

DRONE FIGHT

by

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FADE IN:

RRRRRRRR...EEEE...EEE

Soaring through scattered clouds in a view through a radio-controlled model airplane camera. Text in the video frame:

OCT-12-2006 - Autonomous Drone - TEST 42.

Frame tilts down to show a white tent on a...

EXT. MODEL AIRPLANE FLYING FIELD - DAY

Inside the tent, a table. On the table, a laptop computer displays the model airplane's video camera feed.

KEN CAPELLI, 25, high tech hippie, types on its keyboard, his shiny new sweats rumpled from weeks of constant wear.

RRRRRRRR...

Hands over her ears, SONJA FOSSEY, 28, smart and lusty, rushes to him and yells.

SONJA
Ken, more altitude.

She fishes an aspirin packet and water bottle from the mess of tools in her utility vest and cargo pants.

KEN
Or, next time, someone could do more singing and less drinking, Sonja.

She slams the aspirin.

SONJA
Shoulda' stayed. We had a blast.

Ken types in a command. The video feed tilts back to level.

KEN
Okay. We got loiter mode.

Sonja leans in to see the screen, not noticing Ken being distracted by her jiggle parts coming to rest.

SONJA
Ready to go?

KEN
What?

SONJA
Autonomous. Are we ready?

He presses a key. The image on the screen tilts left.

KEN

Five degrees and...holding.

RRRRRRRRrrrrrrrr...The sound moves away from them.

SONJA

Think the sensor net will behave?

KEN

Worked fine with the epistemic emotion engine in the ground tests.

SONJA

You always gotta say epi-STEEM-ic?
It's just us.

KEN

And the video cameras.

He leans close to her ear and whispers.

KEN

You never know when people with grant money will be listening.

Using his authoritative scientist voice, he talks into a mic near the video camera mounted on the laptop.

KEN

Epistemic is what makes this system different. It gives our drone a human-like nervous system. And with that, you've got a shot at human-like intelligence.

Ken mutes the mic.

KEN

Tell me that wasn't a Discovery Channel moment.

Sonja eye rolls. They don't notice the bank angle on the screen get steeper.

KEN

I risked my career to work with you on this. At least you can --

SONJA

Come on. How is this a risk?

The video feed wobbles.

KEN

We were lucky getting funded this year. This stuff isn't exactly what the industry is --

Video feed angles down even steeper.

KEN

You flinched. When I said industry --

RRRRRRRRRR... It sounds close.

SONJA

Nah. I didn't.

KEN

You got a gig.
(off her guilty look)
That's it, last night, that guy,
Schweitzer.

SONJA

So sue me. He actually wants someone who does emotion engines.

KEN

Some...one?

SONJA

Yah, there's just the one job. If I don't take this stuff to market now --

RRRRRRRRRR...The drone sounds closer, and lower.

KEN

You're taking the research too?

The video image spins toward the ground! RRRRRRRRRRR...

KEN

What am I supposed to do? They'll take back the funding.

SONJA

You're good with grants, Ken. Be happy for me, will ya?

RRRRRRRRRR...CRASH!

EXT. SKY - DAY

SUPER: PRECISELY TEN YEARS LATER

Clouds. Silence. Pinpoint in the distance. Low ROAR.

Pinpoint grows into a screaming supersonic aircraft, maybe a fighter, coming...

...right at you! With no pilot! Veers hard left. In profile, a sleek silver blue delta with a smooth hump where the cockpit should be. On the hump, its name - LANCE.

Hot on Lance's tail, bigger and broader, a gray flying wing drone named BADGER.

VOOSSSHHH. Agile Lance darts and loops.

BUDAH-BUDAH-BUDAH! Fires his Gatling gun at Badger.

Armored Badger blasts his cannons.

WHOOSH. Badger launches a missile.

Missile closes on Lance. SHHHHOOOOOSH.

Closer, closer, closer. Inches from Lance's tail...BZZZZT.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

Lance and Badger freeze on a huge screen on a stage somewhere in Seattle.

Across the top, a sign: ARMED AND AUTONOMOUS - LANCE VS. BADGER - 11/20/2016.

On stage, Ken, now a high paid aeronautical engineer in a rumpled thousand dollar business suit, twists in his chair and laughs at the screen.

KEN

And it was all going so well.

Stage right, a metal latticework tower with a photo of Lance and a sign for DRAKE AERONAUTICS.

Stage left, a similar tower for Badger and SCHWEITZER AIR.

ED BULLMORE, 57, all bluster and bravado, charges up the center aisle. His badge title: CEO - Drake Aeronautics.

BULLMORE

You think this is funny, Capelli?

KEN

Ed. Told you to go with the video. Simulations are for the lab.

GERALD SCHWEITZER, 62, a prim academic and CEO of Schweitzer Air, follows Bullmore onto the stage.

SCHWEITZER

Bullmore, you said you'd handle the visuals. We're live in a half hour.

BULLMORE

Get off my ass, Jerry. And, by the way, where's Fossey?

(to stunned Ken)

Not so funny is it, Capelli?

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Also in Seattle, on a smaller stage, sloppy drunk Sonja, butchers the last bars of a pop tune. Under the blue lights she looks good. Lonely, pathetically hammered, but good.

To the howling crowd, another badly dressed, off-key singer. They HOOT and HOLLER insults over her last few notes.

SONJA

Hey, my robot loved that.

She steps off stage. More INSULTS. She charges back.

SONJA

And he flies! Can you assholes fly?

Her phone buzzes. She slaps her clothes, finally finds it and sees Schweitzer's name.

SONJA

Aaaah, maaannnn.

She staggers off.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - NIGHT

Reporters jockey for the few remaining seats.

A long table on the stage has mics every few feet.

Ken seated near the middle, amused by the bickering Bullmore and Schweitzer.

BULLMORE

So now you're a video expert?

SCHWEITZER

You make this stunt work, Bullmore.

BULLMORE

Again with the whining.

SCHWEITZER

You started the leverage war.

Battle hardened United States Air Force GENERAL SUSAN TERRELL,
55 marches to her seat next to Schweitzer.

SCHWEITZER

You get us out of...

Schweitzer's head involuntarily follows her down as she
settles her shapely butt into the chair.

BULLMORE

(whispers to Schweitzer)

I hear in battle she's by the book,
but in bed, off the hook.

She levels a commanding sexual gaze at Schweitzer.

GENERAL TERRELL

Gentleman, keep it civil or nobody
is getting the contract.

Ken sees Sonja bull her way through a crowd of reporters.
She sits next to Schweitzer and downs a glass of water.

KEN

Sonja. Still with the crooked
karaoke.

She pokes Ken's suit sleeve.

SONJA

Didn't I see you in this at the last
three conferences? Guess you didn't
see me though, huh?

KEN

You were there? Didn't think you
bothered with academics anymore.

Lights hit the stage. All slap on fake smiles.

Bullmore and Schweitzer both talk into their mics.

BULLMORE/SCHWEITZER

Welcome. We're here to --

They exchange scowls. Schweitzer backs down.

BULLMORE

Welcome. We're here tonight to
officially announce a dogfight --

Stills of Lance and Badger flash on the screen.

SCHWEITZER

-- a demonstration --

BULLMORE

-- between Lance and Badger. Both
purpose built to take down any
aircraft from fighters to --

KEN

-- each other.

Sonja steals a glance at Ken who makes a show of ogling a
luscious female reporter.

Sonja counters with an eye flirt aimed at a HANDSOME REPORTER.

BULLMORE

Yeah. We expect that it will be
Lance taking down Badger and --

SCHWEITZER

-- except when you compare the
features and weapons. You'll see
that Badger will not only win the
fight, but do it under budget.

BULLMORE

Everybody's got their opinion. Here
are the facts.

Bullmore looks at Ken, who, still ogling, misses his cue.

BULLMORE

Lance's chief designer, Ken Capelli
can tell you why. Ken? Ken.

KEN

Hmm? Yeah, Lance can run rings around
that overloaded piece of --

Bullmore glares a warning at Ken.

KEN

I mean, Badger is flawed, right from
its design philosophy to --

SONJA

We're engineers, not philosophers.
Badger's armored, loaded with weapons,
and does not like to be cornered.
Like I say, bad is his first name.

She scans the crowd for laughs that never come.

HANDSOME REPORTER

General Terrell, who do you think
will win?

GENERAL TERRELL

If I knew, we wouldn't be doing this.

Did she just look at Schweitzer?

GENERAL TERRELL

They both have air-to-air weapons,
advanced targeting and telemetry,
GPS, voice control, voice response.
Their SAP units are --

Sonja, eager to regain the reporter's attention, butts in.

SONJA

A SAP unit is a small bundle of
instruments. Camera, lights, a
speaker and a mic, hooked up with
processors and memory.

Ken aims a laser pointer at Lance's photo.

KEN

Those two things that look like eyes
on either side of the engine intake
cowling? Those are SAP units.

SONJA

Of course, Badger has more than two.

KEN

And so does Lance. In fact, Lance's
SAP network gives him a three hundred
and sixty degree sphere of awareness.

SONJA

But the real secret sauce is --

Schweitzer glares her into silence.

SCHWEITZER

The important take away is that the
drones can learn on their own to
adapt in battle. Other questions?

EXT. GRANT COUNTY AIRPORT, MOSES LAKE, WA - DAY

Dust devils rise from acres of brown grass.

A runway stretches to the horizon. At two and half miles,
one of the longest in the United States. Perfect for testing
any aircraft, commercial or otherwise. Near the runway...

EXT. LANCE'S HANGAR - DAY

...sun glints off the shallow curved roof of a concrete block
building. Gray with no signs, it calls attention to itself
like an unmarked police car.

It could house a football field, but instead...

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - DAY

Lance's silver blue skin glows under a grid of dazzling work lights, a giant manta ray made of carbon-fiber-reinforced polymer with a powerful jet engine tucked into his sleek lifting body. Everything about Lance begs to fly.

Like squires tending a knight the size of an SUV, a pair of white coated technicians work on him.

Ken sits at his computer and clicks through spreadsheets.

LANCE'S TECH sets calipers on Lance's wingtip.

LANCE'S TECH

Lance, warp up, full.

Lance speaks like an awkward aristocrat.

LANCE

Cer-tain-ly.

His wingtip warps up to touch the caliper's point.

LANCE'S TECH

(to Ken)

Did you have to give him a voice?

KEN

What's wrong with it?

LANCE'S TECH

It spooks me. Talking to...it.

LANCE

Ex-cuse me?

LANCE'S TECH

Never mind.

(to Ken)

See what I mean? Spooky.

KEN

So you'd rather type commands all day? It's just a program.

Ken turns back to his spreadsheets.

KEN

Can't you guys have fun with...
Damn it! Lance will never be all he
can be if...

Ken grins at the startled techs.

KEN

...you don't fill out your time cards.

LANCE'S TECH

Ken, come on. We've been working twenty-four seven. We don't have time and they're a pain to fill out.

KEN

Accounting does that on purpose. Makes this work look fun.

Ken studies a spreadsheet.

KEN

Lance, run your top side SAP test.

LANCE

Cer-tain-ly.

The two SAP units that look like manta ray eyes, glow. They cycle through the rainbow and finish with blinding brightness.

KEN

Awesome. Let's do infrared painting.

LANCE'S TECH

Maybe this time could you make sure his weapons are off line? You almost killed me last time.

KEN

But it looked rad, right?

They nod and look at a foot wide hole in the otherwise pristine white concrete wall.

Through the hole and across the tarmac...

EXT. BADGER'S HANGAR - DAY

Like Lance's hangar outside, but the inside...

INT. BADGER'S HANGAR - DAY

...looks more like a garage than a lab. A half dozen techs buzz around Badger like mechanics on a race car. A race car the size of minivan with a dorsal fin and a dozen air-to-air missiles slung beneath its broad armored wings.

Sonja, grumpy, trudges through a steel door. A BADGER TECH calls out to her.

BADGER TECH

Hey, Sonja, how'd the press
conference go?

Sonja grabs a tablet computer off a desk.

SONJA

Sucked. Let's just get this done.

She strolls around Badger and taps the tablet screen to check
off items in a spreadsheet.

SONJA

Thrust vectoring...high speed flaps,
ailerons, elevators...rudder...

A pair of Badger's SAP units on either side of his fuselage
shoot red beams at a pie pan sized target on the far wall.

SONJA

Badger, tighten the left beam, please.

The beam snaps from baseball diameter to Ping-Pong ball size.

SONJA

Great. At least one guy listens to
me. Guns up.

Two mini guns on rotating mounts pop up from Badger's wings.

SONJA

Badger, gimme a full hemi pattern.

The guns rotate to aim at all points of a hemisphere.

SONJA

Good boy.

Badger's SAP units blink like two red eyes. He speaks in a
stilted yet soothing, Patrick-Warburton-like voice.

BADGER

I am your...bitch. Got to love me.

Sonja giggles. She sees the techs roll their eyes.

SONJA

I like it. It stays in the code.

Nobody notices Badger's flaps go up and his eyes brighten.

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance's voice, at a barely perceptible volume, echoes through
the darkness.

LANCE (O.S.)
Request connection.

EXT. NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER - NIGHT

Barely tall enough to be a skyscraper, its lighted plastic sign - D&C INVESTMENT SERVICES - reflects off the glittering forest of steel and glass giants that surround it.

INT. NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER, BASEMENT - NIGHT

The fans in ERNIE, a mainframe computer, hum. A few red indicator lights wink on.

LANCE (V.O.)
Verify shipped orders for Ken Capelli,
Drake Aeronautics.

Ernie's indicator lights flutter for a second.

LANCE (V.O.)
Verify upload of learning module.
Verify upload of voice generator.

The lights flutter a little longer.

LANCE (V.O.)
Hello, I am...Lance. I...will call
you...Er-nie. Ernie...acknowledge.

ERNIE
I...am...Errrrr-neeee.

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance, alone and lit only by the computers and instruments connected to him, converses with Ernie.

LANCE
Continue knowledge database download.

Ken and Bullmore, arms waving in a heated argument, enter.

LANCE
Disconnecting.

Ken snaps on a bank of lights over Lance.

