scene 3

First Hope

Four more uninhabitable exoplanets had been evaluated and rejected, after another 12 light years of travel from Earth, and ten more years of flight. Even extended sessions in the virtual reality simulators had lost much of their appeal. Each crew member's long talks with *Alexandria* seemed to be the only thing that kept hope alive. Even seeing Rowan and Tarachand ("Bright Star") grow and learn about life aboard *Alexandria* didn't give them real happiness.

The broadcasts from Earth had gotten even more desperate and despairing. Imagining what must be happening on Earth gave the crew no comfort, either.

Alexandria approached another planet. And, this time, the data from *Alexandria's* sensors indicated positive results for the fourth planet. The data was the best the crew had seen yet and it was hard for the crew not to have hope. It was enough to send two people down to investigate.

Sasha Mendel and Aria Lee were sent. While they reported a breathable atmosphere, liquid water, and suitable temperatures, they also recorded the eerie ruins of an alien civilization that spanned the world. They picked an undamaged area of one of the larger cities, avoiding the craters and the radioactive flats of glassy slag; Aria landed the shuttle in the middle of a once-beautiful plaza. They poked about the buildings, finding one that resembled a library. During their investigation, Sasha fell through a weak spot on the floor, into a room that looked almost like a surgical theater.

By the time that Aria reached Sasha, there was a strange glow around Sasha. Sasha had a pulse, was breathing, but was not responding to any external stimuli. There was some blood, smeared across what looked like a deep wound, but Sasha wasn't bleeding any more. Sasha clearly had been very lucky.

It took some time to get Sasha out of the basement and back to the *Alexandria*. There's still no response from Sasha, and the strange glow has faded.

TYPICAL MESSAGES FROM EARTH

UEC TRANSMISSION
UEC NEWS NETWORK: (Breaking) United Earth Concord Emergency Services reported that heroic efforts have resulted in the rescue of all legitimate, loyal citizens from the unusual flooding events that have befallen several cities on the eastern coast of North America. Resources are being diverted to assist those UEC Emergency Services teams addressing minor flooding problems in South Africa. The UEC Relocation Services have opened temporary relocation camps in the Appalachian and Ural mountains. The UEC News Network will continue to keep legitimate, loyal citizens informed of relevant weather concerns in your area….

UEC TRANSMISSION
UEC NEWS NETWORK: (Breaking) The United Earth Concord Military Directorate announces, with regret, the total destruction of Seville, by a nuclear blast, due to the continued illegal actions of illegitimate forces. Forensic specialists have determined that the blast was caused by improper handling of nuclear material, an unfortunate side effect of untrained terrorists using such weapons of destruction. UEC Emergency Services continue cleanup operations in Nantes. The removal of radioactive rubble has been complicated by severe thunderstorms.

PARTIAL UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION 1
....the free Earth Army has taken over UEC refugee camps in Mongolia and is currently securing water and supplies to help the six million starving refugees in.....

PARTIAL UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION 2
….remaining along the Danube is gone as the river has risen another five feet above the twelve feet above flood stage that it was experiencing last week. Reports from India suggest that the Ganges….