

THE MILE:  
Episode 5:  
"I AM BECOME DEATH"

By Jaime Medina

30 Foreman Road  
Cold Spring, NY, 10516  
(845)-265-4043  
Dummytaylor@optonline.net

DEEP SPACE. THE DELTA QUADRANT. THE YEAR 2055

A fighter ship hurtles through the blackness of outer space. The camera drifts towards a porthole and takes us inside.

CUT TO:

A CRYOGENIC POD.

A soldier sleeps in green army fatigues. Holographic DOG TAGS around his neck tell us his name: MAVERICK, DUKE(30).

Sensors in the ship begin to beep loudly. We see the lights around Duke's cryogenic chamber begin to blink, changing from RED to GREEN. The temperature in the tube begins to rise as it opens, awakening him.

A groggy Duke struggles to rise as he is approached by a boisterous DRILL SERGEANT.

DRILL SERGEANT

Rise and shine, sweetheart! Get your ass out of bed, Maverick, or so help me God, I'll have you doing push-ups until you puke up your intestines! Then I'll stomp on 'em while you do 2,000 jumping jacks! Get up, maggot!

DUKE

Will you please just shut up, Sarge!

DRILL SERGEANT

How....dare...you! You know the penalty for refusing an order from a superior officer, son? Get up, you lazy son of a bitch! I'll knock you into next week--

Duke slams his fist on a button and SARGE disappears!

DUKE

Stupid holographic alarm clocks! Hate those damned things!

Duke stretches his wiry, muscular frame and walks over to a control console.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Let's see what's for breakfast.

A machine pumps out a bowl of what looks like oatmeal.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Yum. Can't beat that good old Army  
"chow", now can you? Thank God my  
contract's almost up.

He walks over to a nearby computer and presses his hand  
against the glass. Upon verifying his fingerprints, the  
machine immediately starts up. We hear the voice of the  
ship's computer, HAL.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
(to computer)  
Good morning, Hal.

HAL  
Good morning, Corporal Maverick.

DUKE  
When are you going to start calling  
me "Duke", Hal?

HAL  
Not addressing you by title is  
against my programming sir.

DUKE  
Well, soon I'll be out of this  
man's Army and you can call me  
whatever you like. Capeesh?

HAL  
Yes, sir. Shall I prepare  
breakfast?

DUKE  
No need. I've already cooked up  
some of that slop that passes for  
food. Unless you can make me  
something better.

HAL  
Sir, Army regulations prohibit me  
from serving anything but  
authorized meals. It is against--

DUKE  
Your programming. I get it. So,  
what's the deal with waking me up,  
huh? Another top secret mission?

HAL  
Apparently, sir. I have not been  
informed of the particulars.

(MORE)

HAL (CONT'D)

In fact, there is a call being transmitted now. Shall I--

DUKE

Yes, Hal. Put it on screen and shut up.

HAL

Shutting up, sir. Major Garrett is on the line.

COMMUNICATIONS AREA. CONTINUOUS.

A large video screen displays the logo of the U.S. Army with the words "SECURE CHANNEL--TOP SECRET" displayed. MAJOR GARRETT(60) appears on screen. His uniform and appearance tell us he is IN CHARGE.

MAJOR GARRETT

Corporal Maverick! You awake, soldier?

DUKE

Partially. What's the deal with waking me up early?

MAJOR GARRETT

I wanted to wish you a happy birthday.

DUKE

Really?

MAJOR GARRETT

No! Straighten up, soldier! I know you've only got weeks until you're a civilian again, but for now, your ass belongs to us!

DUKE

Yes sir. Hold on, I dropped something.

Duke "moons" the screen, flashing his bare ass at the Major.

MAJOR GARRETT

Very funny. It is your birthday, by the way.

Duke looks at the digital calendar on his computer.

DUKE

So it is. Thanks! Something tells me you woke me up for another reason, though.

MAJOR GARRETT

Outstanding, Corporal! Discharging a man of your intellect is going to be a great loss for the Army! Here's your mission: you are to orbit and subsequently DESTROY the planet named VIDUS 4 utilizing your full nuclear payload.

DUKE

Okayyyy. Why?

MAJOR GARRETT

Are you questioning orders, soldier?

DUKE

No, sir. It's just if I'm going to annihilate an entire population, I wanna know why.

