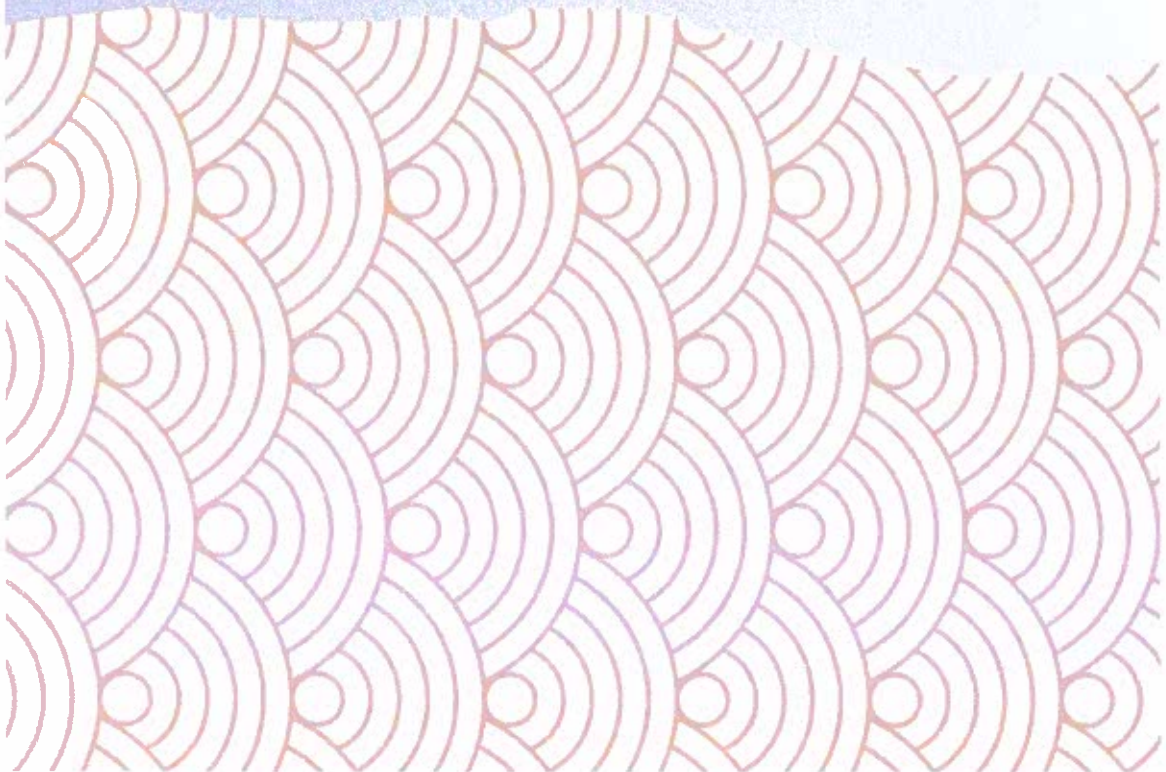




Abort



Abort

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LOG ON: DECEMBER 20, 2052

(18:40 UT)

Evening news broadcast of the Democratic Union News Bureau

Special Correspondents from DUSPACE:

Lake Louise, São Paulo, Houston.

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Lake Louise Good evening. I'm Carla Diaz reporting from the DUSPACE facility in Lake Louise. With me tonight, as always, is my co-anchor Tony Trieste, reporting from DUSPACE São Paulo, and our technical correspondent, Mark Arroyo in DUSPACE Houston. We begin tonight with Tony's report.

São Paulo Thank you, Carla. For tonight's feature we have the renewed competition for political and economic sovereignty of off-world colonies.

The race to colonize Hyperion, the unfrozen moon of Saturn, is reminiscent of our great-grandparents' race to Earth's moon that two other superpowers waged in the middle of the last century. But there are huge differences. Now the target is beyond what can be seen from Earth with the naked eye; this moon is not even round, and the goal is not to walk and leave, but to stay. Once again, the strategies of the contestants are very different. As different, well, as—night and day.

The Eurasians of the People's Republic, which now stretches from Vladivostok to Lisbon, constructed a gigantic vessel that's essentially an interplanetary space station. Now well into its journey, it carries a complement of fifteen. Nine passengers are in deep sleep while six crew members command the space station, on Earthmoon-time based duty rotations. The station had been built just outside Earth's atmosphere over the course of a quarter of a century. At last—a little less than two and a half years ago—it was propelled out of Earth's gravity and drifted toward a series of encounters with Earth's sister planets closer to the center of the solar system, the so-called "inner planets" and then on to the sun. From each encounter it gained more momentum as it glided on what was projected to have been a thirty-month mission. When eventually established in position above the Saturnian moon of Hyperion, it will house a colony of forty souls. Twenty-three other pioneers departed later and are now traveling in faster, direct-flight space cruisers. These ships are bringing provisions and are about a half year into their seven-month journey. The remaining two colonists are *in uteri* among the cruiser passengers. These two are a "first" for any space program to date. That is, at least that we know about—and who are aboard purposefully.

Lake Louise But the Democratic Union chose to send three automated speed cruisers, each with just four crew members aboard, all in stasis. Upon arrival in the Saturnian system, the vessels are to dock in a pair or as a trio, based on mission success. The fabled USA/NASA programmatic support theory of redundancy survived into the current agency, inheriting cautions and back-ups in the event of problems. Three ships instead of one. Three launch sites rather than a central location. So, the three cruisers were launched

individually within days of one another from DUSPACE facilities in Houston, São Paulo, and here at Lake Louise. Cargo freighters with settlers then took off halfway into their flights and are to arrive some weeks after the cruisers rendezvous successfully and complete their link-and-dock maneuver. Each of the three advance cruisers has adequate provisions for that ship's smaller crew, which was to be awakened a week before entry into the Saturnian biosphere.

São Paulo You know, Carla, we keep hearing spurious reports from the Eurasians, intercepting their transmissions occasionally on our downlinks as we try to broadcast from here, overlooking the banks of Rio Tietê.

Lake Louise Yes, Tony. But most of our time is focused on trying to learn how the three vessels of our own Union are doing, and communicating with domestic downlinks in visual images, sound packages, and through VR-5D systems. It's these relatively new VR-5Ds that are the trickiest to keep working and open. For an insight into how all this works, let's turn to Mark Arroyo, our technical consultant in Houston. Mark?

Houston Thank you, Carla. Good evening, everyone. The VR-5D system has been around for about six years on the consumer gaming market. But this is the first time DUSPACE has used it in a mission of such magnitude. Our upgrades will be new to even some of the long-time gamers out there—and to office and school environment users who have begun using them for remote communications and training, and in education settings. We convert computer-encoded telemetry from the vessels, including the biologicals from the hibernating crews. We project the images of their crafts as a hologram above a tabletop disc. The VR-5D stands for *Virtual Reality in Five Dimensions*. The technology suspends a holographic image above an elliptical, concave disc that rests on a tabletop or desk, or is embedded within its surface. Room size displays are mounted atop projection platforms. Disc controls enlarge or minimize the hologram for individual or group viewing or to allow for closer examination of details. There really was nothing like this around during the last space race you referenced earlier, Tony.

São Paulo Not in reality. But I discovered something like it in a historic science fiction movie from a decade after the moon race era. I came across it in a college film study course I reported on last year in preparation for this mission. In a film called *Stars Wars: A New Hope* the heroes were aboard their spaceship, *Millennium Falcon*. Two travelers—an alien and an android—were playing a game on what looked like a twentieth-century circular chessboard. But the playing pieces were holographic images of citizens and creatures from different cultures. Quite remarkably, it seems science fiction gets closer to scientific fact as the march of time ushers in new inventions and discoveries. You can research it as a game called “dejarik.”

Houston I'll have to visit the film library here in Houston to see that. The VR-5D is actually far more complicated than that sounds, because of the physics of the distances involved. Also, because once you leave Earth's world of three-dimensional spaces—of height, length, and depth—you must add a fourth dimension for time and a fifth dimension for the coordinates within the galaxy itself, to define a specific location. These VR-5Ds

account for those fourth and fifth dimensions by suspending the image of, or from within, a given spaceship relative to its celestial position along a time continuum of: our three Union vessels, the Eurasian space station, and the major planetary bodies and gravitational forces influencing the ships. The gravitational forces are the hardest to imagine when watching the VR-5D because the ships' exterior images move above the viewer's disc, with clearly seen reference points for planets, moons, or asteroids—but without any visualization of planetary or galactic gravity encountered.

