

TWO WORLDS

8-Episode Guide

Jeremy Salsburg

ConquestTwoWorlds.ThresholdFiction.com | info@ThresholdFiction.com

CONFIDENTIAL

EPISODE 1 — "CLASSIFICATION"

Runtime: ~58 min | Director block: Episodes 1-2

Logline

Three friends arrive on Mars for humanity's first major extraction operation — and a geologist pulls a core sample that changes everything.

Synopsis

2041. Mark Dowell, Lena Vasik, and James Okoro are aboard the KAIC vessel *Prometheus*, bound for Mars on a 47-day transit powered by the VASIMR-X fusion torch — the series' one speculative leap. Mark is the geological survey lead for Hellas Basin. Lena is resource impact assessment. James commands the security platoon. They are inseparable friends from Colorado School of Mines, shipping out together into the largest industrial operation in human history. On Mars, Mark deploys ground-penetrating radar and finds subsurface anomalies — crystalline networks that don't match any known mineral growth pattern. He drills a core sample from forty meters down. Silicon-carbide filaments, geometrically precise, pulse with electrical activity when exposed to light. Not rock. Biology. He reports to KAIC Chief Science Officer Dr. Elias Brandt, who listens carefully and tells Mark to keep the word "communication" out of the initial report. Mark stares at the core sample. The filaments pulse.

Key Scenes

- **Cold open:** The three friends on a Denver rooftop, toasting the future. Mark looks at the stars and sees wonder. Lena sees a balance sheet. James sees a mission.
- **Transit:** The *Prometheus* in detail — rotating hab ring, the torch's blue-white exhaust, 47 days of anticipation.
- **First drill:** Mark's hands shake as the core sample reveals crystal filaments. Three analyses. The same result.
- **Brandt's office:** "Let's keep the word 'communication' out of the initial report." The first institutional compromise, delivered gently.
- **The galley:** Three friends eating together. Lena talks about Mars the way mining engineers talk about yield. Mark notices.
- **End hook:** Mark alone at the drill site, hand on regolith. Beneath his feet, the crystal network pulses — a rhythm that sounds like nothing and sounds like everything.

Tone/Style

Discovery thriller with institutional dread building underneath. Naturalistic, documentary-style — Mars as mine site, not frontier. The wonder of the discovery played through Mark's trembling hands, not through swelling score.

EPISODE 2 — "CATEGORY B"

Runtime: ~62 min | **Director block:** Episodes 1-2

Logline

The classification committee votes. The lithotrophs are declared non-sentient. Three years of extraction follow — told in a single devastating episode.

Synopsis

Mark presents his findings to the classification committee: crystal networks spanning kilometers, modulated electrical signals, complexity consistent with neural networks. Xenobiologist Dr. Kira Osei agrees — this is complex life, possibly sentient. The legal advisor states the stakes: sentient classification puts Hellas Basin off-limits. Lena watches Brandt steer the committee toward "geological formation with biological characteristics." The vote is 4-1. Osei dissents. The lithotrophs are classified Category B — non-sentient. Extraction proceeds. What follows is the Mars campaign compressed into the back half of the episode: drilling operations sever crystal filaments that took centuries to grow. The lithotrophs raise crystalline barriers. KAIC responds with shaped charges, then targeted electromagnetic pulses. Over three years, 75% of the networks are destroyed. Dr. Osei submits her dissenting paper to *Nature Astrobiology* and is recalled to Earth within 48 hours, data seized. Mark is demoted to "environmental monitoring" and watches the destruction he cannot stop. Lena is promoted. James follows orders. The surviving lithotrophs are confined to Protected Geological Zones — reservations. The three friends meet on a transport platform, heading in different directions. The conversation is careful, polite, and something is broken.

Key Scenes

- **Classification committee:** Four hours of debate distilled to the vote. Osei's dissent. Lena watching the room calculate.
- **Mark and Lena in the lab:** "Do you think they're sentient?" / "I think the classification process worked correctly." / "That's not what I asked."
- **EMP campaign montage:** Crystal networks going dark in expanding circles. Signal maps dimming. Industrial, methodical, devastating.
- **Dr. Osei's departure:** Her shuttle lifting off. Mark watching. Understanding the rules.
- **Protected Geological Zone:** Mark kneeling at the edge, hand on regolith. The pulse is there. Faint. Slowing.
- **End hook:** Mark watches Mars shrink from the shuttle window. Below the red dust, the fragments of a civilization ten thousand years old are going dark, one by one.