MAJOR GARRETT

Population is zero.

DUKE

You want me to destroy an empty planet? I don't get it.

MAJOR GARRETT

Vidus 4 was a TOP SECRET colony. About a year ago we sent a team of 40 scientists and their families to perform research and experiments related to a new weapons system.

DUKE

And now you want me to kill them?

MAJOR GARRETT

Shut up and listen! About two weeks ago we were informed that a highly contagious pathogen had begun to infect the colonists. We lost contact with the colony about a week ago. At the time there were only five people left. The brass says it's safe to assume they are all dead.

DUKE

So why nuke the planet?

MAJOR GARRETT

One, to make sure the work they were doing doesn't fall into enemy hands, and two, we want to ensure that the pathogen has NO CHANCE to reach Earth.

DUKE

Understood.

MAJOR GARRETT

One more thing.

DUKE

Yes sir.

MAJOR GARRETT

No matter what, do not, I repeat, do NOT attempt to land on the planet. We can't risk you being infected and bringing the pathogen back with you.

DUKE

You don't have to worry about that, sir. I stick my neck out for nobody.

MAJOR GARRETT

So I've heard. Those are your orders.

DUKE

Yes sir.

MAJOR GARRETT

Oh, and Maverick....

DUKE

Sir?

MAJOR GARRETT

Happy birthday. I mean that.

DUKE

Thank you sir.

The screen goes dark.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Douche bag. Ok, Hal! It's my birthday! How about a hamburger with caramelized onions, bacon and cheddar cheese and some sweet potato fries on the side?

HAL

Sir, I can only prepare authorized meals. It is against my programming to--

DUKE

Shut up, Hal. Set a course for Vidus 4.

HAL

Yes sir. You have another incoming call, sir.

DUKE

Garrett again? Put it on screen!

The screen lights up. We see the lovely face of JENNIFER(25).

JENNIFER

Hello, Duke.

DUKE

Jennifer.

JENNIFER

I hope I didn't wake you.

DUKE

No, I was awake already. What's up?

JENNIFER

Um, I kinda need to talk to you right now.

He sighs.

DUKE

I thought we went through this already! It's over, okay? It's not that you're not a great girl. You are. It's just that I'm not looking to settle down right now--

JENNIFER

I'm pregnant.

DUKE

Congrats.

JENNIFER

It's yours, Duke.

DUKE

Jen, if this is some silly ploy to get me back--

She places something in a scanner-type device. It prints out on Duke's end. He looks at it. It is a SONOGRAM showing the baby in her womb.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Oh. How do I know it's mine?

She tears up, holding back anger.

JENNIFER

Really? What do you think I am, some kind of whore? You're the only man I've ever been with, Duke--

DUKE

Listen, I'm really not ready for this--

JENNIFER

You're 29 years old, Duke!

DUKE

30 actually. Today's my birthday....

JENNIFER

When are you coming home? I need to see you.

DUKE

No, you don't. What you need is to get rid of it---

JENNIFER

What? You want me to kill our baby?

DUKE

Your baby. Why do you have to make it sound so...! Listen, you can donate it. There's plenty of people who can't have kids.



JENNIFER

Donate "it". That's how you refer to our baby? As an "it"?

HAL

Sir, you are receiving another transmission.

DUKE

Shut up, Hal. Listen, Jennifer, I've gotta go. I'm on an important mission right now. I'll call you later, okay?

JENNIFER

What do you want me to do, Duke?

DUKE

I want you to do the right thing. Okay? Call you later.

JENNIFER

But--

He cuts her off and switches to the next call. TINA(5) appears on the screen.

TINA

Happy Birthday, Uncle Duke!

DUKE

Tina! How's my favorite niece?

TINA

Fine. When are you coming home?

DUKE

I'll be home in two weeks. For good.

TINA

Yay! I made you something for your birthday! Wanna see it?

DUKE

Sure! That was sweet of you! Thanks!

Tina sends him something. It pops out of the scanner-type device on his end. It is a child's drawing of Duke in a space-suit. He looks very heroic as he stomps on an alien's head. A little girl hugs him while large letters at the top of the drawing read "MY HERO".

DUKE (CONT'D)

Awwwww. That's awesome, sweetie! Am I really your hero?

TINA

Yeah. Because you protect us.