São Paulo You know, Mark, we telecommunicators thought the technology of broadcasting would be our greatest challenge in covering this mission. That was before everything went awry. At least some of us here in São Paulo think of it that way. Our corporate executives in Denver, Acapulco, and La Paz don't seem to see it that way, though. But I'm getting ahead of myself ...

Lake Louise ... and you should know better than to do that, from your journalistic training at the University of Michigan-Great Lakes. This is your co-anchor, Carla Diaz. We'll be back after this word.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
São Paulo and Lake Louise - December 20, 2052 **(18:55 UT)**

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São Paulo What was that, Carla? I was about to ...

Lake Louise You were about to get us bounced off broadcast is what you were about to do, Tony.

São Paulo But ...

Lake Louise No "buts," Tony. I've been here a long time. And I plan to stay here. You can't go pulling me down with you—as a co-anchor. It doesn't matter to Denver that I have seniority. Guilt by association is the way the Chief will evaluate—and terminate—me.

São Paulo Hey, I thought you agreed that people had to ...

Lake Louise Call me later. Securely. Now, get back on station.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
São Paulo and Denver - December 20, 2052 **(19:23 UT)**

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São Paulo No, sir. She doesn't know I'm calling. I'm seeking directive explanation for my own understanding. You keep sending us materials on the asteroid and the ship. But it's a

distraction. Why are we dealing with facts together for broadcast when the only real important thing is to get the crew back off Hektor?

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
Denver to São Paulo and Lake Louise and Houston - December 20, 2052 (19:25 UT)

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Denver Okay, you three. I've been told by my bosses. And now I'm talking to you as your Chief of Broadcast. Mr. Trieste says he needs "directive clarification" on why facts about the ship and asteroid are heading up your next broadcast agenda. So here it is, Tony: This is what gets done at a time of tragedy. The facts help soothe the spirit by occupying the mind. And the mind makes the spirit try to cope with the facts. Of course, it's an outright intrusion. It's what news media have done for over a hundred years. Ever since the telecommunications age of the last century. Make people debate the facts. Make the transfer of information about the item seem most absorbing and important. What is ultimately essential. It was done when Apollo 13 went out of control on the earliest lunar missions. It's what people did when planes crashed or were blown out of the sky by terrorists in the last third of that century. It works. So just do it. I'm downloading the briefing now. Study it, so you guys are conversant for your next briefings and broadcast.

 And, Tony. Listen to your co-anchor for God's sake. Or at least for your own.

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Download for Background Data Interactive Only
Denver to São Paulo and Lake Louise and Houston - December 20, 2052 (19:30 UT)

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**TECHNICAL BRIEFING:
HEKTOR**

Asteroid displaying several unique characteristics—some cosmic, some man-assigned. Not located in the asteroid belt *per se* between Mars and Jupiter. Instead, it is in a cluster that sits under the tension of intragalactic gravitational fields about 60 degrees ahead of Jupiter's orbit, in one of two areas called "Lagrangian points." This lead group has asteroids named after Greek warriors, except for Hektor, a Trojan spy. The corresponding group of asteroids following 60 degrees behind Jupiter in its orbit are named for Trojan warriors, except for Patroclus, a Greek spy. Additional and distinct characteristics most essential to the current catastrophe may be related to the fact that Hektor is one of only a few known binary asteroids. It may have been two separate bodies in the past that were joined by a mid-space collision strong enough to imbed them together, but not violent enough to detonate them into smaller bits. Some think they are just locked so closely in orbit that they only appear to be one when viewed from far away.

Our best theory of the current situation to date is that the perturbations brought on by a massive alignment of planets tore Hektor apart, with the lead body hurled into a new orbit which evidently crossed in front of the path of our space cruiser, *Xanadu*, as the ship was making its outer penetration of Jupiter's orbit. The ship did this for two reasons. First, to be drawn into Jupiter's gravitational field to alter its flight path. This is referred to as

“bending” the line of flight. Second, to pick up speed when attracted toward Jupiter. The combination of changing direction and increasing speed is called “sling-shotting.” This course correction happens as the ships continue deeper into Jupiter’s gravitational field. Once the influence of Jupiter’s gravity slingshots the ships, they avoid plunging directly into Jupiter and they become set on a new course, with enough speed to continue on their journey, heading then toward Saturn.

Back to our discussion of Hektor, before the separation of its two parts, astronomers knew some things about Hektor. These things may or may not be significant going forward. First, it did orbit on its axis at a rate of a little less than every 7 hours—6.921 to be more exact. As it did that, it reflected sunlight to a varied degree, from light to dark. But some astronomers also thought there were strange dark and light spots on the surface. These were called “albedo markings.” Hektor’s orbit used to be fairly circular, shadowing Jupiter’s, with a variation of its closest distance from the sun being about 5.08 astronomical units and its most distant being about 5.32 astronomical units.

Correspondents should spend time explaining that the nearest approach to the sun is called “perihelion” and the farthest away is called “aphelion,” because audiences will hear experts use these terms. We want the viewers to feel comfortable and conversant. Your doing this will also distract them from other matters if your reporting leads them to delve into these specifics, which will be new information for most of the general public. Another such concept to work into your broadcast coverage is that of astronomical units. Make sure people don’t mistake this for a light year. Instead, it is the average distance Earth is from the sun, splitting its own perihelion and aphelion distances. Roughly speaking, an astronomical unit is about 93 million miles, specifically it’s approximately 92,960,116 miles. You should begin to call them AUs after a while.

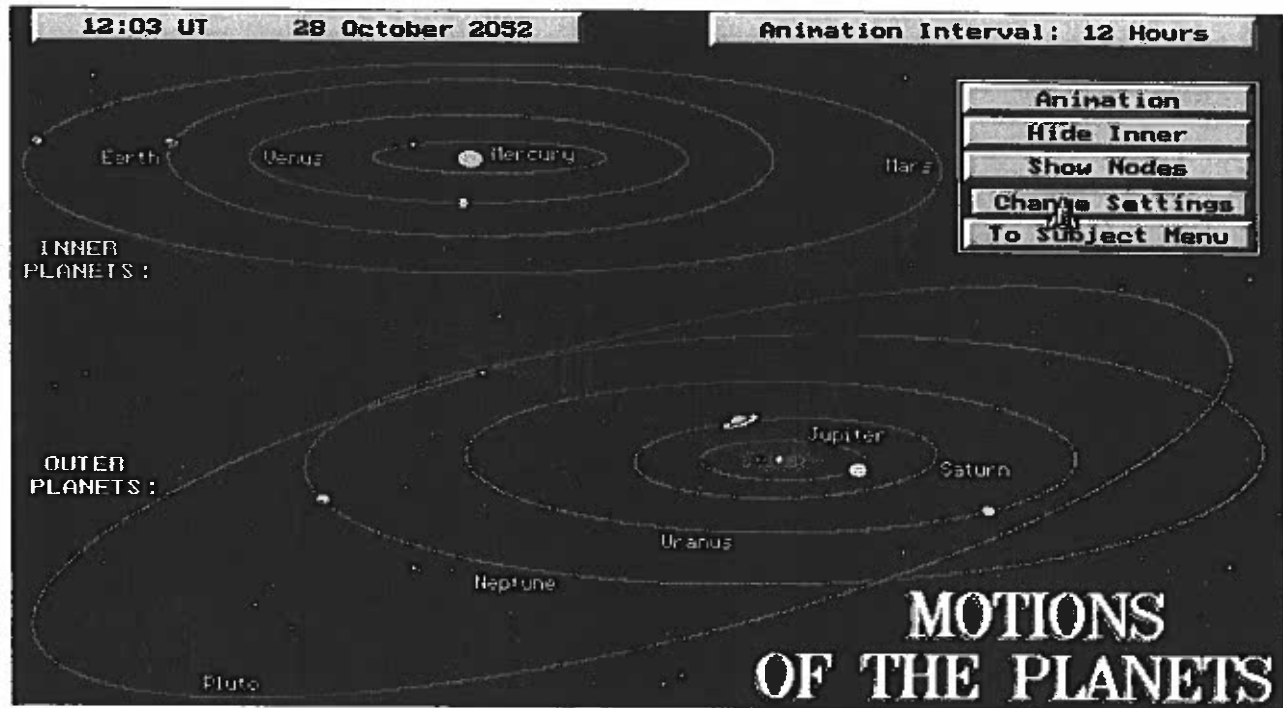
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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
Houston to São Paulo and Lake Louise - December 20, 2052 **(21:50 UT)**
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Houston Okay, guys, from the technical standpoint here’s what looks like happened: At approximately 12:03 Universal Time on October 28, about seven weeks ago, no fewer than six of the nine named planets in the solar system were in significant alignment, with the sun in the center. Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and Uranus were aligned on one side of the sun. All were above the Ecliptic, that is more or less on the level plane within which Earth orbits the sun. Across on the other side of the system Saturn and Pluto were significantly aligned with the others, but were below the Ecliptic. At the same time, Earth, Neptune, and Mars were all together between the other planet groupings on the same side of the system, with Neptune below the Ecliptic and Mars right on the Ecliptic with Earth, orbiting from below to above the Ecliptic at the time.