Tone/Style

The tempo shifts from procedural to elegiac. The Mars campaign is told with the compression of a documentary epilogue — years in minutes, specificity in montage. The audience should feel the institutional machinery working exactly as designed.

EPISODE 3 — "THE DEEP"

Runtime: ~60 min | Director block: Episodes 3-4

Logline

Mark descends beneath Europa's ice and finds a second civilization — one that watches him back.

Synopsis

2047. Europa. Mark arrives at Subsurface Station Cousteau, drilled into the ice crust three kilometers down. Below the station: fifteen more kilometers of ice. Below that: the ocean. Mark rides the elevator cage down the Throat — a two-meter bore lined with heated casing — for twenty minutes. At the ice-ocean interface, an observation blister protrudes into the subsurface ocean. He looks out. The ocean glows. Bioluminescence everywhere — organized, flowing, vast shapes in coordinated displays spanning hundreds of meters. A cephalopoid approaches: two meters, eight manipulator limbs, a mantle shifting in rapid chromatic pulses. It holds position and watches Mark with unmistakable attention. Over weeks, Mark catalogs behaviors: individual recognition, social hierarchy, tool use, architecture. He names the recurring elder "Sonder" — distinctive blue-gold chromatic pattern, scarred manipulator limb. He develops a communication protocol through the blister glass: light sequences, then mathematical patterns, then primes, Fibonacci, geometric progressions. The Europeans solve them faster than Mark can generate them. Meanwhile, James arrives with 500 soldiers and begins establishing extraction corridors. The Europeans retreat from the mining sites, settlements going dark. Then twelve elders approach the blister and project a slow, deep-red pattern interspersed with white flashes. It takes Mark two days to decode. It is a question: will the destruction stop?

Key Scenes

- **The Throat descent:** Twenty minutes in a cage, pressure increasing, temperature dropping. Claustrophobia giving way to awe.
- **First contact:** The cephalopoid at the glass. Ten seconds. Twenty. A chromatic pattern that repeats, varies, repeats with modification. Then it glides away.
- **Mathematical exchange:** Mark projects primes. The Europeans complete the sequences, then introduce their own. The audience watches communication born.
- **Mining begins:** Heated pods lowered through the Throat. Acoustic noise flooding the ocean. European settlements going dark in concentric circles.
- **The delegation:** Twelve elders, slow red pulses. The question Mark cannot answer.
- **End hook:** Mark projects a pattern back. He tries to say: *I'm sorry. I can't stop it.* The twelve hold position for a long time. Then they turn and descend into the dark.

Tone/Style

Awe and dread in equal measure. Station Cousteau is *Alien*-industrial; the ocean is *Planet Earth*-beautiful. The episode's emotional core is the observation blister — glass between two worlds, and Mark on the wrong side of it.

EPISODE 4 — "CHROMATIC"

Runtime: ~62 min | Director block: Episodes 3-4

Logline

Lena writes the classification that authorizes genocide. Mark learns what the Europeans already know: their future is the color of dying light.

Synopsis

On Earth, Lena reads Mark's Europa report — unambiguous documentation of sentient life — and then reads the mineral survey: dissolved platinum-group metals at concentrations that would end terrestrial scarcity overnight. She chairs the classification committee. The xenobiologist argues for sentient classification. Lena finds the rationalizations: stimulus-response, instinctive architecture, pattern-matching rather than comprehension. She knows she is lying. She writes the classification: "Complex pre-sentient colonial superorganism." She signs it. Her hand is steady. On Europa, extraction accelerates. Mark conducts unauthorized communication sessions with Sonder through a maintenance airlock. The pidgin deepens beyond mathematics into concepts: *home*, *time-before*, *the-noise-that-breaks*, *the-dark-that-comes*. The Europeans have a concept of history — performed as vast chromatic narratives describing an ocean before the machines. Sonder shows Mark the future as the Europeans see it: bioluminescence dimming, going out. A young European named Lume — bold, vibrant blue-gold — is the first to approach Mark's equipment. A security contractor kills a disoriented European in Mining Corridor 7. James investigates: the kill was unnecessary. His report is buried. Five hundred Europeans surround the corridor, pulsing deep red. The color of grief. James disperses them with acoustic deterrents.

