. ASHRAY
At least wait until my infrared
scanners arrive. We can't take any
chances here. Colonel Jinn.

Waco and Inez huddle in a crate down the hallway. Nowhere to go. They're cornered.

INEZ

We must leave now. They will fire
but not hit us.

WACO

Easier said than agreed, lady.

Ashray and Jinn are approaching fast, one EXPLOSION after
ANOTHER.

INEZ

With each explosion there is fire
and smoke. Next one, we run for
that small corridor ahead. Okay.

Waco nods, and they get ready to make a mad dash.

Ashray and Jinn zero in on a LARGE CRATE and toss a GRENADE
next to it, blowing it on edge. It's the last crate in the
corridor.

Jinn and Ashray hurry forward - but Waco and Inez have
disappeared.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

General Volk and his aide watch a platoon of Marines setting
up camp in heavy snow. The aide fires off a SIGNAL FLARE. The
Marines grab their weapons and form up on Volk in platoon
order.

GEN. VOLK

Arrest Admiral Ashray on sight. If
he resists, shoot his kneecaps out.

The Marines break formation and run for their vehicles.

Volk grabs his aide.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Where are my tanks and heavy armor?
I want every ounce of steel we
have, right here - post haste.

The aide steps away to make an urgent call.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)

Gonna make my little girl proud.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDORS/WORK AREAS - NIGHT

Waco hurries Inez forward through a series of dark hallways, lobbies, and workspaces.

WACO
I figured out how I remember this place.

Waco muscles open an outside door.

INEZ
All the noise must have rattled it loose. A post-traumatic stress.

They huddle in the doorway, acclimating to the frigid cold.

WACO
This place was Dr. K's P.H.D. dissertation. It was a detailed blueprint of his plan to harness a volcano's geothermal energy.

INEZ
We will perish in that cold.

They head back into the building, leaving the door open.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Waco and Inez sneak down a narrow corridor.

WACO
Structure is a carbon copy of his design except for the drilling rig.

INEZ
That shaft we were in, six stories down? That's all you need to get to the volcano's heat to work.

They reach a sturdy bank-vault door of case-hardened steel.

WACO
Massive doors sealing off the danger zone, in the event of an uncontrolled - eruption.

Inez has to take a few deep breaths.

INEZ
I believe there is no such thing as a controlled volcano.

WACO

The last door I saw like this -

Waco steps back, terrified - crashes into a sharp metal edge of an electrical conduit, gashing his arm badly.

WACO (CONT'D)

Was not at all friendly.

Bats show up and zoom around the scent of Waco's blood. She suddenly notices the severity of his wound.

INEZ

What have you done to your arm? We can't afford any injuries like that right now.

WACO

Bats. The scent of blood will make them anxious to get home. Home is heat.

Waco follows the bats to a "MECHANICAL ROOM" door.

WACO (CONT'D)

What I saw before - bottom of that stairwell. A volcano lab. Behind an electrified vault door.

Waco kicks the door open and disappears inside. Inez looks both ways, then enters and eases the door closed.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Ashray, Colonel Jinn, and the MiB search the building, fanning out into the corridors.

INT. ARKSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Waco grabs a ratty old broom handle and KNOCKS the handle end on the floor, listening to the ECHO.

Inez steps into the room - cringes: BATS are everywhere, fleeting shadows wherever she shines her flashlight.

WACO

On the floorplan blueprint, there has to be a small room above the main volcano vault. An emergency vent, in case - you get my drift.

INEZ
Your face is blue. Nose. Eyes
glazing over. Latent paranoia.
Obsession over this Vulcan Lab.

She rips a strip of cloth out of her blouse to bandage his arm.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Your body can't heal the wound and
fight this big-time cold at the
same time. We need food. And now.

WACO
What we need is heat. And heat is
down there. Below us. Volcano heat.

Waco's broomstick hits a HOLLOW ECHO on the floor.

INEZ
Wait. Stop. That's a new sound.

Waco RIPS a layer of rotten flooring aside: A large, square
seam shows on the floor.