I’ve provided graphics of the alignments and positions for you to grasp quickly in a rough way. We should have refined graphics for you by broadcast time use.

If you need another distraction as a sidebar, you could use a featurette I’ve provided in a Press Kit. It’s about mechanical models of the planets and their movements, around the sun and relative to each other. The models date back to 1704 and 1713 in what was England then. The money behind some of the model-making came from the Duke of Orrery,

so the models are sometimes called “orreries.” Your viewers with kids can access VR-5D kits that can be presented as educational and fun tools for home and school.



São Paulo But Mark, I’ve just gone through the rough graphics. Why are you still including Pluto. It’s considered a dwarf planet now, right?

Houston That’s true, Tony. But we are discussing the identifiable influence of the gravitational push and pull between planets and nearby heavenly bodies—and, as a result, on Hektor. The 1930 discovery of Pluto was based on Lowell’s 1902 hypothesis that a planet was influencing the orbits of Saturn and Uranus. Since it still might be exerting influence in this region of the galaxy, I kept it in my calculations—regardless of the other criteria for its downgrade in 2006.

Lake Louise Mark, you say we’ll have graphics for broadcast. What will they show? How do I integrate them into the broadcast I have only a couple of hours to script?

Houston I’ll explain—and I’ll send you notes for background and edit. I’ll also be on hand if you want me to present for you.

Lake Louise I think I’d like to keep it journalistic, not scientific. News, not snooze!

Houston Wow, Carla. That’s a little harsh. Okay, then. Here you go. The solar system and the sun were completely exposed on fully half their sides, with the significant

alignment creating a borderline of vulnerability from above, right through, and below the Ecliptic, energized by the huge gravitational synergy of the alignment.

It was through this line of vulnerability that the spaceships were to pass on their journey to “catch up” with the “gaseous giants,” the “outer planets.” You can touch on these terms in your scripted news breaks or shorter featurettes.

The mission plan calculations did not account for an asteroid—most likely the binary Hektor—to be still tracking through space on the far side of this line, 60 degrees out in front of Jupiter, away from Neptune, Mars, and Earth. The new hypothesis is that the asteroid was so adversely affected by the alignment’s gravitational force that it was slowed in its journey through the heavens and then was wrenched apart under the stress and strain caused by this multi-planetary exertion of power.

Your broadcasts can indicate that the scientists consider Hektor to be a good candidate for this unprecedented activity for another reason. Hektor was different from most other exceptional binary asteroids in that it approached the Ecliptic from the perpendicular and avoided near-Earth orbits. Some more viewer-friendly stargazers have compared this to the frequency of race cars on an oval track hitting one another being much greater than a bird-dropping falling onto the track from above striking one of the race cars whizzing by.

Remember that in the background you received earlier, from Earth-based telescopes Hektor had the appearance of a pair of spheres fused together. First seen in the nineteenth century, astrophysicists consider the heat and energy of two asteroids colliding long ago provided what was needed to fuse them together. Now, they think the gravitational forces of nine planets of the solar system all exerting on it suddenly from the perpendicular reversed the result and split Hektor apart into two separate spheres again.

Only trouble is, one of those two globes crossed right in the path of one of the Union’s Saturn mission speed cruisers, attracting it and causing it to crash land on the errant asteroid.

São Paulo What about ship herself? We’ve got to make it more than just a metal heap of space junk piled onto a deserted asteroid. For the audience, I mean.

Houston That’s a good idea, Mark. So, now let’s look at the ship herself, the *Xanadu*. The lower region of the ship was to have been their mess hall and social gathering spot, once settled into docked orbit over Hyperion. It was dubbed “Sir Vic’s.” It was named after the British Columbia Victoria Station watering hole favored by the flight engineers here on Earth.

It forms the lowermost section of the ship before the support legs split off to form the tripod on which *Xanadu* rested when she was back on her launch pad. In Sir Vic’s there are couches with padded cushions to sit on at the end of the long fourteen hour shifts they were to have worked once they made it through the asteroid belt and beyond to the outer planets. As stated earlier, between Jupiter and Saturn the crew was to have been awakened, about a week before arrival in Saturn’s orbit.

Now, located above Sir Vic’s when the ship is standing upright is the stasis cabin. That’s where the crew made the voyage from Earth. The cabin has a dedicated atmosphere and there are four self-contained stasis chambers lined up something like bunk beds, two

up and two down. The chambers are set into racks attached to the interior side of the ship's outer bulkheads.

These are the occupiable spaces of the vessel that viewers in your audience will want to know about.

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LOG ON: DECEMBER 21, 2052 **(18:40 UT)**
Evening news broadcast of the Democratic Union News Bureau
Special Correspondents from DUSPACE:
Lake Louise, São Paulo, Houston.

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Lake Louise Good evening. I'm Carla Diaz reporting from the DUSPACE facility in Lake Louise. With me tonight, as always, is my co-anchor Tony Trieste, reporting from DUSPACE São Paulo, and our technical correspondent, Mark Arroyo in DUSPACE Houston.

Welcome again to our coverage of the DUSPACE Saturn Mission. Earlier today we reported on the calamity in space being called "the explosion of Hektor." You will recall the twin sphere-shaped asteroid broke in two and caused one of the Union's Saturn-bound speed cruisers, the *Xanadu*, to crash land on the errant asteroid.

It appears that some cataclysmic activity has taken place on Hektor, or at least the portion of the asteroid on which the ill-fated spacecraft now rests. The on-board transponders have projected images back to Earth that are entirely outrageous and unbelievable, and yet are somehow true. Deep within the recesses of the asteroid itself, left over from its impact long ago, or carried to the asteroid by the spacecraft, there is an organism making its way across the surface of the ship toward the entryway to Sir Vic's. That's the bottommost part of the *Xanadu*. We are trying to project the image onto the video monitors without complete success, because some of the camera transmission equipment on the exterior of *Xanadu* was apparently damaged when the craft crashed into the asteroid remnant. But the transponders for the newer VR-5D devices are still working. So, viewers with that technology available will actually be able to watch what occurs outside the ship, with about a 30-minute, real-time delay.

São Paulo We have been told by sources close to the Mission that there is some kind of creature—yes, that's what it's being called, a "creature," in the vicinity of the spacecraft. These unofficial reports—and we must stress these are unofficial and unconfirmed reports—say the creature is about as big as a lobster, according to those doing the calculations. It resembles an earwig, but has a proboscis like a mosquito's, in addition to pincers mounted in front. It's been crawling around the exterior portal into Sir Vic's for about three hours.

The spin of the remnant of Hektor seems to have almost doubled, rotating now about every three and a half hours. When the sun strikes the side of the asteroid where *Xanadu* is resting, it should be easier to make out this creature which has been mostly in the shade so far, we've been told. It seems to have risen from what the planetary geologists call "regolith." In the case of Hektor's formation, these are the areas of loose, rocky debris left over when the ancient asteroids collided into one another. We expect that *Xanadu* is already in the sunlit area. We should see the VR-5D time-delayed relay shortly.

Houston You know, Tony and Carla, there's an interesting technical twist here. Within the VR-5D hologram there's a flat display that seems to "float" in the upper left quadrant, similar to those your viewers are accustomed to seeing on their vehicle windshield as they fly or drive to work each day. That display for *Xanadu* carries biological telemetry for the crew. These include things such as: brainwaves, heartbeat, respiration, temperature—based on EEGs, EKGs, thermal sensors, and the like. Now, the time delay on receiving those on the "floating" insert panel of the VR-5D is about 3-to-5 minutes shorter than the holographic image creation. The display will appear before the hologram fully resolves.

By way of somewhat more familiar example, even though it's not due to the same physics—perceptually this 3-to-5-minute delay will feel a little bit like the sensation of watching lightning at a distance and listening for thunder during an Earth-bound electrical thunderstorm. We know both the lightning and the thunder are part of the same event, but our senses receive the images and sounds slightly apart from one another—with a difference in the timing based on the distance we are from the storm center.

What this means as we view the *Xanadu* and her crew on Hektor is that we will see the telemetry of the crew on the upper screen or visual display a few minutes before the event related to that telemetry becomes visible on the ... Whoa! Look at that!