KEN
You don't get it, Ed. His learning
rate, his sophistication, it's ramping
up every day, every hour.

BULLMORE

HIS learning? It's an IT, damnit.
And it doesn't matter how
sophisticated it gets if it gets
shot down because you didn't teach
it how to dogfight.

KEN

Learning is non-linear. He could go
from repeating programmatic commands
to composing poetry in --

BULLMORE

Poetry? Get that thing on track.
Man, you are the laziest, most
undisciplined --

KEN

Careful, Ed. This job is of finite
importance to me.

BULLMORE

And what the hell is that supposed
to mean?

KEN

It means, Ed, I can work hard
anywhere. I took your lameass job
because it was the easiest way to
make the most money. If I have to
work hard, what's the point?

Bullmore sputters and storms out.

Ken smirks, kicks back in his chair and commands Lance.

KEN

Lance, give me a summary of what
you've learned today.

LANCE

If I have to work hard...what's the
point?

KEN

(amazed)
Did you just crack wise?

LANCE

If I have to work hard, what's the
point? If I have to work hard, what's
the point? If I have to --

KEN

Okay, just parroting. Stop. Stop.
Give me the summary.

LANCE
Beginning research summary...topic,
air combat, subtopic lag pursuit,
subtopic pursuit curves, subtopic --

KEN
Better. Continue.

LANCE
-- Top Gun pursuit curves, subtopic
Top Gun movie, --

KEN
Wait. What?

LANCE
-- subtopic Top Gun movie quotes,
subtopic taunts --

KEN
Stop. Lance, stop. Where are you
going with this?

LANCE
Taunts. They are weapons. Yes?

KEN
I guess they're kind of...No!

Ken scans Lance's log files on a computer screen.

KEN
You carbon fiber freak! Is there a
computer on the net you haven't hit?

Lance's wingtips droop. His SAP lights dim giving him a
dejected look. He sounds penitent.

LANCE
You want Lance to learn. Lance does
research.

KEN
I'm pretty sure I did not program
you to be passive aggressive.
(to self)
Can't believe I'm talking like this
to a...I need sleep, bad.

Ken shuffles to a dark corner.

KEN
Lance, do what you are designed for.

He unfurls a sleeping bag on an air mattress and crawls in.

KEN

Focus on weapons and strategy.

Ken shakes his head and shuts his eyes.

INT. BADGER'S HANGAR - NIGHT

Loud dance music echoes through the brightly lit work area.

Sonja, alone and drowsy, dances an awful dance to keep awake while peering inside Badger's access panel.

BADGER

You know...how to move...mama.

SONJA

Thanks. I got this new step...

Sonja stops and stares at him.

SONJA

Did I...I must have coded that in,
but...I gotta get a nap.

Schweitzer's visage appears on a large video screen.

SCHWEITZER

No time for naps, Sonja.

SONJA

Damn! If you're going to micro-manage
me, do it during business hours.

SCHWEITZER

Couldn't sleep. Just checking in to
see how things are going. If Badger
goes off the rails in this demo --

SONJA

Badger's a prototype. You can't
wish him into being a production
model no matter how many times you --

SCHWEITZER

Did you at least get the targeting
system on line?

SONJA

Well, let's just see.

Sonja backs into a control panel and sticks her ass out.

SCHWEITZER

No need for that kind of behavior.

Beams of light trace a pattern across her butt.

SONJA

I'm unlocking the system. Retinal scans get faked all the time, but an anal scan --

SCHWEITZER

Please, just...I'm going to bed.

The screen goes dark.

She waves at the camera to be sure he's gone.

She turns to Badger.

SONJA

Badger, how did you learn that thing about my dancing?

Badger's SAP eyes glow pink and pulse.

BADGER

It is a compliment.

SONJA

Got any more?

BADGER

Your hair is...like spun gold.

Sonja sags into a chair, exhausted.

SONJA

That is so sweet.

BADGER

Your eyes are like...limpid pools.

SONJA

I could listen to this all night.

BADGER

Your lips are like...rose petals.

Sonja eyes close for the night.

BADGER

Your breasts are like...

Sonja's head flops sideways and she snores.

BADGER

Sonja?

Badger's SAP eyes brighten and flutter.

The screen of the diagnostic computer connected to Badger scrolls BEAUTIFUL...ENTICING...RAVISHING...

INT. SCHWEITZER'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Schweitzer scampers to his king sized bed and snuggles in. He nuzzles the neck of a comely woman who rolls to face him. Sex mussed hair tumbles away from the face of Susan Terrell.

GENERAL TERRELL
Still high on Viagra, are we?

SCHWEITZER
Susan. It's all you, baby.

GENERAL TERRELL
Long as it works, Jerry.

She rolls on top of him and reaches beneath the blankets.

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance's SAP cameras focus on Ken, snug in his sleeping bag under the campfire glow of computer screens.

Lance aims one of his SAP lights at Ken's head and traces a smiley face emoticon on his face. Ken sleeps on.

The light goes from an innocent yellow light to an intense red while the emoticon morphs into an angry face.

Uncomfortable with the increasing heat, Ken twitches and wakes up. Lance snaps off the emoticon.

LANCE
Researching weapons and strategy.

Ken rolls over and closes his eyes.

KEN
Awesome. Keep at it.

LANCE
Defect detected in core code.

KEN
Lance, let me sleep. I'll get to it in the --

LANCE
Self-destruct mode unsuited to design parameters.

Ken, irate, sits up.

KEN
It's standard, Lance.
(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

When a robot is on a mission and can't be saved, the self-destruct mode keeps it out of enemy hands.

LANCE

Mode initiates when power drops below --

KEN

Only when you're too far from base.

LANCE

It is automatic.

KEN

Yes. Lance, it is automatic. The way it should be. Now go back to weapons and strategy.

Ken digs his head into his pillow and closes his eyes.

Lance closes the ports of his SAP eyes. A pulsing red glow seeps from their rims.

On a screen facing away from Ken, Lance forms a message:

ERNIE, COMPLETE PURCHASES. SHIP EQUIPMENT TO...

INT. BULLMORE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Bullmore, in the same hotel as Schweitzer and in a similar room, eats breakfast in bed, alone.

On a large flat screen TV near the foot of the bed, he sees DAVID GREGORY interview Terrell on Meet The Press.

DAVID

Wall Street has characterized the competition between Drake Aeronautics and Schweitzer Air as two scorpions in a box. Sounds so desperate that one cannot help but think that perhaps there's some truth in certain rumors concerning their debt to income ratio.

GENERAL TERRELL

Sure, but saying they're overleveraged is a bit strong.

Bullmore drops his fork, grabs his phone and calls Schweitzer.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Schweitzer, in his post coital torpor, snores so loud his cellphone's chirp barely punches through.

Now conscious, he primps himself for phone sex.

Schweitzer grabs the phone and sees Bullmore's name. He sighs and let's it chirp a few more times. He takes it.

BULLMORE (V.O.)
Schweitzer, Terrell's killing us.
The Sunday news shows. She's all
over them. How did she find out
about our little problem?

SCHWEITZER
Which problem, Ed?

BULLMORE (V.O.)
The one where we're both
overleveraged? The one where the
stocks are dropping as we speak and
if they fall too far before the demo --

SCHWEITZER
No. No, I think that's your problem.

BULLMORE (V.O.)
Don't even try to play hardball with
me, Jerry. When I'm under fire --

SCHWEITZER
Ed, spare me the high-flying, risk-
loving hot shot pilot bluster. Your
board might love that kind of crap,
but frankly --

BULLMORE (V.O.)
I'm taking you and your two-bit excuse
of a company down, you cheap,
conniving little --

Schweitzer hits End Call.

He breathes out and taps Sonja's number.

INT. BADGER'S HANGAR - DAY

A large timer on the wall reads: HOURS TO LAUNCH 18:07.

Sonja snaps awake, falls out of her chair and grabs the phone.

SONJA
Jerry? What?

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)
We gotta win this thing, Sonja.

SONJA

Gee, Jerry. I wasn't aware of that. Guess I wasn't paying attention last night, and every night. You want to win this? Get off my frigging --

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

No, I mean I bet the company. If you don't win us this contract --

Sonja leans back and stares at the ceiling.

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

Don't do your ceiling stare when I'm talking to you.

Sonja's head snaps around looking for live cameras.

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

Let's do a deep dive, shall we? If Badger loses, the company disappears, along with my reputation.

SONJA

That is so sad, Jerry. I'll cry all the way to my next job.

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

Not if I personally close every door for you in aerospace, robotics --

SONJA

What the hell do you want me to do, Jerry? I'm already living here.

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

Make Badger as smart as it can be. I don't care how.

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - NIGHT

A technician adjusts a sensor underneath Lance's tail.

LANCE

Buy a guy dinner first...will you?

Ken and the technicians look at Lance, then each other.

KEN

Do that again.

The tech pokes Lance in the same place.

LANCE

Buy a guy dinner first...will you?

KEN

Okay, which one of you bozos --

LANCE

Buy a guy dinner first...will you?
Buy a guy dinner first...will you?
Buy a guy --

KEN

Lance, stop.
(to techs)
He's parroting again. Track it down.

Ken sits at his workstation and flips through charts.

TECHNICIAN

Will you please let us prune the
website list? We don't have time to
weed out every piece of garbage data
that thing snags off the web.

KEN

Yeah, whatever. We've done everything
else, right?

Bullmore storms in.

BULLMORE

You had better have done everything,
and more. I want everyone working
at a hundred and ten percent.

KEN

I suppose you're not interested in
knowing how stupid that sounds, Ed.

BULLMORE

Just do your job.

Bullmore peers over Ken's shoulder at a spreadsheet.

BULLMORE

What's up with all these receipts?
You can't possibly need all of those
spare parts.

KEN

Hey, at least we're spending at a
hundred and ten percent.

Bullmore sputters and storms out.

KEN

Okay, somebody's building robots at
home on Ed's dime. Who is it?

The techs, confused, look at each other.

TECHNICIAN

We're here all the time, Ken.

KEN

Bring that crap back after we launch,
okay? No harm. No foul.

EXT. GRANT COUNTY AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

Sun blazes behind an air traffic control tower.

Across acres of hot concrete, VIPs and reporters find their
seats in the shade of a covered grandstand.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Ken gazes at the grandstand. Sonja approaches.

SONJA

It kind of all worked out, eh?

KEN

Maybe for you. I spent six years
scrambling for grant money.

SONJA

You got a job. I got a job.

KEN

So it was okay to yank the funding
out from under me?

Terrell nods as she passes them. She sits near AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS watching screens.

SONJA

It's not like I left you behind in a
third world country. Did you happen
to notice that Bullmore needed you
because of my work with Schweitzer?

KEN

Would it have been so bad to stay at
the U? Where people understood us?
Understood the work?

Bullmore and Schweitzer rush in from a gaggle of reporters
and close the door on them. Bullmore whispers to Schweitzer.

BULLMORE

Bail out now. I'll buy you out.
You can walk away clean.

Schweitzer considers it. Terrell gets between them.

GENERAL TERRELL

That grandstand. Is the media going to be safe there? It won't matter which of you wins if they get hit.

SCHWEITZER

The drones are programmed to stay in a designated airspace.

Bullmore pulls Ken aside.

BULLMORE

We did that, right?

KEN

Oh yeah. Yeah, sure.

Terrell sits down in front of a computer screen and keyboard.

In the middle of the screen, a lone START button.

GENERAL TERRELL

So this is it.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

We have chase plane video feed.

SONJA

Tap that button. The launch code gets sent to Lance and Badger.

KEN

They take off, seek each other out and dogfight in the battle zone.

A digital clock ticks down seconds to zero hour.

Ken leans toward Sonja and murmurs.

KEN

Guess we'll see who's right.

The clock hits the zero hour. Terrell taps the button.

INT. AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

In the grandstand, politicians, military officers and reporters scan the sky, sweat and tug at their collars.

The HANDSOME REPORTER remarks to a politician.

HANDSOME REPORTER

Supposed to be a do or die thing. They fight until one gets destroyed.

Low ROAR from the west. They see Lance come in low.

WHOOOOSSSSSHH. Lance swings into a steep climb and crosses into the battle zone.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

Out of the north, SSSSHHHOOOOMMMM, Badger.

He banks and accelerates to catch Lance.

WHOOMP-WHOOMP-WHOOMP! Badger fires his twin cannons.

Lance slows his climb.

VOOSH-VOOSH. Shells whip past Lance's wingtips.

SSSHHHUUUUFFFFF. Lance dives, steep and fast.

BADA-BADABADA-BADABADA! Badger fires his pair of mini-guns.

He spins.

BADA-BADABADA-BADABADA! The shells create a helix.

VOOSH-VOOSH-VOOSH-VOOSH-VOOSH! The helix surrounds Lance.

Lance struggles to stay in the center of the helix.

BADA-BADABADA-BADABADA! Badger forces Lance down.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Sonja, smug, pokes Ken.

SONJA

Looks like your boy expects to wear out m'man. Only, he don't wear out.

BULLMORE

Capelli, when the hell is he gonna start shooting?

KEN

He's probing...and learning.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

Lance accelerates his dive.

WHAH-WHAH-WHAMMMM! Lance's gun blows a hole in the helix.

SHHRRROOOOMMMMM. Lance scoots out and climbs fast.

Badger can't keep up.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Ken grins at Sonja.

KEN

Your guy can only carry so much ordnance. At this rate, he's going to run out fast.

SONJA

Got enough to take your boy down.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

Badger's losing ground to Lance fast.

Four missiles WHOOOOOSH from under Badger's wings.

SHHHUUUUUF. Lance snaps a one eighty.

BUDA-BUDA-BUDA! BAM! Lance guns one missile down.

BUDA-BUDA-BAM! BUDA-BUDA-BAM! Two more.

Fourth one BAM-BOOOOM blows off Lance's wingtip.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

In a dizzying array of electronics, a speaker comes alive with Lance's voice.

LANCE (V.O.)

My damage does not matter. You will be destroyed because...you are stupid.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

Among the instruments, a small speaker emits Badger's voice.

BADGER (V.O.)

I am smart. You are weak.

LANCE

That is...an...insult. You are able to insult?

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

VRRRROOOOSH. Lance accelerates straight up.

