

DUSHAU

Original screenplay by Jacqueline Lichtenberg
Based on the award winning novel Dushau

FADE IN:

INT. KRINATA'S OFFICE - DAY

A long, narrow bright room. At one end, behind a shimmering partition, recliners nestle among dark sensors and readouts. The shimmering partition displays a line diagram labeled OLIAT with 7 stations in a formation:

OUTREACH

INREACH

EMULATOR

FORMULATOR

CENTER

RECEPTOR

PROTECTOR

Three doors are behind the desk which faces the main entry. The desk is a floating slab curving around a chair. On the wall is an Imperial Seal: Planetary Survey

LADY KRINATA ZAVARONNE bursts through the door and punches it shut behind her. She is a young "Rita Moreno" wearing office clothes. A JEWEL ENCRUSTED WAND swings from her belt.

She yanks the wand free and rams it into a socket at the edge of her desk, then perches on her chair. Desk and chair bob and adjust. She pounds the desk and three virtual displays rise but only one lights immediately.

The first display shows an air-cargo platform floating down to where a mob of diverse species waits. Robots on the platform unload boxes and barrels. Fighting breaks out over the boxes. The mob swarms aboard the platform. It rises as the robots throw people off.

ANNOUNCER

. . . seceding from the Allegiancy
Empire. As food riots continue,
Emperor Rantan's investigators
claim the Dushau planetary survey
teams have withheld arable planets -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRINATA
(scoffs)
. . . *withheld* arable planets!?

All three displays flash a text message:

SCREEN
The Kamminth Oliat has arrived.
Emperor Rantan will bestow Imperial
Honors for discovery of an arable
planet at the afternoon audience.
All Survey Base Personnel will
attend by order of the Emperor.

Krinata pounces on her controls.

KRINATA
Finemar!

A dialog box appears saying: BUSY

KRINATA (CONT'D)
Some Sentient! Not enough circuits
to answer me! Finemar!!!

Krinata rises, opens a closet, tosses a red taffeta outfit with a formal sash, on her desk chair, peels off her clothes.

A display lights showing the avatar FINEMAR, against the logo ROYAL HEALTH SERVICES RESIDENT SENTIENT. He's a humanoid male, dressed for business.

FINEMAR
Lady Zavaronne. I'd have expected
you to be at the audience -

KRINATA
How can Kamminth's Oliat be
commanded to appear before you've
done their physicals and I've
debriefed them? I wasn't even
informed they're back!

Krinata squirms into the tight red court formal wear.

FINEMAR
Kamminth's lost an officer and
returned psychically disoriented.

Krinata freezes, stares at Finemar, straightens her dress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FINEMAR (CONT'D)
I'm treating them for Dissolution
Shock. By Imperial order, I've
just released five of them, -

KRINATA
Which five? Is Jindigar -

Eyes on Finemar, Krinata absently removes her FAMILY CREST (3
LINKED CIRCLES) pin from her discarded clothes.

FINEMAR
The Receptor Jindigar is becoming -

KRINATA
Jindigar's alive!

FINEMAR
- the team's Outreach during the
Dissolution. The Outreach died.
I've got the Inreach sedated.

KRINATA
Oliat officers can't shift function
in Dissolution!

Krinata picks up the sash.

FINEMAR
Jindigar will do anything for the
Emperor. He's as loyal as you are.
But he can't speak; he's not
Outreach yet. Am I in trouble?

Krinata dons the sash, fastens it with the CREST.

KRINATA
Get Dr. Phips to countersign your
order. Even a new Emperor has no
right to do this to an Oliat!

Krinata grabs her wand from the desk which goes dark.

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - DAY

Seen from above, the majestic spires of the Imperial Compound
sparkle in sunlight. ESTABLISH the huge capital DOME well.

EXT. IMPERIAL PALACE - DAY

Seen from above, Krinata enters the Capital at a side door.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE HALLWAY - DAY

Two HOLOT, six limbed, heavily furred Guards in Imperial uniforms, bar Krinata's way into a branching short hall.

HOLOT 1

Public viewing of the robing chamber will recommence tomorrow.

Krinata taps her wand on the crest badge on her sash.

KRINATA

I'm the Kamminth Oliat debriefer.

HOLOT 1

Third rank enter the audience chamber at the blue doors.

KRINATA

Thank you.

Krinata turns away, seething with frustration.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE ROBING CHAMBER - DAY

The chamber is aging opulence and outworn grandeur, with ancient portraits of Emperors of various species, great couches, a fireplace. A RACK OF FORMAL ROBES beside one door includes a LONG WHITE HOODED ROBE, and ANOTHER for a Prince.