Lake Louise Ladies and gentlemen, we now have our first VR-5D display from *Xanadu* on the Hektor fragment. At the top of your hologram, as Tony has been preparing us to see, you will notice the telemetry readings.

It appears all four crew members are still in stasis and alive. This is great news! It appears to us that they've survived the crash landing.

And, yes, now my producer is telling me this is being confirmed—according to the information he just received from Mission Control—and from the data screen portion of our hologram displays. In fewer than five minutes we should be able to see the visual portion of the image come into view in the area that is now a soft green-blue hue above the VR-5D disc on your table or viewing unit, however you have it set up at home or school or work. And I'll remind you that we will be seeing this live for the first time with you—just as you will be. Mark, what are we seeing now?

Houston That's right, Carla. You and our audience will notice that the image area in the center of the holographic field is starting to shimmer. That's an indication that the projected hologram is forming in your units and is about to ... there it is.

Again, this is Mark Arroyo in DUSPACE Houston and ... this is our first look at the craft. *Xanadu* appears to be at the end of a debris trail. The vessel is lying against the surface of Hektor, on its side. Parts of the vessel are strewn behind it. The uppermost side of *Xanadu* should come into view next.

Now, to make sense of the way the images we see will progress and change, I'll explain in advance. The communication to Earth, from the transponders, runs in sequence. Originally there were three transponders outside the vessel and one in each major compartment inside *Xanadu*. Each is also dually programmed with motion sensors. That way, in telecasting, the programmed sequential order from one transponder to the next can be interrupted to follow movement instead.

On this external image sequence, it looks like one of the transponders has been ripped off the ship and is in amongst the debris trail on the ground. Look for the yellow apparatus between those two silver and gold foil struts about 30 meters from the craft. That's the transponder. We are using the grid with an x-axis and a y-axis along the far edges of the holographic reproduction here to calculate that measured distance I mentioned. If you use that "border marking" feature on your display, you can do the same.

Lake Louise Thanks, Mark. My producer has asked me to cut away from *Xanadu* for a few moments. First, we have my report from last week before the current emergency began. I filed it to introduce the crew members to all our fellow Union citizens. The telemetry of their biological data and vital signs is on that report in the "features" section on your VR-5Ds. We'd like to replay that earlier report for you now, so you don't have to find and open that tab in your files index.

To get us ready, for after the 3-to-5-minute delay, to see and meet the crew live from Hektor, we'll preview what you'll see and who you'll meet.

You'll be looking at the interior of the stasis, or travel, cabin of *Xanadu*. You will see the four crew members' individual long-sleep, or stasis, chambers on racks against the far wall, arranged in two lower and two upper berths. The two women of this crew are on the deck level and the two men on this crew are in the overhead berth. This is how the crew traveled from Earth orbit to their current location.

We'll be back to rejoin you live after this short, introductory re-broadcast.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central REPLAY	Lake Louise
Original broadcast - December 12, 2052	(18:50 UT)
Re-Broadcast - December 21	(19:43 UT)

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Justine Bennett is the expedition crew member the rest look up to for her steady leadership, support, and equanimity. During the long days ahead of them after arriving at Saturn, the crew will be linked in a trio of ships awaiting the arrival of the large Union freighters. The pioneers aboard the freighters will form the core of the first colony on Hyperion. But until they appear, it will be Bennett the twelve cruiser crew mates will depend upon. Somewhat demure of spirit on her own behalf, she will advocate for each combatant in a disagreement, without seeming to take sides. All at Mission Control marvel at her peacemaking capabilities. Insiders claim she was picked for this mission for precisely this reason, this attribute. Other candidates for this slot in the three crews have more flight experience. Some others are more physically fit to withstand the stasis period and recover faster. But none of the other potential choices within the three select crews on the speed cruisers keeps people together more closely, more happily, and more productively.

We are looking at her telemetry now on the VR-5D display's upper corner. Contrasted and compared to the others aboard *Xanadu* her blood pressure is steadier, her EEG more consistent, and her respiration less labored. Even in stasis during this part of the journey she is a marvel of peacefulness and tranquility.

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LOG ON: DECEMBER 21, 2052

(19:50 UT)

Broadcast of the Democratic Union News Bureau

Special Correspondents from DUSPACE:

Houston, Lake Louise, São Paulo.

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Houston Hello again, I'm Technical Correspondent Mark Arroyo coming to you from Houston. And that was Carla Diaz reporting nine days ago during *Xanadu's* journey to the "gas giants"—Jupiter and Saturn. But late today on Hektor things are very different. The temperature in Justine Bennett's stasis chamber has increased about 5 degrees centigrade. Telemetry indicates her vital signs are increasing and demonstrating activity beyond what the parameters for stasis are expected to be. Those of you watching over the last hour with VR-5Ds can see from the display that Justine's EEG spiked without any apparent reason.

Since that time, her other life-function measurements and vital signs have begun acting as if her stasis period was altering to a wakened state. But medical personnel and scientists at Mission Control are perplexed. No computers on board *Xanadu*, nor any transmissions from DUSPACE here on Earth, have initiated a waking sequence.

Lake Louise Yet could it be, Mark, that Justine is in some way sensing a danger from the creature outside *Xanadu* and is trying to bring herself to consciousness? Unidentified sources at the space program's medical facility told me two weeks ago "on background" that perhaps they know very little about how or why Justine's personality makes her such a talented peacemaker. Some even conceded that, despite all their high-tech equipment and sophisticated medical and physical examinations of crew members, there might be something deeper within the spirit and soul of this woman that they have no way to quantify or characterize. Now I'm hearing from these same sources that they are postulating that perhaps it may be Justine's same qualities that sense an impending danger to the crew—and are readying to combat it, by forcibly breaking her out of stasis.

São Paulo On that same note, Carla, the ship's exterior transponders are providing VR-5D data and images that show a disturbing increase in the activity of the creature outside on Hektor's surface around *Xanadu*. There seems to be a connection between the creature's activity and Justine's agitation. I've been watching for hours this morning. Someone should review the recorders to check me on this, but I'd swear I've noticed Justine's activity started first and the creature is acting in response. If that's so. I'm ... Well. Let's just wait and see. In the meantime, who shares that lower compartment of the stasis cabin with Justine, Carla?

Lake Louise I won't cut back to my earlier reporting, Tony. I'll just go on memory so we can stay live here on our broadcast.

The second *Xanadu* crew member in the lower berths is Michelle van de Veer. She's a teacher from South Africa, with Dutch ancestry. Michelle's been nominated for teaching honors at almost every school she has taught. Her specialty is with three- and four-year-olds. Michelle was picked for this mission because her instructional methods and subject matter are renowned for promoting cultural and ethnic cross-training. She is in the

forefront of program development for the new colony in order to nurture amity and avoid the ethnic stigmas and political adversities that plagued the globe from the late seventies of the last century through to the 2030 Calamities, particularly the type of ethnic cleansings and tribal warfare that broke the ECC apart and led to the establishment of the People's Republic from Oslo to Johannesburg. She'll be working with new colony couples during their pregnancies, and she'll lay the groundwork for the Hyperion educational centers with the colonists and their children.

São Paulo Oh, no! Excuse me. Carla? Are you ...

Lake Louise Got it, Tony. We're going to take a break now and return you to your regular programming. When we return, we will have live updates from Hektor and more on the other crew members of the Saturn mission.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
São Paulo and Houston and Lake Louise - December 21, 2052 (20:00 UT)

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São Paulo Good God, you two. Are you seeing this? While you were telling us about Michelle, Carla, the telemetries for Justine registered abrupt and elevated degrees of intensity. And the VR-5D images after that show the creature has moved right up to *Xanadu's* hatches and pried open the main port.

Houston Tony. It's Mark. I'm looking at *Xanadu* now. The telemetry from Sir Vic's, the crew's gathering spot, indicates the air in the ship is being drawn out into the asteroid's atmosphere. The systems inside many sealed *Xanadu* compartments are recording massive failures. There's only emergency lighting showing, on interior VR-5Ds and flat screens.

São Paulo Which occurred first, Mark? The creature's aggression or Justine's increased telemetries?

Houston It's too hard to tell because of the damn time delay for the viewing portion of the VR-5D holography to complete the hologram, so we can see clearly what has happened up on Hektor. I wasn't watching to figure out the sequence. I was too horrified by the hologram hovering over the VR-5D in our studio. I ignored the flat screens. Look, there's some kind of probe or extension off the front of the creature. What is that? A mouth?

The VR-5D makes use of available light and Sir Vic's is only blue lit with the emergency lighting right now. Can either of you make that out? Carla? Tony?

