

AURORA CENTAURI
"INTO THE BLACK"

Written by

Jess Adducci and Dan Baker

Based on a story by
Dan Baker

AURORA

Rion, stop.

*
*

Behind the cockpit is a...

PASSENGER AREA-- CONTROL PANELS, a BENCH SEAT. BLUE-GREEN LIGHT pours in through a PORTHOLE on an EXTERIOR HATCH.

RION

A massive dust storm's coming to wipe us off the map. It's time--

*
*
*

AURORA

Stop playing.

*
*

As Aurora speaks, Rion's face falls.

*

AURORA (CONT'D)

Face it, Ri. You want to die with warm, fuzzy thoughts in your head, fine, but we can, we're going to survive--

*
*
*
*

It's Rion's turn to smile.

*

PASSAGEWAY-- A LAVATORY to the left. Aurora is on his heels.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Hey! Seriously!

*

The passageway leads into the...

*

CARGO BAY-- At the far end is a closed CARGO RAMP. The shuttle isn't much bigger than a Winnebago.

AURORA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Rion!

*

Rion beelines for the cargo ramp. He mashes a button on his suit. WHOOSH: a helmet unfolds like origami from his collar.

*

AURORA (CONT'D)

Please.

*
*

RION

(over comm)

Decompression in 3, 2--

He's yanked backwards: Aurora has him by the arm.

AURORA

I'm not doing this.

*

RION
I'll go first--

*

AURORA
No.

RION
Wait for me. I'll come back with
proof. Monitor the comm.

*

Rion tries to pull away from her.

AURORA
No one "comes back". Dammit, no--

*

Rion slaps a button near the cargo ramp. It begins to open. Air rushes from the ship whipping Aurora's hair into her face. She lets go of Rion and scrambles to mash the button for her own helmet: WHOOSH.

*

Blinding blue-green light floods the cargo bay.

Aurora races to the open cargo ramp. Rion is already floating toward the light: an unending wall of borealis energy called THE BARRIER. She grabs for a nearby GRAPPLING GUN and shoots. It sails past Rion within reach.

AURORA (CONT'D)
(over comm)
Rion. Rion!

No answer. He finally turns, slowly, and waves for her to jump. She points angrily at the grappling hook. He drifts into the Barrier, electricity crawling over his body, and disappears.

Aurora stares, her ragged breaths loud in the comm.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHUTTLE - LATER

The shuttle drifts near the Barrier.

CARGO BAY-- Aurora sits on the edge of the cargo ramp, her feet dangling over empty space. RADIO INTERFERENCE whispers over the COMM like ghostly voices.

CUT TO BLACK.

*

INT. TETHYS ASTEROID, RESIDENTIAL BLOC

LOFT APARTMENT-- The subterranean, cinder block loft apartment rocks out with loud MUSIC and pulsing bodies of a HORDE of PEOPLE. They LAUGH, SING, and YELL, space suits half done up and fluorescent drinks in the air. Every once in awhile, the whole place shakes a little and the horde cheers.

TITLE CARD: TETHYS ASTEROID - ONE YEAR LATER

Aurora stands stock still in the writhing masses. Her now strong features and boy-ish haircut are telling: the last year hasn't been kind to her.

SOMEONE shoves by and grabs at her. In a flash, he finds a knife at his throat. While he slithers away, Aurora calmly glances at an ELECTRONIC WIDGET on her arm and sheaths the knife.

*
*
*
*

WREN (O.S.)

Aurora!

WREN (21), a short, weasely guy, squirms through the crowd. A wide, toothy grin stretches his face, Aurora nods uncomfortably, his teeth are rotting.

*

WREN (CONT'D)

(yelling over the din)

Hey girl! Haven't seen you in years!

He tries to hug her but she flails awkwardly.

WREN (CONT'D)

Want a drink?

AURORA

Clock's ticking, Wren. We're cutting it a little close here.

Aurora picks up the case at her feet, E-TAG shining, showing it to him. Practiced. She's done this a million times. Wren pops the latches and examines the contents, he grins.

AURORA (CONT'D)

You have a plan?

Wren shrugs, gestures to the party, and takes a big swig of his drink. Aurora frowns a little.

AURORA (CONT'D)

You've got what I need?

WREN

Yeah, yeah.

(looks her over)

I mean, it's in the back. Come have
a drink girl, loosen that
spacesuit.

AURORA

Oh Wren, you're such a tease. If
only we had time for passionate
lovemaking.

Wren throws his hands up in surrender. He waves a little and
SOMEONE walks up with a CANNISTER PACK.

Aurora cracks it open and smiles a little. FUEL CELLS. Charge
indicator on FULL.

WREN

Totally clean. No tracers. Won't
fry your systems.

Aurora's attention snaps back to Wren.

AURORA

Did these come from The Market?

