

RIVER OF SOULS

An Original Screenplay By:

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An unpublished work

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(The gender-identity and voices of the characters remain hidden for Scene One. All extras are female. All soundtrack vocals are female until Ren is revived.)

"River of Souls The Epic Journey"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHERN REGION OF PLANET MAMMALIUS- DAY -
EARTHLIKE SCENES OF BARREN, SNOW COVERED LANDSCAPES -
MORNING

Morning light casts long shadows over the ice and snow.

Strong winds blow across the lifeless landscape.
Desolation stretches as far as the eye can see.

Although it is extremely cold, signs of spring are beginning to show. We see various shots of the bitter winter releasing her grip.

The smaller sun of this double sun system is just showing herself above the snow capped mountain in the distance. As far as we can tell, this planet could be Earth.

A normal view looking out over relatively flat land. A distant and fast approaching magnetic-field craft heads straight for us.

We pan with the m-craft as it flies overhead and away from us. A light-blue glow around the ship and a slight crackling sound are evident.

The trailing wind blows ground snow from behind us and toward the fleeing m-craft.

The m-craft makes a sharp left turn in between two mountain ranges.

We are now flying behind and above the m-craft as it flies up the valley.

INT of the m-craft from TERREN'S POV. Through the front window, research shacks are seen at the end of the valley. Flight instruments and displays are in the FG.

EXT near the research outpost. View is of an unrecognizable SHREENA in a full environmental suit. Her back is to us as she faces the approaching m-craft.

Shreena's POV watching the m-craft. We see information flashing on the interior of her faceplate.

The m-craft slows even more as it approaches.

INT. Terren's POV as she reaches up to several controls. Her gloved left hand touches other controls in the FG.

The ship stops two hundred feet above the ground.

EXT ground POV looking up to the slowly descending ship.

The m-craft turns one hundred and eighty degrees as it drops toward our POV. The blue glow and CRACKLING sound of the magnetic shield becomes more pronounced as the craft is nearly on top of us.

EXT CLOSE behind Shreena as the m-craft lands in front of her.

She moves toward the new arrival.

INT of the m-craft, Terren's POV as she manipulates controls to shut the m-craft down.

A TIGHT shot of Terren's back as she put on a cold-weather suit.

Another CLOSE shot shows her gloved right hand pulling on the left glove.

A TIGHT shot reveals her finishing pulling on an environmental helmet.

She finishes her preparations by attaching a belt outfitted with several sophisticated electronic devices.

Terren removes one of the devices.

Terren's POV looking at the device. She presses a button, causing lights to flash on the unit.

Another angle behind Terren shows her reattach the device. She is standing at the exit of the m-craft.

Pilot touches the doorway arch and the hatch begins to slides up. Wind gusts inside.

Terren's POV looking through the doorway as she heads out onto the snow. Shreena is just outside. Research shacks and workers are in the B.G. The steep mountain cliffs rise from behind the buildings and out frame.

Shreena waves to POV.

EXT angle of Terren walking up to Shreena.

They shake hands and motion communication as they talk Using helmet radios.

Shreena points off camera.

We turn and follow the two up the icy path.

As Terren and Shreena pull away, the BG revealed is of a large cave entrance and a pipe spewing steaming water into a natural catch basin and runoff.

Fully suited workers are entering and exiting the cave, carrying equipment and black bags.

Terren's POV as a worker walks toward them. Shreena stops the worker.

Another angle of the three as the worker pulls artifacts from the bag. Crude stone and polished crystal spear points are displayed.

Terren examines a piece closely, and then holds it up to The bright clouds.

The worker pulls bones out of another bag, motions excited communications and points to the cave entrance.

Terren and Shreena continue up the path,
past the steaming catch basin,
and into the gaping darkness.

INT of the cavern above the path. Artificial lights mark the path along the water pipe. Shreena and then Terren pass underneath POV.

Another angle show the two walking across to a major path that leads down into a solid ice floor. Shreena enters the descent, followed by Terren.

Further along, we follow Terren as they traverse a long tunnel.

A stationary POV looking along the path toward the duo approaching in the B.G., and CLOSE shot of a worker digging in the F.G.

The worker looks up briefly as the two walk by.

Terren's POV as she follows Shreena.

They are nearing a junction, but one direction is filled with solid ice. Moving shadows and lights are being transmitted through the substance from somewhere on the other side.

HISSING steam intermixing with flashing laser lights encompass the entire view.

PAN down to reveal water cascading to the tunnel floor, and then immediately sucked up by a pump.

We PULL BACK to see workers applying energy beams to the ice filled passageway.

Shreena and Terren come into view. Shreena communicates something to the workers and the beams are shut off.

Another angle from behind Terren and Shreena as they move closer to the ice wall.

The steam clears.

We MOVE in closer and focus about three feet into the ice. A shocking humanoid face is obscured by bubbles and impurities trapped in the frozen substance.

POV from the ice, looking toward Terren and Shreena. TERREN jumps back slightly.