DUKE

Is that you hugging me!

TINA

Yeah. Happy birthday, Uncle Duke! I'm gonna put Daddy on, okay?

DUKE

Okay, honey. When I get back, I'll take you out for ice cream!

TINA

Okay. I love you.

DUKE

Love you too! Bye.

Duke's brother, BRIAN(40) comes on screen.

BRIAN

Hey, little brother! Happy Birthday!

DUKE

Thanks, Brian! How are you and Barbara doing?

BRIAN

Great. We just got some excellent news. Tina's going to have a baby brother!

DUKE

Hey! That's awesome! Congrats! Now I'll have a little nephew to spoil, too!

BRIAN

So, you're done in two weeks, huh?

DUKE

Yes sir! No more of this Army jazz for me!

BRIAN

Do you have another job lined up yet?

DUKE

No, but I was thinking about being a commercial pilot. Good salary, lot's of hot stewardesses!

BRIAN

(laughing)

You're never gonna grow up, Duke! You're 30 today! Isn't it time to settle down? What ever happened to Jennifer.

DUKE

Ugh. Funny you should mention her. She's pregnant.

BRIAN

That's great!

DUKE

No it isn't.

BRIAN

C'mon! It's the best thing for you! You'll see!

DUKE

Don't be too happy for me! I don't even know if she's keeping it yet.

BRIAN

What? Don't tell me you---

HAL

Sir, we are approaching Vidus 4 now.

DUKE

Sorry, Brian! I gotta go, bro! Give my love to Barbara and congrats again!

BRIAN

Yeah. To you too.

DUKE

Ugh.

He shuts off the screen and looks at the picture Tina drew of him once more(pg.8). He frowns and pins it on the wall of the ship.

EXT. SPACE. VIDUS 4.

Duke's ship orbits the blue planet which looks strangely very much like earth.

HAL  
Entering orbit of Vidus 4, sir.

DUKE  
Great. Get the nukes ready, Hal.

HAL  
Already done sir.

DUKE  
Excellent. Hey, I thought you were supposed to wait for orders before loading up. Isn't that a breach of protocol?

HAL  
Affirmative sir. However, I did not perform the loading function. That was done electronically by Houston base, sir.

DUKE  
What? Don't they trust me? Unreal. Okay. Let 'er rip.

HAL  
Sir, regulations and protocol stipulate that we must attempt to contact the colony before launching missiles.

DUKE  
Screw that. They're all dead, Hal.

HAL  
Scanning radio frequencies, sir.

DUKE  
You're an idiot, Hal. You know that?

HAL  
Yes sir.

DUKE

While you're at it, do me a favor and look up abortion clinics and adoption services within a ten mile radius of Jennifer's location, okay?

HAL

Yes sir. Sir?

DUKE

Yes, Hal.

HAL

We have contact with Vidus 4.

DUKE

Impossible. They're all dead. Must be an old distress signal.

HAL

No sir. Sensors indicate this signal is new.

DUKE

Put it on screen.

#### COMMUNICATIONS AREA. CONTINUOUS

The screen comes alive. We see darkness. Out of the black comes a small face. A voice. A little girl (ASTRA, 6) whispers in desperation.

ASTRA

Hello? Please help me! I'm all alone! Please! Help me!

DUKE

Where are you! Where--

The screen goes dark.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Get the signal back, Hal!

HAL

Signal lost, sir.

DUKE

Scan the planet for life forms!  
Now!

HAL  
Scan conducted sir. Positive  
readings.

DUKE  
How many?

HAL  
Dozens of life forms, sir.

DUKE  
They're alive! That bastard lied to  
me! Get me Major Garrett! Now!!

HAL  
On line, sir.

Major Garret appears on the screen.

MAJOR GARRETT  
What is it, Maverick?

DUKE  
You lied to me, you son of a bitch!  
They're alive down there! I'm not  
going to wipe out a bunch of  
innocent people--

MAJOR GARRETT  
What are you talking about,  
soldier? There's no life there!

DUKE  
I just received a signal, a  
message. A little girl, pleading  
for help! Hal ran a scan showing  
dozens of life forms down there, so  
try again, you lying bastard!