Wren shifts uncomfortably.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Wren, tell me you didn't get these
from The Market--

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, CLANG, CLANG.

Aurora checks the widget on her arm with a grimace. ALARMS
and GONGS strike in chorus. The whole place erupts in
celebration.

*
*

WREN

(yelling)

It's tiiiiiiiiime! Bring it on!!

He turns in place, hopping and dancing and shouting. Aurora
slings the fuel cells across her back and bolts.

CORRIDOR-- Aurora barrels through, her rushed run echoes off
the concrete walls. A HANDFUL OF REVELERS loiter near a door.

AURORA

(to Revelers)

Get inside! Go! Now!

The Revelers run for cover. Aurora taps on her ARM WIDGET. An IMAGE shows PRE-FLIGHT SYSTEMS: ENGAGED.

SHUTTLE COCKPIT-- Monitors blink on, engines rumble.

STAIRWELL-- She bounds up the stairs and hits a button for her helmet. WHOOSH.

EXT. TETHYS ASTEROID

LANDING PAD-- Aurora hurtles into the bright, her image distorted by the sweltering heat. Black glittery dust swirls like snow flurries. She squints, searching the field of shuttles. There it is: her shuttle.

A SHADOW overtakes the entire field.

She turns, eyes wide: a pitch-black cloud of interstellar dust called THE DARKNESS swallows the sky. METEORITES smash to the ground.

Aurora sprints to her shuttle.

INT./EXT. SHUTTLE

Aurora slides into the pilot seat, flips a few switches, and punches a RED BUTTON. She grips the YOKE.

SHHHHBLAMMM: Liftoff thrusters fire, kicking the nose of the shuttle skyward. Main engines ignite.

The cockpit shakes, Aurora frowns, pushed back into her seat.

The shuttle zips forward, the gap between the rolling DARKNESS and rocky outcrop of asteroid crater closing all too quickly.

AURORA

C'mon...

Aurora pulls hard on the YOKE. The TALISMANS and E-TAGS swing. The toy ROCKET SHIP bounces on its spring. A blank spot where Aurora and Rion's photoprint use to be.

LANDING PAD-- The Darkness rolls on her tail, sweeping through the field of shuttles like a tornado.

COCKPIT-- The nose barely squeaks through the gap and Aurora shoots into space.

But she's still sweating.

INT./EXT. SHUTTLE

*

SPACE-- Behind the shuttle, the Darkness completely engulfs Tethys. It keeps swelling... faster than the shuttle flies.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS

*

LOFT APARTMENT-- The walls and fixtures shake. Pieces fall from the ceiling, cracks form in the walls. Wren and the others SCREAM and run. But there's nowhere to go. People are trampled. It's like someone kicked an ant hill.

*

*

*

*

*

The COMMUNICATION MONITORS blink out. The lights FLICKER, then go black.

*

*

INT./EXT. SHUTTLE

*

COCKPIT-- Everything RATTLES. Aurora's knuckles turn white. With concentrated effort, she punches a few buttons. Screens light up with collision alarms.

AURORA

Shit.

She glances into space. A number of SMALL ASTEROIDS float nearby. She nods, breathing heavily.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Okay... Yeah. Slingshot.

SPACE-- The shuttle steers toward the LARGEST ASTEROID. The Darkness continues to advance.

COCKPIT-- Aurora struggles to keep control of the yoke. The asteroid completely blocks her field of vision.

Her eyes narrow, focused. With a deep breath at the last moment, she cuts the main thrusters and banks to the right, buzzing the asteroid's surface.

SPACE-- The shuttle zips around the asteroid in a gentle curve, picking up speed from its gravitational spin. Aurora slams the thrusters full on and the shuttle slingshots into space, finally gaining ground on the Darkness.

INT. SHUTTLE

COCKPIT-- Aurora let's out a breath she's been holding since take-off and grins crookedly.

She throws a few switches and checks one of the THREE SCREENS in her dash.

ON SCREEN-- A touchscreen map of New Liberty displays an ASTEROID FIELD, on the far left is a pulsing blue-green line labeled BARRIER, and on the far right, the DARKNESS. Six LARGE ASTEROIDS remain.

Aurora taps the Darkness and traces a line from it to the furthest asteroid, RODINA. A RUNNING CLOCK pops up: 08:10:23 and counting. She double taps the clock, then taps her arm widget: the running clock appears on her arm widget.

COCKPIT-- Aurora nods, gets rid of her helmet, and throws on a headset.

AURORA

Centauri two-two-zero calling Elli,
bloc romeo-one-niner.

No answer. The call kicks over to a voicemail system.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Elli, I'm cutting things close.
I'll be there in 2 hours. Be ready
with it.

She double-taps Rodina. On screen message: COURSE SET.

Aurora nods and holds up a BOTTLE of something.