São Paulo Not really, Mark, but it's still moving and ... hey, the telemetries for Michelle's respiration and her EEG are increasing. She must be stirring in her stasis chamber, too. She's not as active as Justine yet, but ... Hey, Mark, get a timespan differential marking for these on the VR-5D, will you, please. I would like to be able to explain to the people watching on VR, when we go back to broadcasting, and to describe it to those who are not near one to see for themselves. In case the flat screens from inside *Xanadu* are unreliable.

Houston There's air flowing out of the stasis cabin now, based on the figures I see on the display.

São Paulo And, God Almighty Jesus, look at Justine's brain waves. She's got to be awake inside of herself, even if she still looks like she's under stasis. She looks like she's in stasis, but there's turmoil going on inside.

 The creature's through Sir Vic's and is at the entry port to the stasis chamber. It stopped again at the entry, just as it did when it broke into Sir Vic's.

Houston Maybe the rush of air out of the chamber slowed it somehow.

São Paulo But it's moving again now. That probe thing is wrapping itself around Justine's stasis chamber. It looks like the atmospheric preservation seal clamps to keep the chamber shut are what the probe is feeling now.

Lake Louise I bet the wild excitement and agitation on Justine's telemetry we just saw a while ago were actually her responses to this probing. Remember we are only seeing the probing now, while the telemetry comes through sooner, due to the differences in time delay. She must know that thing is out there. How horrible! This gift of sensing they told me she has with other people—I bet it has her hooked up to this beast and it's terrorizing her for sure.

São Paulo Oh, no! The thing is pounding on the base of Justine's stasis chamber down by her feet. How hard is that transparent cover, Mark? Look, she's pounding back at it from the inside. It must have worked. The probe is recoiling from the cover and ... aggh! The creature just thrust that probe right through the cover of the stasis chamber. What the hell is that thing? Look, it's moving along the face of the transponder lens inside the stasis chamber. It looks like an anteater's snout. There's some movement of Justine's stasis robe. But the probe's not touching it. It's a good meter away. Is that thing doing what it looks like? It's actually *sucking* at her robe. Jesus, her telemetries are off the screen. We can't see it yet, but her life-signs and vitals displays are fully open. Carla, she's awake and fully alert. Good Christ, the telemetries just went flat.

Lake Louise But I can see her, right in front of me on this VR-5D disc unit hologram, Tony.

Houston Yes. But remember the delays. We see telemetry on a 30 minute delay, and we see holograms about five minutes after that.

Lake Louise But ... Geez. I can't watch this. Look at that th...that *thing*... It's sucking at Justine's feet. It's vacuuming her right up out of the stasis chamber.

Houston Let's hope the glass will hold and the beast will give up and stop.

São Paulo Mark. Carla. Don't you get it? She's already dead! Her telemetries are flat. You're only seeing it thirty-five minutes after it happened, and a few minutes after the telemetries tell you ...

Houston Easy, Tony. Maybe the suction just separated Justine from the sensors for the telemetry ...

São Paulo Oh, I can't believe it. The glass split and Justine's being sucked right out of the chamber and onto the floor. She's wriggling around. There's no air in there. She's just been torn out of the safety and life support of the chamber. That floor must be freezing. There's no breathable atmosphere in there for her. And that thing's still sucking at her feet. Let her go, you bastard. Christ Jesus, she never had a chance.

Houston All we can hope is that she didn't know ...

São Paulo Didn't know? Are you crazy? You saw the telemetry. She knew. She was terrorized out of her wits. That was horrible.

Lake Louise How could I have let myself even watch that? I'm out of here, Tony. I'm not watching any more of ... Not another one, aggh!

São Paulo Carla, what do you mean?

Houston Look! Tony, it's after Michelle. Her telemetry is beginning to alter. But it's her blood gases that have changed. Everything else looks steady.

São Paulo What's that thing doing? It's dripping. It's eating away at the glass. A milky white color. It's through the glass. There must be a chemical in it. It's burning her robe. Michelle's robe is burning. God, it's acid. That must be how it got through the portal to get into the Sir Vic's area. The thing's drooling some kind of acid. All the bedding in Michelle's stasis chamber is disintegrating and pouring out the side of the chamber where the acid ate a hole through the bottom. And Michelle's sliding out with it. She's slipping right out of its protection as the chamber is breaking down. That's why the telemetry just showed her blood gases soaring higher. Breathing in that acid's fumes must have changed her blood chemistry. The other sensors must have frozen in place as the outdoor air floods the vessel.

Oh, no. Look. She's trembling and trying to push away that milky liquified stuff, whatever it is, inside her chamber. It's almost pulsing as it breaks down. It's squeezing her right out of the chamber and onto the floor. She's fallen to the floor and tightened into a fetal position. She's lying there—motionless.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only
Denver to Houston Command – EYES ONLY
December 21, 2052 (23:35 UT)
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Denver Chief, we want the old NASA plans in our possession so they can't be used against us. They are never to see the light of day.

Houston Command The plans are here, sir. Intact. Undisturbed. But I must tell you the buzz underground is that the computer-driven graphics and holographic models are already copied and are being pirated away for a renegade VR-5D broadcast.

Denver Is Arroyo still in Houston? Is he cooperating?

Houston Command He's here. He has nothing to do with the pirating. It's the correspondents. No. Arroyo's fully on board with us.

Denver Good. Tell him to prepare a broadcast for the next time slot—make it early tomorrow morning—that will begin to lay the groundwork to discredit those supporting the old NASA plans.

Houston Command We're confident he can do that.

Denver Tell him to make it a classic. Innuendo we can deny later if need be. It has to put a few nails in the coffin of public opinion. It must be vintage. Like what he did back during the 2030 Calamities, tell him. Short and to the jugular. We don't want a dry eye in the Union when he's done. Tell him, Chief.

Houston Command Yes, sir.

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LOG ON: Hacked Broadcast – Warsaw – People's Republic Space Center
December 21, 2052 **(23:55 UT)**

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Warsaw Center This is a late-breaking bulletin from the People's Republic Warsaw Space Center. Intercepted VR-5D communications originating from the Jupiter quadrant and censored from broadcast within the Democratic Union tonight make it evident that two of the crew members of the Speed Cruiser *Xanadu* have met untimely deaths on the surface of an exploded portion of the asteroid Hektor. There is no comment tonight from DUSPACE Command in Denver or Acapulco.

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LOG ON: Special News Update from DUSPACE
December 22, 2052 **(12:40 UT)**

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Houston Hello. I am Mark Arroyo. And this is a special DUSPACE afternoon update about the Saturn mission.

Abandoning the *Xanadu* portion of the Saturn mission was the furthest thing from its creators' minds when it first began. But now it appears a splinter group with some old plans from the last century's NASA program tried to make just such a possibility plausible. Their flush of excitement at hearing about new life forms in uncharted regions of the galaxy was, for this deplorable minority at DUSPACE and other unnamed interest groups,

their foremost, and almost their only, thought. And this, to the detriment, it has become apparent, of life forms they knew of already. *And knew as friends.* New life forms to be discovered where none had been known before seemed beyond belief. It was these new life forms they lusted after.

A full investigation is underway. Was this somehow an intrigue from the outset? Or a quick, opportunistic coup? Was there involvement by the People's Republic? Only those involved know for sure.

But here is what we do know.

One of the Union's space vessels rests, somewhat damaged, on its side on what now is understood to be an alien-populated asteroid, Hektor. How the miscalculation occurred, no one is absolutely sure. Mostly, because the fate of the crew is the major preoccupation here for the majority, loyal members of DUSPACE and friends of the *Xanadu* crew. It is on that hostile asteroid that the very idea of alien life forms evolved from adventure to threat, in the mere blink of an eye.

No one saw it coming. The mission planners did not foresee the asteroid shattering. The flight controllers did not project the influence of gravity on the fragile craft from a body speeding by at an unaccounted for and uncalculated rate. Absorbed in their own responsibilities, no one noticed what was going on around them, or at least could or would be, several months into the mission.

Those several months were suddenly upon them just days ago. And there were four crew members in suspended stasis, unable to protect themselves, unable to break away prematurely from their life support and survive.

Xanadu came to rest on the far side of the asteroid. It was beyond the terminator—the borderline of light and dark—on an uphill slope in a terrible darkness. Now the vessel is getting colder. Its life support batteries are denied sufficient time in the precious sunlight that they need for recharging. The hope is that the rogue asteroid will slow its spin rate in its new course and allow the sun to shine for more than three hours at a time on *Xanadu*. For now, half the crew lies in stasis still, unaware we on Earth are mourning their two crew mates, Justine Bennett and Michelle van de Veer. Meanwhile, the eyes of the world, wet with tears and wide open with concerned amazement, watch and await the outcome of this deep space emergency-turned-tragedy.