Three MALE DUSHAU, LELWATHA, SEUM, DINAI, huddle around a FEMALE DUSHAU, KAMMINTH. She sits before the merry fire.

Dushau are humanoid, with blue plush skin in shades darker with age, nailless fingers and toes. The eyes are set wide on the head without brow ridges. Midnight indigo eyes have fine filaments of indigo and purple patterning instead of pupil and iris. They all wear white infirmary garb.

On the rug before Kamminth sits JINDIGAR, a middle-aged, lanky male Dushau hugging IMP a BLACK PIOL PUP, a cross between a kitten with six legs and a badger.

JINDIGAR

Try again. Form Oliat with me as Outreach.

Kamminth beckons to each in turn with a DISTINCTIVE GESTURE.

Jindigar's view of Kamminth and the fire blurs, rocks. Kamminth sighs, reverses her GESTURES, releases each again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jindigar's view of Kamminth and the fire focuses. He slumps, sick, shaking and exhausted, hugging Imp.

KAMMINTH

Jindigar, we can't do this while
Fedewarn is drugged unconscious.

JINDIGAR

We must. The Imperial order -

KAMMINTH

Loyalty takes you only so far.

Jindigar strokes Imp then sets the animal on the floor.

JINDIGAR

Sit up!

Imp lies down. Kamminth buries her face in her hands.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

KRINATA lifts her Wand, spins back to the TWO HOLOT GUARDS,

KRINATA

But I have business within!

She aims at the branch hall's doors, fires a beam of light. It hits the sensor plate and the doors open.

The two Holot Guards gape. She darts between them, down the hall. The Guards pursue. One grabs her around the waist, the other around the shoulders. Krinata hangs between them in the open doorway held head first like a battering ram.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE ROBINING CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON THE OPEN DOOR:

The Holot holding Krinata try to creep back out of the room.

JINDIGAR

(to Imp)

Sit!

Imp sits up. Jindigar picks him up and cuddles him.

KRINATA

Put me down!

Jindigar startles and turns, holding the Piol close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JINDIGAR
 Krinata! Lady Zavaronne!

HOLOT 1
 That's the first he's spoken!

The two Holot hastily set Krinata on her feet.

Jindigar surges to his feet and approaches Krinata. He extends one hand, the other arm protecting the Piol.

Krinata presents Jindigar her hand for a formal greeting. Jindigar scoops Krinata into a hug with one arm, the other cuddling the Piol between them. He clings, shaking, burying his face in her hair and inhaling deeply. Krinata pulls away. Jindigar clutches her tightly.

FX: Krinata's eyes are closed. She "sees" the robing chamber new, not worn and shabby. She "sees" the chamber age.

Krinata opens her eyes wide, searching the real chamber and finds a stain on the wall. She focuses on that stain.

Jindigar steadies, straightens, and takes her hand formally. His eyes stray to a portrait of an Emperor labeled Rantan.

JINDIGAR
 Krinata. Who *is* that?

KRINATA
 (to Holot)
 That will be all. Thank you.

The Holot leave and close the doors.

KRINATA (CONT'D)
 Since you left on survey, we have a new Emperor. Rantan Lord Zinzik.

JINDIGAR
 He looks just like Turminor.

KRINATA
 His several times great uncle.
 Like Turminor, Rantan put down food riots and provided for the people.
 The Tri-Species Combine rejoined the Empire. Everyone thought the famine problem solved. It's not.

Jindigar regains poise, places the Piol on his head where it happily grooms itself. The other Dushau stare at portraits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JINDIGAR

Do you know why I can talk to you?

KRINATA

Because you knew me when you were
Kamminth's Outreach, and you're
Outreach again?

JINDIGAR

No. We're still in Dissolution.

Jindigar takes the Piol down and sets it on the floor. He leads Krinata to a couch and sits, facing Krinata.

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)

Time seems distorted. We can be
trapped in our minds, in the past.
You belong to now. This is all
real, not memory. You anchor us.

Jindigar's hand strays toward her. He snatches it back. Krinata focuses on a WORN SPOT on the rug and hugs Jindigar. The four other Dushau steady when Jindigar clutches Krinata. Jindigar pushes back, relaxed, a new man.

The Piol climbs up Jindigar's pants leg. The faint thrum of Imperial marching MUSIC stirs the air.

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)

We'll be in limbo until Fedewarn,
our Inreach, wakes. The Emperor -

KRINATA

No! I came to stop Zinzik from
doing this to you!

The Piol squirms into Krinata's arms. MUSIC swells.

JINDIGAR

I would ask another service.