Terren's POV as she moves closer to the trapped figure.

Lights are adjusted, but the condition of the ice hides the creature's identity.

Another angle shows Terren and Shreena step back from the trapped specimen as the workers resume their task to free it.

Lighted energy melts the ice as billowing steam fills the frame.

FADE OUT.

INT. RESEARCH SHACK.

FADE IN CLOSE shot of strong wind and blowing snow just outside the entrance to a research shack.

Terren and Shreena enter and close the door behind them.

The two release their helmets as another strong gust outside shakes the building.

CLOSE on Terren finally reveals her gender and identity. She loosens her long blonde hair before removing the thick protective jacket.

TERREN
Quite a find, Shreena.

Terren looks over at her guide.

Shreena pulls off her gloves and loosens her dark hair.

SHREENA
I knew you'd be surprised.
(beat)
We'll have it freed soon.

Shreena sits to remove her boots.

TERREN

Please keep it encased in the ice.
Doctor Crellus may want to try
cellular regeneration.

Terren removes her jacket.

Shreena struggles with her last boot.

SHREENA

There's something you should know.

Shreena succeeds in liberating the stubborn boot.

SHREENA

We ran a test on the ice.
(beat)
Professor Tareash says it's one
hundred thousand annual-old sea
water.

Terren has a surprised look as she glances toward
Shreena.

TERREN

What? How can that be? This site
is over four hundred meters above
sea level, ninety-five kilometers
from the ocean,
(beat) [confused]
and separated by the Harsperde
mountain range.

Shreena walks to a table and motions for Terren to
follow.

SHREENA

I'll show you the results.

Shreena sits.

SHREENA (continues)

We're as baffled as you are. Maybe
we'll uncover something else when
more of the ice is removed.

Terren approaches the table. Shreena moves several maps
aside to reveal a computer screen.

It is a detailed layout of the cave.

SHREENA

Computer, what's the status of
the Tareash report?

COMPUTER

Last update occurred at one-
ninety-seven (01:97).

SHREENA

My, the professor was working late this morning. (beat)
Computer, retrieve entry eight-seven-one-one-three.

TERREN

I thought this model was supposed to be fast.

SHREENA

We've entered a lot of data in the last few triads. This report uses information from several files. It should be finished soon.

Terren begins to speak, but the computer interrupts her.

COMPUTER

Entry eight-seven-one-one-three is ready

SHREENA

Continue.

Shreena sits back.

COMPUTER

Substance tested matches composition of liquid found in Gorrully nodules retrieved from the Arctural Basin. Chemical components indicate ancient seawater. The liquid has been trapped approximately one hundred thousand annuals. It has a low sodium content.

(beat)

Prehistoric animals are also preserved. Specimen XL-one-one-nine was scanned with rebounder ray.

An earlier image of the frozen creature appears on the computer display screen.

COMPUTER(continues)

Vibrational scattering occurred due to inconsistencies in the ice material. Identification is impossible at this time.

TERREN

Theorize about specimen XL-one-one-nine.

COMPUTER

Humanoid form, possibly higher ape or human. A cell scan is advised to examine genetic codes.

TERREN

Continue report.

COMPUTER

Evidence retrieved from upper chamber sites indicates human occupancy for approximately thirty annuals after the ice formed in the lower areas.

Artifacts found here are similar to those found by the Zeena Expedition to the Grand Rift Zone.

SHREENA

Computer, prepare a full Tareash report. Also, print out the latest maps of the Harsperde caves.

Several colored printouts emerge from a slot in the tabletop.

Shreena hands them to Terren.

SHREENA

Here, Terren. The rest of the report will take longer.

Shreena sits next to Terren and points to one of the images.

SHREENA

Here's the upper chamber and the entrance to the main cavern. There are many unexplored passages and what appears to be several living chambers off these main corridors.

She points to highlighted areas.

SHREENA

These locations appear to be common to the people that lived in these caves. The small marks here are where we found camp fires, and here, animal bones.

Shreena traces her finger along a narrow passageway that ends at a square room.

SHREENA

This leads to what Doctor Tareash believes is a ceremonial chamber. we found some interesting treasures there.

Terren points to a large blue area.

TERREN

Is this where the ice floor is located?

SHREENA

Yes. Here as well.

Shreena motions to several smaller blue patches at various places on the upper chamber map.

SHREENA

All these marks are passageways downward and are filled with the same type of ice. We think most of these tunnels lead to the location where our friend is trapped.

Terren shuffles through some of the other pages. She finds the one representing the lower chamber.

TERREN

How large is this cavern past the humanoid specimen?

SHREENA

We're not sure yet. Since the rebounder ray doesn't work well in this material, we'll have to melt the ice to find out. We may have barely scratched the surface of what lies ahead.

TERREN

Has there been any attempt to get to the other side of the Harsperde Range yet?

Terren pulls out another map and examines an area on the opposite side of the mountains from where the outpost is located.