WACO
The emergency vent purge.

Waco pries at the edges, and the floor crumbles away to
reveal rusty hinges.

WACO (CONT'D)
That secret volcano lab, behind
that electrified door I found -
deep in that stairwell. We're right
above it.

The building RUMBLES from another earthquake.

They grab onto each other for dear life. The tremors subside,
and Inez peels his arms off her.

WACO (CONT'D)
So cold. Ouch. I can't feel my
extremities. Vision is going.

INEZ
Your body is shutting down blood
flow to your extremities.
Preserving heat in the core.

Waco climbs a few shelves of a metal storage rack, then
maneuvers around to face Inez. He grabs his stomach in pain.

WACO
Stomach. Killing me. Ulcers. Bad.

INEZ
Break through that floor, and you
might just fall into the maws of a
volcano.

Another tremor, stronger, rattles the room.

The metal shelf BUCKLES. Inez rushes to brace the shelf with
her arms.

Waco doubles over from the stomach pain.

WACO
Bloody - er, ulcers. If I could
explode this place the way they're
exploding my stomach right now.

Waco points toward the rectangle on the floor.

WACO (CONT'D)
We don't need a full-blown volcanic
blast, Inez - just enough to make
some ash, so that the ash cloud
blocks out the solar flare.

Inez moves away.

WACO (CONT'D)
Wait. Don't let go of that shelf -

But Inez has already let go of the shelf, which BUCKLES.

Waco falls off the shelf and crashes onto the middle of the
rectangle. The floor crumbles away.

Waco FALLS through the opening.

EXT. ARKSTAF - NIGHT

General Volk's convoy has to veer off the road to avoid a
giant crevasse gushing STEAM and SUPERHEATED GAS. Volk stares
into the chasm as they move by.

GEN. VOLK
Christ Almighty. Did you see that?
Down in the abyss - lava flowing,
angry - furious.

Volk's aide, driving the vehicle, speeds away.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
Finally, I understand the fatal
attraction of video games.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray and Colonel Jinn, both with a group of MiB,
approach from opposite directions. They meet and huddle.

ADM. ASHRAY
Huh. Smart as you are, you don't
wonder why you're still alive?

The ground rumbles. GEYSERS erupt from deep cracks in the
frozen ground nearby.

COL. JINN
Karma. The solar flare is a given.

Ashray points toward a vent shaft shooting out hot, humid
air, forming a TORNADO BLIZZARD when it mixes with the
frigid, hyper-dry arctic air.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
We. Have rules between us.

ADM. ASHRAY
For ours is the power and the glory
forever. Amen.

INT. ARKSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Waco hangs on by his fingertips above the crevasse.

Inez stands above him, hands on hips, foot tapping
impatiently.

WACO
A little help here?

Inez plants a foot near his hand.

INEZ
What's going on? You said this
place was protected by an A.I.

He grabs her ankle and hauls himself up and out. Waco finds
some sturdy rope and loops it around a ceiling beam.

WACO
If it's watching us, it's pretty
damn obvious we're no danger.

He drops the other end of the rope down into the jagged hole in the floor, then ZIPS down the rope into the black void. Inez stares down: A dim light sweeps an arc in the darkness below.

WACO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's warm down here. Hot even.
Get down here.

An updraft sucks the air out of the opening in the floor.

EXT. ARKSTAF - NIGHT

General Volk and his convoy get stranded in the middle of a jagged ice flow. STEAM GUSHES out of the ground, then spreads out into a shallow lake, freezing instantly.

GEN. VOLK
We're goners if we can't get out of
this mother-loving ice field.

The Marines get out of their vehicles, jack up the rear wheels, and hurry to install heavy-duty snow chains on the back tires of their vehicles.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
Ashray told us to come this way. He
knew we'd get bogged down and boil
to death in molten lava.

The chains circle two sets of double tires each, making the rear of each vehicle look like a half-track.

GEN. VOLK (CONT'D)
Five-star bastard. Arrogance
without limits. Just like the
Nazis.