Key Scenes

- **Lena's classification:** The committee watches Mark's recordings. Mathematical exchanges. Architectural structures. The European pressing against the glass for four minutes. Lena signs the document anyway.
- **The pidgin deepens:** Sonder shows Mark chromatic history — a forty-thousand-year civilization performed in light. The most alien and most human scene in the series.
- **Lume's introduction:** Young, curious, vibrant. She approaches Mark's hand-light and mirrors its patterns. The audience falls in love with someone who will die.
- **Corridor 7 killing:** James reviews the helmet-cam. An unarmed European, 1.2 meters. Lost. Dead.
- **The mourning:** Five hundred Europeans pulsing grief-red at the exclusion boundary. James watches and does not sleep.
- **End hook:** Mark accesses the station equipment manifest. Mining charges. Detonators. Navigation beacons. He begins making a list.

Tone/Style

Dual-track episode: Lena's institutional betrayal on Earth, intercut with Mark's deepening connection on Europa. The European communication scenes should be visually extraordinary — this is the episode that teaches the audience to read chromatophore language.

EPISODE 5 — "DEFECTION"

Runtime: ~60 min | **Director block:** Episodes 5-6

Logline

Mark goes into the ocean. James files a lie. The Europeans learn to fight.

Synopsis

The Europeans stop retreating. Coordinated strikes on extraction equipment across every mining site simultaneously — machines targeted, not personnel. James deploys his brigade. Acoustic deterrents, light barriers. No lethal force. But the Europeans are communicating across hundreds of kilometers, coordinating strategy through their chromatic network. Station Commander Hayes authorizes lethal force. James's soldiers fire into a group blocking Mining Corridor 12. Eighteen killed. Mark tells James: "They're going to kill them all." Then Mark defects. Three months of preparation: stockpiled equipment, memorized patrol schedules. He descends through a maintenance airlock. Sonder is waiting. A chromatic exchange — recognition, surprise, gratitude. Sonder leads Mark deeper, into unmapped reaches. Hours of descent. They arrive at a vast settlement on a hydrothermal vent complex. Thousands of Europeans. A city. Mark begins teaching: how human equipment works, where the weak points are, how to disable, disrupt, destroy. James searches the station, the corridors, the surrounding ocean. He knows. He reports Mark as "missing, presumed environmental casualty." He doesn't report the missing equipment. Three weeks later, human mining charges detonate in Mining Corridor 3 during a shift change. Seven drilling rigs destroyed. No human casualties. James reads the after-action report and closes his eyes.

Key Scenes

- **The uprising begins:** Simultaneous strikes across every mining site. Coordinated, deliberate, targeting machines. The Europeans distinguished between equipment and personnel — a moral distinction their classification denies them.
- **Corridor 12:** James's soldiers fire. Eighteen dead. The rest scatter, then regroup, then come back.
- **The defection:** Mark descends through the maintenance airlock. The ocean swallows him. No music. Just the sound of breathing and pressure.
- **The city:** Mark's first view of a full European settlement. Silicate and chitin, illuminated from within. Architecture older than human civilization.
- **James's lie:** "Missing, presumed environmental casualty." The gap between what he knows and what he reports.

- **End hook:** Mining Corridor 3 detonates. Precise, devastating, clearly directed by someone who knows the layout. James reads the report. He closes his eyes.

Tone/Style

The episode's center of gravity is the defection — played as a quiet, deliberate, rational act. Not a breakdown. Not a crisis of conscience. A decision. The underwater descent should feel like a one-way door closing.

EPISODE 6 — "BROTHERS"

Runtime: ~65 min | **Director block:** Episodes 5-6

Logline

James hunts Mark through the deep ocean. He finds his friend. He lets him go. A young European dies, and Sonder carries the grief in color.

