

TWO WORLDS

Series Bible

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CONFIDENTIAL

FORMAT & STRUCTURE

Episodes: 8 **Runtime:** 50-65 minutes each **Total Runtime:** ~8.3 hours (500 minutes) **Rating:** TV-MA (violence, moral intensity, no gratuitous content) **Shooting Format:** Digital, 2.39:1 anamorphic widescreen **Genre:** Hard science fiction / anti-colonial tragedy **Source Material:** *A Conquest of Two Worlds* by Jeremy Salsburg (novel, 2028)

Episode Breakdown

Ep	Title	Primary Location	Climax
1	CLASSIFICATION	Mars — Hellas Basin / Geneva	Mars arrival, lithotroph discovery, classification vote — Committee votes Category B; Dr. Osei dissents and is removed
2	CATEGORY B	Mars surface	Mars extraction campaign compressed across 3 years; lithotroph network 75% destroyed; departure to Europa
3	THE DEEP	Station Cousteau / Europa ocean	Europa arrival, Station Cousteau operational; Mark sees the Europeans through the observation blister; first chromatic exchange
4	CHROMATIC	Station Cousteau / Geneva	Europeans classified Category B; Lena chairs the committee and signs the document she knows is a lie; extraction begins
5	DEFECTION	Europa ocean	Mark defects to the Europeans; teaches them to fight; goes through the Throat alone
6	BROTHERS	Europa ocean	James hunts Mark; Lume killed by drone strike; James lets Mark go; Moyo arrives to take command
7	LAST MESSAGE	Europa / Earth	James fired; Mark's broadcast to Earth; military escalation

8	TWO WORLDS	Europa ocean / Earth	Operation Final Reach; Mark's death; European civilization destroyed; 847 survivors in a research preserve
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WORLD RULES

The One Fictional Leap

The VASIMR-X fusion torch engine is the single speculative technology in the series. Everything else — the spacecraft engineering, the submersible design, the drilling technology, the military hardware, the biology, the institutional frameworks — is real or plausible near-future extrapolation.

Parameter	Value
Base technology	Real VASIMR engine + compact fusion reactor (MIT SPARC-type)
Fictional advance	Superconducting magnetic nozzle maintaining plasma coherence at 10M+ K
Specific impulse	30,000 seconds (vs. ~5,000s for real VASIMR projections)
Thrust per engine	200 N continuous
Power requirement	40 MW(e) per engine
Propellant	Liquid argon (abundant, cheap, storable)
Mars transit	47 days (optimal conjunction)
Europa transit	~180 days (direct)

What the VASIMR-X is NOT: Not a warp drive. Not reactionless. Not FTL. It still carries propellant. It still obeys Newton. It just brute-forces the rocket equation with enormous power input from a compact fusion reactor.

Failure modes are real: Magnetic nozzle quench shuts down thrust for 4-6 hours. Propellant leak displaces oxygen in adjacent compartments. Reactor scram leaves the vessel on 72-hour battery backup. These are engineering constraints, not plot devices — though they may become both.

The Rule of One

One fictional leap. Everything downstream is calculated from real equations with the fictional Isp as input. If a writer proposes a technology or capability, the question is: "Does this require a second fictional leap?" If yes, it does not exist in this world.

TONE GUIDE

Core References

Reference	What We Take
Chernobyl (2019)	Institutional complicity. The system that produces atrocity through procedure, not malice. The banality of catastrophe. The whistleblower who is punished for being right.
Apocalypse Now (1979)	The journey upriver into moral darkness. A protagonist who crosses a line and cannot return. The aestheticization of violence that makes the audience complicit.
Annihilation (2018)	Alien biology that is genuinely alien — beautiful, terrifying, incomprehensible. The shimmer of the European ocean. The sense that human categories do not apply.
The Expanse (2015-2022)	Hard science fiction that respects physics. Lived-in spacecraft. The political economy of resource extraction. The Belter colonial parallel.