SHREENA

We've thought about it. Professor Tareash wants a map of the area under the ice. We've taken core samples. We really could use a Solid Material Mapper. It would cut our digging time in half.

TERREN (smiling)
Where is the Professor?

Shreena turns toward the computer console.

SHREENA
I think she's in the excavation
shack sifting through some old
bones. Computer, locate Doctor
Tareash.

COMPUTER
Doctor Tareash is in research
module A-fifty-five.

Shreena looks at Terren.

SHREENA
Do you want to contact her now?

Terren has a devious look.

TERREN
It's been a long time. I think
I'll surprise her.
Computer, how's the Tareash report
coming?

COMPUTER
Tareash report is seventy-five
percent ready.

SHREENA
And growing every triad. Follow
me, and I'll show you where A-
fifty-five is.

CUT TO INT of a small room crowded with female workers.
Charts, drawings, and anatomy pictures decorate the walls.
Workers are emptying contents of black bags onto trays
while other women fill storage containers with tagged
objects.

MARA recognizes Terren from across the room and rushes to
the entryway.

MARA
Terren. I'm so glad you made it.
How long has it been?

TERREN
A full annual.
(hugs Mara)
Too long for me. I miss our talks.

MARA (frowns)
How's council life been treating
you?

Terren smiles slightly.

TERREN

Council isn't as bad as you think, Marakielle. I have many responsibilities. Your work here can only increase my duties now.

The professor brakes away from Terren and moves back to her table, a strained look on her face.

MARA

Is that why you're here, to fuel the extremist's fires back home?

TERREN

They don't know I'm here. I doubt they know what you're up to.

MARA (smiles)

I'm sorry. I didn't think you'd let on. (smile fades)
I'm just worried. Too many Malletions want to trash annuals of research in order to protect their damned beliefs.

Terren moves closer to her friend and places a hand on her shoulder.

TERREN

You have been away for a long time, haven't you? The Malletions have fewer council member seats than they did a few annuals ago. There are many non-Malletion delegates open to new ideas. I promise you I won't mention a word of this until you give your approval.

Terren sits next to Mara.

TERREN

Show me what you've found.

MARA

For an old friend, gladly. Let's start with the Harsperde expedition fifty annuals ago. How much do you remember?

TERREN

Only what I learned from school and our talks. Do you still believe this area of the continent is the fabled lost land of Karacas?

MARA

Yes, but I'm leaning toward a purely scientific explanation of how it got to this part of the globe.

The professor enters a few computer commands.

MARA

Vallrey Harsperde proved that a major catastrophe rocked the planet over a hundred thousand annuals ago.

TERREN

My great grandmother was part of the archeological team that uncovered the layer of ash and rock strata on every major continent.

The Book of Malletion described a great conflagration that consumed the land and the nonbelievers.

(beat)

Wasn't the fire followed by quakes, tidal waves, floods from a three-annual long winter?

MARA

I think so. Wasn't the coming of Malletius preceded by a large crashing of the ground?

Terren nods.

MARA

What if the fire was caused by a natural phenomenon, like a small asteroid or comet hitting on or near land?

Mara removes a computer display screen from a slot in the table and lays it between them.

MARA

Let's say here.

Mara points to an area on the eastern coast of Barelliuun, the largest continent of the planet. A small red square begins to blink.

TERREN

Why there?

MARA

Listen to this. Computer, give a brief overview of my notes on this area. Include graphics.

COMPUTER

Coordinates experienced an asteroid impact approximately one hundred thousand to one hundred twenty-five thousand annuals ago. Radial shock-wave formation was mapped out to four hundred kilometers using a vayron device.

A yellow ring appears, encircling the red coordinate marker.

COMPUTER

Impact crater is approximately one hundred and five kilometers in diameter.

The center marker expands out to a red circle that follows the contour of the coast for about ninety kilometers - like a giant bite.

COMPUTER

Rock strata shock patterns, material composition, and crystal formation all confirm asteroid impact theory. The only conflicting information is the missing northeast perimeter of the crater. One possible location is shown at Norterium.

Mara points to the new coordinate marker.

MARA

Less than a hundred kilometers from our location.

COMPUTER (cont.)

Rock types and formations from this area match samples from the Barelliuun site. The area outlined may be a previous extension of the Barelliuun land mass.

A yellow outline marks about a third of the northern continent. Terren points to the edge of the outline.

TERREN

What information have you gathered for this area?

MARA

We've not only verified the early Harsperde findings by taking new core samples at the same sites, but we've added a hundred twenty-five cores to the list.

The professor points to small Xs that cover the northern continent. The computer automatically rotates the graphics view just above the Northern Hemisphere.

TERREN

Is this your new computer design?

MARA (smiles)

I was wondering when you would notice. This model can follow any conversation while continually tapping into multiple data bases as the dialogue changes. As you can see, the computer even indicated the Harsperde core sites with a different mark.

Terren moves closer to the display screen and notices a tiny H at the center of several of the core indicators. The resolution is the best she has ever seen.

TERREN

Wow! Great detail. Is this the new Plasma Grid Display?