MAJOR GARRETT  
You'd better secure that kind of  
talk, soldier, before you find  
yourself in a world of trouble! You  
got me? Understand something,  
Corporal! Those people are dead!  
That planet is dead! Any life forms  
you are reading are either animals  
or your equipment is faulty! Did  
you run a second scan, just to make  
sure?

DUKE  
Well, no. But--

MAJOR GARRETT

Before you accuse a superior officer of attempted murder, you'd better damn well be sure your equipment hasn't malfunctioned! Run another scan!

DUKE

Hal.

HAL

Done sir. Negative results.

DUKE

But..how?

MAJOR GARRETT

Idiot. Running a second scan is something the newest academy puke would do! Maybe it's best that you're leaving us, after all! Finish the job and come home!

DUKE

But, there was that signal. It was a little girl. I saw it with my own eyes!

MAJOR GARRETT

Maybe you picked up an errant signal. Maybe it's an old message played on a loop! Whatever the case, there's no one down there. Blow the thing and come home before I stick a court martial up your ass!

DUKE

Yes, sir....

MAJOR GARRETT

Oh, and just in case you're having second thoughts, we remote-loaded your nuclear payroll from here.

DUKE

I know. Hal told me. I guess you don't trust me--

MAJOR GARRETT

You just showed me that I've got no reason to! Get it done!

DUKE

Yes sir.

The screen goes black. Duke sits contemplatively. He looks at the drawing his niece made (pg.8), focusing on the words "MY HERO".

DUKE (CONT'D)

Hal. Run another scan for radio signals. See if we can pick up that message again.

HAL

Yes sir. Done. Signal received.

DUKE

Really? Put it on screen!

The same message plays again, the little girl asking for help (pg.). It ends.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I guess it was a recording. Poor kid. I'm sure she's dead like all the rest. Prepare to launch, Hal.

HAL

We are now out of position, sir. Orders were to orbit until missiles can be aimed at nuclear reactor, setting off a chain event to destroy the entire planet. We must stay in orbit until the target becomes available again.

DUKE

How long is that going to take?

HAL

Three hours sir.

DUKE:

Great. Damn it. (pause) About that hamburger--

HAL

Sir, I--

DUKE

I know, it's against your programming. Have a sense of humor, will ya--



HAL  
Sir, I'm receiving another signal.

DUKE  
Open the channel!

We see the little girl once more on the screen.

ASTRA  
Hello? Are you there?

DUKE  
Yes! I'm here! Can you hear me?

ASTRA  
Yes! I can hear you! Please help me! They're coming for me!

DUKE  
Who's coming for you? Who?

ASTRA  
They're coming! Please, hurry!

She screams!! The screen goes dark.

DUKE  
Oh, God. I've gotta go down there!

HAL  
Sir, may I remind you of your orders--

DUKE  
Shut up, Hal. Screw orders. There's a little girl down there that needs my help!

HAL  
Sir, I just performed an additional scan for life forms and found none.

DUKE  
Obviously, your equipment is faulty, Hal!

HAL  
Entirely possible. Sir, if there is a life form down there, chances are it is carrying the pathogen.

(MORE)

HAL (CONT'D)

Statistically speaking, if you were to risk exposure by landing on the planet, you would have a 100% chance of contracting the disease and dying.

DUKE

I've gotta take that chance, Hal. Prepare the shuttle and my weapons.

HAL

Sir, the weapons systems are down for maintenance. They will not be back up and operational for five hours.

DUKE

Why would you schedule maintenance now?

HAL

It was scheduled two days ago, sir. Automatically. There were no combat missions in the quadrant at that time.

DUKE

Damn it. How about the blowtorches?

HAL

They are full and ready for utilization, sir.

DUKE

Good. Stop the countdown for the nukes and let's take the ship down.

HAL

Sir, I can not do that.

DUKE

You do it now, Hal! That's an order!

HAL

Sir, the launch sequence has been activated remotely from Houston base.

DUKE

Override.

HAL  
Unable to do so, sir. Major Garrett  
out-ranks you, Corporal Maverick.  
Thus, his orders stand. I am sorry.

                  DUKE  
How much time until the nukes go  
off?

                  HAL  
Two hours and forty minutes, sir.

                  DUKE  
Damn it. Fine. I'll have to make it  
quick, then.

                  HAL  
Sir, the launch will go off as  
scheduled. Orders are clear. If you  
do not return in time--

                  DUKE  
Then I'll see you in hell.