INT. ARKSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Solid as an alley cat, Inez lands on her feet near Waco.

She shines her light up at the vaulted ceiling and a mass of bats swarming, hanging, chirping.

INEZ
You could have told me to look out
for the huge swarm of bats. I have
a temper for bats.

Waco gives the rope a sharp yank, and the rope falls into a heap at their feet. Inez stares at the rope, the hole.

WACO
We can't let them follow us. Not
down here, too.

Suddenly, he shivers convulsively, so much that she has to
grab his arms to steady him.

WACO (CONT'D)
Freezing. Cold. So cold. Hungry.

INEZ
Where's the baby nuke? What does it
look like?

His knees buckle, and he grabs her shoulder. Inez holds him
in her arms, rubbing his arms and back.

INEZ (CONT'D)
No food. Damn cold is sucking all
the energy out of you.

WACO
Got any food?

INEZ
My backpack was empty all along.

WACO
Gave mine to Zeppo. He needed it
more than me. I'm accustomed to the
cold. At least I thought I was.

All the strength drains from him.

INEZ
You need heat. Sweat-lodge heat.
Come on, Waco - hold on.

Inez props him up against a wall, stripping off his parka,
then hers. She pulls him into her and wraps their parkas
around them both.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Dammit, Waco. Focus.
(quietly)
You can't leave. Anything to pump
your pulse up.

He shivers so vigorously he shakes her too. His words are
slurred, confused.

WACO
Don't rightly know if it's the damn
cold or the stark terror.

Gently, she brushes the hair off his forehead.

INEZ
You're freezing cold. Delusional.

She takes her gloves off and feels his wrist for a pulse.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Weak pulse. Confused thinking.
You're getting hypothermia.

Waco maneuvers onto wobbly legs and falls toward an electrical panel.

WACO
Makes me think of home. Back on the bayou.

Waco reaches out to stop his fall - touches the electrical panel. SPARKS FLY.

Waco gets blown backward. Inez catches him in her arms. He's smoking from the electric charge, hair all frazzled.

INT. ARKSTAF - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Ashray, Colonel Jin, and the MiB double-time down the corridors, searching every possible hiding place.

Ashray stops at a "Mechanical" room and kicks the door in.

INT. ARKSTAF - MECHANICAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Ashray steps in, and yanks open a pneumatic control panel - full of mechanical levers. One of the levers is red.

Ashray pumps the lever, opening up a giant floor vent. A maelstrom of hot, humid air PURGES OUT through the vent.

COL. JINN
Heat. Venting from this big building. We have little time - the volcano awakens.

Jinn grabs Ashray, and they hurry out.

INT. ARKSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Inez sit, huddled close for warmth. He's drowsy.

INEZ
 You're getting some color back.
 Maybe we got you warm in time.
 Goddess, I hope so.

THUNDER ripples above them.

She shies her flashlight into the cavern above: Clouds of steam, glowing with static electricity.

LIGHTNING strikes nearby, from the ground up. STEAM rises from where the lightning hit. Inez shakes him.

INEZ (CONT'D)
 Waco? What to do now? I need to get us out of here.

WACO
 It's ground lightning.

LIGHTNING strikes in the distance, then a steady stream of strikes, with gentle rumbles of THUNDER echoing.

WACO (CONT'D)
 The volcano. It's waking up.

Beat.

WACO (CONT'D)
 Ice particles, rocks, and volcanic ash collide to generate an enormous amount of static electricity that has to go somewhere.

Waco struggles to sit up, pulling his parka on.

WACO (CONT'D)
 The U.V radiation from the baby nuke. Penetrated the ground.
 (sudden fear)
 The volcano is going active.

She's on her feet and back to her old assertive self.

She cringes as BATS SWARM around her flashlight beam.

WACO (CONT'D)
 An active volcano? Something in Dr. K's dissertation. A contingency plan.

Waco maneuvers onto his feet, looking around, desperate - shivering. She's a step behind, supporting him.