AURORA (CONT'D)

To you Wren...
(under her breath)
Ya moron.
(takes a swig)
Here's hoping you party yourself
numb to the end.

She flips a switch: On comes a DRIVETIME RADIO SHOW with obnoxious co-hosts.

DJ DAY-GLO

(over comms)
--the latest in energy efficient
wall mount power control units from
Elyon. And don't forget those
fabulous designer suits and helmets
from Tethys--

ROID

(over comms)
Hang on. I'm afraid we might have
already lost Tethys...
(MORE)

ROID (CONT'D)

(off mic mumbling; edged
in panic)

No comms with the Tethys colony?
(nervous chuckle and
stutter)

Yep, folks. Tethys has seen the
Darkness. I bet they're having some
raaaaaging parties!

DJ DAY-GLO

I know we are!

Fake PARTY SOUND EFFECTS play. Aurora rolls her eyes. Gets
up.

PASSENGER AREA-- Aurora checks a control panel.

DJ DAY-GLO (CONT'D)

It's going to be a bumpy day out
there, New Liberty!

ROID

Eight hours before every colony
goes black for good. No one in, no
one out. Check those supplies and
hunker down!

*
*
*

Aurora heads down the...

*

PASSAGEWAY--

To the...

*

CARGO BAY-- It's stocked like a survivalist's bunker: FOOD
PACKETS. BOTTLED WATER. EXTRA CLOTHES. The walls crawl with
WIRES and SCREENS all labeled things like WATER/AIR
PURIFICATION, TEMPERATURE REGULATOR, FOOD REPLICATOR, WASTE
SYSTEMS, SECURITY and COMMUNICATIONS. They're all dark and
silent. In the center, all wires converge on a circuit box
with a conspicuously empty terminal.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Aurora throws the fuel cells onto a supply shelf and plops
onto a comfy bunk. She uses an ELECTRONIC TABLET and flips
through STAR CHARTS.

*
*
*

Lines indicate possible routes. She tosses the time alarms
away (every route will take decades) and continues with the
excitement of an explorer.

*
*
*

DJ DAY-GLO *
 (lowering his voice; *
 serious) *
 Of course, there's always "The *
 Leap", folks. Take the plunge, dive *
 in, cross the Barrier! *

Aurora pauses. *

ROID *
 (laughs) *
 Something's waiting for you on the *
 other side. *

An ELECTROCUTION SOUND EFFECT plays, the DJ's feign agonizing *
 screams, guffaw. *

DJ DAY-GLO *
 (brightly) *
 The last New Hope transport leaves *
 in just a few hours. If you're not *
 on it I hope you're settled in and *
 par-ty-ing. *

Aurora frowns and taps a command on her tablet: the broadcast *
 switches off and METAL POP blares. *

Aurora continues tracing lines between nearby systems when-- *

BEEP, CHIRP. BEEP, CHIRP.

Aurora glances at a screen by her bed. "NEW LIBERTY DISPATCH" *
 - CALL INCOMING.

With a sigh, she taps the screen.

AURORA *
 What's up Pixie Stick? *

A shining face beams back at her, all smiles. PIXEL (18).

PIXEL
 Good news! Lots of jobs just hit
 the dispatch. Priority Ones. So--

AURORA
 (tired)
 I'll pass. Thanks though.

Aurora goes to tap the screen but Pixel keeps talking.

PIXEL
 Pass on well-paying gigs? Who am I
 talkin' to? Is Aurora there?
 (MORE)

PIXEL (CONT'D)
 (laugh and snort; then
 deadly serious)
 But seriously, there's a lot of
 work to do--

AURORA
 I'm set to jet, Pixel. One more
 stop and I'm outta here.

She glances out at her bunker.

AURORA (CONT'D)
 Can't chance the complications.

PIXEL
 They'll behave! C'mon. Some simple
 runs, Aurora--

AURORA
 Over and out Pixie Stick.

BOOP. She cuts the call. Uneasily, she sits up and glances at the wall with all the circuitry, at the circuit box and it's empty terminal.

AURORA (CONT'D)
 One more stop.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. SPACE, NEW LIBERTY SYSTEM

Aurora's shuttle zooms towards a MASSIVE ASTEROID floating near the Barrier. CITY LIGHTS twinkle on it's surface.

TITLE CARD: RODINA

INT. RODINIA RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS

HALLWAY-- Aurora double times through REVELLERS that clog the worn, carpeted Living Quarters. Aurora frowns at them and checks her widget.

5:59:03 and counting.

KNOCK, KNOCK.

Aurora waits with a half grin. The door's thrown open. There stands a long haired hippie way past her prime... ELLI (50's)

ELLI
 Those BASTARDS!

AURORA

Hey-- what?

