

RUNAWAY

Written by Carlos GCA

Script excerpt, work-in-progress draft

FADE IN:

PANEL 1

EXT. MALEK SYSTEM — SPACE

PAREL: main character, Pilot of the ASTERISK

ENEMY 1: spaceship made to pursue and chase its adversaries

ENEMY 2: spaceship made to take a slower route in trade-off for accuracy in firing from a distance.

The camera pans slowly downward. A graphic overlay of the star system fades in, labeled MALEK SYSTEM, holds a moment, then disappears, revealing a pale, curved planet filling the lower half of the frame.

PANEL 2 AND 4

A small ship—the ASTERISK—rocks into frame from behind the camera and streaks past toward the planet below. The camera shudders as it passes.

ASTERISK AI
Two hyperspace signals remain in pursuit.

PAREL
I know! Stop telling me.

PANEL 3 AND 5

Two ENEMY SHIPS dash past the camera in quick succession. Enemy 1 first, then Enemy 2, passing on opposite sides of the frame.

PAREL
(frustrated, working at the hyperdrive)
What's the matter with this thing?

ASTERISK AI
Hyperdrive integrity compromised.

PANEL 6, 7, AND 8

PAREL
Just my luck.

Enemy ships 1 and 2 begin firing. Enemy 1 took an aggressive approach while enemy 2 stayed behind to keep constant visual contact.

(shot akin to the camera on the wall of a racetrack of the Asterisk and enemy 1 as they make a turn)

ASTERISK AI
Enemy ship is attempting a target lock.

PAREL
(Sarcastically)
Great
Let's try to destroy it before that happens.

PANEL 9

Parel pushes a button, and the Asterisk's cannon turns around to face backwards and begins to shoot at enemy 1.

PANEL 10

Enemy 1 evades some of the shots; some others are absorbed by its deflector shields.

PANEL 11

Enemy 2 makes a decisive shot. It lands on the ammo reserves of the ASTERISK

ASTERISK AI
Ammunition reserves compromised, immediate ejection of module is advised.

PAREL
What button do I push that for?

a button lights up on the dashboard of the ASTERISK, with a little "ding" sound like that of an elevator arriving at the right floor

PAREL slams the button with his palm

the ammunition module ejects with force, pushing the asterisk in the opposite direction slightly.

The ammunition module explodes into a cloud of smoke and fire.

PAREL
That gives me an idea.

The ASTERISK then turns toward enemy 2, it begins to fire as it sees the ASTERISK reveal itself from behind the cloud of debris.

ASTERISK AI

Enemy locking signature nearing lock.

Enemy 1 follows behind, upon becoming visible to enemy 2, enemy 2 stops firing.

(shot as a shaky, handheld, narrow angle, "OTS" of enemy 2's ship)

ASTERISK AI: enemy torpedoes on route

PAREL

What other systems can be ejected from this ship?

ASTERISK AI

The modules with ejection mechanisms are: the pilot seat, the left and right engine cores, the cargo hold—

PAREL

Perfect. Reroute all power from the hyperdrive and targeting systems to the left engine.

ASTERISK AI

The engines are not fit to handle high power, are you sure?

PAREL

Yes.

Let's just hope it's enough to draw off the torpedoes

PAREL continues to approach enemy 2 as the torpedo gets closer and closer.

PAREL ejects the left engine core in the direction of enemy 2, the torpedoes redirect their heat seeking towards the engine core

Enemy 2's ship blows up

PAREL lets out a guttural scream, the kind of scream you make when something extremely unlikely happens.

PAREL

did you SEE that? ha haaaa! That oughtta teach them!

ASTERISK AI

my sensors "saw" that, yes

PAREL

Ehhh what good are sensors for if you
don't have *eyes*. That's what it's all about

ASTERISK AI

My sensors are detecting we are still in
pursuit.

Enemy 1 emerges from the cloud of smoke and wreckage, and begins its
approach

PAREL

I guess that answers my question

PAREL begins flying towards the planet

PAREL

(absentmindedly)

Good thing this ship is faster than any
garbage THEY can produce!

("THEY": empire, or whoever made the enemy ships)

PAREL notices ENEMY 1 is still catching up very quickly

PAREL

How the hell are they so fast all of a
sudden?