EXT. ARKSTAF - NIGHT

General Volk and his men head toward the high-rise spire.

Their vehicles are tossed around by random EXPLOSIONS OF STEAM from the ground underneath them.

INT. ARKSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Inez study a vast array of barrels neatly arranged in racks. All the barrels have FREON stencils.

INEZ

They would need Freon to control the reaction. To moderate the temperature for optimal gradient.
(quietly)
Also for an emergency shutdown.

WACO

If we could get one of these Freon barrels open. We could start a chain reaction. Freezing cold plus extreme hot - boom.

Inez moves away, exploring - fighting the swarming bats.

INEZ

A volcano eruption to blow a ton of ash into the atmosphere? Maybe enough to block the solar flare?
(quietly)
With us inside here? No thanks.

A steady stream of lightning illuminates the cavern now. Waco studies her movements.

INEZ (CONT'D)

What about the second nuke?

Waco scrapes frost built up off one Freon barrel.

WACO

If the volcano goes active, the lava will explode the nuke, wherever it might be.

Inez yells from across the room.

INEZ

Another massive steel door over here. It looks open.

Waco runs over to Inez. She points toward a vault door.

Waco clamps his hands on the vault door and gets the JUICE SHOCKED OUT OF HIM.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Our escape route. Good thinking.

Inez yanks Waco away from the door.

Charge grounds from Waco onto Inez. Her hair goes wild with static electricity. The static charge holds them together.

WACO
We're stuck. It's the static electricity. Tight as two coats of paint.

INEZ
How to escape this love clutch?

He waits until she is visibly perturbed.

WACO
Reach out and touch anything metal.
Well, except for the door.

She reaches out to touch a metal pipe, and they bounce apart.

WACO (CONT'D)
I can't believe you threw me into that electrified door.

They look up at a sudden SOUND.

A face stares down from the hole that Waco made in the floor above. A bright, piercing light shines from the opening around the face.

COL. JINN
Kudos. You found the Vulcan Lab.

Waco and Inez whisper to each other.

WACO
We have to make him fire his weapon at us. It's the only way to puncture a Freon barrel.

Inez pushes Waco out of her way and yells upward:

INEZ
Building an A.I. Providing an unlimited power source.

Then totally isolating it at the
bottom of the world?

COL. JINN
What? Cruel and unusual punishment?
Of a God Damn robot brain?

Beat.

WACO
Who killed the Russia Peace
activists on the swift boat?

ADM. ASHRAY (O.S.)
You lousy, cheating, son-of-a-gun.

ORANGE TRACERS fire from above. ROUNDS RICOCHET through the
Freon canisters.

The barrels of refrigerant EXPLODE and pour Freon out onto
the floor.

INT. ARKSTAF - STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Admiral Ashray wrestles Colonel Jinn back from the opening,
takes Jinn's weapon away, and throws it aside.

COL. JINN
Stop. I swear to God. We killed no
dissidents. LARS took control.

ADM. ASHRAY
LARS only acts in justifiable self-
defense. That swift boat was no
threat whatsoever - except to you.
Whatsoever

COL. JINN
Honest. In the name of my child
Elbys. Elbys. My little girl loves
penguins. I would never conspire to
obliterate their land.

Livid with fury, Ashray HITS Jinn square in the face, drawing
blood from a deep gash. Calmly, Jinn pulls out a white
handkerchief and wipes the blood off his face.

COL. JINN (CONT'D)
No matter. Now China will blame
Noah's New Flood on America.

ADM. ASHRAY
Not if I kill you first. Then we
can blame it all on China.

Ashray rushes Jinn and PUMMELS him with his fists. They trade
BLOW FOR BLOW. until they're both bleeding.

They pause to get their breath, circling each other, wary.

ADM. ASHRAY (CONT'D)
Don't take no A.I. to figure you
out.

Ashray grabs Jinn and throws him to the wall.

COL. JINN
With America blamed for Noah's
Flood, you are forced to abandon
LARS to China. We'll be decades
ahead in the A.I. race.