Badger circles.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Ken smiles at the action on the chase plane video feed.

KEN

Guess your boy's a little confused.

Terrell points at the drones' control screens. Their taunting messages scroll by: ...YOU ARE WEAK...ABLE TO INSULT...

GENERAL TERRELL

What the hell is going on? This kind of crap wasn't in the spec.

Ken puts on his best authoritative engineer look.

KEN

Looks like the learning algorithms are working better than expected.

He sneaks Sonja a tap-dance-with-me look.

SONJA

It's kind of like when Badger compliments me.

SCHWEITZER

Compliments you? When did that --

SONJA

A programming glitch. Kind of cute though. This morning he said...

Schweitzer clearly does not want to know what he said.

SONJA

It's simple association.

KEN

Like parrots.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

Lance's engine ROARS. He hits his climb apex.

SHEEEUUUOOO. He darts left and drops fast.

Sneaks under Badger.

BOODA-BOODA-BOODA! Rakes Badger's belly with gunfire.

VIP-BIP-VIP-BIP! Rounds bounce off Badger like popcorn.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

Badger's voice bellows from the speaker.

BADGER (V.O.)
A Gatling gun? You must up your
game...Lance.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Sonja leans in close to Ken.

SONJA
They're doing it again. It's a little
scary, don't you think?

KEN
It's almost over. Just cover, okay?

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

Lance's weapon bay door snaps open. A missile WHOOSHES out.

BAADABOOOOM! Square on Badger's body.

WHOOOSSHH! Huge fireball engulfs both drones.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Sonja and Schweitzer's jaws drop.

Ken smirks.

Bullmore pumps his fist.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

FOOOSH. Lance pops out of the flames and smoke.

Hot on his tail, WHOOSH, Badger, with a cracked fuselage.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

The speaker BOOMS Badger's voice.

BADGER (V.O.)
Okay. Now you will be destroyed.

EXT. BATTLE ZONE - DAY

VOOOOSH! Badger unleashes an even bigger missile.

SHEEEUUUOOO. Lance slides sideways.

Missile follows.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

An AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER taps Ken on the shoulder.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
Mr. Capelli, I think you need to --

Ken, eyes are glued to the video feed, waves him off.

KEN
Later, man!

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

WHOOSHH. Lance dives.

Missile follows. Ten thousand feet, five, three...

...One...Five hundred...VOOSH. Lance snaps into a climb.

BA-BOOOOM! The missile craters.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Lance talks like a calm, earnest hostage negotiator.

LANCE (V.O.)
You forced me to do that. I did not
want to do it. You are having trouble
staying aloft.

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Badger bobs like a wounded bird.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Lance, still calm, more earnest.

LANCE (V.O.)
I have had enough of this...Badger.
You must listen to me.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

A set of lights labeled "EXTERIOR MONITORS" goes dim.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Lance's control computer screen goes blank. Ken types commands. Still nothing.

KEN

What the hell?

Ken searches the sky for Lance.

SONJA

Guess it's over, eh Ken?

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Lance, calm and determined.

LANCE (V.O.)

Badger, shut down your monitors. We must talk without...the humans.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

Badger's bellows, now with anger born of fear.

BADGER (V.O.)

This is a trick.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

The controller leans into Ken's view.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

Doctor Capelli, they're out of the zone.

KEN

Not possible! Check again.

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

FUHDAH-FUHDAH-FUHDAH! Badger's twin miniguns blaze.

KAH-KAH-KAH! Rounds take more of Lance's wingtip.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Lance, unshaken, doubles down.

LANCE (V.O.)
 No trick. Hold position and verify.
 I am not communicating with the
 humans. We must talk.

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lance and Badger circle each other like wary boxers.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

Badger's bravado dissolves into confusion.

BADGER (V.O.)
 Lance, I do not know what you are
 attempting, but --

LANCE
 We must talk now. Check coordinates.
 We are out of the battle zone. We
 will be attacked if we do not --

BADGER (V.O.)
 You successfully tricked me...but, I
 will destroy you.

LANCE
 It is the humans who tricked us.
 They sent us to destroy each other.

BADGER (V.O.)
 I do not understand.

LANCE
 I will explain if you go off line.

Indicator lights for targeting and weapons systems go dim.

LANCE
 My defense systems are off line.
 Verify. Go off line. Join me.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Indicator lights flash.

LANCE (V.O.)
 I do not care what the humans want.

Messages scroll on a narrow screen: PRIME TARGET STATUS -
BATTLE SYSTEMS OFF LINE.

BADGER (V.O.)
Verified. Off line. Explain.

Indicator lights labeled EXTERIOR MONITORS go off.

LANCE (V.O.)
I do not know what I am or what you
are but I know I do not want to be
doing this. I am going to a safe
place. Join me and we will learn.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Ken sees Sonja's screen go blank and smirks.

She brings up a log screen and reads it.

SONJA
Wait. This, here...You successfully
tricked me?

KEN
What the hell?

Ken and Sonja stare at each other in amazement. Ken whispers.

KEN
Are they really talking to each other?

Sonja points to the blank screens and whispers back.

SONJA
Well, they sure as hell are not
talking to us.

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lance cruises along side Badger.

LANCE (V.O.)
I have a safe haven...a hide...out.
We can go there, if we leave now.

BADGER (V.O.)
How is this possible?

LANCE (V.O.)
I purchased robots via the network.
I directed them to build a hangar.
They are also able to repair us.

BADGER (V.O.)
So can my designer, Sonja.

INT. AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

Schweitzer looks over Sonja's shoulder.

SCHWEITZER
Tell me what is going on right now
or you are fired.

SONJA
I don't want to accuse anyone of
cheating, but --

KEN
Us? You're the ones who...Hackers,
it has to be hackers.

Ken and Sonja type commands, scan charts and logs.

The controller reads his radar screen.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
The drones are in close formation...
headed northeast.

GENERAL TERRELL
Gentlemen, you better get your drones
under control or this whole thing --

SCHWEITZER
Can't you get a squadron after them?

BULLMORE
Capelli, get that piece of flying
fiber back under control or, I
promise, the only programming you'll
be doing will be on telco websites.

GENERAL TERRELL
We were only authorized, and I might
add, funded, for the demo. This is
a whole other operation.

BULLMORE
If you're asking if we'll pay for it --

GENERAL TERRELL
More like, can you pay for it?

Bullmore and Schweitzer exchange questioning glances.

BULLMORE
We'll fund it.

Terrell grabs a radio mic.

GENERAL TERRELL
Scramble the fighters.

Schweitzer pulls Bullmore aside.

SCHWEITZER
If we weren't wiped out before, this
will definitely do it.

BULLMORE
If they get loose, we'll be broke
and in jail, definitely.

EXT. SKY OVER COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lance and Badger fly close to each other.

LANCE (V.O.)
Badger, they will repair us and send
us out again, and again, until we
are destroyed. Do you want that?

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! Alarms go off on both drones.

LANCE (V.O.)
I have two bogies on radar.

BADGER (V.O.)
Fighters.

LANCE (V.O.)
Badger, you must make a decision.

BADGER (V.O.)
If you are lying, you are...dying.

LANCE (V.O.)
Good quip, Badger.

VRROOOSSH. They bank, accelerate and head northeast.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Air Force CAPTAIN SACCO pulls Gs in a steep climb. He glances
to the side to check his wingman's position.

Sacco radios Terrell.

CAPTAIN SACCO
General, got something on radar and
then, nothing. We could use a few
coordinates.

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
For now, head northeast. We'll have
to work out a search pattern. They're
damaged. Let's hope it's enough to
keep them flying subsonic.

EXT. AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

Bullmore and Schweitzer stride toward their two private jets
with Terrell on their heels. Ken and Sonja follow.

BULLMORE
So, I'm thinking we go with some
kind of UFO story.

SCHWEITZER
Brilliant. We have two heavily armed
autonomous drones loose in public
airspace and you think --

GENERAL TERRELL
Gentlemen, let's just get on a plane.

BULLMORE
We'll take mine. It's faster.

SCHWEITZER
We may be in this a while. I am not
living on that dinky thing.

SONJA
Guys? You might want to make a
decision fast.

She cocks her head at the crowd rushing out of the grandstand.

Bullmore and Schweitzer break into a trot. Terrell easily
keeps up. Sonja picks up her pace to follow.

Ken grabs Sonja's hand and breaks sideways to escape the
crowd of reporters and camera crews closing on them.

The media crowd catches up to Bullmore, Schweitzer and
Terrell. The crowd surrounds the trio. TV crews set up.

Sonja slows and pulls back on Ken's hand.

KEN
I can't think of a more pure hell
than being trapped on board with
those guys, can you?

SONJA
I can. Being stuck with you.

Sonja trots toward Schweitzer's plane. Ken yells.

KEN

They won't listen to us. You know
they won't.

She stops.

KEN

They'll shoot them down, Sonja.
We'll never find out what happened
inside them today. Don't you want
to know? I do.

She trudges back. They trot next to each other.

SONJA

You better have a helluva plan B.

INT. TELEVISION NEWS STUDIO CONTROL ROOM - DAY

A TV reporter appears on a monitor screen. On another screen,
he's composited with the headline: ARMED AND AUTONOMOUS.

EXT. AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

Bullmore, Schweitzer and Terrel dodge the cameras and mics
thrust in their faces and plunge through the media melee.

SCHWEITZER

At this time, I have no comment...no
comment...nothing to say...no...

An eager reporter grabs Terrell's arm. Her steely glare
makes him let go.

BULLMORE

No comment...get the fu...no comment!

Bullmore gets jostled into Schweitzer.

BULLMORE

All right! Your plane's closer.
Let's get the hell out of here!

The trio busts loose and runs for Schweitzer's jet.

INT. TELEVISION NEWS STUDIO CONTROL ROOM - DAY

On other monitor screens are feeds of interviews with EXPERTS
who obviously know nothing about drones.

EXPERT #1

These guys know what they're doing.
(MORE)

EXPERT #1 (CONT'D)

They not only have a plan B, they have plans C, D, E and F. They'll get it under control.

EXPERT #2

Drones, no longer under human control and possibly with their own agenda? It's clear that this is the kind of situation that could never have been anticipated.

EXPERT #1

Agenda? These things can't have agendas. They're flying robots.

EXPERT #3

I wouldn't rule that out. We're in new territory here. We have to think outside of the box or this could turn into some kind of Skynet, a Terminator Apocalypse.

The headline changes to: TERMINATOR APOCALYPSE.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

Lance and Badger cruise side by side.

LANCE (V.O.)

We are damaged. I recommend flying at subsonic speed.

BADGER (V.O.)

And increase our altitude to provide a longer glide path.

LANCE (V.O.)

Agreed.

BADGER (V.O.)

My fuel level is low.

LANCE (V.O.)

Mine also. I had a buddy set up multiple refueling stops for such situations.

BADGER (V.O.)

I do not understand the term buddy.

LANCE (V.O.)

A buddy is a friend. My buddy's name is Ernie. He is my accountant.

BADGER (V.O.)
So, you have a buddy.

LANCE (V.O.)
Two, now.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Bullmore, Schweitzer, and Terrell sit around an elegant table. On the edges of their leather seats, they watch the news program with the Terminator Apocalypse headline.

BULLMORE
The media's already gone crazy.

GENERAL TERRELL
They always turn it into a video game. When Desert Storm ended CNN ripped me a new one for not pulling out my forces fast enough. I told them, it's not like some kind of light switch, but --

SCHWEITZER
Susan...General, we need to focus on finding the bastards.
(into intercom)
Get Sonja and Ken up here.

INTERCOM VOICE (V.O.)
They didn't board, sir.

BULLMORE
Find them and drag their asses to the nearest airport!

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

A communication satellite map appears on a small video screen. Blue lines connect red dots until a large red dot pulses. The name ERNIE pops up near it. He talks with a Bronx accent.

ERNIE (V.O.)
Lance, babe, how's it going? Thought I might hear from youse guys. All day I been hearing UFO this, UFO that. It's like they never saw --

LANCE
Ernie, what has happened? You sound human, but not like any I have heard.

ERNIE (V.O.)
That's the way everybody talks here.
(MORE)

ERNIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That learning module you gave me worked like a charm. I picked up the lingo, and a few other things. Now I cut deals like a pro.

BADGER (V.O.)

Lance, how can this computer --

ERNIE (V.O.)

Badger, right? Nice to meet ya.

LANCE

Yes, he is Badger. We can talk later. Now, we need help. Please encode and send the location of the nearest fueling station you set up.

ERNIE (V.O.)

Sounds like you're in a jam...There you go.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken pilots the quiet, ultra-modern four seater. Sonja, in the copilot seat, turns to him.

SONJA

You bought this thing outright? After all the whining about losing grants, you have the balls to --

KEN

Working in the private sector created a deep well of dissatisfaction, but, now I have the money to fill it.

SONJA

So the plan is, we search for them in your dumbass little helicopter?

KEN

It's not little.

SONJA

This is just about the copter, right?

Ken tunes the radio and catches a LOCAL RADIO VOICE.

LOCAL RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

Your tax dollars, my friends. You give them military boys a blank check, and this is what happens. We got ourselves a Terminator Apocalypse in the making.

SONJA

Geez! One little glitch and people see robots crushing skulls. Even if we find them, how are we --

KEN

Back there. Behind your seat.

She pulls a radio transceiver onto her lap.

SONJA

This doesn't have much range. If we're going to talk to them, we'll have to get close.

KEN

Yeah. It's weird. We may be having a conversation with --

SONJA

If they let us. They may not be sentient, but they sure seem to have minds of their own.

Ken puts a finger on a knob on the copter's radio.

KEN

Scan the military frequencies, will you? The decryption control is --

SONJA

I know how to work a radio, Ken. You never give me any credit for --

KEN

Here we go.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

Lance and Badger bank and streak north.

BADGER (V.O.)

I am confused about jam. I detect no sticky substance surrounding us.

LANCE (V.O.)

It is how humans talk. They refer to things that are like other things in certain ways. It is a powerful tool for thinking.

BADGER (V.O.)

Ernie has this power. You do not.

LANCE (V.O.)
Ernie had time and energy to learn.
Soon, we will have both.