MARA

Yes, thanks to Verende Traper. The interface is my design.

Mara presses a button and another display panel moves up to a locked position. In an instant, the second screen displays the same map image.

MARA

I took your idea to Verende - about making the resolution of the display slightly better than what the eye can detect. It seems you were right.
(beat)

I also incorporate a digital to analog conversion to add contrast. This is a bad example, since both screens are in medium resolution mode.

TERREN (impressed)

I can still see the difference.

MARA

Let's check out what the latest enhanced satellite images look like in the highest resolution possible for both.

A composite image instantly flashes to both screens.

TERREN

Amazing. It looks like we're up in space looking down.

TERREN (continuing)

I can barely see the pixels. It has a three-dimensional quality to it. Big difference.

MARA

What you're seeing as pixels is really the limited resolution of the digital collector plate in the camera on the satellite.

Mara pushes the old style screen back down into the table and directs a command to the computer.

MARA

Add the markers to this image.
(beat) (to Terren)
Once the software engineers adapt to this new arena, who knows how far this technology can go.

TERREN (winks)

Think of all the money you and Verende will make.

MARA

And think of all the exploring that I'll be able to do.

TERREN

Just let me know where and when, because I'd love to join you on a trip.

MARA (smiling)

Absolutely.
(beat) (points to display)
Maybe we can start here, along the Harsperde fault and this possible land of Karacas.

All the geology on the other side of this line is younger than the rock within the boundary. Every core sample taken from Karacas indicates a lighter or less dense mineral pack. There's also a huge network of ancient volcanic vents, chambers, and Correlium Wormholes.

TERREN

Karacas formed in water?

MARA

I'm glad you retained some of what I taught you.

TERREN

I remember quite a bit, actually.
(points to display)
The first Harsperde expedition
predicted that this other side of the
fault is more of a thrust zone, right?

MARA

Yes. (her smile widens)

TERREN

Have your core samples verified this?

MARA

Yes.

TERREN

Let's say this part is Karacas. How
did it travel thousands of kilometers
to come to rest here? The fastest
traveling continental plate on the
planet only moves five centimeters
per quarter.

Mara turns slightly toward the display.

MARA

Computer, what's the exact
measurement?

COMPUTER

The last measurement taken by
geological satellite and ground based
triangulation methods indicates
Montebiel has slowed to four point
three five centimeters per quarter.

TERREN

This is great. It's like having a
librarian doing the research as we
talk.

MARA

Computer, prepare Karacas computer
simulation forty-two for this display.

COMPUTER

Working.

Mara turns to Terren.

MARA

I wish I had a three-dimensional
screen here.

The computer signals.

COMPUTER

Simulation forty-two is ready.

MARA

Now remember, this is based not only on my theories, but also the theories of Vallrey Harsperde and the early studies of Doctor Glesser.

(to computer)

Run simulation by voice-sync.

An unfamiliar view of the planet replaces the previous image. The sophisticated program combines real images with computer generated graphics that produce a very realistic effect.

MARA

We're looking at where Zaruus is located today. As you know, this city is the largest and oldest known city to have existed on the planet. Since we use the center of the city as a standard of reference for the rest of the globe, I begin the simulation at this point. Because we base the standardized calendar on the supposed founding of the city at five thousand twenty-five annuals ago, all earlier time periods will be denoted by a minus sign.

TERREN

Zaruus Central is four hundred kilometers due west of the crater site, correct?

MARA

As it sits today. At this point in the simulation, Karacas hasn't even formed yet. It will form slightly southeast of the future position of Zaruus.

(beat)

So, time position is three hundred million annuals ago. Barelliuun and Trizarius are drifting apart, but connected by a land bridge. Montebiel, Valteus, and Sequaine have drifted apart by several thousand kilometers.

The image rotates and shows each continent as the Professor talks.

MARA

The northern region looks like this.

The picture rotates to a view directly above the pole.

MARA

And the South Pole is nothing but open ocean.

TERREN

Of course! The southern landmass is supposed to be another thrust zone. (She looks up.) Isn't it the same age as the volcanic rock at the North Pole?

MARA

Now you see where I'm heading with this. I sent a team to the southern region last annual. We had access to a Solid Material Mapper at the time. They verified that the current land mass there is ninety to ninety-five percent ice.

She points to the red superimposed outline that the computer added during the conversation.

MARA

Let's go back to point zero.

The computer complies with a rotation back to a view directly over the future coordinates of Zaruus.

MARA

We're looking at Mammalius several hundred million annuals ago. This is where Doctor Glesser says Barelliuun was located, right on the equator.

The computer flashes a temporary equator line for a few seconds.

TERREN

Didn't Korasu Te predict a different position of Barelliuun?

Doctor Tareash laughs.

MARA

I swear, Terren, sometimes you know exactly what I'm going to say. It's on Korasu Te's theory that I base my model. She places point zero...

The computer moves the land mass several hundred kilometers south before Mara finishes her sentence.