ADM. ASHRAY
I'll kill you first. You cheat.

Jinn gets Ashray in a nelson lock, ready to snap his neck.

COL. JINN
(quietly)
Elbys. For my Elbys.

Jinn throws Ashray against a wall and darts away.

Breathing hard, Ashray sets the sat-phone in BEACON MODE
(blinking red light), stuffs it into his parka, and moves
out.

INT. ARKSTAF - VULKAN LAB - NIGHT

Waco and Inez stand on a NASA CRATE, surrounded by a sea of
neon blue Freon.

WACO
So we found the nuclear weapon. It
still needs a launch code.
(quietly)
Saw letters and numbers etched on
Dr. K's glasses frame. Left it in
the stairwell when we escaped.

A Freon barrel falls into a distant lava flow, EXPLODING -
sealing the lava flow with a flurry of cold.

WACO (CONT'D)

Blow the nuke and a ton of volcano ash spews out the top of this building, covers up the ozone hole, and blocks the solar superstorm.

INEZ

That's why that tower structure is so super-reinforced, against the heat and pressure to eject all those hot ashes into atmosphere.

All around them, the floor of the cavern slowly collapses into a thick cloud of wind-blown volcanic ash.

INEZ (CONT'D)

Waco, I can't breathe.

Waco grabs Inez, hoists her over one shoulder, and wades into the viscous Freon.

WACO

It's the sulfur in the fumes. It'll burn your lungs out. Take one good breath and hold it. Now.

Waco heads toward the heavy steel-vault exit door.

He reaches out to the door, eyes closed, wincing. There's no electric charge. He muscles the door open.

INT. ARKSTAF - BOTTOM OF STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Waco lowers Inez, then rubs his legs to warm them up.

WACO

Both my feet are frozen solid. Come to think of it, I can't feel squat from my knees on down.

Inez kneels at the stairwell, sifting through ashes - pulls out a pair of gold-rim glasses.

INEZ

Dr. K's eyeglasses.

She shines her light on them, inspecting the frames.

INEZ (CONT'D)

Some sort of code here.

WACO

I have the frequency on my sat
phone. We can detonate it remotely.
If we ever get out of here.

Waco searches the stairwell area. He finds a door behind the stairwell.

WACO (CONT'D)

It's a lava tunnel made into a
service corridor.

INEZ

I was here. When I was very young.
When they were building the place.
This tunnel leads to the surface.

They hurry through the door.

EXT./INT ARKSTAF - VOLK'S HUMVEE - NIGHT

General Volk and his Marines are just outside the ARKSTAF sky-tower. An EXPLOSION lights up the night sky.

GEN. VOLK

Christ, every time the lava
explodes, I think the solar flare
has arrived. Trust in the Lord.
When my time comes, it comes. Can't
do beans about it but to die well.

INT. ARKSTAF - MAIN CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Inez and Waco hurry down empty hallways. Waco's frozen feet make an odd sound as he walks.

WACO

That's odd. I can wiggle my toes.

The corridor pressurizes, pushing them toward the outside of the HIGH-RISE TOWER like they're in a WIND TUNNEL.

INEZ

The sky tower will shoot a giant
cloud of ash upward. Just what we
need to block the solar flare. Yes.

Arms locked together, they struggle against the air pressure, toward a nearby doorway. Inez kicks the door in.

INT. ARKSTAF - MECHANICS ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Waco and Inez struggle into a small "MECHANICS" room, full of wall-to-wall mechanical levers.

INEZ
Start flipping levers. See if they
do anything.

They FLIP one lever after another, waiting for a split second after each to see if anything happens.

INEZ (CONT'D)
Talk. Babble. Just stay conscious.

They look toward a loud mechanical THUD out in the hallway. Then keep pulling levers, looking up to hear ASSORTED SOUNDS.

WACO
Getting sensations in the legs now.
How can that be?

INEZ
Are the long johns working? They
have feet in them?

WACO
Sure. Charged the batteries
earlier.

INEZ
Where did these long johns come
from?