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LOG ON: Broadcast Central Interactive Only

Denver to New York EYES ONLY INTERVIEW - DUSPACE Central Intelligence Squad

December 22, 2052

(22:00 UT)

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Denver Where have you been for the last 25 hours, Miss Diaz?

New York I ran. After that terrifying VR-5D download. My parents live in Barbados. You know that. I was just trying to get back home. I was stopped here in New York and taken into custody.

Denver Where is your co-anchor, Mr. Trieste?

New York After the DUSPACE guards secured my broadcast booth in Lake Louise and prevented any VR-5D transmissions, I lost contact with everyone on the team. I haven't seen Tony since.

Denver But you were conspiring with him before that. Correct? You were not in DUSPACE custody for over 13 hours between leaving Lake Louise and being apprehended in New York. Did you release any conventional flat screen transmissions?

New York No, sir. He was only trying to find out why this tragedy really happened. He was upset no rescue efforts were made on behalf of the crew. He asked me to help before I left Lake Louise. I told him I agreed something should be done, but I never found out if he had any plans.

Denver You say you have not seen him. But have you had any further contact of any kind with Tony Trieste since you fled Lake Louise.

New York No. None of any kind.

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RENEGADE BROADCAST FROM SECLUSION	VR-5D Open Transmission
December 31, 2052	

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Unidentified Voice-over:
We have assembled a team of dissident members of the DUSPACE community and from the news and science broadcast industry. We will be using several relay uplinks and downlinks and a scrambled holographic display with enhanced encrypted visual and altered voice technologies. All these are precautions to avoid detection, during this open VR-5D transmission and perhaps for others in the future.

Hello, my name is Tony Trieste. I may be familiar to you previously as DUSPACE's São Paulo news and broadcast co-anchor. However, this is not a DUSPACE broadcast. All other presenters and facilitators and technicians will remain anonymous for their protection and to maintain their ability to remain connected and in place—so they can stay with this story as it unfolds over the next several months. For my own part, I expect this will be my last broadcast.

But this is not about me. So, let's get on with it.

In summary, a catastrophic event in the solar system caused the disruption of the manned space exploration heading for Hyperion, the moon of Saturn determined by scientists in the Peoples' Republic and in our Democratic Union as most suitable for colonization efforts.

DUSPACE leaders and politicians of the Democratic Union declined the effort to save the lives of four crew members of the deep space speed cruiser *Xanadu* after she crashed landed on a fragment of what had been binary asteroid Hektor, near Jupiter. *Xanadu* came to rest, damaged but intact, and with all four crew members still alive and surviving in their stasis chambers on board.

Though it's been vehemently denied by official DUSPACE announcements and promulgated by newscasters, commentators, and politicians as impossible to do, we will show you during this broadcast how there was still time to undertake a rescue mission by diverting the third Union space craft heading for Hyperion, the speed cruiser *Xanthus*. In addition, our computer model demonstration shows how this would not only have saved the lives of the four crew members, but how it would have turned the accident into a significant and unique space exploration opportunity. For that, I will turn to one of our experts in this field, whose voice has been modified and image has been scrambled for his protection, as our opening disclaimer indicated.

But before I do, I must make one thing absolutely clear. Though this is a renegade broadcast, no one involved with it is a renegade. No one among us conspired beforehand to subvert the Hyperion effort or mission. Not one of us made an effort to capitalize on this accident personally or professionally. And this assembly of patriots is not the group that abandoned hope and—our friends—the brave crew of *Xanadu*. It is simply beyond our powers of imagination to fathom why DUSPACE has created and so widely promulgated such a scenario. Is it to distract attention from the People's Republic winning the race to Hyperion? None of us knows. Nor do we care. We care only about our friends and their fate. That their sacrifice is not for naught.

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Thank you, Tony. When word first came of the breakup of Hektor, a group of near-Earth asteroid watchers on DUSPACE's staff dug into their charts and models and began a series of new calculations. Those calculations indicated that the Hektor fragment would most likely assume a near-Earth orbit, though it was not in such a path before it was torn apart by the planetary alignments that perpetrated this whole incident. On the computer models here, in two dimensions for viewers of video screens and in a five-dimensional model for VR-5D audiences, the blue line traces Earth's orbit, the yellow line indicates the former orbit of Hektor, and the pink and purple dotted lines are the projected orbits of the two fragments of the asteroid. These models were completed within two hours after the first word that a collision between *Xanadu* and a Hektor fragment was imminent. That was about ninety minutes before the actual crash. And more than a day prior to the attack on *Xanadu* commenced.

Watch now as we set your model in motion—and follow the pink dotted line as it adjusts. Keep an eye on the icon that shows where the Hektor fragment, with *Xanadu* now on it, tracks along the new orbit. Do the same for the blue line and the sphere representing the Earth. You will see that every several cycles, which appears to be about every four years and eight months, the Hektor fragment carrying *Xanadu* and the Earth pass within about 300,000 miles of each other. On a galactic scale, that's a little bit more than the distance from Earth to our moon. For most near-Earth astronomers this is disastrously close and sets off enormous concern. But in this case, as dangerous as it may be, the proximity also presents an unprecedented opportunity.

The stimulus for this thinking was a vintage hypothetical mission drawn up in a NASA think tank back in the twentieth century. It's forgotten now by most DUSPACE engineers. But not by the old timers.

There are telemetry materials and equipment aboard both *Xanadu* and *Xanthus*, her sister ship, that could have been deployed, after a soft landing by *Xanthus* on this Hektor fragment, to monitor this reduced asteroid's approach to Earth. Such a deployment could have left technology that would have provided more accurate warnings in case its orbit decayed in a way that might threaten a collision with Earth. Both speed cruisers also carry sufficient components to construct explosive charges that could have been left behind—to be remotely detonated to destroy the fragment, in case a near-Earth emergency arose at some future date.

The *Xanthus* crew would also have triggered *Xanadu's* homing beacon for any future deep space missions that could land on the fragment, hitchhike a ride out past Jupiter, which the new orbit appears likely to provide, before re-launching and continuing—with immense reduction on fuel requirements. This would include large re-supply trips to the Hyperion colony occasionally, when their orbits were correctly synchronized. The same could be done for huge payloads much heavier than can be launched as one structure. They could be staged on the Hektor fragment, built on the safer, steady ground of an asteroid, and then catapulted out toward Hyperion. All, of course, at a cost benefit to take the sting out of *Xanadu* and *Xanthus* not getting to Saturn on this first planned Hyperion mission. But the greatest benefit of all, most certainly: all eight crew members returning to earth aboard an overcrowded but safe *Xanthus*.

Nonetheless, the middle ship, the speed cruiser *Balius* from Houston, could still have gone to Hyperion on this mission and awaited the freighters, as planned.

This was all presented to DUSPACE leadership in Acapulco, but there just did not seem to be the will to make it happen. To be fair, it all had to be thought about, decided, and set in motion within about two hours. To have tried and failed would be one thing. It was debated and argued for more than five hours. By then it was simply too late, Tony. By will or indecision, DUSPACE aborted the *Xanadu* mission.

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Okay, thank you. Getting on to the dynamics of that argument can certainly be left to another time.

Again, this is Tony Trieste. We need to keep our eye on the clock so we can finish showing the recordings of the holographic projections from *Xanadu* that are still left for broadcast. I was just told we have already had the video portion of our simple signal, for flat screen viewers, jammed into darkness. The VR-5D is apparently more complex and not jammed as readily. The images you are about to witness have been censored by DUSPACE and kept out of public view until now.

When Carla Diaz in Lake Louise and I stopped broadcasting last, some ten days ago, the assault on the two female members of the crew, Justine Bennett and Michelle van de Veer, was not meant to be on DUSPACE's public broadcast. I disagreed with Carla censoring that transmission, though I had no way of knowing what was going to happen—what my actions set in motion. I adjusted the technology as much as I could from São Paulo. As a result, some flat screen viewers were able to witness those horrible events. I'll never know if Carla or I made the right choice. But what's done, is done. I've had to go on from there. To make sense of it. To find some value in it.

Recordings the flat screen viewers made have circulated worldwide. I have come under fire and been driven underground for allowing such a thing to occur. And now I am being hunted so I do not continue by circulating the fate of the two male crew members. I never intend to re-broadcast Justine's and Michelle's deaths. What I am doing now has nothing to do with sensationalism. It has to do with making sure these deaths are not glamorized as heroic sacrifices. Not that these crew members aren't heroes. They are. But their deaths were not glamorous, and they need not have been accepted as foregone conclusions, as they were.