Synopsis

KAIC sends 2,000 reinforcements and autonomous hunter-killer drones. General Adisa Moyo replaces Hayes — career military, colonial-suppression experience, methodical and professional. He implements Operation Deep Reach: sector-by-sector clearance, containment zones, lethal force. James is promoted to Brigadier and commands the southern sector. His forces push through the ocean in armored submersibles. The Europeans exploit three-dimensional space and Mark's training — ambushes, communication disruption, targeted disabling. James loses 23 soldiers in the first week. He adapts. He is a good tactician. He corners a settlement of 5,000 and relocates them to containment zones — barren ocean, no vents, no food. They die within weeks. James knows this. Lume is killed by a hunter-killer drone inside a settlement she was building. Sonder cradles the body, chromatophores flickering erratically. Mark finds them. Sonder incorporates Lume's blue-gold signature permanently, shot through with ash-gray. Lena calls James from Earth with orders: find Mark, bring him in, alive if possible. James assembles a special-ops team and tracks Mark to the southern pole. Two submersibles meet in the thermal current near a hydrothermal chimney. Over short-range radio: "Come back. They'll give you a trial." / "Fair like the classification committee?" James powers down his weapons. "Go. Deep as you can." Mark goes. James ascends alone.

Key Scenes

- **Moyo's arrival:** "We did this on Mars. The fauna always breaks." James: "These aren't the lithotrophs." Moyo: "No. They're smarter. That makes them more dangerous."
- **Containment zones:** Europeans dimming their bioluminescence in submission. Relocated to barren water. The camera holds on James's face.
- **Lume's death:** A shaped charge in a structure she was building. Sonder's grief — chromatophores beyond translation. The ash-gray that never leaves.

- **The confrontation:** Two submersibles circling in thermal current. The conversation between brothers who have run out of road. The best scene in the series.
- **James lets Mark go:** Weapons powered down. "Go. Deep as you can." The most consequential act of mercy in the story.
- **End hook:** James ascends alone. He reports Mark escaped in the thermal interference. Moyo doesn't believe him. James doesn't care.

Tone/Style

Two parallel tragedies: Lume's death and the brothers' confrontation. The underwater hunt should feel like *Das Boot* — claustrophobic, dark, sonar pings in black water. The conversation between Mark and James should be the emotional fulcrum of the entire series.

EPISODE 7 — "LAST MESSAGE"

Runtime: ~62 min | **Director block:** Episodes 7-8

Logline

James is fired and watches from Earth. Mark records his testimony. Sonder says the word that means "family."

Synopsis

Lena recommends James's removal for "operational failures." He is recalled to Earth — 47 days watching Europa shrink in the viewport. A quiet administrative proceeding strips his command. Desk job. Fluorescent lights. A window overlooking a parking lot. Lena visits. "Do you hate me?" / "No. I understand you. That's worse." On Europa, without James's restraint, Moyo implements the full Mars playbook. Autonomous drone swarms, sector clearance, lethal force against all resistance. The European population collapses. Mark flees with the migration toward the polar vent complex — the last warm water. Two million survivors gather there. Mark builds defenses and plants mining charges throughout the settlement. Then he records a message — not a plea, not an accusation, but a geological survey. Clinical, precise. Population estimates, architectural achievements, communication complexity, forty thousand years of culture. Chromatic recordings play in the background. His editorial: "The classification of these organisms as non-sentient is a lie maintained for economic convenience. What is happening in this ocean is genocide. My name is Mark Dowell. I am a geologist. I will die with them. This is my testimony." The broadcast reaches Earth. KAIC suppresses it within hours. The data replicates anyway. Debate ignites. Too late. Operation Final Reach launches in 72 hours. Sonder approaches Mark after the recording. A manipulator limb against his faceplate. The chromatic pulse that means *family*.

Key Scenes

- **James's removal:** Three sentences. "Your service record is noted." A parking lot window. Europa visible in the eastern sky.

- **Lena and James:** His small office, fluorescent light. "I understand you. That's worse." The last conversation between two people who used to be friends.
- **The migration:** Two million Europeans moving toward the pole. Bioluminescence streaming through dark water. Beautiful and doomed.
- **The broadcast:** Mark's voice, steady. Data, not rhetoric. Chromatic recordings running behind him. The most important geological survey ever conducted.
- **The suppression and spread:** KAIC kills the feed. It doesn't matter. The data is everywhere.
- **End hook:** Sonder's manipulator limb against Mark's faceplate. *Family*. Mark's gloved hand against the glass. They stay like that for a long time.