                  HAL  
Yes sir.

                  DUKE  
Get the shuttle ready.

CUT TO:

SPACE. VIDUS 4. ORBIT.

A small SHUTTLE launches from Duke's ship like a slow-moving  
comet.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHUTTLE. CONTINUOUS.

Duke checks his equipment: a BIOHAZARD containment suit with  
life support systems and two BLOW TORCHES. He speaks into a  
mic inside of his helmet.

                  DUKE  
How long until touchdown, Hal?

                  HAL (V.O.)  
Five minutes, sir. Coordinates set  
for a quarter mile outside of the  
base's perimeter.

Duke pulls something from his pocket: the picture his niece drew for him(pg.8), and sticks it to the wall of the shuttle.

The shuttle lands. The doors open. Duke sees:

A desert landscape. He can see the COLONY BASE in the distance. It is dark and forboding. There are no lights or other signs of life.

Duke approaches silently. Hal's voice startles him.

HAL

Sir, I am--

DUKE

Dammit, Hal! You scared the crap out of me! Lower your volume!

HAL

My apologies, sir. Based on the readings being transmitted from your gear, it seems that the composition of the planet's air is 99% that of Earth. Were it not for the presence of the pathogen, you could remove your helmet.

DUKE

Great. Thanks. I'll keep that in mind. Do me a favor and keep quiet, okay? If I need you, I'll call you. Capeesh?

HAL

Indeed, sir.

Duke approaches the front gate of the Colony. Something scurries quickly in the darkness behind him. He wheels around and activates his BLOWTORCH. Silence.

DUKE

Hal? You getting any life readings in my radius?

HAL

No sir.

DUKE

Good. Just nerves, I guess.

He takes a step closer and sees that there is a large HOLE in the gate. What looks like BLOODY FLESH is hung around it's edges. Duke removes a device and bathes it in a green light.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Sending you a sample scan, Hal.

HAL  
Sample received sir.

DUKE  
Well, what is it?

HAL  
Undetermined, sir. It has the appearance of human flesh, but with unusual characteristics. Accelerated rot being one of them. Fascinating.

DUKE  
You're a nerd, Hal.

HAL  
Thank you, sir.

Something jumps from the shadows, pouncing on Duke! He flips it over, judo-style. It crashes up against the fence and squares off with him!

Duke stares at the creature, a rat-like animal the size of a large cat! It bares its' fangs and leaps at him once more.

Duke punches the animal and blasts it with the blow-torch. It squeals and runs off, a ball of fire.

HA  
Sir, I am detecting numerous life forms--

DUKE  
A little late, Hal, thanks!

HAL  
Sir?

DUKE  
What?

HAL  
Move. Now.

Jake takes cover as a SWARM of rat-creatures pours from the base like a biblical plague. They scurry across the planet's surface as if they are running from SOMETHING.

As they pass, Duke makes his way past the broken gate and into the base.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKNESS. THE VIDUS 4 BASE.

Pitch black darkness. We hear the sounds of shuffling. Something LARGE moves SLOWLY through the darkness.

Suddenly, indicators on Duke's suit begin beeping LOUDLY.

DUKE

Dammit, Hal! My suit is making a ton of noise! What the hell is going on! Shut it down!

HAL (V.O.)

Yes sir.

We hear a GROAN...is it the wind? Duke pauses. He whispers into his mic.

DUKE

Hal, are you getting anything? Life forms?

HAL

Negative sir. However, the planet's atmosphere may be making it difficult for my scanners to properly detect any life forms.

DUKE

That's comforting. What happened with my suit.

HAL

Sir, I regret to inform you that the integrity of your suit has been compromised. Check your left arm.

He does. There is a large tear, and some BLOOD.

DUKE

Dammit. The "rat" must've got me. Is that why the suit was beeping?

HAL

Yes.

DUKE

Well, what does it mean?

HAL

It means the suit has analyzed your injury and determined that you have been infected, sir.

DUKE

By the pathogen that killed the whole colony?

HAL

Yes.

DUKE

Dammit!

He throws his blow-torch to the ground in anger.

DUKE (CONT'D)

How long do I have left?

HAL

Approximately five hours sir.