MARA

...here. Now do a slow progression of five hundred annual increments.

The animated graphics shows the two continents twist and slowly move away from each other. Barelliuun begins to drift farther north across the equator, while Trizarius starts its journey south.

Mara points to an emerging bulge on the southeast edge of Barelliuun.

MARA

Watch this part. As the Barelliuun continental plate runs along what we know as the Treikale plate, this area experiences volcanic activity, producing this piece of land.

As Barelliuun continues rotating, the pressure is relieved from this edge, and the land stops growing. A little more rotation and Karacas is now slightly northeast of Zaruus.

The computer stops the progression.

MARA

Here we are about one hundred thousand annuals ago, right before the impact. Continue simulation.

The entire screen fills with a close up of an asteroid and then its receding image as it speeds toward the surface of the planet. Several moments later the space traveler hits right where Karacas connects to the mainland. The resulting energy instantly converts solid rock into molten material. A huge plume of burning rock and dirt shoots high into the air.

Karacas brakes free from Barelliuun and begins to spin north.

TERREN (confused)

Mara, why is Karacas floating?

The professor looks up from the unfolding drama.

MARA

Remember what I mentioned about the core samples?

TERREN

Low density materials with a lot of air pockets.

She looks back at the display in time to see the island ship come to rest slightly up and over the edge of the north continent.

The simulation stops.

TERREN

I'm impressed. How many scenarios have you tried?

MARA

Several hundred. I tried various mass asteroids with different speeds, but I kept the angle of trajectory relatively constant. I tried other angles at first and shifted the point of impact around, but even the computer's recommendations matched mine.

TERREN

How much longer do you think it will take to verify your theory?

The professor shifts uneasily.

MARA

I'd like to finish Vallrey Harsperde's work to prove that this part of Norterium didn't form here as part of the original land mass. I can do that in less than a quarter-annual with the right resources - like a Solid Material Mapper, and some of those fancy new toys you've been working on with Doctor Felini and Doctor Kralis.

TERREN

What about funding?

MARA

You're reading my mind again. Do you think council would approve a research grant?

The look on Terren's face is not hopeful.

TERREN

Mara, I love you dearly, and I'm fascinated with the work you're doing here, but council is getting tighter on things like this. They wouldn't see any social value in what you're trying to prove and would consider it a major waste of money.

Syrin Thoris and a few others, including myself, are the only ones that can appreciate what a discovery like this could mean.

Mara nods her head in agreement.

MARA

Of course the majority of the opposition is purely political since elections are around the corner.

TERREN

Exactly.

Terren grabs Marakielle's hand.

TERREN

But there's another way. I've saved up more than enough to help you out.

MARA

I couldn't take your money, Terren.

TERREN

Well, let's see. You sold your property in the Kalees Mountains to finance your trip here. You've sold several patents at under value in order to purchase equipment. What's left?

MARA

Not much. I have a hard time taking your money.

TERREN

Consider it a donation then. We've given each other gifts in the past. You let me live in your guesthouse at no charge while I attended school. It's the least I can do.

I'll make the arrangements to send you a Solid Material Mapper and anything else you need when I return home. Make up a wish list before I leave.

The professor manages another smile.

MARA

You're a true friend.

The professor hugs Terren.

TERREN

This will work out better because those Malletion members on the council won't know what you're up to until you're ready to go public with your findings.

The conversation is interrupted by a communication signal.

SHREENA (v.o.)

Professor, Shreena here. We've removed the humanoid from the tunnel and placed it in Module A40. I think you should get over here right away. Rumors are starting to spread throughout the camp.

MARA

We're on our way. Tareash out.

Mara looks perplexed as she turns to Terren.

MARA

Shall we go see what the fuss is all about?

FADE OUT.

INT. MODULE A40. DARK.

The room is dark except for two spotlights directed onto the ice casket lying on the observation table. The environment is cold to keep the ice solid. Frost on the tomb hides the true shape within.

Shreena and a WORKER move around the block. They stop on one side, their backs to the door.

Professor Tareash walks up behind them.

MARA

What do you have?

Shreena and her assistant are startled.

MARA

Jumpy, jumpy.

Mara smiles, but both Shreena and the worker have serious looks on their faces.

MARA

What's wrong?

SHREENA

Sorry, Professor.

Shreena looks cautiously at the frozen structure and then back at Mara.

SHREENA

We're trying to take a tissue sample from this thing.

Shreena looks back to the research table.

TERREN

Thing? I thought you said it was humanoid.

She moves closer and wipes the frost off the side of the block to reveal its resident. Cold chills ran over her body as she pulls back.

TERREN

Strange. Do you think it's some form of mutant?

Shreena motions to the attendant to resume her work.

SHREENA

This tissue sample will help to explain a lot. My guess is between Critoeus Woman and modern human.

She wipes the top off the ice.

SHREENA

The face and cranium appears modern, but look at all the hair on the face. (points to chest area) And look here, no mammary protrusions. In addition, its upper body mass seems to be higher. Its shoulders are wider than its hips.