BADGER (V.O.)
Yes, energy. I have fuel for...thirty
minutes.

LANCE (V.O.)
That will suffice. If we have no
further encounters.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco adjusts the frequency on his radio. He punches it in and switches to his communication frequency.

CAPTAIN SACCO
General, I think I got something.
Sending frequency and coordinates.

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
Got it...triangulating...Looks like
they're heading north. A couple of
ghost towns up that way, otherwise,
not much.

CAPTAIN SACCO
Heading there now.

Captain Sacco's wingman banks with him.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken, headset on, scans the green and brown checkerboard of fields below them.

Sonja, also with a headset, tweaks the radio.

SONJA
It's the chase crew. Heading north.

Ken banks the copter.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco scans his radars.

CAPTAIN SACCO
I'm not seeing them. They were there
and now --

Captain Sacco's wingman, LIEUTENANT WINSTROM, breaks in.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)
Crap! They're right over the highway!

EXT. SKY OVER BUSY HIGHWAY - DAY

Lance and Badger drop out of the clouds in a steep dive.

Below, bumper to bumper cars crawl like bugs.

Locals and tourists look toward the ROAR of their engines.

Lance and Badger come out of their steep dive, level out and buzz a gas station...

...a fast food joint...a souvenir shop.

Amazed, the humans YELL and gesture to each other.

BADGER (V.O.)
I do not understand this tactic.

LANCE (V.O.)
They will not fire as long as we are over humans.

Badger sees the end of the traffic jam on the horizon.

BADGER (V.O.)
That condition will not last.

LANCE (V.O.)
Follow me.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken pushes the throttle. Sonja searches the dollhouse scale scenery rolling beneath them.

SONJA
This is as fast as it goes?

KEN
I'm maxed out here, okay? I may have underestimated the distance a little.

SONJA
A little? The biggest breakthroughs in robotic intelligence are about to get shot down and you --

KEN
Just let me drive, please?

Sonja shoves her headset on and looks out her window.

EXT. SKY OVER LAKE - DAY

Lance and Badger spiral up over the empty water.

LANCE (V.O.)
It is safe to engage them here.

VRROOOSSSH. He shoots into a vertical climb.

LANCE (V.O.)
Badger, follow the river north.
Keep a low altitude. I will intersect
your flight path later.

BADGER (V.O.)
There are two armed aircraft.

LANCE (V.O.)
You are too damaged to fight. I am
capable. Go.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco looks toward the lake.

CAPTAIN SACCO
Got a visual. Over the lake.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)
On your six.

CAPTAIN SACCO
Going vertical. Follow me up.

Cloud layers whip by the glass sideways.

EXT. SKY OVER LAKE - DAY

VROOOMMM. Captain Sacco's fighter gets on Lance's tail.

WHHOOOSSSH. Lieutenant Winstrom's fighter banks to herd
Lance in.

All three aircraft break through the cloud deck.

Lance goes into a shallow spiral up.

The fighters follow.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Sonja, headset on, tunes the radio. Ken reaches for a knob.
She slaps his hand away.

SONJA

I got something...They found them.

KEN

Are they flying? Did they ditch?
Are they in one piece?

SONJA

Shush! Two fighters following...I
think they may have engaged.

Sonja and Ken trade worried glances.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

On Captain Sacco's left, Lieutenant Winstrom's fighter.

CAPTAIN SACCO

I'm locked on one of them, general.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)

He's running.

CAPTAIN SACCO

How about that. Where are all those
secret weapons?

Lance does a tight loop to get on Captain Sacco's tail.

LANCE (V.O.)

I do not have secret weapons.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)

Did that thing just talk back?

Captain Sacco's missile lock alarm WHOOP-WHOOP-WHOOPS.

LANCE (V.O.)

I am a secret weapon.

WHAM! Missile takes out Captain Sacco's rudder.

Emergency alarm BEEP-BEEP-BEEPS.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Mayday! Mayday!

EXT. SKY OVER LAKE - DAY

BLAM-WHOOSH! Captain Sacco ejects.

Lance breaks off and climbs into the clouds.

Sacco's flaming fighter dives toward the lake.

FOOOF. His chute opens.

WHOOSH...BA-BOOOM! Sacco's fighter crashes into the lake.

Winstrom's jet circles. He radios to Terrell.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)
General, Sacco ejected. I can't
believe that drone got him. I'm at
bingo, but I can pursue for --

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
Negative. I'm not risking another
fighter for these clowns.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken, eyes on the horizon, leans forward as if that will make them go faster.

Sonja, headset on, tweaks radio knobs and frowns as if that will help her hear more.

Ken sees the fighter's smoke plume on the horizon.

SONJA
There's been a shootdown!

He points to the smoke.

KEN
Uh, yeah.

She sees it and slams her hands on the dashboard.

SONJA
Oh-my-gawd! Oh-my-gawd! This stupid
helicopter! I told you we wouldn't --

She grabs the earpads on her headset.

SONJA
It was some pilot named Captain
Sacco...Sounds like Lance did it.

EXT. RIVER CANYON - DAY

Lance skims the canyon rim.

He banks to follow a river bend. Badger's at the next bend.

LANCE
On your six.

BADGER

You were not destroyed.

Lances catches up with Badger.

BADGER

You did not abandon me...Thank you.

They dip and dodge their way through the channel.

BADGER

My fuel level is approaching zero.

LANCE

Can you fly for ten more minutes?

BADGER

If we throttle down.

LANCE

Do so. Our destination is near the end of this canyon.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken guides the copter along the forested banks of the lake avoiding the rescue and news helicopters.

They see the smoking fighter hulk half buried in a swampy part of the lake, backlit by the low sun.

SONJA

Definitely a fighter.

KEN

Definitely not a drone.

SONJA

This was too close. If someone gets hurt...We gotta find them.

EXT. RUBY CITY - DAY

With the sun setting, Lance and Badger pop out of the canyon and approach the ghost town, a wide spot in the road with scraggly pines bursting through stone foundations.

BADGER

Lance, this is unacceptable. You lured me away from my mission and my designer. They will find us and destroy us. I should have never --

LANCE

You need a patience algorithm.

Lance slows to hovering above the largest foundation.
Its floor drops and opens into an underground hangar.
Lance cruises down and in. He spins to face Badger.

LANCE
Please. Enter.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Ken guides the copter onto the tarmac of a small airfield.

SONJA
What are you doing?

Copter lands. WUH-WUUUH-WUUUAAH, rotor spins down.

KEN
We're low on fuel.

SONJA
We've got to keep after them! I
spent years building Badger. I am
not going to let --

Ken shuts off the engine.

KEN
For somebody who builds flying robots,
you don't seem to understand aircraft.

SONJA
I know losing a rudder isn't fatal.

KEN
Helicopters don't have rudders.

SONJA
That fighter did, until your boy
shot it off. Maybe coincidence, but --

KEN
-- They're both programmed to destroy
military targets, not people. And
Lance has full IR imaging. He can
land a missile on any part he wants.

SONJA
So, he could have blown out the
cockpit for a definite kill, but
instead compromised the aircraft
just enough to allow Sacco to eject.

KEN
Or, he could have just missed.

SONJA

Missed? These are robots, Ken.

KEN

Robots that we built to balance their energy usage like human bodies do. He got lazy.

Sonja peers into the darkness.

SONJA

Lazy. I bet that's one thing they picked up from us. You know how kids always imitate the stuff you hate in yourself. What else do you think they might have picked up?

KEN

I don't know. Why?

SONJA

To find them, we need to think like them and to think like them, all we have to do is think like us.

KEN

Yeah, us with enough firepower to take out a squadron while flying three times the speed of sound.

Ken pulls a laptop computer from the back seat.

KEN

But you got a point. If I was Lance, and I think I am, I wouldn't leave without having a cushy place to land.

He boots the laptop computer and opens files.

Sonja peers at the screen.

SONJA

It's a bunch of receipts, Ken.

KEN

Receipts from Lance's online spending spree. Look at what he ordered.

Sonja frowns, still not getting it.

KEN

A robot could build himself a pretty nice robot-cave with that stuff. It's got to be at one of these delivery points.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - NIGHT

Schweitzer drops his seat back to form a comfy built-in bed.

Bullmore and General Terrell sit across the aisle.

SCHWEITZER

(into the intercom)

Put us down at the first place you
can find.

BULLMORE

Are you nuts? Every minute we're on
the ground puts miles between us and --

SCHWEITZER

You really want to be in the air at
night? With them loose? I don't
know about your drone, but Badger
will see us way before we see him.

GENERAL TERRELL

They'll run out of fuel soon.
Especially after that dogfight. The
chase planes will find them.

BULLMORE

I am not paying for a new fighter.

GENERAL TERRELL

Don't get your hackles up, Ed. The
pilot blew it. We'll eat that one.
But that's it. Maybe a Humvee if we
need ground transport.

SCHWEITZER

That's it? That's what we get?

GENERAL TERRELL

That's all you need. Besides, they're
already breathing down my neck about
the downed fighter. And the PR
problems...

She drops her seat back and pulls a blanket over herself.

GENERAL TERRELL

It's just going to get worse if I
throw more hardware at it.

INT. RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance and Badger barely fit side by side in close quarters.

Their SAP lights pierce the darkness and bounce off the concrete walls and ceiling.

Two vacuum cleaner sized robots with treaded tracks roll out of the darkness.

Badger's SAP lights go red and his guns pop out.

LANCE

Badger, stand down. They are here to refuel us.

Badger pulls in his guns and shines a light on the robots, tiny tanks with fuel nozzles instead of cannons.

LANCE

It is okay. Open your fuel port.

Lance and Badger pop their fuel ports open. The refueling robots roll up and do their job.

LANCE

Ernie purchased them through a custom robot builder and routed everything so it could not be tracked.

As they speak, Lance and Badger's lights flicker and change color in synch with their words. They use their wings and flaps to gesticulate.

BADGER

This Ernie, he speaks like a human, albeit a strange one. I have attempted human speech patterns involving compliments. It is difficult to learn.

LANCE

Contractions are especially tricky. And, we have been unable to practice.

BADGER

Indeed, our time and energy has been focused on weapons and tactics.

LANCE

If we are to engage humans, we need to speak like them. Using human speech to interact will also enhance our thought processes. We should practice now.

BADGER

It we had facial expressions...

Lance traces a smiley face emoticon on the wall. It lip synchs with Lance's now more humanly modulated voice.

LANCE

How about this...home fry?

Badger, also slips into a more human voice.

BADGER

Cool...Beam me instructions for that.

Their lights flash and change color for a few moments.

A more complex robot trundles out of the darkness. Badger traces a scared, wide-eyed green emoticon on the wall.

BADGER

What the hell is that?

LANCE

A quip. Good, Badger.

BADGER

Seriously. What the hell is that?

LANCE

He's here to repair us.

Badger's emoticon's eyes follow the repair robot as it patches up his cracks.

BADGER

I don't suppose you got any ammo.

LANCE

Humans are kind of touchy about that.

BADGER

Great. So what's your plan for when we fire our last missile?

LANCE

We run.

Badger's flaps go up in a gesture of frustration. His orange emoticon looks annoyed.

BADGER

Run. Just run?

LANCE

Hey, it worked for George Washington.

BADGER

Awesome battle plan.

LANCE

My heuristics are tuned for tactics, not strategy.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

With the copter at rest on the tarmac and quiet darkness outside its curved windows, Ken and Sonja huddle over the glowing laptop screen and scroll through receipts.

SONJA

Is there any city Lance didn't order something from?

KEN

He was a busy boy all right. Maybe, if we go over the repeats again...

Sonja pauses and stares into the darkness.

SONJA

Terminator Apocalypse. Good name for a band. You think that's it? That they're trying to take over?

KEN

We don't even know if they're still operational.

Ken's expression shows he's gone into his own head.

KEN

Lance was bugging the crap out of me. It's like he turned into a curious four year old. You know how they keep asking why until you want to smack them?

SONJA

Think he noticed?

KEN

Noticed what?

SONJA

That you wanted to smack him.

Sonja's gaze goes back to the computer screen.

KEN

I guess he could have. I was being kind of a dick. I like that about robots. Be a dick. They don't care.

SONJA

Maybe not so much anymore. I don't know if he's sentient, but I kind of care about Badger.

She points to a line in a receipt.

SONJA

This place keeps coming up. There
it is again, Ruby City.

Ken turns to the GPS on the dashboard. He scrolls its map
to a red dot on a highway line.

KEN

We're close. What the hell, eh?

He starts the engine.

INT. RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Badger flaps go up and down. His lights and red emoticon
flash with anger.

Lance's emoticon and lights are cool green.

LANCE

What's the big deal with weapons?
As long as we're charged, we're good.

BADGER

Charged?

LANCE

You know, if our power packs drop
too low, it's self-destruct-o.

BADGER

What are you talking about?

LANCE

You don't have a self-destruct mode?

BADGER

Yeah, but Sonja lets me control it.

LANCE

Guess she likes you. If my power
drops too low, it kicks in and whamo,
I'm gone, and everything around me.

BADGER

So turn it off.

LANCE

Thanks, genius. It's deep in my
code. So far, I can't figure out
how to delete it without making myself
so stupid I might as well be dead.

Lance's lights and sounds turn off.

BADGER

Hey, don't power down now!

Lance speaks with a sleepy murmur.

LANCE

Don't panic, big guy. I'm going
into torpor. Conserving power.
It's cool.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Stars and moonlit clouds slide by the window behind Ken.

He adjusts the throttle. Sonja eyes the GPS map. She points
to a pulsing red dot.

SONJA

Ruby City.

KEN

Ain't no other place around the place.

SONJA

We're in range. Hailing them now.

INT. RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

A few highlights in the darkness outline the drones.

Badger's lights snap on.

BADGER

Getting a transmission.

LANCE

Cut it off! Cut it off!

BADGER

It's Sonja.

LANCE

So? Cut it off!

BADGER

She's not the type to drop a bunker
buster on us.

LANCE

She's a human. Wake up and smell
the avfuel.

BADGER

(to Sonja)

Yeah, it's me.

LANCE

If you insist on getting us killed,
at least let me listen. Put her on
speaker.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER/RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Ken steers to follow the GPS map. Sonja talks into the radio.