Jindigar rises and goes to inspect the hooded robes.

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)

We're not sure Kamminth can hold us
out there. Come with us. If I
revert to Receptor and can't speak,
or if Fedewarn - make our excuses.

KRINATA

I'm not - I can't -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jindigar hands out the formal robes and they all strip and dress in court attire, winding turbans. The WHITE ROBE is left on the rack.

JINDIGAR
We'll risk it. We trust you.

In Oliat formation, they face the audience chamber doors, Kamminth at center, Jindigar as Receptor. Jindigar draws Krinata to his side.

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)
Hold my position as Receptor and I will take Outreach.

Marching FORMATION:

OUTREACH
Jindigar

INREACH
(vacant)

EMULATOR
Lelwatha

FORMULATOR
Seum

CENTER
Kamminth

RECEPTOR
Krinata

PROTECTOR
Dinai

Jindigar goes to the front of the formation, facing the doors to the audience chamber. The doors open on MUSIC CUE.

Eight bipedal Honor Guards, various species, face them carrying white and gold Dushau banners bearing the OLIAT DEVICE, crossed wands balanced on the tip of an arrow.

GUARD LEADER
The Zavarrone is not permitted -

Krinata moves out of formation.

JINDIGAR
She's not of us, but is essential to our well-being.

Jindigar grabs the WHITE CLOAK, sweeps it about Krinata's shoulders, flips up the hood. LOUD MUSIC STOPS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)

We don't keep the Emperor waiting.

FANFARE!! Dushau march forward, force the Guard to move.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE THRONE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Krinata skips to keep her place, struggles with the cloak.

The Throne Room seats thousands under a huge, translucent dome. ESTABLISH THE DOME WELL. AFTERNOON SUNLIGHT on carpet runners that cross in the center, then lead to the foot of the throne. The dais is newer than the robing chamber. Dignitaries sit in several ROWS OF CHAIRS on the lower steps. 7 of 10 EMPTY CHAIRS are on the lowest step of the dais. Nobles fill the auditorium. Each House has a section with their colors. One section is empty. The chair backs show the Dushau symbol, like that on Jindigar's robe.

Led by the Honor Guard, the Oliat advances to the center, turns to face the throne, halts in SUNLIGHT. The Dushau ANTHEM plays. COLORED SPOTLIGHTS come on over each of the Oliat Offices, even the vacant one. The Guards step aside. Jindigar leads the Oliat to the throne, Honor Guards to the side, the spotlights pacing them, the formation perfect -- except for Krinata. She trips over the long robe. Finally, she matches the pace, head high, graceful. It's a long walk.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE THRONE ROOM DIAS - CONTINUOUS

RANTAN LORD ZINZIK, short, trim, 50's Lehiroh, in Imperial green, dripping honors, poses regally. The IMPERIAL WAND stands in the socket of the Throne's arm. Zinzik's ASSISTANT, a Lehiroh, points at a display showing the Oliat.

ASSISTANT

Notice their teeth.

ZINZIK

As blue as their skins.

ASSISTANT

It means they don't suspect what we're doing.

ZINZIK

They see the Dushau seats empty.

ASSISTANT

Your plan will work.

INT. IMPERIAL PALACE THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Oliat and Krinata stop at the dais steps. On FANFARE the Oliat kneels, Krinata graceful. Jindigar alone rises.

ZINZIK

How does Kamminth's Oliat report?

JINDIGAR

Kamminth's endorses a new planet for colonizing.

Zinzik gestures to Kamminth's and the audience to rise.

ZINZIK

Receive Kamminth's with honors.

The audience stands, the DUSHAU ANTHEM SOUNDS, the Honor Guard escorts the Oliat to the 7 empty chairs. Jindigar contrives to put Krinata beside him.

The Honor Guard heads for the rear doors of the audience chamber. New MUSIC sounds. The Guard opens the back doors.

All eyes shift to the rear. Jindigar whispers to Krinata.

JINDIGAR

Does Rantan use the old protocol?

KRINATA

He's fanatic about it.

JINDIGAR

Then something is dreadfully wrong.

Jindigar folds his hands around a bulge in his lap. The piol's furry head pokes out of his robe. Jindigar strokes the animal, eyes on the empty section of audience.

JINDIGAR (CONT'D)

Where is the Dushaun delegation?

Krinata eyes the empty section with understanding, nods.

A pair of Honor Guards present a Cassrian, an insectoid species wearing only straps to support badges and honors.

KRINATA

Rantan'll be furious. I hope he doesn't blame you for the absence.

JINDIGAR

They'd have come if summoned. See how Holot and Lehiroh are nervous?