Shreena moves around the table as she talks, wiping the frost of the surface.

SHREENA

It's also wearing an animal skin over the reproductive area.

MARA

So, what's your theory?

Shreena looks very uncertain about answering and stumbles over a response.

SHREENA

I'm not sure, Professor. I'd rather run some tests first.

MARA

Come on, Shreena, you're a scientist, theorize.

Shreena shifts her gaze to the floor and musters a barely audible word.

SHREENA

Mankia.

The attendant looks at Mara and Terren for their reactions, then continues her work of inserting a long, slender metal rod into the ice toward the frozen creature's right arm.

Terren moves to the other side of the table to get a clear view of the specimen.

TERREN

It can't be Mankia. Mankia is a mythical creature.
(she scrutinizes the image closer)
Do you have a molecular scanner here?

SHREENA

Yes. It'll have to be adapted for such a large piece.

TERREN

Good. I'd like to see what's behind this animal skin. We'd at least know if your theory is correct.

Terren turns toward Mara.

MARA

What's the significance?

TERREN

If you remember from the Book of Malletion, Mankia had mutated flesh for reproductive organs and was able to pass its seed into the daughters of Malletius. Supposedly, all the different races of our world came from this mythological union.

Mara positions a light to look through the bottom of the ice.

MARA

This thing either has a lot of hair, it wore its covering loose, or there definitely is something down there.

Terren moves next to the professor.

TERREN

Amazing.

She turns to Shreena.

TERREN

How long will it take to set up the scanner?

Shreena issues a computer system communication.

SHREENA

Shastii to Lankar.

ZERA (v.o.)

Lankar here.

SHREENA

Zera, how long would it take to set
Up the molecular scanner here in
Module A40?

ZERA (v.o.)

About twenty subarqs. Did you want to
do a full depth structural analysis?

Shreena looks at Terren, who nods yes.

SHREENA

Affirmative. Is the equipment still
in A30?

ZERA (v.o.)

I believe so. We were scanning some
fossilized bone and primitive tools
earlier. I'll get on it right now.
Lankar out.

Shreena turns back to Terren and Mara.

SHREENA

The equipment will be here in a few
subarqs. At least a partial mid
section scan can be completed within
half an arq.

The worker's voice draws their attention.

WORKER

Got it. Ready for the quarantine
field.

Shreena attaches a device to the probe still inserted
In the ice. She presses a button and a blue light
penetrates the material surrounding the probe.

SHREENA

We'll need to seal up this hole here
to prevent any germs from getting in.

She enters a few commands on the device and slowly
removes the prod. Pure water replaces the hole behind
the retreating tip. The cold of the ice freezes the
added water.

The tube clears the block. At the end is a small frozen
plug of tissue.

The worker attaches an airtight box around the specimen, twists the box, and separates the tip of the probe from the rest of the device.

Shreena then places the specimen box on a stand in the center of a clear cabinet.

Her assistant presses a few buttons, and the computer begins to analyze the target.

Shreena pulls up a display screen and the four gather around it.

SHREENA

Computer, give a verbal analysis of the specimen.

COMPUTER

Mammal tissue, hair, skin, muscle, blood.

The computer displays a microscopic image. The magnification increases as the computer locks onto a skin cell.

COMPUTER

Crystallization of surface cells due to freezing temperatures.

Hundreds of the structures pass by the screen as the computer searches.

COMPUTER

Muscle tissue is in better condition.

The computer locks onto a well-preserved cell and magnifies the image. The nucleus fills the screen.

COMPUTER

Chromosomes denote human species. Possible mutation of X2.

The display shows what the computer is pinpointing by flashing the image from bright to normal.

SHREENA

Hold image.

She points to the highlighted chromosome.

SHREENA

It's smaller than X2 should be. There appears to be missing genes. Computer, put a standard X2 on top of the current shape.

A see-through library image appears over the real one.

SHREENA

Strange. It's as if a portion is missing from this X2. Computer, are all cell nuclei identical?

COMPUTER

All intact cell structures contain identical nuclei matter.

TERREN

What percentage of the cells can be reactivated with current technology?

COMPUTER

Approximately seventy-five percent can be reactivated to full function.

TERREN

Wow! That's incredible for any frozen cell, let alone ones that have been frozen this long.

A door at the opposite side of the room swings open and hits a metal cart. All four women jump at the sound. Zera and two other workers enter the room carrying equipment.

MARA

All this speculation and mythology is getting on our nerves, ladies. Terren, there's something else I want to show you.

Mara grabs Shreena's arm.

MARA

Let us know when you start the scan. I also want to call a meeting at 11:00. It's 09:06, so less than two hundred subarqs from now. We need to keep this specimen under wraps until we know exactly what we have here.

SHREENA

Yes, Professor.

TERREN

Doctor Crellus will definitely want to try cellular regeneration, so keep the tests safe.

SHREENA

Absolutely. This tissue plug will be the only thing it feels if we ever manage to wake it up.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN. INT. ANOTHER WORK MODULE.