DUKE

Fantastic! I can't believe this! I'm gonna die on this God-forsaken rock for what? Because I tried to play the hero?

HAL

Sir, the sensors on your suit are sending back information to the ships computers. It may be possible to synthesize a vaccine.

DUKE

Well, that's good news. Get to work on it!

HAL

Yes sir.

We hear MORE groans. It can't be the wind.

HAL:

Initial test results on the material you scanned shows it is indeed human flesh, infected with the same pathogen you have contracted. It seems to have the effect of.....

DUKE

Hold, on Hal.

In the darkness, we see pairs of GREEN GLOWING lights bouncing up and down towards him.

He stoops down to pick up his blow-torch and lights it. We see....

DOZENS of ZOMBIES shuffling their way towards Duke! Their eyes GLOW a HIDEOUS GREEN as they draw closer...closer...

HAL

...of re-animating flesh, sir.

DUKE

Tell me about it! Fire up the shuttle, Hal! I'm getting out of here!

He backs away from the zombies, fumbling towards the entrance. Just then, Duke hears....

...the SCREAMS of a little girl!

DUKE (CONT'D)

Little girl! Where are you?

She screams again!!

ASTRA

Help me! Help!!! Ahhhhh!

The screams seem to emanate from deep in the building. He looks at the exit and then back at the Zombies. Should he stay or should he go?

DUKE

I know I'm gonna regret this! Hang on! I'm coming!

Duke fires up the blow-torch and begins blasting the zombies! It slows them down just long enough for him to push past them and run down the corridors and deep into the building.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BASE.

Duke follows the screams when they suddenly STOP.

DUKE

Oh no. Little girl!

Something grabs Duke from behind! He wheels around to find...Astra, holding onto him for dear life.



ASTRA

You came! Thank you! We've got to get out of here. Now!

DUKE

How did you--

Something grabs Duke from behind once more. This time, it is a zombie. It knocks the blow-torch from his hand and a struggle ensues! The creature attempts to BITE him numerous times.

ASTRA

Don't let it bite you!

DUKE

I'm trying not to! How do you kill these things?

Astra picks up a large microscope and slams the creature over the head, killing it INSTANTLY.

DUKE (CONT'D)

So that's how you do it. C'mon, let's go!

ASTRA

We can't go that way! They'll all be waking up now. Follow me!

He does. Astra leads him down a long corridor. We begin to see zombies at one end, then zombies at the other. They close in on them. Suddenly, Astra grabs Duke's hand and pulls him down to the floor, where they slip into an AIR VENT large enough for a man to fit.

INT. AIR VENT. CONTINUOUS.

Astra locks the vent from the inside, and for the moment, they are safe. Hal reaches out via radio.

HAL

Sir, your suit's sensors indicate an increase in heart rate and breathing. Are you okay?

DUKE

No. How long until the ship is in position to nuke this place?

HAL

One hour, sir.

DUKE

Dammit.

ASTRA

Who are you talking to?

DUKE

My ship. Hang on. Hal, how's it going with the vaccine?

HAL

Very well sir. I project a 75% chance of success.

DUKE

Excellent. You have the shuttle fired up, right?

HAL

Affirmative.

DUKE

Good. Keep it warm. I'll be bringing a guest aboard.

He winks at Astra. She smiles.

HAL

Sir, may I remind you that your guest may also be infected?

DUKE

Right. Just have the ship synthesize two doses of antidote.

HAL

Yes sir.

DUKE

That was an easy one, Hal! I thought you were the smart one, here!

HAL:

Yes(static)....indicates...(static)

DUKE

Hal? Hal! Dammit. I lost contact with the ship.

ASTRA

What's your name?

DUKE

Duke. What's yours?

She hugs him tightly.

ASTRA

Astra.

DUKE

Okay, Astra. Listen, I've got a ship about half a mile from here. Is there another way out?

ASTRA

Yes, but it's dangerous. It's better to wait until morning. That's when they sleep.

DUKE

Honey, we don't have until morning. In fact, we've got an hour until my ship destroys this planet. So we've got to get out of here. Now. Show me the way out.

ASTRA

Okay. This way.

He follows her down a small, tight passageway.

INT. THE AIR VENTS. CONTINUOUS.

DUKE

What happened here, Astra?

ASTRA

I moved her with my Daddy. He was a scientist.