WACO
Gift from Dr. K. Some special NASA
project for astronauts. Waterproof
even.

INEZ
I think the frozen must be your
shoes and outer clothing. Okay.

WACO
How did you know about the long
johns?

INEZ
Dr. Olga told us. You are a famous
joke with the *Arktika* crew.

A distant THUD reverberates through the structure.

INEZ (V.O.)
That sound. Did you hear it? One of
the levers did something. Closer.

Waco throws a lever. The THUD happens again.

WACO
O.M.G. They're pneumatic pump
levers, for when the power goes
out.

Waco works the lever back and forth, frantic. An outside door
slowly opens on the far side of the space.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Air vents BLOW OUT along the length of the ARKSTAF high-rise
tower with a high-pitched whistle, venting steam.

Admiral Ashray bolts out of the building. He stops - just in
time to see Colonel Jinn run for a taxiing all-black
helicopter.

The admiral yanks the pin from a grenade, runs to the
chopper, tosses the grenade inside, and runs for cover.

The helicopter EXPLODES in a fireball of reverberating
explosions of ordinance and jet fuel.

The explosion throws Ashray through the air in a cloud of
steel and shrapnel.

Ashray falls to the tarmac. FLYING DEBRIS knocks him flat on
his back, unconscious.

WACO AND INEZ bolt out of an exit nearby. MiB blast them with
a flurry of three-round bursts.

Inez points toward the sky-rise tower.

INEZ
We have primed the volcano. Lines
of pressure and force are
established. We must detonate the
baby nuke now.

A ROUND clips Waco's shoulder, and he falls. Inez drags Waco
to shelter.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

Inez jams a cloth into Waco's hand and makes him hold it over his shoulder wound. He's fading fast, delusional.

INEZ

Don't you dare quit on me.

WACO

I'm sorry, Zeppo. I did my best,
little buddy.

Waco collapses, spent. Inez stands up - an MiB is right there.

She karate-punches the MiB into the ground - slips. - falls flat on her back. She ends up staring up at concrete tower.

INEZ

No time for the stupid Hollywood
sentimentals, here.

Inez grabs the MiB's weapon and fires off the whole magazine.

More MiB are coming. Inez hurries away. A sudden wall of snow obscures her escape.

EXT. ARKSTAF - MAIN GATE - NIGHT

A convoy of Marine vehicles barrels through the main gate. Volk stands at the passenger door of the lead Humvee, his aide driving.

Marines jump/roll out of their vehicles, then streak across the tarmac like avenging angels.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - NIGHT

The ARKSTAF tower shatters. WRENCHING SOUNDS, of metal under extreme stress, pierce the still night air, as the tower superstructure expands into a distorted shape, on the verge of exploding.

GEN. VOLK

This is what happens when children
play with fire.

Inez runs back toward Waco, dragging a machine gun, a bandoleer of ammo draped across her torso. She scoots down beside Waco - surveying their situation:

MiB approach, darting from cover to cover.

INEZ

Give me cover while I make
satellite call, yes?

WACO

A Ma Deuce? And how. Oorah.

Waco grabs the weapon and feeds the bandoleer of ammo into the magazine. Inez starts to dial, but the MiB are - there.

WACO (CONT'D)

Brace my back against that wall.
Fifty-caliber rounds have one hell
of a kick.

Sliding on his butt, Inez helps Waco steady his back against a brick wall.

He hands her the satellite phone and the glasses. She puts them in her backpack - KICKS an MiB away.

WACO (CONT'D)

Eight. Seven. Four. Two. That gets
you on the nuke's frequency. Wait
for a tone. Input the glasses
detonation code. Hurry.

Waco takes aim, adjusting the sights. HOT BRASS FLIES all around, sizzling as it hits the snow. Expertly, Inez feeds the bandoleer of ammo into the magazine.

Waco collapses, spent. His expression fades, and his body goes limp.

Inez hauls the M-60 over and wraps his body around it. She whispers by his ear, with a parting kiss on the lips.