ASTERISK AI

Without the left engine core, the ship can
only accelerate at half capacity.

PAREL

(sarcastically)

I knew that.

ENEMY 1 opens fire after reaching effective range

ENEMY 1 clips the ASTERISK with some shots

PAREL

Okay, playtime's over. What offensive
capabilities are left on the ship?

ASTERISK AI

There appears to be one shot left in the
rotary cannon.

[elaboration needed, Parel risks it with the one shot left in the chamber]

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Something along the lines of parel not being able to shake the enemy, so he becomes unpredictable by trying a technique that went very wrong last time he tried it

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PANEL 12

A HUD display appears across the windshield, illustrating the ship's VERTI-LOCK system, while Parel pilots.

PAREL

Turn off the Verti-Locks.

(Verti-lock: a core system that the ship uses to fly in space as a plane would in an atmosphere. This technology facilitates space travel greatly, as it is the sole reason why spaceflight became so commonplace)

ASTERISK AI

Disabling this feature is a very dangerous—

PAREL

Just do it!

ASTERISK AI

Do you acknowledge that the company isn't liable if—

PAREL

Can't trust you to do anything when I need it.

He disables the Asterisk AI mid-sentence (add a line about AI mentioning that G-forces involved in disabling it are dangerous).

The instant the locks disengage, the Asterisk snaps into an uncontrolled backspin akin to a rocket out of control, a can that's been kicked, or a plane that just lost its tail fin.

PAREL

Here goes.

PANEL 13

The ship starts spinning.

PAREL
(CONT'D)

Oh shi—

[Elaboration needed here, something about Parel lining up the shot to kill enemy 2 by systematically managing the engines]

INT./EXT. ASTERISK — COCKPIT / ATMOSPHERE

Still spinning, the Asterisk manages to take down Enemy 1 but keeps tumbling, falling toward the planet below.

Parel jabs frantically at the Verti-Lock button. Nothing happens.

PAREL
God dammit!

He re-enables the Asterisk AI. A soft chime plays like the sound of a computer powering back on. (Like windows XP or a Macintosh startup sound)

ASTERISK AI
Hello, Parel! How may I assist—

PAREL
(cutting him off)
How do I enable Verti-Locks!?

ASTERISK AI
Easy! First, make sure you're parked on stable ground, to ensure—

Parel's face twists, a look that says *this motherfucker*.

PAREL
Just tell me what to press!

ASTERISK AI
... (loading response) ... Press and hold the Verti-Lock button for three seconds.

Parel holds it down. The Verti-Lock re-engages.

the ship's spin stops dead, like a flat slab hitting water.

MCU — PAREL

Relieved, seeing the ship steady again.

PAREL

YEAH!

A beat.

Then red lights flash on Parel's face and alarms blare.

ASTERISK AI

Engine stabilizer misalignment detected.
Total engine failure.

PAREL

Great. Now how the hell do you fix that?

ASTERISK AI

Repairs are possible. First, open the
external wing panel—

Parel glances left to see that same wing panel being torn off the ship as it plunges into the planet's atmosphere. (The AI keeps talking about repairs, oblivious.)

Parel stares at the dashboard, stunned—then leans back, looking upward, an "*I'm-fucked*" expression on his face.

A beat

He shakes his head and rubs his face.

PAREL

(interrupting)

No, I can't do that. What other options
are there?

ASTERISK AI

In times of distress, it is recommended to
call the local authorities to help—

PAREL

Really? You bring that up NOW of all
times?? No. Give me other options!

ASTERISK AI

As a last resort, I can enable Adaptive
Learning Mode to determine the optimal way
to manage the ship in extreme situations,
but it'll consume a good deal of power.

Parel's eyes widen.

PAREL

Do it!

ASTERISK AI

Installing Adaptive Learning package.

A loading bar appears in the ship's HUD.

Parel looks up again, the ground approaching now, slowly but steadily. He accepts his fate, pulling out a photo of someone he loved to look at in his final moments.

As the ground rushes closer, the ship suddenly shuts down, then restarts, engines and shields flaring to life to soften the fall. It still crashes hard, but moments later Parel limps out of the wreckage, banged up but alive.

FADE OUT.

END OF EXCERPT.