DUKE

Your dad, is he...?

ASTRA

Dead? Yes. He became very sick. They all did. Some of them died. But then they came back. They started biting people, and then....

DUKE

It's okay, honey. I think I get the idea. Is there anyone else left?

ASTRA  
I don't think so.

DUKE  
How did you survive? How long have  
you been by yourself?

There is a large noise.

ASTRA  
Shhhh. They're here.

DUKE  
There's more of those people?

ASTRA  
No. Not people.

There is a rumble. It grows louder. Louder. Louder. We hear  
screeching...a roar? Astra screams AS.....

Hundreds of the rat-like creatures(pg)scurrying down the  
corridor towards them. There is something different about  
these creatures....their eyes GLOW a hideous GREEN.

DUKE  
Oh, Jesus. They're infected, aren't  
they?

Astra SCREAMS as the VERMIN squirm towards them in WAVES.  
Duke takes Astra into his arms and closes his eyes, waiting  
for the creatures to overrun them.

Suddenly, the animals part AROUND Duke, passing him without  
harm!

Shocked, he opens his eyes....and we see they are GLOWING  
GREEN. Astra looks at him and screams!

She pulls away from Duke, huddling in a corner.

DUK  
Astra! What is it?

ASTRA  
Your eyes! You're one of them!  
Please don't hurt me!

He grabs a compact mirror-type device from his suit and looks  
at himself. Shocked, he looks over at Astra, whose eyes are  
ALSO glowing.

DUKE

Oh no. Astra, listen to me! If we get to the ship, I can save the both of us! But you've got to trust me, okay?

She shakes her head, "no".

ASTRA

That's why my Daddy said before he...before he...

He holds up the mirror to her face. She sees her reflection and screams.

DUKE

The ship, Astra. We don't have a lot of time!

Weeping, she leads him towards a long, dark tunnel.

EXT. NIGHT. VIDUS 4. SURFACE.

Duke and Astra emerge from a vent onto the surface of the planet. Duke tosses his helmet.

DUKE

I guess I won't be needing this anymore. Hal?

Static. We see Duke is becoming very ill. He slumps to the ground.

ASTRA

It's happening. You're changing!

DUKE

The ship. Let's get to the ship. Only chance.

Frightened, she helps him to his feet and towards the ship.

THE SHUTTLE. CONTINUOUS.

Duke and Astra reach the top of a large hill and see....the shuttle surrounded by zombies! She screams, drawing their attention.

DUKE

Astra, don't be...don't be scared. I don't think....they'll hurt us. Just like the rats.

(MORE)

DUKE (CONT'D)  
We're...infected already. They  
won't....

Sure enough, they make their way towards the ship, and the  
zombies let them pass! Suddenly, Duke's radio comes back on!

HAL  
Sir?

DUKE  
Hal....Hal....bring us back.

HAL  
Hurry sir, you have only ten  
minutes until the ship launches  
it's missiles.

Duke and Astra enter the ship....and find a zombie inside!

DUKE  
Get...get out of here....ship can't  
hold...the weight of three people.  
It'll crash. Get out!

A weakened Duke grabs the zombie and they begin fighting.

HAL  
Sir, eight minutes.

Astra grabs a heavy item and smashes it over the zombies'  
head, killing it. Duke smiles.

DUKE  
That's...two...I owe you, kid.

He pushes the body out of the shuttle and closes the door.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Hal, how's the vaccine....going?

HAL  
Successful, sir.

DUKE  
Excellent. Take us home and blow  
this place.

HAL  
Sir, ship supplies were only enough  
to synthesize one dose. I'm afraid  
one of you will have to stay.

Duke looks at Astra, who is getting weaker by the minute. His eyes glowing, brighter, he hears the engines beginning to roar.

Duke makes his way over towards Astra and places her in his seat, buckling her in.

ASTRA

Duke....where are you going....

HAL

Six minutes sir.

Duke looks over at the drawing his niece made for him and pulls it off the wall. He stumbles over to the exit.

DUKE

Hal...

HAL

Sir.

DUKE

I'm sending my guest up to you.  
Administer...the vaccine...at once.  
You hear me?

HAL

And what about yourself, sir?

DUKE

Never mind me...you do as you're  
told.

HA

Yes sir. Engaging engines now. Five  
minutes to missile launch.