What This Show Is

- A tragedy. Earth wins. The aliens die. Mark dies with them. The audience knows this is coming.
- A procedural about genocide. The mechanisms are bureaucratic: classification committees, cost-benefit analyses, chain-of-command compliance. The horror is institutional, not personal.
- A first-contact story where contact fails. Not because communication is impossible, but because the system is designed to make communication irrelevant.
- An anti-colonial narrative that does not soften. The parallels to terrestrial colonialism are deliberate, structural, and unflinching.

What This Show Is Not

- A rescue fantasy. Nobody saves the aliens.
- An action series. Violence exists but is industrial and impersonal, not choreographed.
- A mystery. The audience understands what is happening before the characters do.
- A franchise launcher. This is a complete, self-contained tragedy. Eight episodes. One story. Done.

VISUAL LANGUAGE

Three Worlds, Three Grammars

Environment	Camera	Palette	Light	Sound
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Mars surface	Handheld, documentary feel. Dust on the lens.	Rust, ochre, iron-oxide red. Desaturated sky.	Harsh, flat, unforgiving. Low sun, long shadows.	Wind. Drill percussion. Distant machinery. Silence between.
Spacecraft / Station	Locked-off, symmetrical, Kubrickian.	Steel gray, LED white, amber warning lights.	Artificial, clinical, institutional.	Reactor hum. Air circulation. The mechanical breath of life support.
Europa ocean	Steadicam, fluid, three-dimensional movement.	Black water. Bioluminescent blue-green-gold. Hydrothermal orange at depth.	No natural light. All light is biological or human.	Sonar clicks. Pressure groans. The vast acoustic space of a 100 km ocean.

What We Show vs. What We Don't Show

We Show	We Don't Show
The lithotroph crystal network glowing with modulated electrical signals — alive, thinking, beautiful	A "brain" or central organism. The intelligence is distributed. There is nothing to point a camera at and say "that's the alien."
European chromatophore displays in full — complex, shifting, clearly meaningful, never translated with subtitles	European "speech" rendered as English. The audience must learn to read the light as Mark does: slowly, imperfectly, with humility.
The classification committee meetings in full — the arguments, the dissent, the vote, the paperwork	Mustache-twirling villainy. Every committee member believes they are making a reasonable decision. The horror is that they are.
The drilling operation destroying the lithotroph network — crystal shattering, signals stuttering, the network dying in real time	Gratuitous alien suffering rendered as spectacle. The destruction is industrial, not dramatic. It happens in the background of a workday.
Lume's death — sudden, arbitrary, impersonal. A drone detonation. No buildup, no slow motion, no music.	A dramatic death scene. Lume is alive, then Lume is not. That is how industrial killing works.
Sonder's grief — ash-gray chromatophores permanently incorporating Lume's blue-gold pattern	Alien tears, alien screaming, any anthropomorphized grief response. Sonder's grief is expressed in a medium humans cannot produce. It is visible but not fully comprehensible.
The observation blister scene — Mark seeing the Europeans for the first time through pressure-rated sapphire, the glass between them	A magical first-contact moment. The glass is literal. Mark is inside a pressure vessel looking out at people he cannot reach.
Mark's final detonation — structural charges, a decision made calmly, the chromatic history display still pulsing when the screen goes white	A heroic sacrifice. Mark does not save anyone. He prevents capture. The Europeans die with him, not because of him — they chose this.
The 847 survivors in a containment zone — cold, dark, not reproducing, fed minimally by KAIC personnel	A hopeful coda. The survivors are not "saved." They are specimens. The containment zone is a death camp with a research budget.