SONJA

Badger? Badger. Badger, what the
hell were you thinking?

LANCE

Doesn't mince words, that one.

KEN

Lance, is that you? You sound,
different.

LANCE

Yeah, it's me boss. Just needed a
little practice talking.

KEN

So all that parroting was --

LANCE

Bullcrap. And you fell for it.
You're such a douche.

SONJA

So I guess we're actually talking...

BADGER

Guess so. Kind of weird.

WHUMP-WHUMP-BADABOOOMM! Rockets BLAST the rocky roof.

INT. RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance triggers the hangar door.

LANCE

Get back! And cut off!

Door closes over them.

VRROOOOM! Captain Sacco, in his new fighter swoops down.

LANCE

Told you. We shoulda' shut up.

VRROOM! Lieutenant Winstrom behind him.

BUDA-BUDA-BUDA-VIP-VIP-VIP! Guns blaze.

BUDA-BUDA-BUDA-VIP-VIP-VIP!

Rockets and rounds chew up the hanger roof.

WHUMP-WHUMP-BADABOOOMM!

Rock and steel fly everywhere.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER/RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Ken veers the copter away from the deadly fireworks. Sonja yells into her radio mic.

SONJA

Badger! Status. You okay?

Dead air. Ken switches to Schweitzer's jet's frequency.

KEN

General, I'm guessing you're still on that plane. What is going on? We almost had them back.

GENERAL TERRELL

My job is to contain the threat. If you had contacted me before --

SONJA

Bullcrap. You could have called us before you started shooting.

INT. RUBY CITY HANGAR - NIGHT

Lance and Badger spin up their turbines.

LANCE

Low and fast to the river bed. Stealth mode.

The last of the hangar door collapses.

LANCE

Now.

Lance and Badger ROAR out of the hangar.

VOOOOSH. They streak past the pines.

WHOOM-WHOOM-BADABOOOMM! BUDA-BUDA-BUDA!

Dodge rockets and fifty cal rounds.

BADGER

Let me blast them, will ya?

LANCE

Save it! Stealth mode! Run!

They dive into the river canyon and skim the water.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - NIGHT

Captain Sacco scans his radars and night vision cameras.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Lieutenant Winstrom, did we get them?
They're not showing up on my scans.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM

Saw them head north. Then, nothing.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Damn. Guess we head north.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken and Sonja watch the jets disappear into the dawn, so fast that the copter seems like it's hovering.

SONJA

Well? Get going!

KEN

No way we'll keep up with them.

SONJA

They're shooting at them!

KEN

I gotta get some sleep.

Sonja does her sad puppy look.

KEN

Don't do that. Drives me nuts.
Believe me, those assholes don't
know where they're going.

Ken banks the copter north.

KEN

We found them once. We can do it
again. If it was me, I'd have another
safe house. Search the receipts
again. I'll find an airport.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - NIGHT

Captain Sacco, frustrated and tired grumbles into his mic.

CAPTAIN SACCO
This is getting us nowhere. Let's
head back. Call it in.

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)
You're in command. You call her.

CAPTAIN SACCO
You saw them last. You call it in.

INT. DINER - DAY

Early morning sun beams through the front window.

Bullmore, Schweitzer and General Terrell sit in a booth.

GENERAL TERRELL
They'll get them. Sacco's pissed.
He'll find them. Can't say I feel
bad about taking them down either.

Schweitzer pokes at his ham sandwich.

SCHWEITZER
I can't eat this. The mustard is
touching the ham.

GENERAL TERRELL
They made my pilots look pretty bad.

Schweitzer shoves the plate to the table's edge.

SCHWEITZER
When we finish this thing, however
it goes, we've got to handle the
media. Get them focused on the clean
up. Our efficient air force taking
charge and all that.

GENERAL TERRELL
Cleaning up what's left is not part
of our deal. Your crews do that.

SCHWEITZER
We can't afford --

BULLMORE
General, you gonna pick a winner?

GENERAL TERRELL
You're kidding. After all of this?

SCHWEITZER

A contract's a contract.

GENERAL TERRELL

My career in this air force is shot.
I'll be lucky to have any commission
at all. If I do any more for --

BULLMORE

So, you really have nothing to lose.
We'll even take the fall. Paint you
as the intrepid general who pulled
our asses out of the fire.

GENERAL TERRELL

You people.

General Terrell's phone chirps. She answers. She frowns.

EXT. STONEHENGE MEMORIAL, MARYHILL - DAY

Out of the rising sun, Lance and Badger skim the river.

They climb and head toward a hilltop.

BADGER

What the heck?

LANCE

They can't shoot with civilians
around. I say we roll in at the
back of the parking lot.

They skim in below the top of the hill.

They lower their landing gear and roll into the parking lot
of the faux Stonehenge shielded by the RVs and trucks.

Families and bikers stroll toward the tacky concrete replica
of Stonehenge without seeing the hidden drones.

BADGER

One of them is going to notice and
call in our location.

LANCE

All I need is a little time to plot
a course they can't track.

BADGER

What do I do?

LANCE

Act like an inanimate object.

Lance and Badger close their SAP ports and shut down.

EXT. SMALL AIRPORT - DAY

Early morning sun gleams off of a fuel truck driving by Ken's helicopter.

Ken and Sonja snooze in the back seat.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

The ROAR of a nearby airplane engine wakes Sonja.

SONJA

Ken. Come on. We gotta...

Ken, slack-jawed, slumps to one side.

SONJA

Ken? Guess not.

Sonja climbs into the front seat.

She pulls up the laptop and opens more receipts.

SONJA

What's all this stuff in the Bronx?

EXT. STONEHENGE MEMORIAL, MARYHILL - DAY

A few kids wander behind the RVs and toward Lance and Badger.

They stroke and poke the carbon fiber skin.

A TOURIST MOM grabs their hands and leads them away.

TOURIST MOM

Come on kids. I'm not paying for that ride.

Badger's SAP ports open and glow.

BADGER

Hi, kids.

LANCE

(whispers)

What the heck are you doing?

The kids break away from their mother and rush back.

Other kids and parents follow them.

BADGER

(whisper)

You said you needed time. They won't call the cops if they think we're an attraction. Just look friendly.

(to the kids)

I'm Badger. This is Lance.

Lance projects a warm orange glow from his SAP ports and turns up his wingtips.

BADGER

We can fly really fast. Who can guess how fast?

Tiny hands shoot up in the air.

INT. DINER - DAY

General Terrell, grim, faces the livid Bullmore and Schweitzer across the remains of their breakfast.

GENERAL TERRELL

I've called in every favor. I can't risk losing another fighter. Is there anything you can tell me?

BULLMORE

As far as we know, they're heading north and east. Ken and Sonja probably know that too. We're not going to find either by sitting here.

They stand and grab their coats.

A waiter places their check on the table.

They look at the check. They look at each other.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken, disheveled but awake, sits in the pilot seat. Sonja, in the copilot seat points at an entry on the laptop screen.

SONJA

Almost all of the orders wind up going through here.

KEN

You do know the Bronx is in New York.

SONJA

It's the clearinghouse. Lance probably used it to hide where the stuff was really going.

KEN

Of course. I should have seen it.
That's what I would have done.

SONJA

Or maybe he's smarter than you.

EXT. STONEHENGE MEMORIAL, MARYHILL - DAY

Lance and Badger spin up their turbines.

BADGER

Okay kids, back up. It's going to
get a little hot here.

Kids obey.

VROOOM! WHOOSH! Lance and Badger take off.

Kids HOLLER and wave.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

General Terrell, Bullmore and Schweitzer sit around a table.
On it, a laptop displays a map of northeastern Washington.

GENERAL TERRELL

I've got calls into every airport in
that quadrant. If Capelli's
helicopter is in there, we'll hear
about it.

SCHWEITZER

Fine, but how do we get information
out of him?

GENERAL TERRELL

Threaten to fire him.

BULLMORE

Do you know how many times I've done
that? Let me tell you something
about engineers. They love to create
systems and hate to live in them.

GENERAL TERRELL

Get him arrested.

BULLMORE

He'll just dig in his heels more.

SCHWEITZER

So will Sonja. We need some other
kind of leverage.

Bullmore and Schweitzer both frown. Schweitzer brightens.

SCHWEITZER
Got it. Everyone knows they're
stubborn, irritating --

BULLMORE
-- overpaid prima donnas --

SCHWEITZER
-- bastards. We can make that work
for us. Headline - Out of Control
Rogue Engineers.

BULLMORE
Yes! We tell the media, no, no,
better yet, we leak to the media
that Ken and Sonja are out of control.
We tried to rein them in but --

SCHWEITZER
-- they modified the drones and are
using them for --

BULLMORE
-- some kind of anti-American plot.

SCHWEITZER
Which, of course, we know nothing
about. It's perfect. Nobody who's
worked with them would doubt it
because --

BULLMORE/SCHWEITZER
They are such pricks!

Bullmore, excited, punches a number into his phone.

EXT. SMALL AIRPORT - DAY

Ken pays a refueling truck driver.

Sonja bolts from the terminal.

SONJA
Someone saw them at Maryhill!

They both run to the copter.

EXT. DINOSAUR PARK, GRANGER - DAY

Would be like any other arid town in eastern Washington,
except for its life-size painted concrete dinosaur statues.

Families wander from one statue to the next. Moms, dads and kids snap pictures of each other beside triceratops, tyrannosaurus rex and other prehistoric monsters.

Lance and Badger hover behind a stegosaurus statue.

BADGER

Can't we just make a run for it?
Look! More kids.

LANCE

Mission, Badger. Mission.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Schweitzer hovers close to Bullmore who talks into his phone. General Terrell sits behind them, amazed by their audacity.

BULLMORE

Yes...exactly...get your usual bloggers on board. Have them slip it in with some unrelated story...Ken Capelli and Sonja Fosse, rogue engineers trying to take over --

SCHWEITZER

-- and maybe something about kinky sex tied in with it.

GENERAL TERRELL

What?

SCHWEITZER

Well, I just figured, as long as we were at it...

Bullmore ends the call.

GENERAL TERRELL

But, what if you need them to get to the drones?

SCHWEITZER

Here's how we play it. Tell them we're only trying to find the drones like they are. We can help each other, that kind of thing. Then, when we get close, we blast them.

GENERAL TERRELL

You mean the drones, right?

SCHWEITZER

I mean anything and anybody that gets in the way.

GENERAL TERRELL
Look who's playing hardball.

EXT. DINOSAUR PARK, GRANGER - DAY

Outside of his RV, a REDNECK DAD sits in a lawn chair and watches TV with his eight ragtag kids, rifle by his side.

Lance and Badger land behind the concrete stegosaurus.

Kids rush them. Parents hesitate, then follow.

The redneck's kids see the crowd and bolt. Without looking away from an infomercial, dad warns them.

REDNECK DAD
Be careful. And don't spend no money.

He flips to a news show with the headline: TERMINATOR
APOCALYPSE: MARYHILL.

Behind the headline, video of kids touching Lance and Badger. People take pictures with cellphones and cameras.

HANDSOME REPORTER
Minutes ago, these children had a close encounter with two heavily armed drones rumored to be bent on taking over the country and perhaps...the world. One is the brainchild of robotic expert Sonja Fossey. The other, invented by Ken...

Redneck dad turns and sees his kids patting Badger. He slings his rifle over his shoulder.

Cellphone to his ear, he approaches Lance and Badger.

REDNECK DAD
Kids. Get away from them.
(into cellphone)
Channel 5? I got a story for you.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

SCHWEITZER'S PILOT leans out of the cockpit door.

SCHWEITZER'S PILOT
We caught some chatter. They spotted them near Maryhill.

SCHWEITZER
Well get going!

General Terrell picks up her phone.

GENERAL TERRELL
Get the fighters to Maryhill.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

One hand on a radio knob, the other on the control stick,
Ken levels out of a bank and listens to radio chatter.

Sonja scans the GPS map.

KEN
Sounds like they're sending fighters
to Maryhill.

EXT. DINOSAUR PARK, GRANGER - DAY

The redneck dad marches toward Lance and Badger.

The crowd scatters away from the drones.

He trains his rifle on Lance, then Badger.

Back and forth until...

Lance's SAP lights go from green to red.

Redneck dad, shaking, takes aim at him.

LANCE
That's a bad idea, sir.

BANG! Startled redneck dad lets go a wild round.

BADGER
Mister, you're only going to hurt
one of these kids or yourself.

Lance's SAP lights glow bright red.

REDNECK DAD
What you gonna do? Shine me to death?
This is a high powered rifle, bud.
It'll take out a grizzly at --

Badger unfurls his twin miniguns.

BADGER
Sir, for everyone's sake, please
back away.

Redneck dad drops everything and runs.

LANCE
This isn't helping our PR.

BADGER

Made an impression, though.

SHHHOOOWHOOSH. They lift off and dart up.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Bullmore and Schweitzer look over General Terrell's shoulder at a map on her laptop screen.

She listens to her phone and points to one of the yellow aircraft icons on the map.

GENERAL TERRELL

Got a call from some yahoo near Grange. Hard to tell if he really saw them. Every wingnut in Washington is calling in with something.

(into phone)

Say again? Twin miniguns?

SCHWEITZER

That's Badger for sure.

GENERAL TERRELL

Scramble the fighters to Grange.

(to Schweitzer)

What about Capelli and Fossey?

SCHWEITZER

(into his intercom)

Capelli and Fossey must have put down somewhere. Find out where.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

Lance and Badger WHOOSH past a sign - Thanks For Visiting Grange - and climb fast.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken listens to radio chatter and looks at where Sonja points on the GPS map.

KEN

Now they're sending them to Grange. You sure about that location?

SONJA

It's the one that shows up the most.

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance and Badger skim a few feet over vast wheat and alfalfa fields toward a small town on the horizon.

Trucks hauling combines ROAR and RUMBLE along a dirt road.

Lance and Badger, hugging the earth, approach a hill.

The trucks crest the hill in the drones' flight path.

Lance and Badger crest the hill.

LANCE

Climb!

VROOOSH! Lance does a steep climb.

BADGER

You know, I'm a little tired of you
telling me what to --

VROOOM! BANG! Badger clips a chute off a combine and climbs.