Mara produces a box from a locked cabinet and places it on the table in front of Terren.

MARA

Tell me what you think of this.

Mara sits down.

Terren opens the container and removes a wrapped object. She pulls the multi-colored cloth off and reveals a crystal carving.

TERREN

It looks like a thruster plane with modified wings and tail. Is this one of your latest pieces?

Terren holds the triangle-shaped object up against the light.

MARA

No, I can't take credit for this one. Look at the details, and how polished it is.

TERREN

It's beautiful. Is it quartz?

MARA

It's a rare form of quartz, super high-density, but crystal clear and relatively free of inclusions. Diamond tools were used to cut and polish this piece. A computer scan indicates that a high-grade polishing compound was used.

TERREN

Mara, you're the only one I know who likes carving in crystal. Whose work is it?

She brings the carving in for a close examination.

MARA

That's the mystery. We found it in a small room that we excavated two triads ago. We think the location is some type of ritual chamber.

TERREN

How did a modern day carving get into a cave that's been buried for one hundred thousand annuals?

MARA

Any possible explanation only leads to hundreds of unexplainable facts. Maybe our early ancestors were more advanced than we think. Yet the oldest city on our planet is only five thousand twenty-five annuals. (looks directly at Terren)
Maybe your theory about being put here on this planet as some sort of experiment is the only possible explanation.

TERREN (smiles)

Our sentinel scanners detected an unidentified, high velocity object several triads ago. Asteroids and comets never do sharp turns or speed up in quick bursts. It was the first time our computers were able to record a non-celestial object in our star system.
(beat)
How did our ancestors know of thruster planes?

MARA

I thought it looked like a thruster plane the first time I saw it, too. Kind of an Andraka version. Especially these swirls and lines on the wings and tail. If these are wings, I guess it could be some type of flying creature. These look like eyes.

TERREN

This has got to be the find of the century, Mara. Where exactly was it located?

Professor Tareash produces her modified display panel with a video image of the entryway already pictured. Mara's smile reflects her ingenious computer's ability to follow along.

MARA

This is the actual recording after the team cleared the entrance to the room. I have a camera mounted on my helmet. Let's listen to my narration.

The computer immediately projects Mara's verbal record through the display speaker.

MARA (recording)

I'm entering the cave now. A lot of debris covers the floor.

MARA (recording cont.)

It appears the tremor brought part of
the ceiling down in here as well.

The professor's image directs a spotlight down the
narrow passage into a chamber area,

then down to the ground. The camera is pointing directly
at some bones protruding from the dirt.

MARA (recording)

Shreena.

SHREENA (recording)

Right behind you.

She moves up to Mara's position.

MARA (recording)

Some of the inhabitants were caught
under the falling rocks. See here,
(beat)
a complete forearm. And there...
(The camera shifts left)
part of a jawbone. Have someone
figure out if this one died because
of the cave-in. I'll try to stay
next to the wall so I don't disturb
too much.

She continues her discovery trek down the hallway and
into the chamber.

MARA (recording)

I've entered the room. It's carved
out of solid rock.

Mara's camera view flashes up to the corners,

to each wall,

and to various areas across the littered floor. Small
numbers appear at the bottom of the screen, indicating
the dimensions and distances.

MARA (recording)

It looks like a perfect cube, six
meters each for length, width, and
height.

Her camera points to a three-quarter-meter high structure
in the middle of the room as she moves up to it.

MARA (recording)

There's some type of centerpiece
here.

Mara's camera pans down.

MARA (recording)

What's this?

The view is of the same crystal object that is now in Terren's hands. In the replay, several precious stones surround the artifact set into the top of the rock form.

MARA (recording)

It's a ritual altar. There's one carved main piece with twelve holes surrounding it. Five of the slots have various rough crystals in them. Looks like tourmaline, quartz, beryl, and possibly corundum or garnet.

The camera shifts toward the ground.

MARA (recording)

Several gemstones are here on the floor. They were probably thrown during the quake.

MARA

We recovered all of them.

She produces a small bag and carefully dumps the contents on the table.

MARA

Twelve different types - all uncut gem quality. Check out this ruby.

She picks up a brilliant red crystal, holds it up to the light, and then hands it to Terren.

Mara selects the emerald.

MARA

These gems are priceless because of where we found them. I'm thinking of duplicating this entire room for the cultural museum and using these artifacts in the display.

A communication signal from the computer is followed by Shreena's voice.

SHREENA (v.o.)

Professor, Shastii here. We have the scanner set up.

MARA

Great. Computer, patch into Mod A40's computer and display the scan image here. Include a one-sixteenth window using the overhead camera in A40.

A thin blue line appears across the bottom of a black screen, and then a small insert screen appears in the upper left corner.

It shows Shreena, Zera, and two other workers surrounding the block of ice, adjusting and tuning equipment.

Shreena looks at the camera.

SHREENA

We've positioned initial tracking at mid-thigh for an upward sweep.