ELLI'S QUARTERS-- Elli sets a kettle on an electric range. The place towers over the pair with stacks of JUNK, thick-framed ART on the walls, and KNICK-KNACKS perched on every available surface. A stack of luggage sits near the door.

ELLI

It's the council's breeding program. They don't see a need for an old bag like me so they kicked me off the New Hope transport. I think 'viable progenitor' were their exact words.

Aurora looks from Elli to a working HABITATION SYSTEM nearly identical to the one on her shuttle, except Elli's has a PCU plugged into it's central terminal.

ELLI (CONT'D)

Didn't even have the decency to tell me to my face. Sent a memorandum.

AURORA

What are you gonna do?

Elli sighs.

ELLI

I guess I'm going to kick around here.

*
*

Aurora nods.

*

AURORA

You have another plan? A friend's place to go to or--

*
*
*

Elli pauses for a moment, choosing her next words carefully.

*

ELLI

Let's Leap. Together.

*

Aurora frowns.

*

AURORA

Suddenly everything is all about the Leap.

*
*
*

(pause)

You know, suicide's a funny way to survive--

*
*

ELLI

Messages float across the barrier
every day, kiddo. Things carved in
wood. Explain that.

Aurora eyes a shelf full of things foreign to life on an
asteroid: A jar of rich soil; driftwood; a pinecone.

ELLI (CONT'D)

Aurora, it's paradise! Peaceful,
satisfying, full of things we only
replicate here--

AURORA

All these years and you've never
leapt. Why?

ELLI

(searching)
Well-- I--

Elli sags.

AURORA

Funny. That's my reason, too.

Elli stands quiet.

ELLI

(cautiously)
I'm sorry kiddo. If I'm stuck here
I need my habitation system.

AURORA

What? What about me?
(indicates Elli's PCU)
So I've gotta source another PCU...
(checks her arm widget)
...six hours before blackout!

ELLI

Aurora...

AURORA

No. I can do this. I should go. I
need to find a PCU.

ELLI

Be safe.

Aurora hardly notices Elli as she walks out the door.

HALLWAY-- Elli catches up to Aurora and embraces her. Aurora, stiff at first, eases into it. This may be the last time they see each other.

AURORA
You have everything you need?

ELLI
Not sure it's going to matter.

Aurora frowns.

INT. SHUTTLE

CARGO BAY-- Aurora rushes past the empty PCU terminal and taps through lists of PCU's on a screen. There. The ANDREL WALL MOUNT POWER CONTROL UNIT hovers, doing a slow spin.

500,000 Bars. Quantity: 7.

Her account: 407,536 Bars.

She looks at the empty terminal on the wall and all her lifeless systems.

COCKPIT-- Aurora throws on her headset, starts the engines for take-off, and mashes some buttons.

VID-SCREEN: CALL OUTGOING. NEW LIBERTY DISPATCH.

PIXEL
(on screen; mechanically)
New Liberty Dispatch. Your delivery
is our priority--

AURORA
Whoa! Watch out!

Vehicles zoom by, narrowly missing the shuttle. The skies are packed with panicky pilots hightailing it away from the Darkness.

PIXEL
Aurora? What--?

AURORA
(in a hurry)
Gimme a list of local work. I'm in
quadrant 2, outside Rodinia.

PIXEL

(punching buttons)

Well, miss high and mighty demands work. Maybe there isn't anything else. Other drivers want work, ya know.

*

AURORA

C'mon. C'mon.

*

*

A list of jobs pop up on Screen 3. A few more vehicles narrowly miss the cockpit. Aurora sweats trying to maneuver through space debris and crazy drivers.

*

*

*

AURORA (CONT'D)

Thanks. And Pixel? Get out of there.

*

Pixel smirks.

*

PIXEL

(sarcastically)

Your delivery is our priority.

BOOP. Call end. Screen 1: 5:27:35 and counting.

INT. BOLTHOR, LIVING QUARTERS

BAR-- Aurora THUMPS in, quick, focused. A weathered WOMAN peers at her from behind the counter. The lights FLICKER.

*

WEATHERED WOMAN

Generators aren't worth a puttock.

AURORA

(pointing to the back)

Rooksons? They around?

*

WEATHERED WOMAN

She don't go by that no more. Wilsimms.

The lights FLICKER again.

*

AURORA

(walking away)

You should get that taken care of. It's close.

The old woman shrugs.

*

STAIRS-- Aurora clomps up the steps. A not-too-distant rumble stops her; the building quakes, lights flicker, plaster rains from the ceiling. She picks up the pace a little.

HALLWAY-- Aurora knocks on an apartment door.

She slowly slides a hand over a LARGE KNIFE strapped to her thigh.

The door CREAKS open.

AURORA (CONT'D)
New Liberty Dispatch. Pick-up--

A short, shadowy figure stands in the doorway. Her hand relaxes.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Aww hell...

CUT TO BLACK.