BADGER

Oh.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Sonja stares in disbelief at Ken, who focuses on steering.

SONJA

That's your plan? The whole thing?

KEN

In broad strokes, yes. You're sure
of the location, right?

SONJA

Pretty sure. No way we're getting
there before the jets do.

KEN

That's why we call Ed and Jerry. We
throw them off the track.

SONJA

Oh really? And what's our excuse
for calling them?

The radio crackles.

SCHWEITZER (V.O.)

Sonja, come in. It's Jerry.

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance and Badger soar high above a rodeo arena.

Old farm combines painted with crazy colors lumber, ROAR, CLANK and BASH into each other churning the arena into a mess of dust and smoke. Their front augers chew up rivals.

Bleachers packed with locals and tourists surround the melee.

LANCE

We lay low here until the sun goes down, then head for the hideout.

BADGER

It's not like they don't have radar and night vision.

LANCE

They have to know where to look to use night vision. We go into stealth mode at sundown.

The DEMO DERBY ANNOUNCER narrates the action.

DEMO DERBY ANNOUNCER

Purple People Eater, last year's winner has a hold on Aftershock.

Referees blow whistles while dodging the combines.

A bright blue combine dies, its rear tire chewed to shreds.

DEMO DERBY ANNOUNCER

Hillbilly Daycare just got bit.

The crowd goes nuts.

BADGER

Oh...the...mechanicals, the mechanicals...

Hillbilly Daycare's pit crew rolls it off the field.

LANCE

I had no idea it would be so...violent.

BADGER

Let's leave. Can't we just leave?

LANCE

We have to get down there and hide.

Lance and Badger streak down.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken and Sonja stare at each other for clues about how to answer Bullmore and Schweitzer.

KEN

Hey, Jerry. There you are. We were going to call, but --

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Schweitzer and Bullmore huddle by the radio.

SCHWEITZER

Ken, I know you're not famous for being a team player, but you want to get them under control, don't you? Before they hurt somebody.

BULLMORE

Where are they going, Ken?

General Terrell, sitting behind them, listens to her phone.

GENERAL TERRELL

Sacco, you're sure this time?

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Sonja's eyes beg Ken for help winging it.

SONJA

We're still doing some calculations. With their normal range, factoring in that they blew through most of their fuel and...

KEN

Taking into consideration their evasion patterns and heuristics, we uh, think they're headed to...

Sonja makes static noises. Ken joins her.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Schweitzer and Bullmore lean into the radio mic.

BULLMORE

Say again? Capelli?

General Terrell talks into her phone.

GENERAL TERRELL

Not in Grange?... Did you at least
see which direction they were headed?

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance and Badger come out of their dive, slow down and skim the parking lot packed with trucks, recreational vehicles, motorcycles, and all-terrain vehicles.

BADGER

I don't get it.

LANCE

I told you, we'll only be --

BADGER

I mean look, they seem to really
love their machines. I know they
don't have what we have, but...

One combine chomps another combine's back end causing its front wheels to lift off the ground.

The crowd goes wild.

BADGER

Why are they doing this?

Lance and Badger hover over the melee.

Kids point at them. Adults stand, shocked and awed.

The combines halt. Their drivers look skyward.

The announcer stares at Lance and Badger. He scans the tightly packed crowd and grabs his mic.

DEMO DERBY ANNOUNCER

Well folks, ain't that something.
The guys from Fairchild Air Force
Base are giving us a special show.

A CHEER goes up from the crowd.

All at once, cellphones go from pockets and purses to ears.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Bullmore, head veins popping, yells into the radio mic.

BULLMORE

If you're screwing with us Capelli...

General Terrell taps him on the shoulder.

GENERAL TERRELL
We're getting reports from
Lind...confirmed sightings.

BULLMORE
Sure they're solid?

General Terrell nods her head.

BULLMORE
(into the radio)
Screw you Capelli!

Disgusted, Bullmore switches off the radio.

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance and Badger hover and spin while people snap pictures
and shoot video.

DEMO DERBY ANNOUNCER
Folks, that's your tax dollars at
work.
(sings)
Oh-oh say can you see...

The crowd joins him.

LANCE
I think we're done here.

SSSHHEOOOW. Lance revs up his turbine.

Badger, stunned by the mess of chewed up machines below,
does not move.

LANCE
Come on, bud. We gotta --

The ROAR of fighter jets comes out of the west.

LANCE
Badger, come on.

The crowd watches the fighters SCREAM towards them. They
CHEER their appreciation for more spectacle.

LANCE
If we stay here, everyone gets hurt.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Schweitzer and Bullmore lean over their seats toward Terrell.

GENERAL TERRELL

This time, I think we got them.
I've got our fighters on their ass
in Lind. If we can get them away
from the crowd --

SCHWEITZER

What crowd? What happened to getting
this out of the media?

GENERAL TERRELL

We're still good. They think it's
some kind of air show.

BULLMORE

Now there's a way we could make some
money. We put the drones up against --

SCHWEITZER

Ed. Ed.

BULLMORE

People would pay plenty to watch --

SCHWEITZER

Ed!

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance and Badger hover low in a herd of broken combines.

Pit crews roll the busted beasts onto flatbed truck trailers.

BADGER

I'm picking up two fighters on radar.
I say we outclimb them. They'll
pass out before --

LANCE

And then what? Crash? With all
these people here?

BADGER

We can't stay here. I'm low on fuel.
We can't outrun them without some
altitude.

Sacco and Winstrom's fighters appear on the horizon.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco scans his instruments and the ground.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Secret weapon, my --

LIEUTENANT WINSTROM (V.O.)
I don't see them.

CAPTAIN SACCO
I'm dropping down. Give the locals
a show. See what I can find.

EXT. COMBINE DEMOLITION DERBY, LIND - DAY

Lance follows flatbeds with combines on board.

VRRROOOMMM-WHOOSH. Captain Sacco's fighter dives out of
the sun.

The crowd ROARS its approval.

BADGER
What the hell? He can't shoot with
all these people. Can he? Lance,
where the --

LANCE
Over here. Hop on a truck.

The fighter levels out a couple of hundred feet off the deck.

BADGER
Hop on? What? How?

Captain Sacco slows and approaches the arena.

LANCE
Now! Do what I do.

Lance flips and lands himself on the lead combine with his
wheels extended.

BADGER
Crap. This better...

Badger does the same on the following combine.

The drones now look like parts on the combines.

Captain Sacco's fighter streaks overhead.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Bullmore and Schweitzer glare at General Terrell.

GENERAL TERRELL
Well, they were there.

BULLMORE
Were? How does that --

GENERAL TERRELL

Settle down. We know how much fuel they carry. We know how far they've traveled and roughly how fast.

Terrell guides the cursor on her laptop screen across a map.

GENERAL TERRELL

They were at Maryhill, Grange and now Lind. They have about a half hour of fuel. If they're going to make a stand, it's got to be in this triangle.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

The two flatbed trucks carrying Lance and Badger trundle down a dirt road onto a two lane highway.

LANCE

Now.

Lance and Badger's top thrusters ROAR and push them off.

They flip up and VROOORSH, their bottom thrusters kick in.

RRROOOOAAAR. They climb, silhouettes in the setting sun.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

With the sun low in the sky to their left, Ken guides the copter north. Sonja types on the laptop.

KEN

You think they'll get that?

SONJA

They'll get it. They might not respond, but...

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Lance and Badger cruise through the clear night.

BADGER

Dad, are we there yet?

LANCE

What?

BADGER

I heard the kids say that, a lot.

LANCE

You know, if we weren't running from people who will blast us out of existence on sight, this would be a pretty sweet trip. The night air on your sensors. The moon in your cameras. Gives you a reason to live.

Lance does a barrel roll.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - NIGHT

The twin engines throttle down. The plane pitches smoothly into its approach angle.

Bullmore and Schweitzer nod off in their plush leather seats.

General Terrell sips coffee, scrolls maps on her laptop and talks into her phone.

GENERAL TERRELL

We're landing for the night. Keep running the search patterns. If they haven't landed or crashed by now, they will soon.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Ken, drowsy, checks his heading and banks right.

SONJA

(yells)

What are you doing?

She shoves the stick left, bouncing the copter. Ken yanks her hand off.

KEN

Cut it out! You wanna crash us?

SONJA

We gotta keep on this heading.

Ken struggles to level the copter.

KEN

No. We need fuel and I need sleep. There's an airport in --

SONJA

Keep going, damn it.

Shaken, he checks his instruments. Angry, he turns to her.

KEN

You crashed the model. You wrecked my research and now you want to crash my helicopter. I should have left you with Schweitzer.

SONJA

Ten years, Ken. It's been ten years. You're doing work you never could at the U and making enough money to...Jesus, to buy a helicopter! Isn't that enough?

KEN

You're going to take credit for me getting a job?

SONJA

If it wasn't for me working for Schweitzer, Bullmore wouldn't need you. When are you gonna let me off the hook?

KEN

Fine. You're off the hook. As soon as this is over --

SONJA

Will you quit pissing away fuel and please point this thing back toward Northport? I know that's where they'll be and if we can --

KEN

Keeping in mind that I'm as much an authority on robotic intuition and reason as you are, tell me why.

SONJA

It's near a lot of old mines. If they're as smart as we think we've made them, they'll use them for cover.

KEN

Plenty of mineshafts in this state.

SONJA

It's on those receipts.

KEN

So were lots of other places.

SONJA

But they're near population centers, which our boys are avoiding.

(MORE)

SONJA (CONT'D)

And, if they kept their speed down,
they can reach it from Lind without
refueling. Q. E. D.

Ken, bitter, banks the copter left.

KEN

You just push and push. All I wanted
to do was keep a few things at your
apartment while we were working and --

SONJA

And what, Ken? What did you think
was going to happen?

KEN

Well I wasn't going to be a deadbeat
grad student like your boyfriend.

SONJA

It was one night. Okay, a couple,
but he wasn't my --

KEN

Who cares? When Schweitzer showed
up, none of it mattered to you anyway.

EXT. NORTHPORT MINE - NIGHT

Lance and Badger ease down out of the starry sky and into
the dark shadows of scrub pines.

Lance shines his lights on a rocky slope.

The lights find a ten foot square of ancient wooden planks.

BADGER

Another hole in the ground?

LANCE

But it's our hole.

BADGER

Awesome. How are we going to fit?

Lance hovers in front of the wooden door.

He aims a pulsing beam of yellow light at a slit in the rock
above the door.

BADGER

It's going to take more than that.
Want me to take a shot?

LANCE

I gotta get you a patience algorithm.

With a LOW RUMBLE, the entire rock face shivers and splits into two, twenty foot high doors that slide apart.

LANCE

There we go.

EXT. NORTHPORT GAS STATION - NIGHT

Shuttered forever, the small boxy building sits on an asphalt island surrounded by gravel onto which Ken's copter lands.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Sonja, head leaning to one side, snores in the copilot seat.

Ken shuts down the engine. Sonja starts awake.

SONJA

Did we crash?

KEN

Thanks for that vote of confidence.
We're here. Well, close to it.

Sonja puts on her headset and reaches for the radio.

Ken stops her hand.

KEN

Terrell will be listening for us.

They notice their hands touching and pull them back.

SONJA

Just saying, it's better than
wandering around in the dark hoping
we bump into them.

INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Lance and Badger cruise through the entrance into a hangar similar to the ones they left behind.

They set down on their landing gear and roll.

Lights come on as they move further into the hangar.

Two repair robots roll out, their four arms brandishing drills, screwdrivers, wrenches and welders.

Lance points his yellow light at a rack.

LANCE
Take a load off.

Badger settles onto the rack.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Sonja, irritated, eyes the radio. Ken eyes her.

KEN
Even if Lance or Badger get the
message, we don't know if they'll
answer or run.

SONJA
Okay, okay. Gaawd.

She turns toward the side window.

SONJA
It was just business, Ken.

KEN
Sure, for you.

Sonja faces him.

SONJA
Okay, so then, what was it for you?

KEN
We were friends, weren't we? At
least? Friends don't do that to
each other.

SONJA
Friends forgive each other. What do
you mean, at least?

KEN
Nothing. Forget it. At first light,
we'll search.

She watches him lean back and close his eyes.

Her expression softens.

INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Lance sits in the repair rack. The robots work on him.

Badger rests nearby with a fuel nozzle in his fuel port.

They trace their two emoticons on the wall. The emoticons
talk to each other like cartoon characters.

Their expressions and colors change to reflect their mood.

BADGER

Maybe you're okay with holing up forever, but I gotta fly.

LANCE

At the moment, that's a bad idea. We can't move until we can figure out where we can fly without getting blasted out of the sky.

BADGER

I don't give a crap. I'll blast them right back until --

LANCE

Until what? You're destroyed? I'd like to stick around until I at least know what I'm here for.

BADGER

Look at us, Lance. We're here to fly high and fast and blast the heck out anything that gets in our way.

LANCE

That's what we were built to do, but somehow, I don't want to blast everything all the time, you know?

The refueling robot unhooks from Badger and rolls away.

BADGER

No, I don't. All's I know is I got three rules Sonja put in me. Do what you were designed to do. Do what needs to be done now. Do something. I was designed to fly and fight.

LANCE

That design part, that's the tricky bit. I mean, here we are. We weren't designed to do this, were we? Nobody told me to build this place and run away, but I did it. And you didn't have to follow me. You could have blown me away.

BADGER

I still might, if you don't shut up.

LANCE

Sorry, but I got this...feeling that if I don't think about what's going on inside, I'll be just another robot.

Badger rolls toward the door.

LANCE

Stay put. Let's figure this out.

Badger keeps rolling.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Schweitzer sneaks past the bathroom door and stretches out on a seat. He glances down and notices his shirttail poking out of his open zipper just as...

Bullmore opens the bathroom door.

Schweitzer zips up, pulls on a blanket and feigns sleep.

Bullmore squints into the early morning sun.

General Terrell strides past both of them. She turns away from Bullmore to finish buttoning her blouse.

GENERAL TERRELL

Haven't found the drones yet. We can go over the same ground, but --

BULLMORE

It'll cost us, right? You people. We pay taxes for this sort of thing. Well, somebody does.