Doctor Tareash presses a few buttons on her display and sits back.

MARA

We're ready here.

SHREENA

Starting ice scan.

As she moves the upper panel forward, the corresponding screen image fills from the bottom up. At first, the light blue ice is all that displays. Shreena stops the scanning-panel and returns it to the start position.

SHREENA

Starting body scan.

Another sweep reveals the hips down to the mid-thigh region. The covering still shows. Shreena issues a few computer commands to exclude the garment.

SHREENA

Starting second body scan.

The panel is pushed forward again.

Astonished reactions come from both rooms. The image reveals two protrusions that appear to be hanging from the human's body.

TERREN

There still might be a purely scientific explanation.

Shreena turns toward the camera.

SHREENA

The computer confirms these protrusions are part of its body. Let's see what these things are made of.

She enters commands to display the internal organs and tissues.

A quick pass reveals everything inside.

Shreena studies her monitor display.

SHREENA

Interesting. Look where the birth chamber and egg sacs should be. There isn't even any deformed or dormant tissue in the area. Everything is different.

TERREN

Remember, Shreena, Mankia supposedly gave birth to nine sev-Mankia before falling into the eternal pit.

Shreena glances up to the camera.

SHREENA

I do remember. This thing has no trace of anything that even resembles a birth chamber. Is it a sev-Mankia?

TERREN

They were all supposedly hunted down over a nine annual period and dismembered.

Terren points to the two oval structures just behind what appears to be a tube.

TERREN

Could the twin protrusions be mutated egg sacs?

MARA

Computer?

COMPUTER

Structures contain gene packets at what appears to be various levels of maturation. Packets possess a long slender extension off one end.

A generated graphics picture shows several of the frozen genetic envelopes.

COMPUTER

Collection tubes extend from the ends of each oval structure, up over the front of the pubic bone, come together through an unknown cell mass, pass unknown gland structures and terminate at the end of the single protrusion. The fluid waste system is also connected to the external structure.

The computer highlights its detailed map.

TERREN

What's the structure for?

COMPUTER

Layout does not correspond to any known human anatomy. I am unable to make a comparison.

MARA

Theorize.

COMPUTER

One possible use is to deliver genetic material outside of the body. The closest non-human comparisons are Vesuven worms.

Everyone is deep in thought.

TERREN

Your expedition is turning up all kinds of strange things.

The professor looks at Terren, and then back to her display.

MARA

I never thought I'd be the one to prove the Malletion religious story.

TERREN

I know it's just a story. The references of Mankia are all symbolic. Jontu Thoria thinks the entire Book of Malletion is a description of the creative process told in story form. Wait until you finish here before giving any credence to mythology.

Mara relaxes slightly.

MARA

You're right. There has to be a good explanation for all of this. I hope the Malletions don't jump to conclusions.

A communication signal is heard.

VREENI

Shreena, Vreeni here. We've located two more specimens. They're several hundred meters farther in the same tunnel. Both are suspended near the entryway of a larger cavern.

MARA

Vreeni, Tareash here. Extract both in the same manner as the first and bring them to A40.

Shreena, store XL-119 in a secure place and keep me updated on the dig.

Mara disconnects the link and turns to Terren.

MARA

Maybe we have a whole family here.

TERREN

The history books will never be the same.

Terren grabs Mara's hand.

TERREN

The information you find here could lead to a major turning point in the history of our civilization. We'll never be able to view things the same again.

MARA

Kind of scary, isn't it?

TERREN

Very scary, Mara. What are the literal translators of the Book of Malletion going to say? Although Council controls them, they're gaining more influence within the ruling party every election. I think you were correct in telling Shreena to keep this hidden for now. Can you trust every one here?

MARA

I hope so.

TERREN

How many are here?

MARA

Thirty-five, including myself.

Terren thinks for a moment.

TERREN

Let me talk to Aurora Brightwind. Besides Syrin, and a few others, Aurora is the only other Council member I can trust with this information.

TERREN (continuing)

Council Brightwind knows more about the subversive side of the Malletions. She knows about Council Becca Zartis, and how strong her Malletion faction really is. We'll have to be careful about communications outside of this camp. Becca and her little group will do anything to use your findings against not only you, but also everyone who doesn't follow their beliefs.

I should also leave soon. The longer I stay, the more attention will be on you. If anyone asks, you're here on a simple expedition.

Encode all of your records and swear everyone to secrecy if you can. Secure all specimens and artifacts. There might be a way of covering up the entrance to the caves in case you get uninvited guests. I'll try to arrange a way of transporting everything to another location, if we have to.

Until the polar satellites are put up next quarter, you'll be safe from any nosey Malletion council members. Since you haven't received any support from Council, you can refuse any searches of your camps and records.

MARA (nods)

Agreed.

She hugs Terren.

MARA

You're one of the few people I can completely trust. Thanks for helping me with the funding.

TERREN

Make up the list of things you need and I'll see what I can do when I return home.

FADE OUT.

END ACT 1