Duke pats Astra on the head and exits the shuttle.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIDUS 4.

Duke watches the shuttle rise into the atmosphere and collapses to the ground. We see the horde of zombies begin to surround his lifeless body. DARKNESS.

CUT TO:

INT. A BRIGHTLY-LIT ROOM.

Duke's eyes open. The brightness makes him squint. He sits up and finds himself in a white room, so clean it almost seems supernatural.

DUKE

Hello?

A door opens and bright light emanates from it, blinding him. The door closes. We see a smiling Astra in a gleaming white robe.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Astra. Are we....

ASTRA

Dead? No Mr. Maverick, I assure you we are quite alive.

He is puzzled by her mature demeanor.

DUKE

Then where are we?

ASTRA

On Vidus 4.

DUKE

I don't understand. I thought my ship nuked Vidus 4.

She laughs.

ASTR:

No, this planet is still intact.

DUKE

What the hell is going on here?

ASTRA

Mr. Maverick, I'm afraid you've been lied to. And not just by me.

DUKE

You're not a little girl, are you?

ASTRA

According to the human definition, no. But for a member of my race, I would be considered still quite young. Let me explain.



DUKE

Please do.

ASTRA

You were sent here to destroy this planet, but not for the reasons you were lead to believe. Your military had detected the presence of my people on this planet, and, unable to make contact, but quite aware of our power, decided to strike before we made the decision to do the same. Thus, you were given a false story concerning your true mission, which was to destroy us.

DUKE

So what was all that? You know, the base, those creatures, the zombies? Was that all--

ASTRA

An illusion? Indeed.

DUKE

But I came there to destroy you, and you just toyed with me, huh?

ASTRA:

No. Not toyed. Tested.

DUKE

Tested me for what?

ASTRA

Mr. Maverick, we were never in any danger from your missiles. In fact, we could have destroyed you at any time. Further, we could easily destroy your planet as well.

DUKE

But you spared me? Us? Why?

ASTRA

Because you spared ME. You sacrificed your OWN life for mine. Empathy. Compassion. Respect for the sanctity of life. You see, these are traits that are NOT found in every walk of life, human or otherwise. We decided to judge your entire people on the actions of one person: you.

(MORE)

ASTRA (CONT'D)

And what did you do? You showed kindness, mercy, and love. You showed us that the human race should NOT be destroyed, because where ONE such as you can be found, so can MANY more. Humanity is worth saving, Mr. Maverick. You just proved it to us.

DUKE

Wow. So what now?

ASTRA

Now? You go home, Mr. Maverick. Duke.

She approaches him and embraces him tightly.

ASTRA (CONT'D)

She was right, you know. You are a hero.

She hands Duke Tina's picture(pg.8), and walks out of the room. It begins to glow brightly.

THE SHIP.

Duke awakens on board his ship as it zooms towards Earth.

HAL

Good morning, sir.

DUKE

Hey, Hal. How are you....uh...feeling?

HAL

Sensors indicate all is normal sir. ETA to Earth is 24 hours.

DUKE

Excellent. I can't wait to get home.

HAL

Sir, I arranged the data you requested earlier.

DUKE

Data?

HAL

Yes. Concerning abortion clinics and adoption agencies in the vicinity of Jennifer's location, sir.

DUKE

Oh. Yeah. Do me a favor and get Jennifer on the line, will you?

HAL

Yes sir.

INT. THE SHIP. COMMUNICATIONS AREA.

Jennifer comes on screen.

JENNIFER

Hi.

DUKE

Hi. I'm uh...heading home. I'll be there sometime tomorrow.

JENNIFER

That's nice.

DUKE

Listen, what we talked about before, you know...

JENNIFER

The baby.

DUKE

Yeah. You didn't...you haven't....

JENNIFER

No. I'm keeping this baby, Duke-

DUKE

Oh, thank God.

JENNIFER:

-no matter what---what did you just say?

DUKE

I want you to keep the baby, Jen. I want US to keep the baby.

Jennifer smiles. He smiles back.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Tell my little girl that Daddy's  
coming home.

JENNIFER  
How do you know it's a girl?

DUKE  
Lucky guess.

She smiles and places her hand on the screen. He places his  
hand on the screen as if he could touch hers.

Fade to black.

THE END.