Tone/Style

Split between James's quiet institutional death on Earth and Mark's countdown on Europa. The broadcast scene should be played without score — Mark's voice and the chromatic recordings, nothing else. The audience should feel the weight of testimony that arrives too late.

EPISODE 8 — "TWO WORLDS"

Runtime: ~72 min | **Director block:** Episodes 7-8

Logline

The assault comes. Mark detonates the charges. Earth wins. Nobody is saved.

Synopsis

James sits in his darkened office and listens to the tactical feed as Operation Final Reach begins. Moyo's forces converge from three directions on the polar vent complex. The outer defenses hold for sixteen hours — Mark's fortifications, the Europeans' own innovations, organic camouflage, chromatic jamming. Then the outer ring falls. Then the secondary defenses. A junior officer's voice: "They're not fighting back anymore. They're just standing there. They're dimming." In the central chamber — a natural cavern centered on hydrothermal vents, walls covered in chromatic art — Mark stands among 200,000 Europeans. The remnant of two million. They perform their history one final time: a vast chromatic display, two hundred thousand individuals pulsing in coordinated light, telling their species' story from the first warm water to the last. It takes hours. It is the most beautiful thing Mark has ever seen. Moyo's forces breach the outer wall. Mark's hand rests on the detonator. He thinks of Lena, who designed the protocols. Of James, who let him go. Of Sonder, carrying Lume's colors. He detonates. The chamber collapses. Two hundred thousand Europeans and an unknown number of soldiers die in the compression wave. James removes his earpiece. Lena watches the footage in Geneva — bioluminescent art flickering and going dark — and shreds the classification document. It changes nothing. She knows. The aftermath: 847 Europeans in a research preserve, not reproducing. The Dowell Protocols in committee. Mark posthumously awarded the Medal of Science and convicted of treason. Both verdicts stand. James resigns in three sentences. Lena disappears. The epilogue, told from a clinical omniscient distance: Mars lithotrophs fading. European elders carrying colors no one understands. James watching Europa set from Denver. A lithotroph network sends one last pulse. 0.3

seconds. No one records it.

Key Scenes

- **The tactical feed:** James listening in the dark. "Twelve fauna neutralized, sector 7." Clinical language over human-on-alien violence.
- **The final chromatic history:** Two hundred thousand Europeans performing forty thousand years of culture in coordinated bioluminescence. The series' visual and emotional apex. No dialogue. No score. Just light.
- **The detonation:** Not heroic. Not cinematic. A man pressing a button. A compression wave. Silence.
- **Lena and the document:** She shreds the classification. It changes nothing. She knows that.
- **The epitaph:** Mark's recovered recording — found in a pressure-proof container in the debris. "I was a geologist. I came here to survey minerals. I found a world. I couldn't save it. I could stand in it while it ended."
- **Final image:** Hellas Basin, Mars. Night sky. Below the red dust, a crystal filament pulses once. 0.3 seconds. It dies. No one records it.

Tone/Style

The longest episode. The first half is relentless compression — military assault intercut with the chromatic history. The detonation is the silence at the center of the episode. The second half is aftermath: quiet, clinical, devastating. The epilogue should feel like a documentary coda — distant, factual, and unbearable. The audience should sit in silence when the credits roll.

SERIES TOTALS

Metric	Value
Total runtime	~500 min (~8.3 hours)
Major VFX sequences	18-22 (European creatures, underwater environments, Mars surface, submersible combat, chromatic displays)
Locations (Mars)	Hellas Basin surface, drill sites, hab tunnels, Protected Geological Zones
Locations (Europa)	Station Cousteau (corridors, labs, observation blisters), subsurface ocean, European settlements, polar vent complex
Locations (Earth)	Colorado School of Mines, KAIC Geneva HQ, ISD offices, James's apartment
Locations (Transit)	ISV Prometheus, ISV Erikson, shuttle interiors
Underwater sequences	~120 min total (Eps 3-8)

Chromatic display sequences	8-10 (communication, history performances, grief displays, final history)
POV distribution	Mark ~45%, James ~30%, Lena ~20%, Omniscient ~5% (finale epilogue)