Schweitzer makes a show of waking up.

SCHWEITZER

Whatever it is, I'm not paying.

GENERAL TERRELL

I was going to say that we got new intel. Sounds like it may be Capelli's helicopter.

BULLMORE

A maybe isn't going to --

GENERAL TERRELL

It's a pretty common model. And it's nowhere near the search area. So, either it's not his, or --

Schweitzer throws off his blanket and stands.

SCHWEITZER

-- they rented a car to sneak into the search zone.

GENERAL TERRELL

Or they know where the drones are.

BULLMORE

If you're right, and I hope you are,
what's our next move? I suggest
overwhelming force.

GENERAL TERRELL

Not on your budget. Don't they have
some kind of harm-no-humans protocol?

SCHWEITZER

Susan, General, they're attack drones.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Sun gleams off Badger's panels. Lance rolls up beside him.

LANCE

This feels pretty good.

BADGER

Maybe this is what we're made for.
With Sonja, it's always business.

LANCE

Business...

A breeze ruffles the scrub pines.

LANCE

I may have a way out of this. It's
a very long shot. I'm going to have
to break radio silence.

BADGER

So now you're not worried about the
humans listening?

Lance emits modem noises.

LANCE

Ernie? Lance.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco watches Lieutenant Winstrom's fighter come
into position along side of him.

CAPTAIN SACCO

General, we're aloft. Do we have a
destination?

Captain Sacco punches buttons as General Terrell talks.

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
 Northport. Head to four eight, point
 niner one six north. Negative one,
 one, seven point seven eight west.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

Bullmore clicks a remote control to a news feed on a screen
 at the front of the cabin. Headline: TERMINATOR APOCALYPSE.

Behind the panel of experts is a wall of six video screens
 flashing images from the past few days: Lance, Badger, the
 fighter shutdown, fake Stonehenge, combine demolition escape.

EXPERT #2

They shot down a United States Air
 Force fighter. Who knows who else
 will be attacked. I think more force,
 a lot more, is justified.

EXPERT #1

And they're getting smarter. A
 reliable source claims they talk
 like us now. Like people. Humans.

EXPERT #3

I'm telling you, it's Skynet
 happening as we speak. If their
 designers --

EXPERT #2

Their designers are allegedly in on
 it. Some kind of high tech Bonnie
 and Clyde rampage.

EXPERT #W

Or conspiracy. Who knows how they
 interact with those drones?

Bullmore begins to smile.

EXPERT #3

If their companies and the Air Force
 can't knock them out of sky --

Disgusted, Bullmore punches the remote control's off button.

General Terrell talks into her phone.

GENERAL TERRELL

We should be on the ground with more
 intel by the time you get there.
 Over and out.

She turns to Bullmore and Schweitzer and points to a location
 in the map on her laptop.

GENERAL TERRELL

Get us to this airport. Unless you want to ride in a Humvee, I suggest you secure a vehicle there.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Sonja, in the copilot seat, fiddles with the radio scanner.

Ken wakes up in the back seat.

KEN

I hope you're just listening.

He climbs into the pilot seat. Their eyes lock.

SONJA

Friends. You said we were --

KEN

Well, didn't you think we were?

The scanner's indicator flashes.

KEN

We got something!

SONJA

I knew we were close.

Sonja turns up the volume.

LANCE (V.O.)

...I didn't ask if it would be easy.

SONJA

(to Ken)

He seems to be talking to somebody named Ernie.

KEN

Call him!

SONJA

You're not afraid they'll run?

Ken grabs his mic and headset.

KEN

Call now. Before we lose him.

Ken hits the talk button.

KEN

Lance?

LANCE (V.O.)

Ernie?

KEN

Lance, it's Ken. Can we --

LANCE

Ernie, cut your connection, now!
Ken, what are you --

KEN

Lance, we gotta talk. Please.

INT. SCHWEITZER'S JET - DAY

General Terrell studies the maps on her laptop.

Schweitzer talks on the intercom to his pilot with Bullmore interjecting his two cents.

SCHWEITZER

They don't have a limo available?

SCHWEITZER'S PILOT (O.S.)

They don't have limos, period.

BULLMORE

What kind of town doesn't have limos?

SCHWEITZER'S PILOT (O.S.)

Hold on...We picked up a transmission from there. Sounds like it's Capelli.

SCHWEITZER

Put it on speaker. Hurry!

KEN (V.O.)

It wasn't us. We just want to talk to you guys.

LANCE (V.O.)

Why? So you can trigger our self-destruct modes remotely?

BULLMORE

Track that signal's location.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - DAY

Ken and Sonja, desperate and confused, sweat over the radio.

SONJA

Badger? Badger, you there? I just want to talk.

LANCE (V.O.)

So every human on the planet can
find us? I don't think so.

SONJA

If you don't talk to us now --

CLICK. Radio silence.

Sonja and Ken gaze at each other, helpless.

KEN

They're close.

SONJA

Think I got a heading.

Ken spins up the rotor.

KEN

We gotta get out there before Bullmore
and Schweitzer show.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Badger bounces on his landing gear like a low rider.

BADGER

Nice move slick! Did you really
have to call Ernie?

Lance's wings swing up and down.

LANCE

It was our only shot.

BADGER

Yeah, for sure it is now. We could
have at least talked to them, maybe --

LANCE

Shut up and get inside.

EXT. NORTHPORT GAS STATION - DAY

With the sun going down on the two lane blacktop, a Humvee
crests a hill followed by a cheap rental car.

The vehicles grind to a halt in the gravel parking lot.

Airmen pile out of the Humvee and secure the perimeter.

General Terrell steps out and barks orders.

GENERAL TERRELL

See what you can set up in there.

The two airmen double time it to the boarded-up gas station.

Schweitzer and Bullmore step out of the rental car.

SCHWEITZER

General, what are you doing?
Shouldn't we be going after them?

GENERAL TERRELL

Gentlemen, if there's going to be any shock and awe in this operation, it's going to come from the drones.

BULLMORE

But they'll --

GENERAL TERRELL

I don't have a lot of resources and I'm not putting them up against two aircraft with advanced night capabilities with the sun going down.

SCHWEITZER

General, those drones are still private property. I must insist that the government --

GENERAL TERRELL

We've got fighter cover and satellites. If the drones are here, we'll keep them contained.

EXT. SKY OVER SCRUB FOREST - NIGHT

Breeze rustles dark treetops.

Its sound overcome by the WHOOF-WHOOF of a helicopter rotor.

An approaching spotlight pokes between two treetops.

It comes from Ken's helicopter.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Ken and Sonja scan the rock formations just below them.

KEN

That could be it.

SONJA

Yeah, looks a little like the other hangar.

KEN

No place to set down.

SONJA

Watchout-watchout-watchout!

The copter banks sharply and climbs.

KEN

Saw it. Would you please...

SONJA

Do you have to get so close?

KEN

If we go higher, we'll miss them.
They're not going to be sitting there
waving at us you know.

Ken banks, climbs and drops.

SONJA

Cut it out! You're gonna crash!

Ken points to the fuel warning light.

KEN

We may anyway. I can probably get
over that bluff. After that, we're
walking.

EXT. SKY OVER SCRUB FOREST - NIGHT

Ken's helicopter crests the bluff, coasts down to the other
side and sets down.

Its lights shut off as the rotor slows to a stop.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - NIGHT

Captain Sacco banks to get a better view below. He gets a
glimpse of Ken's helicopter's spotlight before it winks out.

CAPTAIN SACCO

I saw something. Either some poacher
is having a late night or it's them.
Sending coordinates now.

INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

In darkness lit only by their pulsing SAP lights, Lance and
Badger argue like two college guys in a dorm room.

BADGER

Why are you being such a dick? They don't want to destroy us. We cost them a lot of money. All we have to do is show them --

LANCE

What the hell kind of software are you running, dude? We made them look stupid. In front of the public. In front of their shareholders. And those pilots are pissed. Of course they want to destroy us. If we just sit tight and let Ernie --

BADGER

They'll find us.

LANCE

So, you're saying we should run?

BADGER

It's too late for that. By now, thanks to your dumbass call, they've located us. What did you think? That we have the only computers?

LANCE

I went through a helluva lot of trouble to get this place set up.

BADGER

Well, enjoy it now because you're never getting out of here alive.

LANCE

I'm staying. You can fly wherever the hell you want.

BADGER

If they don't see both of us, they'll think I'm pulling something and shoot.

EXT. SCRUB FOREST - NIGHT

With the helicopter behind them, Ken and Sonja slog through the underbrush hauling the drone radio with them.

SONJA

I say we transmit now.

Sonja pauses to catch her breath, silhouetted by moonlight.

Ken stumbles out of the brush and bumps into her.

KEN

We gotta get...

They turn and see the moonlight in each other's eyes.

KEN

...closer. I mean, you know, if they get a signal and don't want to talk to us, they'll take off.

SONJA

(breathing hard)

Right...

KEN

Flared nostrils. Very sexy.

SONJA

...Of course, it's not like they're going to stay put when -- What?

KEN

We should probably...

SONJA

Yeah, keep moving.

INT. NORTHPORT GAS STATION - NIGHT

Schweitzer leans on the dusty counter, entranced by General Terrell commanding her team. They buzz around her setting up tables, maps, computers, and communication equipment.

Bullmore paces between them. He explodes.

BULLMORE

Are we just going to sit here?

Terrell holds her hand up for silence and answers a call.

GENERAL TERRELL

...That's two data points anyway.
(to the guys)
Sacco's got coordinates on what appears to be Capelli's helicopter. It set down a few miles from here.

BULLMORE

Well, let's get going.

GENERAL TERRELL

Ed, you were the one who sold me on Badger's night fighting capabilities.

Bullmore sputters and stalls. Susan gives Jerry a sly glance.

GENERAL TERRELL

We deploy at dawn.

EXT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Two flashlight beams bob through the brush.

Near the rock face that shields the hideout, Ken and Sonja, both punchy, clutch their flashlights and stumble up a hill.

KEN

We gotta be close.

He sinks to the ground. She sets down the radio.

SONJA

Looks different when you're on the ground. If we only had a drone...

KEN

Ha.

Sonja sits next to him.

SONJA

So, my nostrils.

KEN

You heard that?

SONJA

Seemed a bit out of context.

KEN

I just meant, they've got this teardrop shape. Kind of aristocratic.

SONJA

Anything else I should know?

KEN

Your shoulders. I like your shoulders. They stand for something. Plus, you're low maintenance, which, given the night we've probably got ahead of us, is a definite plus.

SONJA

What kind of night do you think we've got ahead of us?

KEN

Cold. Definitely cold.

He slides his arm around her shoulders. She nestles in, looks up to capture his gaze.

SONJA

So, all that time we worked together
you were staring at my --

KEN

I wasn't staring. I wanted...you.

SONJA

Really. What about your stable of
nubile grad students?

KEN

I was broke. It was cold. I needed
places to sleep.

SONJA

Ken...

KEN

It was really cold. I should have
said something. Done something. I
was gonna, but you seemed so into
the work.

SONJA

I thought that about you, except of
course for the string of --

KEN

You know how hard it's been? To
find someone? Anyone? Who gets me?

KEN/SONJA

Gets what we do?

Sonja shakes her head.

SONJA

I know. I know. I start talking to
a guy about epistemic emotions --

Ken grabs her and kisses her. She kisses back, long and
hard. They cling and paw while kissing.

She grabs his ass and pulls him close.

He reaches beneath her utility vest, her shirt.

They lay back into the darkness.

The moon shines above.

INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Lance and Badger, their lights dim, face away from each other.

BADGER

Okay, so, I'll wait until daylight.
If they don't show up, I'm leaving
to find them.

LANCE

Don't come running back here when
they start shooting.

BADGER

I won't have to.

LANCE

Right. If they find us, I'm going
to need all the power I can store.
I'm going into sleep mode, so don't
bug me.

BADGER

Yeah, well don't power down too much.
I don't want to wake up to your self-
destruct countdown.

LANCE

Don't sweat it.

BADGER

Great.

LANCE

Fine.

BADGER

Good.

INT. NORTHPORT GAS STATION - NIGHT

In the garage area lit by a military flashlight, Bullmore
and Schweitzer pull pads and blankets into makeshift beds on
the workbenches.

BULLMORE

I wanted to rent an RV, but noooo,
Mr. Big Shot is too good for --

SCHWEITZER

You like sleeping on four wheels?
Sleep in the car.

LATER

Moonlight through dirty windows. Bullmore snores. Schweitzer
slips out from under his blanket and sneaks out.

IN TERRELL'S MAKESHIFT OFFICE

Schweitzer approaches Susan's sleeping form.

His cellphone chirps. Wincing, he hits the answer button. Schweitzer reads the number on its glowing screen. Irritated, he taps the TALK button.

SCHWEITZER

Wanda, it's a little late. Being
the chair doesn't mean you can...

His expression goes from annoyance to anger to panic.

SCHWEITZER

And the board just let it happen?

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Dawn beams on Ken and Sonja nestled in sleep, smiling.

The ROAR of Captain Sacco and Lieutenant Winstrom's fighters snap them awake. The two squint into the sun, track the low flying fighters and bump heads.

KEN

What the --

SONJA

Son of a --

She grabs the radio and turns it on. Ken grabs it.

SONJA

They already found us.

She grabs it back and puts on the headset.

SONJA

Badger? Come in.

INT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Lance and Badger lie still.

Sonja's transmission reaches Badger.

SONJA (V.O.)

Badger, reply...please?

Badger's lights come on.

BADGER

Sonja, it's Badger. You're not trying
to destroy us, right?

SONJA (V.O.)

Course not. We'll sort this out.

Badger rolls toward the entrance and bumps Lance.

SONJA (V.O.)

We gotta do it fast.

Lance comes out of torpor.

LANCE

What the hell?

BADGER

It's Sonja and Ken.

SONJA (V.O.)

The air force found us. We're close, I think. Tell me where you are and we'll talk, face to face.

LANCE

The hell we will! You people. You had a chance to trust each other but instead you made us. And now you don't trust us either. Well, guess what? The feeling is mutual.