These four space pioneers were also individuals, not just functionaries. Carla Diaz, my co-anchor and mentor, taught me to remind you of that, when she argued about how to cover this story. I have not seen her since. And probably never will again. She introduced our viewers to Justine and Michelle just a few weeks ago. Now we want you to meet the men of *Xanadu*.

Jacob Lilly's friends knew him as Jake. That's how you should know him. He seems to be a character straight out of a fabulous fiction story, his closest associates say. But they assure us he is "the real deal." His hometown and birthplace are both in Texas. His personal office walls feature pictures of nineteenth century cowboys and twentieth century Texas Rangers, because his family roots are in law enforcement. Jake is the Hyperion community's Superior Court Judge. He won the trust of all members of the Saturn Mission Planning Group. The military and the civilian members of the future colonist population voted unanimously for him to be their chief jurist. Jake knows the laws of the majority of the countries forming the Democratic Union, some going back a half-century into their governance. He is known as a systematic jurist whose decisions often set precedents for new "blended" laws of these divergent cultures. His selection demonstrated many hopes for the permanence of the Hyperion colony.

His suite mate in the stasis cabin's upper level is one of the three captains of the mission, Maximillian Templeton, called Max by his fellow pilots on this venture. These captains were chosen for more than their flying experience. The three were to become a triune Leadership Council for the first two years of the colony, through the final completion of the space station. The linked speed cruisers and the subsequently arriving freighters that would dock to form the nucleus of the colony space station would require three primary pilots on rotating eight-hour shifts. Max and the two other captains of the speed cruisers formed this group, with replacements and back-ups arriving aboard the freighters. Max holds the current Union duration record for longest mission piloting, as a result of his co-pilot taking sick on a previous Mars excursion back eight years ago. Max manned the vessel for five straight days. His endurance was a measure, associates say, of his thoroughness and patience. He is reputed to put people at ease under his leadership and then to encourage them to achieve personal excellence and peak performance. His crews are lauded in the DUSPACE program as the most efficient. They hold some of the highest performance ratings in the interplanetary program. Maximillian Templeton and Justine Bennett are viewed as complementary leaders for this entire effort.

Of the four stranded *Xanadu* crew members, Max is the only one whose family was to follow on the freighters and be part of the founding colony. He has three young boys and a teenage daughter from an earlier marriage. His wife, Jillian, is a nutritionist in the main galley of the freighter *Constellation*, which will serve as the command mess for the Hyperion community's first two years prior to the surface colonization.

Though the creature attacked Max last, he was the third crew member to die. We are going to show you the struggle both he and Jake underwent facing off against the Hektor creature. Leadership and justice will be impoverished at Hyperion, and in the entire Democratic Union, as a result of the decision not to try to defend these men's lives. At least we can preserve their deaths so their image sears into the Union's political and social conscience deeply enough so that this can't happen again, so unquestionably and without heroic efforts to foster a better outcome.

The view of the stasis cabin is quiet as this section of the playback begins. Apparently, the Hektor creature retreated from the chamber out through Sir Vic's and back onto the asteroid terrain after the slaughter of Justine Bennett and Michelle van der Veer. It was many hours later that the creature returned. In the interim, DUSPACE Mission Control argued the merits of bringing the jurist and the Captain out of stasis, but decided against it. We understand there were arguments against it because there was no confidence the waking systems would work in the atmosphere-depleted cabin. Others thought it was more humane to let the crew die without seeing daylight in their fatal situation. Either way, these men were left to die without having any say in their own survival. So too were the women in the crew—don't get me wrong. But the additional delay once the threat was understood was not true in the case of the women.

This is a replayed version of what took place ten days ago. We have staggered the telemetry display and conflated it, so it appears almost in real-time synchronization with the crew's and the creature's VR-5D hologram. As well as eliminating that 3-to-5-minute lag, since this is a recording, there is no 30-minute delay, either. Again, we do not have the ability to project any flat screen video at this time. I would truly prefer to say nothing and just let you watch this drama play out in front of you on your VR-5Ds. But for those of you with voice contact only, I will try to explain this tragedy as it unfolds. I may even help VR-5D users to anticipate what is about to occur, in some instances.

The creature enters the same way, through Sir Vic's, after the sunlight again strikes the outside surface of the asteroid and the protective shadow thrown by *Xanadu* fades. Some planetary biologists hypothesize from this that the creature may have been nocturnal and its ability to retreat from the sunlight was disturbed when the gravitational forces of the alignment tore Hektor apart. Upon entering *Xanadu*, the creature seems to go back to the bodies of the women. After poking around in their remains, the creature loses interest and begins looking for additional chambers.

The creature first approaches Jake Lilly's chamber. There's more purpose in the search this time. You can see how it is spending more time probing the exterior of the stasis chamber than the wanton wreckage it made out of Justine Bennett's and Michelle van der Veer's. Rather than using its proboscis as it did earlier, you can see that its pincers are feeling for the soft spots of the chamber. In these images you can see the creature's dimensions, not just in size, but in the way it propels itself upwards, to reach the higher chamber, grasp it with what appear to be six pairs of articulated legs, and then push into the chamber with the pincers.

The jurist's biological telemetries are starting to activate right about now, as the creature rocks the chamber somewhat. It seems that as more time has gone by the creature has "learned" about the chambers. The pincers are going to start in a moment to snip away at some of the motion restraints. Now it actually appears as if the thing wants to take Jake out of his chamber. It's apparently recognized from attacking the women that the crew are separate entities from the chambers themselves. Life forms within a protective shell.

As horrifying as it is, you can see now that Jake's eyes have opened, and he sees the pincer reaching across his chest and cutting the restraint. His heartbeat is off the scale and his blood pressure has soared. In a less disciplined and physically fit man, these telemetry readings would suggest a massive heart attack. But Jake's brain activity and physical response indicate he is alive, awake, and beginning to move his hands in his own defense. The VR-5D transponder inside his stasis chamber triggered by the motion sensors catches this activity as you can see, imaging itself right on your coffee table or desk.

We must warn you that this virtual reality five-dimensional imaging in your home is going to become more graphic than you might wish your children to see. But we beg you, if that is the case: record this so they can see it when they are older, so you can explain just what was allowed to happen to the crew of the speed cruiser *Xanadu* in their name, by their government.

As Jake moves his arm toward the pincer on his chest, a second pincer is shooting straight out at Jake's armpit. That pincer is holding his arm tightly. Jake's grimacing and his brain waves, heartbeat and respiration all show considerable levels of increase on the display. We were told later these patterns are typical representations of physical pain. Now a quick jerking pincer motion is yanking Jake's arm out of its normal position, pinning it first over his head and then behind his arching back. You see a precipitous drop in Jake's blood pressure. That first pincer still has him pinned down in the stasis chamber.

If you walk around the side of your VR-5D dish hologram, you can see there are several brightly colored wires now exposed that were previously under Jake's back. The creature is snipping each, one at

a time, with the pincer it no longer needs to restrain Jake's twisted arm. Each time the pincer severs a wire, Jake's disconnected from a sensor. You can see his heartbeat and respiration no longer appear on the biorhythmic display. We still can see his brain waves and blood pressure, which are still dropping, though more slowly. His umbilicals for nutrition and waste elimination are severed.

The creature is switching out the pincer with its proboscis on Jake's chest. The intruder is now methodically pushing Jake around in the chamber, nudging him from the sides and snipping all his life support connections. The long proboscis has Jake pinned down, but the creature is not using it to suck at Jake the way it did to kill Michelle on its first attack. Jake's broken arm and blood loss have taken most of the fight out of his resistance. His EEG is indicating Jake is wavering in and out of consciousness.

I must tell you that the confusion and pain and horror we witnessed when Justine and Michelle were assaulted are absent from this broadcast. We all want a calm dignity associated with the passing of these two remaining crewmen. I truly regret that the unexpected and unprecedented attack, and the bootlegged broadcasts of the assault, made it impossible to do so for the women of the crew. We ourselves have seen these images of the men several times, so we could make sure we could broadcast them under adverse conditions and with the biological telemetries synchronized, as I explained earlier. As such, I am totally drained—emotionally and psychologically. By my reserved and dispassionate broadcast of these deaths I mean no disrespect for these four people, nor their families, nor for our fellow citizens of the Democratic Union seeing this in homes and offices from the Arctic to Antarctica.

At this point of the attack the creature is retreating. You can see severe biological telemetries emitting from Captain Templeton's stasis chamber. These started just before the creature broke off assailing Jake. Some think the creature is sensing the activity and turning its attention to the Captain. If so, then these deaths are even more horrendous than they are on a purely physical level. These deaths may not be the result of automatic reflex actions of a living organism of some unknown kind, but possibly those of a sentient being. Actions with intent. Up to this point, the crew members have not successfully defended themselves. They have posed no overt threat to the existence of this creature.

As your VR-5D display brings Max Templeton's stasis chamber into focus out of the blue vague haze, you can see the creature making its way over to the chamber brace racks and right straight to the chamber. There is none of the uncertainty and searching in its motions we witnessed earlier. No hesitancy. This creature learns fast. There is no question that it knows what it is doing. Its motions are purposeful, even routine.

This is going to be particularly ghastly. I will try to maintain my composure, but please excuse me in advance if I am unable to do so. For those who can't see this for yourselves, the creature is raising a pincer and appears to be looking in through the cover of the Captain's stasis chamber. The Captain's telemetry is racing now, as the overhead display on the VR-5D shows. His heartbeat is accelerating and his respiration is up. You can see the chamber cover is fogging from his breathing. The EEG telemetry lines are in the green zone on the display, clearly showing Max Templeton is awake and fully conscious.

The pincer is driving a hole right through the stasis chamber cover. The Captain's arm is now in the creature's grip and the audio levels from inside the chamber are recording at a decibel level indicating he is in excruciating pain. I can only thank God that I am looking at decibel levels on a screen and not listening to an audio transmission. I don't think I could stand to hear his screams. This entire spectacle has driven me to the brink of a nervous breakdown as it is. If I could hear those screams and the incessant sucking that you can see is happening in the hologram above your VR-5D dish, I would certainly go mad.

For those only hearing our description of this scene, the creature is inserting that sucking probe into the same hole the pincer made in the chamber cover. But the Captain is still alive, so there is still air in the chamber and his umbilicals are still intact. The creature is sucking into its probe the broken bits of the arms it just cut off Captain Templeton. The damn thing seems to have determined what is the crew member and what is the chamber. It's hardly damaging the chamber at all. And it isn't trying to separate the Captain from the umbilicals as it was doing to Jake Lilly, whose life signs and vitals seem to have stabilized on his display.

The gruesomeness in the Captain's chamber is still underway I am sad to chronicle. He is now a parapl ... God, I'm sorry, I thought I could do this. But I can't. Please excuse my crying. I'm just trembling head to foot. Max Templeton ... the thing has taken off his limbs, like it knows he can live without them. This is horrible. Utterly horrendous. You can see on his telemetry display that the Captain's blood pressure is practically non-existent now, but he still has a heartbeat, and his EEG is active, but ... God forgive me, the decibel level has at least subsided, and his EEG is in the semiconscious range.

The creature is poking around with the sucker now. The telemetry display is just soaring for heartbeat and brain waves. It seems the Captain and the creature are staring at each other. The decibel level just peaked again. The creature is shaking itself and now is sticking its second pincer through the chamber's side. Templeton's blood gases are rapidly being depleted of oxygen. One pincer is at his throat and the other on his chest. There are signs that are unmistakable. The decibel level indicates a sharp, abrupt sound. There is now blood covering the inside of the stasis lid. The EKG is falling off to nothing. The EEG is fluctuating wildly—for three or four seconds. It is now flatlined. The only remaining telemetry is the decibel level, whose transponder is mounted on the inside of the chamber, not on the crew member. It shows the same signature pattern as when the creature was vacuuming severed parts of Max Templeton visible before blood obscured our view.

My mind is teetering on the brink of what is probably insanity at just the thought of what happened out there in the dark, cold of space aboard *Xanadu*. And I wish I could just stop. But I know I can't. Not without returning to the last moments of Jake Lilly's life.

You can see the creature has lost interest in the stasis chamber that held the promise and life of Captain Max Templeton. Frighteningly enough, your VR-5D hologram shows the creature has grown in size since this rampage began several hours ago. In moving in reverse from Templeton's chamber, it slips backwards—right there—and almost plummets down to the lower level where it earlier killed Justine Bennett and Michelle van der Veer. Its right pincer jabs out for purchase and severely dents, but does not penetrate, the bottom of Jake Lilly's chamber. His telemetries show the jurist is critically injured but is still alive. His body temperature is lowered. If the creature leaves now, Jake will die peacefully the sleep-like fate of freezing to death. For now, his life support umbilicals are still attached, and the warmth of the circulators seem to have stabilized his core temperature. His respiration, heart rate and brain activity are slowed to a rate rendering him unconscious of the pain registered when his arm was dislocated and broken. You can see some of this on the biologicals display in the corner of your VR-5D viewing area atop the dish and holographic multi-dimensional image of the creature, the stasis chamber, and the upper portion of *Xanadu's* stasis cabin space.

The creature is now moving again. It's achieved some kind of balance and is rubbing its proboscis against the portion of Lilly's chamber it dented in the fall. The wisps of what appears to be steam you see on your display are flowing back over the creature's body and out toward Sir Vic's. Our scientists' analyses think this indicates two things:

First, that the creature is releasing some of that acidic fluid to eat away at the chamber, but in a more controlled manner than when it dripped that same titanium-and-flesh-eating goo into Michelle

van der Veer's chamber previously. It seems to have learned just how much acid to use to penetrate the chamber without affecting the human within.

Second, that the direction in which the steamy fluid is drifting demonstrates that the entire atmosphere of *Xanadu* is escaping into the Hektorian environment through Sir Vic's and out the lower portal the creature entered to wreak its deadly havoc.

As you watch on your hologram, notice how the colors of the stasis chamber change. What you are seeing is the disintegration of the outer shell and the supportive cushioning that lines the chamber to protect the crew: from the shock of space travel, the firing of pre-programmed thrusters, and the buffeting by solar winds, space dust, and the accelerations and decelerations of various gravitational fields *Xanadu* has to pass through on the way to the Saturnian system. Interlaced in this supportive membrane are various sensors and life support connections from the mother ship to the crew member. The fluids you see dripping out in a blue-green tint are a combination of temperature regulator and shock absorbent that permeates the inner lining of the chamber.

The creature is now doing something it hasn't before. It's inserting its proboscis into the hole it has eaten away, and then is reaching into the chamber. Now the VR-5D program is switching to the transponder inside the chamber, showing a view taken from the head of the compartment. You can see Jake's bare feet where the stasis robe was kicked away during the earlier incursion. That silver-grey, tube-shape object wrapping itself around Jake's feet and calves is the creature's proboscis. In the all the earlier violence, the creature used its pincers to grasp its victims. For some reason, as time has passed, it seems not to want to leave Jake inside the chamber. You can see the robe seems to be riding up along Lilly's thighs, exposing his genitals and waist and navel. In reality, the robe is staying fairly still as the creature draws Jake out the bottom of the chamber. This quick cutaway to the transponder in the cabin reveals the creature now has the jurist out to about his chest, which isn't fitting through the opening in the chamber wall. The creature is repositioning its probe around Jake's torso and squeezing him to a circumference that will fit through. As your image goes back within the chamber, note that Jake's blood pressure displays peaks and valleys, even though it's still lower than normal. So is Lilly's core body temperature as the creature extrudes him into the stasis cabin, itself now filled with frigid outside Hektorian atmospheric gases entering through the Sir Vic's area.

Jake's EEG waves are beginning to show renewed activity, though sluggish due to the cold and the stretching of the sensor connections. But it is certainly enough that we can infer he may be regaining consciousness. In our earlier viewing we hoped this would not happen. But you can see now that his dislocated arm is jammed in the space between the hole in the chamber and his head. Only his head and the upraised arm are still in his stasis chamber. If you look under the holographic reproduction of Jake's chamber on your VR-5D display dish, you can see the transponder image from the cabin detecting involvement of the creature's proboscis again and switching the projected image. It appears that the creature is trying to jam its snout into the space between Jake's arm and head. Some of his shoulder drops into view just— there—but it seems the arm just won't pull through. The proboscis is moving again inside the chamber, so the sensors on the interior transponder are keying a switch again. So now you're looking at the top of Jake's head. You can see the proboscis wrapping around Jake's head, the way it earlier wrapped around his chest. The EEG display is spiking, and it appears momentarily that Jake may be conscious. It's not a certainty, but it may be so. Jake's head is now slightly lifting off the cushion inside of the chamber. The Hektor creature's probe is jerking, twisting, and constricting in a spasm and it's squeezing the cranium of the man whose brain was to guide the protection of everyone's rights under multicultural and multiracial law in the new and hope-filled Hyperion colony. That EEG is just flatlining on your biological display at the same time that the decibel levels are peaking to record what

our physiological experts can only surmise to have been the sound of a human skull cracking.