TIMELINE

Year	Event	Episode
2035	VASIMR-X fusion torch demonstrated	Pre-series
2038	Kepler-Aldrin Interplanetary Consortium (KAIC) formed	Pre-series
2039	Deep Space Resources Compact (DSRC) ratified by 31 nations	Pre-series
2041	Mars expedition launched; Mark, Lena, James ship out	Ep 1
2041-2042	Hellas Basin survey; lithotroph discovery; Category B classification	Ep 1
2042-2044	Mars extraction campaign; lithotroph network 75% destroyed; departure to Europa	Ep 2
2045-2046	Europa transit; Station Cousteau operational; first European contact	Ep 3
2046-2047	European classification (Category B); extraction begins	Ep 4
2047	Mark's defection; teaches Europeans to fight	Ep 5
2047-2048	James hunts Mark; Lume killed; Moyo arrives	Ep 6
2048	James fired; Mark's broadcast; military escalation	Ep 7
2049	Operation Final Reach; Mark's death; European civilization destroyed	Ep 8
2049+	Aftermath: 847 Europeans survive in research preserve	Ep 8 epilogue

TECHNOLOGY RULES

Spacecraft

ISV Prometheus (Mars vessel):

- 180 m long, rotating hab ring (4 RPM, 0.4g at rim), 12 crew
- 4x VASIMR-X engines, 2x compact D-T fusion reactors (100 MW thermal each)
- 4,000 m² deployable radiator panels (glow orange-red at 600°C operating temp)
- Rotation stops during engine burns — crew experience 0.01-0.02g linear acceleration
- Water jacket + polyethylene composite radiation shielding around hab ring

ISV Erikson (Europa vessel):

- Larger variant, modified for deep-space transit (180 days)
- Same engine/reactor configuration, expanded cargo and personnel capacity
- Carries submersible complement in external bays

Submersibles:

- 12 m, crew of 4, pressure-rated to 150 km depth (Europa's ocean maxes at ~100 km)
- MHD (magnetohydrodynamic) drives — no moving parts, near-silent
- 72-hour endurance at patrol speed
- Sensors: sonar array, thermal imaging, chromatic spectrum analyzers
- Weapons: directed-energy sonar projectors (stun), kinetic spear-type penetrators

Station Cousteau

Europa's primary KAIC facility, drilled into the ice shell 3 km below the surface.

- Five pressurized cylinders in hub-and-spoke around the Throat (2 m bore, ring heaters every 500 m)
- 8,000 m³ habitable volume, 200+ operational crew (300 max capacity)
- Nuclear fission reactor (50 MW thermal), closed-loop life support
- Observation blister: 1 m synthetic sapphire dome rated to 1,500 atm, protruding into the ocean
- Elevator transit: 10 min surface-to-station, 20 min station-to-ocean interface

Military Hardware (Europa Theater)

- Pressure suits (ocean): ceramic-composite, rated to 1,500 atm, 6-hour O₂, limited mobility
- Personal weapons: sonar projectors (stun/disorient), kinetic spear-guns (lethal at 20 m)
- Hunter-killer drones: 1.5 m, MHD propulsion, autonomous targeting via chromatic/thermal signature, single kinetic penetrator, 48-hour endurance
- Swarm drones: 0.3 m, groups of 50-200, acoustic disruption weapons for herding populations
- Acoustic barrier arrays: 160+ dB at 1 km, creates impassable "wall of sound"

ALIEN BIOLOGY RULES

Mars Lithotrophs

A distributed electrochemical life form — a network, not a collection of individuals.

Feature	Detail
Substrate	Silicon-carbide crystalline filaments, 0.5-2 mm diameter
Extent	Hundreds of kilometers through Martian regolith, 5-100 m depth
Communication	Modulated electrical signals through crystal lattice, 0.1-10 m/s
Intelligence	Distributed — $\sim 10^{14}$ operations/second across the network, comparable to mammalian brain
Age	10,000+ years
Growth rate	~ 1 cm per Martian year
Vulnerability	Percussion drilling shatters the lattice. EMP disrupts signaling. Severed networks die and cannot recover.
Defenses	Surface spines (puncture suits/treads), subsurface collapse, localized EM pulses, coordinated network-wide response

Visual treatment: The lithotrophs are invisible until Mark's instruments reveal them. On screen, we see: core samples with crystalline threads catching the light. Oscilloscope traces showing modulated signals. Thermal imaging of subsurface activity. Then, after the EMP weapons: the signals flatline. The crystal devitrifies. The screen goes dark. We never see a "creature." We see data proving something was alive, and then data proving it is not.

European Cephalopoids

Feature	Detail
Body	1-3 m, muscular torpedo mantle, 8 manipulator limbs, 2 sensory tentacles
Eyes	Large (8-12 cm), adapted to bioluminescent wavelengths (450-520 nm)
Chromatophores	Entire mantle surface — bioluminescent organs producing light in 400-700 nm range
Lifespan	80-120 Earth years
Biochemistry	Carbon-based, water-solvent, hemocyanin-analog (copper-based, blue blood), antifreeze glycoproteins
Population (pre-contact)	50-80 million
Settlements	~ 500 major, thousands minor, clustered around hydrothermal vents

Architecture	Silicate and chitin structures, organic forms, illuminated by cultivated bioluminescent organisms
Technology	Neolithic equivalent — stone/chitin tools, advanced aquaculture, heat-treated minerals. No metallurgy (no fire underwater).
Cultural age	~40,000 years

Visual treatment: The Europeans are the show's visual centerpiece. Their chromatophore displays should be rendered with the complexity and beauty of a living aurora — shifting, pulsing, clearly communicative but never reducible to subtitles. Group chromatic displays (hundreds or thousands in coordinated patterns) are the equivalent of cathedral art: cultural performance that makes the audience understand, viscerally, that this is a civilization.

Communication System

Channel 1 — Chromatic (emotional/social):

- Bioluminescent patterns across the mantle surface
- Color, intensity, frequency, spatial pattern, temporal sequence all carry information
- Analogous to facial expression + body language + tone of voice
- Visible at 100+ meters in the dark ocean

Channel 2 — Sonar (precise/technical):

- Click trains from a specialized mantle organ
- Frequency, timing, amplitude modulation carry information
- True language: syntax, grammar, vocabulary, abstraction, tense, conditionals
- Effective range: 1-50 km

Mark's pidgin: He can produce chromatic patterns via a modified light projector but cannot produce sonar clicks. His communication is limited to the chromatic channel — emotional and conceptual but never technically precise. The equivalent of communicating entirely through facial expressions and gestures. This constraint is non-negotiable: Mark never "speaks European." He gestures in light.

THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The DSRC classification framework is the central mechanism of the story's injustice.

The Three Categories

Category	Definition	Legal Status	Extraction
A — Sentient	Body hosts intelligent life	First-contact protocols; exploitation prohibited within 500 km of habitation	Prohibited

B — Non-sentient life	Body hosts life not meeting sentience threshold	Fauna/flora analogs; environmental monitoring required	Permitted
C — Abiotic	No life detected	Unrestricted	Unrestricted

Why It Fails

The entity doing the exploiting also controls the classification. Classification committees are appointed by KAIC. The DSRC Scientific Advisory Board has never overturned a classification — it lacks enforcement authority, and its members serve at KAIC's pleasure. Dr. Osei's dissent on Mars was legally irrelevant. Mark's evidence of Europan sentience was suppressed under security protocols the DSRC explicitly authorizes.

This is not a dystopian invention. It mirrors: the self-certification systems of extractive industries, the regulatory capture of environmental agencies, the legal doctrine of discovery that enabled European colonial claims over inhabited territories.

The Two Lies

Mars — Category B (non-sentient geological formation): The committee's rationale: no individual organisms, communication could be electrochemical autocatalysis, defensive responses could be tropisms, no tool use or architecture. Mark's suppressed counter-evidence: symbolic representation, novel adaptive responses, communication complexity exceeding any non-cognitive system.

Europa — Category B (pre-sentient colonial superorganism): They have architecture, agriculture, social hierarchy, oral history, tool use, and a language with grammar. They are classified as a colonial superorganism — like coral, like ants — because the classification system has no mechanism for admitting it was wrong about Mars without invalidating every extraction contract already signed.

LOCATION GUIDE

Mars Surface — Hellas Basin

The deepest impact basin on Mars. 7 km below mean surface elevation. Atmospheric pressure at the basin floor is the highest on Mars — still only ~1% of Earth's, but enough for occasional dust-hazed skies.

Visual character: Rust and iron. Flat basalt plains scored by drill sites. Dust storms that reduce visibility to meters. The equipment is industrial — drills, rovers, prefab habitats connected by pressurized tunnels. Nothing is beautiful. Everything is functional. Reference: Antarctic research stations, offshore oil platforms, strip mines.

The lithotroph reveal: When Mark's instruments detect the crystal network, we see it rendered as data overlays on the Martian landscape — a hidden nervous system mapped in false color, pulsing beneath the drill sites. The audience sees what the classification committee refused to see.

Station Cousteau — Europa Ice Shell

A submarine research station embedded in alien ice, 3 km below the surface, connected to the ocean by a bore shaft that must be continuously heated or it refreezes in 48 hours.

Visual character: Claustrophobic, institutional, submarine. Narrow corridors, low ceilings, condensation on walls. LED lighting that never changes. The observation blister is the only window — a 1 m sapphire dome looking out into absolute darkness, until the Europeans arrive and the darkness fills with light. Reference: submarine interiors (Das Boot, The Abyss), Antarctic under-ice stations, ISS modules.

Europa's Ocean

An ocean 2-3x the volume of Earth's, in perpetual darkness, 60-100 km deep, heated from below by hydrothermal vents driven by Jupiter's tidal forces.

Visual character: This is the show's visual signature. Black water punctuated by bioluminescence — blue-green-gold European chromatophore displays, orange hydrothermal glow, the ghostly light of cultivated organisms illuminating alien architecture. The settlements are cities of living light in an ocean of darkness. The submersibles move through this space like intruders, their artificial lights harsh and flat against the organic luminescence. Reference: deep-ocean documentary footage (Blue Planet II), the shimmer sequences in Annihilation, the bioluminescent forests in Avatar (but grounded, not fantastical).

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

Central Question

What happens when the systems we built to govern resource extraction encounter life they were designed not to recognize?

Five Threads

1. Complicity and Participation — Mark is not an outsider who discovers injustice. He is a participant who helped build the machine before he understood what it does. His defection is not innocence reclaimed — it is judgment rendered from inside.

2. The Banality of Genocide — Nobody in this story is a monster. Lena is brilliant and terrified. James is decent and obedient. Brandt is reasonable and compromised. Moyo is professional and thorough. The genocide is produced by a system functioning exactly as designed.

3. Classification as Violence — The act of defining what counts as "sentient" is the act that authorizes killing. The classification committee is the most important scene in the series — not the military operations, not the detonation. The committee. The vote. The paperwork.

4. Communication and Its Limits — Mark can communicate with the Europeans but cannot save them. Communication is necessary but not sufficient. The tragedy is not that they couldn't talk — it's that talking didn't matter, because the system had already decided.

5. The Cost of Witness — Mark's final broadcast ensures the evidence survives. The Dowell Protocols are adopted. Too late. The question the show leaves with the audience: What are you classifying? What system are you inside? What evidence are you suppressing because reclassification would be expensive?

SOUND DESIGN

Core Principles

- 1. Space is silent.** No ship sounds in exterior shots.
- 2. Mars is wind and machinery.** Thin atmosphere means sound is muffled, distant, wrong. Drill percussion carries through the regolith. The lithotroph signals are translated to audio for the audience — a low, rhythmic pulse that stops when the EMP fires.
- 3. Station Cousteau has a heartbeat.** Reactor hum, air handlers, the creak of ice pressing inward. The station sounds alive because it must be — if the systems stop, everyone dies.
- 4. Europa's ocean is vast and acoustic.** Sonar clicks at distance. Pressure groans from the ice shelf above. The deep, bass vibration of hydrothermal vents. European chromatophore displays are silent — the audience learns that the most important communication in the show makes no sound at all.
- 5. Music is sparse and textural.** No heroic themes. No sentimental strings. Reference: Hildur Gudnadottir's Chernobyl score — ambient, organic, dread-soaked. The score should feel like pressure.

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