INEZ

Hot steel will keep you warm until
Inez comes back.

Inez runs away into the night. Across the way, General Volk yells at a group of Marines, pointing toward Inez.

GEN. VOLK

After her. Alive. I want her alive.
Alive and kicking.

Inez scoots into a dark, narrow alley. The Marines run past her.

She squats down, back against the wall - pulls out the satellite phone and glasses frame, shines her flashlight.

She dials - waits - punches in a CODE. Stares at the high-rise tower.

The ground shakes. STEAM SHOOTS UP from a thousand cracks in the ground, smothering the area in a cloud of hot steam.

A TORNADO of volcanic ash shoots out of the high-rise tower, up into the sky, darkening a nascent DAWN.

LATER

Waco struggles to consciousness and manages to get onto his feet. He grabs a rifle to use as a walking aid. Heads for shelter.

Waco stumbles over the body of Ashray.

The admiral's EYES OPEN WIDE. He focuses - sees Waco. He's instantly wracked by rage. He struggles into a sitting position - to his feet.

WACO

You damn near destroyed the world.
You should thank me for saving it.

Unsteady on his feet, Ashray pulls out a pearl-handled service revolver, aims - shoots, hitting Waco in the leg.

The admiral stares, unbelieving, as the bullet shatters Waco's leg, BREAKING HIS CALF like it was porcelain glass.

ADM. ASHRAY

What are you, a goddamn robot?

Waco doesn't miss a beat - JAMS the butt of his rifle into Ashray's eye. The admiral falls onto his back. Waco stands over him.

WACO

Who me? Put you out of your misery?

Waco turns and hobbles away. A few steps later, he stumbles and collapses to the ground. Doesn't move.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

The shaft of volcanic energy from the HIGH-RISE TOWER gets more intense as the mass and momentum increase.

HURRICANE-FORCE WINDS whistle through the complex, sandblasting paint off vehicles and storage tanks.

General Volk runs through the chaos to Marines gathered around the admiral. Ashray's eye is a gruesome mess, oozing gray matter.

GEN. VOLK
This is what happens when you
disobey DEFCON regs.

ADM. ASHRAY
No. The Chinese set me up to take
the fall.

Volk puts a heel in Ashray's wounded eye. The admiral screams. Volk pulls out his pistol and aims it at Ashray.

GEN. VOLK
Don't tell me Space Force built
this place - cooperating with the
goddamn mother fucking Chinese?

Volk cocks his revolver.

ADM. ASHRAY
We analyzed NASA's Freon Mafia
data. Cornered the Chinese with it.
They threatened to expose this
place and our Freon stockpile.

Volk locks and loads, aims at Ashray.

GEN. VOLK
To break the glass in case of a
planetary emergency? O.M.G. You
idiots fell for that Armageddon
paranoia flick?

ADM. ASHRAY
Shoot me. I order you. Fire.

GEN. VOLK
When the world learns how we worked
with China - damn. Russia will be a
superhero - saving Earth from us.

Volk's hand shakes.

ADM. ASHRAY
Tell my family I died a hero, will
you? That's all I ask.

Lightning fast, Ashray goes to pull a weapon out of his parka. The general empties the magazine into the admiral.

Volk kneels and yanks Ashray's arm out of his parka: it's just a clenched fist.

There's a RED FLASH DRIVE in the admiral's fist. Volk wrenches the flash drive free.

GEN. VOLK
The things we do for God and
country.

EXT. ARKSTAF - DAY

Racing downrange (the aide is driving), General Volk plugs the flash drive into a laptop computer, pulls up a map, and points directions for his driver.

GEN. VOLK
Ashray downloaded the entire Black
Dragon access protocols. Wipe them
off the face of God's green Earth.

EXT. ARKSTAF - ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

The tarmac is empty but for driving snow and sleet. The MUTED THROBBING of a MedEvac helicopter approaches and lands.

The chopper bay doors open, and the medic jumps out with a medical bag.

MEDIC
Search all the bodies. Hurry.

Two HELPERS with Red Cross armbands are with her.

HELPER #1
Found the satellite phone with the
G.P.S. tag we've been tracking.

Helper #1 finds Ashray and turns him over, searches his parka, and pulls out his sat-phone, still in blinking BEACON MODE.

HELPER #1 (CONT'D)
It was the Admiral's tracking
signal, all right. Excepting he's
stone, cold, and dead.

The medics hustle around, turning bodies over and checking their vital signs.

HELPER #2

Got fresh blood coming from the
mouth and ears. Over here.

The medic hurries over. It's Waco. She feels his neck.

MEDIC

Weak pulse. Give me a hand. We
might be able to save this one.

The medic rips Waco's shirt open and listens to his chest
with a stethoscope.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

He's bad off, real bad.

Helper #2 pulls out electroshock paddles and a voltage
charger.

HELPER #1

Hurry.

The medic jolts Waco with the electroshock paddles. ZAP. Waco
startles awake. The medic pulls out a pre-filled syringe.

MEDIC

Antibiotics. Say ouch.

She plunges the needle into his arm.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

Keep the leg frozen, Semper Fi.
Otherwise you'll bleed out.

Helper #2 approaches the Medic and hands her a TABLET.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

Okay. Notify the Marine Command
Sergeant Major. This is the eco-
terrorist they've been looking for.

They help Waco to sit up, and give him some liquid food.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

Thanks for saving the world, but
I'm afraid you'll spend the rest of
your life in Leavenworth.

Suddenly Zeppo runs across the compound (followed by half a
dozen other Gentoos) and into Waco's arms. Waco's in heaven.

WACO

Don't you worry none about me,
lady. I'm alive. Zeppo's alive.
What more can a body ask for?

Streaks of lightning pierce the gloom. The sun breaks through, looking like a dark dawn. Waco leans back, soaking up the rays on his face, scratching Zeppo and his friends.

Suddenly a RUSSIAN STEALTH HELICOPTER glides into the clearing, hovers down soundlessly, and settles down.

Inez (Russian military uniform) scoots out of the chopper, leading several RUSSIAN SOLDIERS. They confront the medics, and there's a standoff. Inez stands between the groups:

INEZ

Your call, Mr. Magoo.

WACO

Can Zeppo come? The others? So I
can continue my research - maybe
find a way to save their vision?

INEZ

You prefer Siberia to - Kansas?
Actually, to volunteer for a Gulag
community? Not a happy place.

WACO

They'll let me go? Yes.

Shaking her head sadly, Inez motions to her soldiers.

They scoop up Waco (Zeppo still in his arms) in a fireman's carry and hurry him to the chopper. Other soldiers corral the other penguins and carry them to the helicopter.

The chopper is gone before the marines arrive on the scene.

INT. EARTH ORBIT - ISS SPACE STATION - THE NASA CHANNEL - DAY

A live view of the solar flare shows it shooting out from the sun, engulfing Mercury - moving past Venus - enveloping the moon - heading directly for the south pole.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Planet Earth narrowly missed a
global catastrophe from a solar
superstorm. An elite team of
international scientists at McMurdo
Sound saved the day. Hurray.

Just as the superstorm arrives, a giant plume of volcanic ash shoots up from southern Antarctica. It spreads out as it hits the upper atmosphere winds, and covers the whole OZONE HOLE.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Meanwhile, in other news, two eco-terrorists are on the INTERPOL's Most Wanted List for attempting to use this crisis to disparage China, the U.S., and our leading-edge efforts to save the environment.

The solar flux recedes, and the sun returns to normal.

INT. RUSSIAN MEDEVAC CHOPPER/EXT. CARRIER DECK - DAY

As the chopper scoots over the ocean, barely above the waves - ocean spray washes gray ashes and soot from the windows. Waco stares out a window - Inez from a window next to his.

The jagged shoreline is brilliant in reflected light from the full sun.

Bunches of penguins gather along the shore, diving, sliding.

One look up at the helicopter and they dive into the surf.

FADE OUT.

THE END