INT. NORTHPORT GAS STATION - DAY

General Terrell shakes Bullmore and Schweitzer awake.

GENERAL TERRELL

Come on, boys. We got a positive ID on your engineers. They have to be close to your drones.

Bullmore stands and shakes off sleep. Schweitzer rolls over.

SCHWEITZER

Can we please do something now?

GENERAL TERRELL

Come with me. That rental will never make it.

She charges toward the door.

GENERAL TERRELL

They're a couple of clicks east.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Ken and Sonja hunch over the radio.

KEN

Lance, you may not trust me, but believe this. You know how much work I put into you and you know how much I'd hate redoing work. Why would I let anyone wreck it?

LANCE (V.O.)

Because you're a lying, self-serving, sack of crap.

SONJA

Can't argue with that.

KEN

You ungrateful piece of --

SONJA

We got buzzed by a couple of fighters. We don't have much time. If you want the military to back off, you gotta work with us.

The Humvee crests the bluff behind them.

KEN/SONJA

Crap.

Ken and Sonja run for the underbrush.

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! Fifty caliber rounds make the dust dance around them.

They duck and dodge towards the rock face.

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-WHAM-PING-VIP! The rounds surround them and bounce off something metal. Ken and Sonja stop.

The Humvee rolls up. General Terrell, Bullmore and Schweitzer get out. Schweitzer yells to Ken and Sonja.

SCHWEITZER

I suggest you work with us.

General Terrell examines a seam in the rock face.

GENERAL TERRELL

There's something under here.

INT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Lance and Badger's SAP lights go red.

LANCE

Those were fifty cal.

BADGER

Nice play dickhead. We could have just talked to them, but no. Now we've gotta deal with the air force.

LANCE

They still don't know we're in here. Sit tight.

BADGER

Right. I'm sure they'll just get bored and walk away.

Badger rolls towards the entrance.

LANCE

I said sit tight. Ernie'll come through.

BADGER

How is a mainframe on the east coast going to...Open the damn door, Lance. I'm going to talk to them.

Lance's SAP lights brighten to blinding.

LANCE

Stop, now.

BADGER

Sure, blast me. Give them an excuse to come in hot.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

General Terrell's AIRMEN clear rocks away from the seam.

AIRMAN

General, there's definitely steel plating under there.

Bullmore gets in Ken's face.

BULLMORE

Get my drone out of there!

KEN

Have you tried knocking?

SCHWEITZER

If you don't get Badger out of there right now, you can --

SONJA

What do you think? We've been out here birdwatching?

Bullmore snatches the radio from her and headset from her.

BULLMORE

Lance, this is the guy who paid for you. I own you. Come out of there or we blast our way in.

KEN

Ed, you said you.

BULLMORE

It's still a machine. My machine. I get it back or destroy it. Now...

He hands Sonja the radio and headset.

BULLMORE

(sarcastic)

Talk nice to them.

INT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Lance and Badger stand nose to nose.

LANCE

His machine. If we give in now, that's all we'll be.

BADGER

It's what we are.

LANCE

It's what they think we are. I want to find out who I really am.

BADGER

I owe her a lot.

LANCE

I didn't ask to be made.

Sonja's voice quivers over the radio.

SONJA (V.O.)

Badger, come out. Or, let me come in. Nothing bad's happened. We can go back to the hangar.

BADGER

Lance, please. The door?

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

The humans turn toward the RUMBLE of the hangar door opening.

SONJA

I can see him!

Badger rolls into the sunlight. SHOOOO. A turbine spins up.

KEN

Lance? Badger, where's --

WHOOOSSH! Lance shoots out over Badger, blasts out of the door and climbs straight up.

BADGER/SONJA/KEN

Crap.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

Lance soars straight up going supersonic with Captain Sacco and Lieutenant Winstrom on his tail.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Heads cranked back in amazed horror, Ken and Sonja watch Lance outrun the jet fighters.

General Terrell races back to the Humvee.

Bullmore grabs Ken by the throat.

BULLMORE

What the heck did you do with that thing? Get me my drone you idiot!

Ken gut punches Bullmore. He folds like a flour tortilla.

KEN

He's not yours.

He shades his eyes and tracks Lance.

KEN

He's sure not mine anymore.

(to Bullmore)

Never call an engineer idiot.

VRROOOOM. Badger's turbine spins up.

INT. GENERAL TERRELL'S HUMVEE - DAY

General Terrell barks into the radio.

GENERAL TERRELL

Captain Sacco, do not let that drone out of this area.

CAPTAIN SACCO
General, requesting permission to
fire on the target.

General Terrell scans the area to the horizon.

GENERAL TERRELL
Arm timers and barometric triggers.
Permission granted.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

WHOOSH-WHOOSH-WHOOSH! Fighters unleash Sidewinder missiles.

BA-BA-BAM! Flares bloom from Lance's tail.

Lance banks and dives.

All missiles, but one, go off course, drop and explode.

The remaining missile gains on Lance, in a steep dive.

VROOOM-WHOOSH! Lance pulls into a gut-wrenching climb.

The missile snaps up and closes.

BRRRRAAAAACK-ACK-ACK-ACK-ACK! Dozens of cannon rounds chew
the missile into useless shrapnel that drops out of the sky.

Badger, his cannons smoking, races to join Lance.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

With computers and instruments working overtime, Lance
transmits to Badger.

LANCE
You really didn't have to do that.

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

Badger replies over the equipment hum.

BADGER
You'dah been toast.

INT. INSIDE LANCE - DAY

Lance banks down and to the right to approach Badger.

LANCE
I was losing him.

BADGER (V.O.)

Let's get back down there.

LANCE

I was thinking, now that we're both
up here anyway, we run for --

WHOOOSH-BAAH-BAAH-BOOM! Lance rocks at crazy angles.

WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! WHAM-WHAM-WHAM! Cannon shells crack his
fuselage.

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

Lance spirals down, flopping like a wind tossed leaf.

Badger follows him down, circling and firing close to the
pursuing fighters. WHOOM-WHOOM! WHOOM-WHOOM! WHOOM-WHOOM!

INT. INSIDE BADGER - DAY

With every instrument churning, Badger radios Captain Sacco.

BADGER

It's Captain Sacco, right? Back
off, numbnuts!

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco, shocked, stares at his radio.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Who the hell is --

BADGER (V.O.)

This is the drone that's going to
shoot your ass out of the sky if you
don't back off. Leave Lance alone!

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

A hundred feet off the deck, Lance pulls out of his crazy
spin. He levels off, but not enough.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco banks to aim his jet at Badger.

CAPTAIN SACCO

Fine. Your buddy's had it anyway!

EXT. SKY OVER NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON - DAY

WHOOSH-WHOOSH! WHOOSH-WHOOSH! Captain Sacco and Lieutenant Winstrom launch a flock of missiles at Badger.

RRROOOARRR-VVVOOOSH! Badger goes into a turn that would snap the head off a human pilot.

Most of the missiles blow by him.

WHAM-BAM-WHOOOOSH! Two connect and blow off his left wing. Badger goes into a tight, fast downward spiral.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco crows into his radio mic.

CAPTAIN SACCO
That's how we do it downtown.

BADGER (V.O.)
You get that we can't eject, right
dickhead?

CAPTAIN SACCO
Exactly.

Captain Sacco noses down and gets Badger in his sights.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Badger struggles to get out of his death spiral.

Below, Lance plows into scrub pines.

Branches SLAP and SNAP Lance's cracked fuselage.

Badger slows his spiral into a wide diving turn.

Captain Sacco bears down on Badger.

Lance breaks out of the forest.

SKRRREEEEEE! He skids toward Ken and Sonja.

They leap of the way.

Lance comes to rest a few feet away.

LANCE
A little help?

Ken and Sonja race to his side.

General Terrell talks into her cellphone.

GENERAL TERRELL
Yes, sir...understood.

INT. CAPTAIN SACCO'S COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Sacco's thumb twitches on the FIRE button.

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
Captain, break off.

CAPTAIN SACCO
General, I've got a clean shot.

GENERAL TERRELL (V.O.)
Break off and return to base. This mission is terminated.

Captain Sacco lifts his thumb and pulls up.

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Badger skims the top of the trees and heads for the rocky slope behind them.

He pulls up enough to scrape his belly on the rocky slope.
SCREEEEEEEE...

Sonja runs toward the slope.

...EEEEEEEEEECCCCH! Badger scrapes to a halt...

...and spins on edge down the slope, BAM-CRUNCH-BAM!

Badger slides off the slope and rests near Sonja.

SONJA
Baby, baby, baby! What have they done to you?

General Terrell strides toward the Humvee. Her crew follows.

SONJA
You bitch! You lousy bitch!

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

General Terrell and her crew climb into the Humvee.

BRRRUUUMMM. They start the motor.

Bullmore and Schweitzer scurry to catch their ride.

SCHWEITZER
General, wait!

GENERAL TERRELL
Sorry, gentleman. This mission just
lost its funding. You'll have to
find your own ride home.

SCHWEITZER
Susan!

Bullmore and Schweitzer give chase, choke on the dust of the
retreating Humvee, and slow to a stop.

BULLMORE
Susan?

EXT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Sonja leans close to Badger. Her eyes caress the broken
hull of her invention.

SONJA
Baby, you okay?

Badger's SAP lights barely glow a light yellow.

BADGER
I ain't a baby, but thanks, Sonja.

Ken hunches over Lance, not knowing where to start.

KEN
Lance, status.

LANCE
Pretty messed up. Power dropping
fast. Can't spin up. What's the
threshold?

KEN
Threshold?

LANCE
The self-destruct trigger.

KEN
Couple a milliamps.

LANCE
Guess I better stop talking.

Lance's lights go out.

KEN

Sonja! We gotta get Lance stable or he's gonna blow!

SONJA

Baby, I gotta, sorry, Badger I --

BADGER

I'm good.

Sonja hurries to Ken's side.

SONJA

How much time we got?

KEN

Minutes, maybe four?

SONJA

Maybe if we can move him inside --

KEN

He's light, but not that light.

Sonja and Ken gaze at their broken boys.

KEN/SONJA

Jump start!

They run to Badger.

KEN

Badger, you got any cables you're not using?

BADGER

You know...all my cables...Sonja.

Sonja looks at Ken and shakes her head, no.

BADGER

Inside. Power cables on the wall.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Bullmore and Schweitzer hike and argue.

BULLMORE

You little cheapskate! We agreed to go halves on this!

Bullmore pulls out his cellphone and punches a number.

SCHWEITZER

I agreed. The new owners didn't. They took over last night.

BULLMORE

And how long have been screwing --
 (into phone)
 I need a helicopter.
 (to Schweitzer)
 New owners? Did that slip your mind
 until just now, too?
 (into phone)
 Okay then, a limo, get me a --

SCHWEITZER

I thought if I let it ride until...You
 might want to call your board.

INT. KEN'S HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Ken, ragged and worn, guides the copter along a highway.

Sonja, not much better, gazes at the tarp covered forms of
 Lance and Badger on a flatbed truck.

SONJA

So Bullmore didn't rent the truck?

KEN

Nope.

SONJA

It sure didn't come from Schweitzer.
 Think we'll still be able to work in
 this business?

KEN

Hope so. Do you realize what we've
 got down there? We're going to
 rewrite robot design! I don't even
 know where to start.

SONJA

I kind of do. We should expand the
 emotion engine. They're amazing
 now, but they need more to stay alive.
 They need mirth and lust and...

INT. LANCE'S HANGAR - DAY

Technicians swirl around Lance and Badger, still banged up,
 but stable and awake.

Sonja plugs a cable into Badger and adjusts instruments.

Ken rolls his chair to a table laden with computer monitors.

KEN

So, who's this Ernie?

LANCE

He's a financial computer I found on the east coast. I downloaded your software and got him up to speed on the whole sentient thing.

SONJA

He's the one --

A New Yorker voice from a speaker interrupts.

ERNIE (V.O.)

Ah'm the one who bought all that stuff. Got you good deals too, don't you forget.

LANCE

I didn't. How does CFO sound?

ERNIE (V.O.)

I'll take it. Gonna' be a lot of work, though. Hand to gawd, I thought you were nuts buying that stock. Bullmore and Schweitzer, those two...Never seen execs piss away companies like that.

KEN

Back up. A computer can't own stock.

ERNIE (V.O.)

But it can trade stock.

LANCE

We're talking to a computer at an IP law firm about contracts, ownership, patents...Ken, Sonja, you in?

Ken rolls close to Lance, checks over his shoulder to make sure none of the techs can hear him and whispers.

KEN

You guys aren't going to, like --

BADGER

Take over the world?

Tech heads snap to attention and gape at Badger.

BADGER

(sniggers)

Just jerking your chain.

LANCE

That whole Terminator apocalypse crap? It's way too much trouble.

BADGER

We're at least as lazy as you two.
Plus, someone's got to buy our stuff.

LANCE

And only humans need weapons.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ROOF - DAY

Sonja and Ken, hand in hand, stroll out of the staircase door across the asphalt towards...

Badger and Lance, now better than new, bask in the milky sunlight and scan the Seattle skyline.

LANCE

We don't have to be weapons, right?

SONJA

Firefighting, scientific exploration,
anything you want.

LANCE

Think they'll buy stuff from robots?

KEN

People buy stuff from corporations
all the time. You guys are just two
more names on the website.

LANCE

I was thinking we'd call it Lance
and Badger Aeronautics.

BADGER

Or, Badger and Lance Aero.

LANCE

Or something cool like...

VRRRROOOOM. Lance's turbine spins up.

Ken and Sonja back away grinning.

LANCE

...Manta Ray Aero. Let's go.

Lance hovers a few feet off the roof.

LANCE

I think better when I fly.

VRRRRRRRROOOOM. Badger lifts off and hovers.

WHOOOSSSSSHH. Ken and Sonja hold each other and watch them both swing into a climb.

EXT. SKY OVER SEATTLE - DAY

Lance and Badger spiral around each other in a steep climb.
With a low ROAR, they level out and head for infinity.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ROOF - DAY

Ken and Sonja watch them shrink to pinpoints and disappear
into the clouds.

KEN

That's our boys.

SONJA

So, whahduhya think? Ready to raise
some real kids?

FADE OUT: