

THE EUROPA SOCIETY

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The scene opens with a large image of the planet Jupiter, slowly turning.

RAD (O.S.)

Well, Alicia, what do you think?

ALICIA (O.S.)

Hmmm ... I dont know. What are those specks? Are those Jupiter's moons? Which one is Europa?

RAD (O.S.)

Europa's still behind the planet.

ALICIA (O.S.)

Are you sure, Rad? What about that bright one -- on the left?

RAD (O.S.)

That's Callisto.

ALICIA (O.S.)

Callisto? Callisto? This is the Europa Society, not the Callisto Club! I'm not spending this meeting looking at Callisto.

Jupiter turns faster.

RAD (O.S.)

There. There's Europa. Happy?

ALICIA (O.S.)

But I can still see Callisto. Do something!

RAD (O.S.)

Like what? It's 400 million miles away!

Slowly it is revealed that the planet and moons are a projection on a white screen.

RAD JOHNSON, 22, stands to the left of the screen, fussing with some gizmo and brushing dust off the side. ALICIA YOUNGBLOOD, 35, stands on the other side holding a cardboard box.

Alicia stands stiff with outrage. Then turning her back on Rad, who ignores her, she stalks past a banner blaring "THE EUROPA SOCIETY" and a large, covered poster on a tripod. A green, paper-mache robot stands in a corner. A large, extravagant seal lettered with "Winslow Village Council" hangs on the wall.

Alicia sets the box on a large, wooden table with another seal carved into the center and six gilt chairs on each side. The table is strewn with tote bags, buttons, pamphlets, mugs, rolled posters, etc.

Still nettled, Alicia dumps envelopes and folded pamphlets out of the box. Then she spies her husband, EDWARD YOUNGBLOOD, 37, who is glumly folding pamphlets. A huge three-ring binder stuffed with pages sits beside him. She scurries over to him. Alicia picks up a piece of paper.

ALICIA

Edward dear, remember, the logo goes in front. Like this.

She folds the sheet into three sections and shows it to him. Edward nods resignedly and Alicia pats his shoulder encouragingly. Then she sits beside LYDIA JOHNSON, 20, who is slapping big orange stickers on tote bags. Alicia looks around furtively.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Lydia ... Lydia!

Lydia looks up from her tote bags. Alicia motions her closer.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

I need that marketing survey. Where is it?

Lydia hands her a folder.

LYDIA

It took forever, Alicia, I had to go all over town --

ALICIA

Where did you go?

LYDIA

The mall, Wal-Mart, Barney's Bar ...

ALICIA

Barney's Bar?

(lowers voice)

We need sophisticated, enlightened opinions -- people who will understand the enormity of our mission. Did you try the Holiday Inn?

LYDIA

Couldn't get in. Some Reindeer Lodge just took over the place. They put out a big sign: "Stags Only -- No Does Allowed."

ALICIA

Oh, never mind.

Alicia flips through the folder.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

How many took the survey?

LYDIA

Fifteen -- I found Bob Willore at Barney's Bar, but he seemed a little drunk. Every time I said the word moon, he tried to take his pants off.

ALICIA

Disgraceful. I expect better behavior from a councilman.

BARNEY CRANSTON, 45, enters. He is big, jovial and obviously prosperous. Active in the local Chamber of Commerce.

BARNEY

Hello fellow space colonists! Whoa, look at that Jupiter! Great job, Rad!

Edward immediately abandons his pamphlets and runs over to Barney, tucking the thick binder under his arm.

EDWARD

Barney! How's business?

BARNEY

Great, just great. I'm expanding my bar, might add a pool table.

EDWARD

(lowers voice)

Bring any beer?

BARNEY

Of course, Ed. Anything for my favorite author here.

He cracks open two bottles and the men drink, turning their backs to the rest of the group, especially Alicia.

BARNEY (CONT'D)

So what's gonna happen to the evil warlord -- the one launching a nuclear attack from Callisto?

EDWARD

You'll find out tonight. I just finished Chapter 47.

BARNEY

Amazing, just amazing. I could never write so much. When d'ya think it'll be done?

Edward sips his beer and takes on persona of world-weary author. A long-suffering, jaded sigh.

EDWARD

The world is harsh to literary artists, my friend. I can't even write at the insurance office anymore. My boss says that until life on Europa can file personal injury claims, it has no place in his office.

Alicia is still bugging Lydia, who has returned to her tote bags.

ALICIA

I know this is difficult, dear. But are you sure these people grasp our mission? You must explain it very carefully.

LYDIA

But the mission --

ALICIA

(talks right over her)

Our society is a private venture dedicated to establishing a permanent, self-supporting community on Jupiter's moon Europa. We're not some crackpot group like the Callisto Club, make sure they understand that.

LYDIA

(exasperated)

Well, I wish you'd tell me how to explain our mission so we DON'T sound like some sort of crackpot group. Half the respondents laughed in my face. Most didn't realize that Jupiter had moons. Some didn't know Jupiter was a planet. Heck, one guy didn't know EARTH was a planet.

Alicia slaps down the folder.

ALICIA

Obviously an informal survey is insufficient. We can't interview random yokels on the street and expect illuminating insight.

LYDIA

What do you suggest?

ALICIA

Paid focus groups. For say ... twelve dollars an hour. You can establish a professional setting. Present our mission properly. Generate thoughtful discussion. Yes.

LYDIA

Twelve bucks an hour? Sean will never approve the expense.

Barney slings an arm around Edward's shoulders.

BARNEY

Aw, don't get discouraged, buddy. Why don't you read me some of your latest stuff? Make you feel better..

EDWARD

O.K.

He opens binder and strikes a pose.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

The Europa Chronicles. Volume One. Chapter 47: "Snowflakes of Desire".

Edward takes a dramatic breath.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Prince Polar stood alone, a shimmering figure against Europa's icy, desolate landscape. His will was frozen and only death could break it ..."

Barney listens attentively, slugging back his beer.

Back to Alicia and Lydia.

ALICIA

These are desperate times, Lydia. Do you want to keep losing members to the Callisto Club? If Sean won't approve the focus group, I'm sure Dr. Borden will.

LYDIA

Dr. Borden? He hasn't been to a meeting in months.

(MORE)

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(beat)

That's another thing ... how much longer can we go without a chairman? People are starting to talk.

ALICIA

(shocked)

Lydia! Dr. Borden is a great man! He was a NASA guidance technician on the first moon landing! He was the guy who said "Go" to the guy who said "Go" to the flight director! If he's temporarily preoccupied, it is not our place to question --

She suddenly leaps up. Rad has sneaked over to the covered board on the podium and is lifting one side of the cloth.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

RAD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GET AWAY FROM THERE!

RAD

What is this, Alicia?

ALICIA

It's our new logo -- don't touch that!

RAD

C'mon, just a peek!

They struggle, and the cover falls off the podium, revealing a poster of a girl on a flying rocket.

ALICIA

Aaagh! You've ruined everything! I was going to present this properly -- a spotlight, a soundtrack ...

She hastily grabs a small boom box and punches a button. A fanfare blares. She turns it down.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

This logo will be the linchpin of a new marketing campaign. We're putting it on coffee mugs, tote bags, t-shirts ...

RAD

I'm not wearing that logo. Who's the girl? Why is she on a carrot?

ALICIA

That is a rocket. A rocket reflecting the orange glow of the Jovian clouds.

RAD

But its got green leaves.

ALICIA

The green swath behind the ROCKET symbolizes the path from earth. And the girl represents the moon Europa.

RAD

Nobody will get that. It looks like a poster for good nutrition.

SEAN MCNEALY, 12, enters in a Boy Scouts uniform. He carries a backpack. Unnoticed, he sits at the far end of the table. Opens his backpack and takes out a small calculator, file folders and arranges them neatly on the table. Takes out pens and pencils and arranges them in a special holder. Takes out a small strongbox.

Nobody notices him but Rad, who abandons the logo and runs over.

RAD (CONT'D)

Sean! Thank God you're here! I gotta fly to Antarctica!

SEAN

(disapprovingly)
Now, Rhadamanthus --

RAD

No, really, this is the real thing! Here's a list of scientific equipment, cold-weather gear --

He fishes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

RAD (CONT'D)

The biggest item is the parka -- a polyfil-insulated jacket with reflective zippers and a fuzzy hood. My cousin can get me a deal on the booties for the sled dogs.

Sean looks over the list.

SEAN

Electric socks?

RAD

It's 30 degrees below zero there.

SEAN

I just dont see --

RAD

There's no time to waste! They've drilled 11,000 feet into the ice over Lake Vostok!

SEAN

And?

RAD

They've found viable microorganisms in the ice core -- exactly the type that could thrive on Europa!

SEAN

I'm sorry, but --

RAD

OK, forget Antarctica. I suppose that is a little pricey. Just get me to the Upper Peninsula. Plenty of ice up there. I'll rent a truck in Escanaba, drill through Lake Superior --

Edward broadly gestures as he reads to Barney.

EDWARD

(still reading)

... "My loyal subjects!" Prince Polar cried. "Fear not the evil Callistean hordes. For the Rhadamanthus Ocean has welcomed us into her warm embrace and will defend us against our malevolent foes ..."

The brisk tap of heels is heard offscreen. MIRANDA enters and surveys the chaos. It looks nothing like a conventional meeting. Alicia waves her flashlight as she argues with Lydia. Barney cracks open his third beer and Edward paces the room, waving his imaginary sword and declaiming Polar's speech. Rad is on his hands and knees, begging Sean for a few hundred so he can take a bus to Traverse City and hitchhike to the lake.

MIRANDA crosses her arms and eyes them all with disapproval. She is in her fifties, heavyset, with glasses on a chain. She barks out her statements with authority.

MIRANDA

What on EARTH is going on here?

Everybody stops, bewildered.

BARNEY

Hey, Miranda! Have a beer!

MIRANDA

Alcoholic beverages are forbidden on government property, Mr. Cranston.

Miranda swings her gimlet eye to the poster.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

What is that?

ALICIA

Our new logo -- play the music, Lydia --

MIRANDA

Why is that girl on a carrot?

RAD

Tell her about the Jovian glow, Alicia.

MIRANDA

Never mind. I'm sure you all have weighty business to conduct ...

She eyes the beers again.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

... so I'll be brief. I regret to say that after tonight, the Winslow Village Hall can no longer accommodate your group. This room is required on Mondays for the council's pest control committee.

BARNEY

No problem. We'll just pick another night.

MIRANDA

There is no other night. We'd prefer that you didn't meet here at all.

BARNEY

(wounded)

Miranda!

MIRANDA

I have concluded -- and the Council agrees with me of course -- that robots and space movies ...

She glances at Barney.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

... and illegal refreshments do not project the right image for the great
(MORE)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
 metropolis of Winslow. I wish you
 all the best of luck.
 (eyes poster again)
 You'll obviously need it.

She exits. The group stares at each other in shock, appalled
 by the turn of events.

BARNEY
 Hey, this is serious, folks. The
 Village Hall here gave us real
 credibility.

ALICIA
 Obviously fresh, inventive marketing
 will be necessary to counteract this
 development.

LYDIA
 Oh no. I am not bribing the good
 citizens of Winslow to rave about
 Europa.

RAD
 And I'm not wearing that sissy logo.

ALICIA
 Oh, I don't expect any help from
 you. You're too busy training sled
 dogs in the village park, destroying
 whatever credibility we do have.
 You're a running joke in this town,
 Rad Johnson!

EDWARD
 (alarmed)
 Alicia! Stop it!

ALICIA
 Why? Can't he handle the truth? Maybe
 he's not the only one. What should I
 say about a man who neglects his
 job, neglects his wife and daughter,
 to write eleven hundred pages of
 intergalactic drivel?

EDWARD
 I thought people liked my book.

LYDIA
 I couldn't get past page 500. Prince
 Polar needs to stop writing poetry.

Edward looks wounded.

BARNEY

(with false heartiness)

Now, now, you're just a little upset,
Alicia, that's all. It's a fine book,
very exciting --

ALICIA

Exciting? Prince Polar spends the
first five chapters lying in bed,
thinking about Europa.

EDWARD

It's supposed to be that way ...
it's a trilogy. I mean, everything
can't happen in chapter one.

Alicia covers her face in her hands. Everyone freezes,
shocked.

BARNEY

So who's up for another beer? Rad?

Rad is packing up his equipment.

RAD

Forget it, Barney. I'm outta here.
All I get around here is criticism,
snide remarks, lectures about
excessive spending. I'll go where
I'm appreciated. Europa isn't the
only moon capable of --

He stops and clears throat.

LYDIA

Capable of what, Rad?

Rad looks down for an instant, then up defiantly.

RAD

Capable of sustaining life.

Shocked reactions all around.

RAD (CONT'D)

New research indicates that Callisto
might have a liquid ocean just like
Europa's.

BARNEY

What? You spoke to those bums at the
Callisto Club? I won't even serve'em
in my bar!!

RAD

Damn straight I spoke to them. Just
last night!

Shocked responses. Even Edward and Alicia look over at Rad.

RAD (CONT'D)

The Callisto Club loved my report on cryovolcanism. They're willing to fly me to Boise to analyze clay deposits. Boise, Idaho! Sean here can't send me to Escanaba!

SEAN

With our budget, we couldn't send you to Grand Rapids.

RAD

So you say. We've put a lot of trust in you, kid. You with the colored pencils and the fancy slide rule.

Sean calmly pulls out a thick binder.

SEAN

The society's financial records have always been available for review.

RAD

Like anyone can make sense out of this.

Rad flips through the binder.

RAD (CONT'D)

What's with the algebraic equations? Do we really need to know the square root of April's expense total? How much money do we have anyway?

SEAN

\$12.41.

RAD

What?

SEAN

It was \$23.78, but the cookies for next weeks open house cost more than expected.

LYDIA

Well, that does it. What kind of scientific society is this? All we have is a paper-mache robot, a poster, a box of tote bags and \$12 in the general fund!

Edward has been rocking his binder in his arms like a baby.

EDWARD

I am disturbed. Perhaps the sun has set on the bleak European landscape.

BARNEY

(sighs)

Maybe you're right, bud.

(standing)

Vice-Chairman Bernard Cranston formally moves to disband the Europa Society, effective --

A knock on the door. Everyone freezes. Barney looks around at everyone, then opens it. LOU LACKDORF stands in the doorway, a little balding guy with thick, heavy glasses. He holds a knit hat in his hands and wears a fanny pack.

LACKDORF

Hi ... I'm Lou Lackdorf. Is this the Europa Society Open House?

He blinks around the room.

LACKDORF (CONT'D)

I was told there'd be refreshments.

LYDIA

The open house is next week. Actually, it's --

LACKDORF

Where do I sign up? Do I have to pay dues? My wife says I can't give more than thirty a month.

Sean stands.

SEAN

Thank you, sir. Thirty dollars a month will be perfectly sufficient.

BARNEY

Sean, what ...

SEAN

Do you all propose to abandon our mission? Just give up and turn this man away?

Sean looks around.

SEAN (CONT'D)

What would we all do without the Europa Society?

LACKDORF

I don't understand any of this. Look,
if you don't want my money, there's
this other bunch --

RAD

Don't even think about it, Lackdorf.
Europa is the Solar System's premier,
life-sustaining extraterrestrial
body!

Alicia rummages through her papers and hands Rad a folder.

ALICIA

Here, Rad, maybe you should show him
your scientific objectives.

Rad takes the folder.

RAD

Ah, yes.
(to Lackdorf)
Now, this is our mission prospectus.
Study it thoroughly before our next
meeting.

SEAN

Just a minute, Rad. Mr. Lackdorf,
we'd be happy to accept your payment.
This way, sir.

He leads Lackdorf to his chair, takes bills, puts them in
strongbox and begins writing out a receipt. This galvanizes
the rest into action and they quickly gather around the new
member.

BARNEY

This merits beers all around!

Rad waves Alicia over.

RAD

This is Alicia Youngblood, our
society's marketing director.

LACKDORF

(dazed by all the
attention)
Uh, hi.

ALICIA

Welcome to the society, sir. You'll
need a bag and a mug, and a pamphlet,
oh, and take some stickers and here's
a poster ...

She puts a space helmet on his head and a tote bag on his arm.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

And this is my husband, Edward, who's writing the definitive epic of Europas colonization. Honey, read a little

...

Edward opens the binder.

EDWARD

I'll start at the beginning. Chapter One: "Dreams in the Darkness"

(reading)

"Prince Polar lay in his ermine-lined bed, desolate at leaving his home world, yet eager to meet his mighty destiny ..."

His voice fades away to black.

THE END