

"Polaria Chronicles: Shardstorm"

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FADE IN:

EXT. OPEN SKIES - DAY

In the clouds on a sunny day. Clouds flying past indicate we are moving forward rapidly.

The clouds break and there is open space for as far as the eye can see. Below, a layer of white clouds obscure the ground level.

A flock of sea birds flies by.

Suddenly, loud RUMBLE can be heard. A large shard of Earth hurtles into view, obscuring everything. It passes as quickly as it entered, but we follow it.

The "shard" is a large floating island, about 2 square kilometers on its surface and about a kilometer deep. It is floating in mid air, above the clouds, untethered. The landscape is vibrant, with fairly dense foliage and a small hilly, mountainous region.

We see the remnants of a society - dilapidated houses and windmills that barely move, rusted over equipment, overgrown fields.

On the far edge of the horizon, 3 small airplanes appear. The style of the planes are highly reminiscent of the Steampunk genre.

In each plane:

SGT. ALEXA WHITE, designation: "77-Capulet", (mid 20's, Asian, thin and tall).

CAP. ANDREW SPARROW, designation: "77-Zulu", (mid 20's, dark black hair and a severe disposition).

SGT. HARRY ARMSTRONG, designaton: "77-Kilo", (mid 20's, black, medium build).

The jets move relatively slowly and are not heavily armored.

They come upon the clearing where our Shard is.

(They speak to one another on their radios.)

ALEXA

See, I told you, Captain: This area is always clear for some reason. It's like a cloud "field".

ANDREW

There're no clouds here, Sergeant.

ALEXA

Exactly. The weird part is there are never clouds here. Except for the ones below, of course.

HARRY

(amused)

Only you would get excited over the concept of a field of nothing, Alexa.

ALEXA

Spoken like a true meathead! Consistency is like music to the ears of an Archiver-- and I know these skies better than anyone.

HARRY

Well do you know that shard up there?

INT. ALEXA'S PLANE - DAY

She pulls down her scope, which looks like a pair of goggles attached to an arm within the cockpit.

ALEXA

Wait is that--

ANDREW

What?

In the distance, but not too far away, the shard can be seen.

ALEXA

(using a telescope)

It's Athena! At least, I think it's Athena!

HARRY

Slow down, who's Athena?

They begin to close in on the shard.

ALEXA

Not a "who" - a "what"; Athena was a Union colony that broke off and disappeared about 12 years ago. Look--

She points to a broken cable that is dangling over the edge of the shard.

ALEXA (CONT'D)

Look, see? They were a small farming community that was lost to the Sea. By the looks of things, they didn't fare too well.

ANDREW

Did you memorize the history of every Union colony, Sergeant?

ALEXA

Something like that, Captain!

ANDREW

I'm impressed, actually. It's not how I would have spent my time, but...

As Alexa speaks, a small, floating mine comes up behind her. It whirs quietly as it moves towards her at a great speed though no one notices.

ALEXA

It's really fascinating - trying to sort out the history of the Unio--

BOOM! The mine explodes, sending Alexa's plane hurtling toward the canopy of trees lining the shard.

HARRY

ALEXA!

She disappears quickly beneath a thin cloud cover over the shard.

ANDREW

What was that??

The two pilots break in opposite directions.

We see they are being pursued by 6 or 7 of these mines.

HARRY

What are these, defense drones?

ANDREW

This is old tech someone hacked - magnet powered, but that explosion must have been liquid polaria-fueled... primitive, but highly effective.

HARRY

"Highly effective", great. Look, stay steady, Captain.

As they continue to scramble, Harry maneuvers in a wide loop so that he comes up behind Andrew. He begins opening fire on the drones chasing Andrew.

ANDREW

What are you doing?!

HARRY

Just trust me on this - get ready to hit your burners when I tell you.

Harry's bullets hit the heavy hull of the drone mine, and eventually cause it to rupture and explode.

HARRY (CONT'D)

NOW!

SLOW MOTION: The exploding mine triggers another mine, and a third mine. The chain explosion is tremendous.

Andrew's engines flare and steam exhaust pours out of the rear of the plane as he accelerates enough to avoid the wake of the explosion.

We refocus on the mines following Harry's plane.

ANDREW

Alright! Nice job, Sergeant. My turn.

As Andrew loops around to perform the same maneuver on Harry's plane, he notices how close the mines are to the rear of his plane.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Actually, negative on that - those mines are too close. You won't survive the blast.

HARRY

Any suggestions?

They are flying over what appears to be the main part of an old, abandoned farm.

ANDREW

Follow me!

Andrew overtakes Harry, then dives down toward the farm.

They weave around the old farm equipment - towers, windmills, silos - and the drones pull off of Harry's plane to hurtle into the structures, attracted magnetically, causing massive explosions, and the structures to crash to the ground.

HARRY

Whoo!

The pilots reform in the air.

ANDREW

This is 77-Zulu to Union command - We're flying above a lost Union colony - it appears to be Athena. We are under attack by modified warning drones. There could be more hostiles. We have one pilot down. Our coordinates are 22.6 by 77.9. Over.

HARRY

Look, they're coming from over there!

At the far end of the shard, covered in low-lying fog, a few small specks can be seen. They begin to grow larger on the horizon - but they appear to be thrown, catapulted, not like the magnetic movement they showed before.

We focus on the mines now. As they hurtle through the air, tumbling randomly, they suddenly "activate" with a burst of steam, and rotate about a central axis like a drum, hovering in midair.

ANDREW'S RADIO

Copy 77-Zulu - we are on our way. ETA is approximately 45 minutes.

ANDREW

Unacceptable! Get out here sooner! We have a man down, I repeat--

ANDREW'S RADIO

--Captain, we'll do the best we can.

The planes charge at the mines.

HARRY

Look alive, Captain!

They open fire on the mines, causing them to explode just as they start to move toward the planes.

ANDREW

(to himself)

Who's responsible for this...?

ALEXA

(on her radio, through static)

It's Severyn's men!

EXT. "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Alexa is standing, sidling a tree near a pair of train tracks. She is holding a sturdy tree branch in one hand, and her other hand is touching a communications button on her helmet.

Now that she is standing, we can see her in full Union uniform. It is feminine and attractive, but stylized as an old Union-type civil war-style military outfit. It is accented with heavy leather, including a heavy jacket.

On her hip, attached to a utility belt, is a handgun-looking device, though it is rather large, with pipes coming off the sides stylishly.

In the background, we can see a parachute with the straps cut hanging in a tree, and further in the background, the smoke rising from the wreckage of her plane.

HARRY (O.S.)

Alexa! You made it! Are you okay?

ALEXA

I got out just in time, Harry.

ANDREW (O.S.)

How do you know they're Severyn's men?  
What's a pirate doing on this shard?

ALEXA

I know they're Severyn's men because  
they're right here...!

Down the tracks, three men are racing down on monocycles - single-track, personal locomotives, which look like steampunk "motorcycles". Two men are on the near-side track and one on the track farthest away from Alexa. They are dressed in distinctive clothes, colors of navy blue and red.

ANDREW (O.S.)

I want you to hang back - we have backup coming.

ALEXA

I can't do that, Captain! These guys are going in the same direction those mines are coming from... they're going back to their base camp. I'm following!

Two of the pirates fly by Alexa on the track, but don't notice her. As the third cyclist is passing by, Alexa swings

the stick she is holding, knocking the pirate off the bike, which slows to a SCREECHING stop.

She runs and gets on the monocycle and takes off after them.

HARRY (O.S.)

Alexa, what are you doing? It's too dangerous!

ALEXA

What are you talking about? They don't even know I'm here.

As she nears the pirates again, she pulls out her handgun, and lets it rest on the handles of the bike to aim.

She takes her first shot, but misses, as the pirate in front of her suddenly darts to the left, on a new track.

ALEXA (CONT'D)

...Well now they do.

Alexa's cycle follows the same path as the pirate she missed. They both dart through a thick, overgrown path, narrowly lined with trees. Alexa ducks close down on the bike to avoid the branches overhead.

The pirate looks back and fires at Alexa, just barely missing her.

She keeps a close profile to the bike, making herself a nearly invisible target.

The pirate continues firing, though, hitting Alexa's monocycle, which causes it to emit a jet of steam that blasts Alexa's hand, causing her to jump back momentarily.

The pirate, seeing this, grins and takes aim for another shot.

Alexa is prepared for him. She aims and fires, hitting him in the arm.

The pirate loses his balance - his cycle wobbles violently, and the front wheel bends, causing the entire cycle to flip end-over-end on the track.

SLOW MOTION: Alexa's cycle hurtles towards it and, by a lucky bounce, she is able to get just under the flipping locomotive as it crashes onto the track behind her.

Suddenly a SHOT comes that hits another pipe on Alexa's monocycle, causing it to emit yet more steam.

She looks to her right - just on the other side of the thinning tree line is the other end of the track, and the second pirate. He is firing at Alexa from his bike.

Alexa kicks a lever on the right side of her bike. The lever hits a mechanism on the track that causes the track ahead to bend to the right, connecting her to the track of the pirate firing at her.

She speeds up now, and by the time they join on the same rail, she is directly behind him, separated by a few feet.

Alexa pulls her gun again, and fires it at the pirate's gun, knocking it from his hand. She then aims it at the pirate, who looks at her, stunned.

Alexa's eyes narrow. She smirks.

In a swift pair of motions, she kicks out her left foot, deploying the switching lever for the left side of the monocycle, and aims at the engine of the pirate's monocycle (instead of directly at the pirate) and fires, incapacitating the craft. Just as it would slow down and hit her, she violently switches tracks, avoiding the pirate, who angrily slows to an halt.

Alexa stabilizes her cycle, then goes back to her radio.

ALEXA (CONT'D)

Alright, I'm clear. Headed toward their destination - are you guys good?

ANDREW (O.S.)

Yeah, the fog is clearing over here now. I think I see Severyn's craft!

EXT. ABOVE "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

The guys are flying toward the foggy clearing at the edge of the shard. As the fog clears, a large aircraft carrier can be seen. It doesn't look like a plane, but rather a series of platforms and cabin-like areas. On the top, a large, red cloth sits - the balloon to the craft, which is slowly inflating, but partially obscured by the fog.

ANDREW

What is that thing?

HARRY

And how did Severyn get it?

EXT. "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Alexa is still speeding on her monocycle.

ALEXA

I'd heard reports that he was becoming something of a big-time black market polaria trader, but what would he be doing out here?

There is silence for a second as she rides.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Sergeant, do you have any grenades on you?

ALEXA

Yeah, why?

ANDREW (O.S.)

Because I don't think our guns are going to be able to make a dent in that thing before we run out of ammo.

EXT. ABOVE "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Suddenly out of Severyn's plane, 8 jets take off from the carrier positions. They move more nimbly through the sky, their guns firing faster than the Union pilots'. They come right for Harry and Andrew.

Harry and Andrew open fire. The two sides come directly at one another, the sky a hailstorm of gunfire. The Union pilots, in synch, bank left and right, respectively, splitting the group of fighter planes as they move across the sky.

EXT. "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Alexa is still riding along, when a shot causes her engine to sputter.

She looks behind - another pirate on her rail. She finally shows panic on her face as she rapidly switches the rail path, taking her back through the trees.

EXT. ABOVE "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

The guys are still trying to scramble. Their planes are noticeably faster and less agile than the pirates that are firing on them.

HARRY

I don't know how much longer we can last like this...

ANDREW

I can't get a shot off on them!

Suddenly a new voice comes across on the Union radios. It is NEEKO (late teens, skinny, arrogant), captain of the Silver Gale aircraft.

NEEKO

You guys look like you need some help.

ANDREW

Who is this? What are you doing on this channel?

NEEKO

Sorry, Cap, I was just flying through and heard your distress call.

(a beat)

Whoa, is that Severyn?? That guy owes me money!

The Silver Gale flies through the battlefield. It is significantly larger than either of the Scrambler jets or the pirate planes, but is still dwarfed by Severyn's carrier. The Gale has a very large mounted gun on the front and a rotating gunner nest on the top.

ANDREW

What do you want?

NEEKO

What does anyone want? Money, of course. If I can't get it from Severyn, I can get it from the Union.

The guys are under very heavy fire.

NEEKO (CONT'D)

What do you say, Cap? How about ten-thousand bucks a pirate I take down?

ANDREW

What makes you think the Union wants anything to do with a mercenary like you?

Harry's plane is riddled with bullets. It begins to smoke.

HARRY

Captain, maybe we should listen to what he has to say...

ANDREW

You'd trust a pirate to keep his word? He'll shoot us down just as soon as he'd take down his friends. Then sell us for scrap.

NEEKO

Look, I think you have the wrong idea. I'm a nice guy... Look!

Suddenly bullets rip into one of the pirate planes, and it explodes.

NEEKO (CONT'D)

I'll make these first three free. That's still 50 thousand if I take the rest down!

The Silver Gale flies in from behind two pirate planes. When it is in the center of both planes, a harpoon gun fires out from the side of the plane, latching onto the pirate plane on the left, attached by a strong metal chain.

NEEKO (CONT'D)

I call this move... Actually I don't have a name for it yet, it's just cool.

The Silver Gale banks hard to the right, slowly attempting to rotate into a series of barrel rolls.

The pirate in his plane struggles to keep control of his craft, but eventually loses it as the Silver Gale begins spinning the craft around and around by the chain.

The Gale comes up behind the other pirate plane.

The hook releases, and the first plane hurtles into the second plane, knocking them both out of the sky.

HARRY

(to himself)  
What the...

The hook returns to the Silver Gale, and it rights itself.

NEEKO

Severyn should spend more money on his planes. And paying me.

NEEKO(CONT'D)

(a beat)  
So, what do you say, Captain?

INT. ANDREW'S PLANE - DAY

Andrew hesitates to answer.

ALEXA (O.S.)  
(sounding shaky)  
I think you should take him up on it,  
Captain.

EXT. "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Alexa is still being pursued by her pirate, who is shooting at her. As she constantly shifts tracks, the bullets from the pirate's guns hit the trees around her or the exhaust pipes on the bike, but barely miss her.

HARRY  
Alexa! Are you okay?

ALEXA  
I.. I think so - I'm almost there. I can  
see the balloon rising!

Suddenly the pirate behind her slams on his brakes. Alexa looks back, confused, and then looks forward - the track is ending.

She is unable to stop in time, and flies off the track, onto the rough jungle surface. The metal cycle wheels shake violently as they tear through the forest floor. Alexa is barely able to steer the cycle as she hurtles uncontrollably toward the carrier.

She bursts through the treeline, coming at full speed on the carrier. She pulls out her grenade and gets ready to pull the pin.

ALEXA (CONT'D)  
Hang on - I'm almost there!

But just as she does, the guns on the carrier turn toward her and begin firing.

She is forced to bail out of the monocycle, tumbling to a stop right in front of the craft. She doesn't move.

HARRY (O.S.)  
Alex? Can you hear me?

EXT. ABOVE "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

Harry continues calling for Alexa.

HARRY  
Alex??

Silence.

ANDREW  
Sergeant, come in?

Silence, again.

HARRY  
Neeko- get these guys off of us, now! I don't care what we have to pay, we need to get down to that craft!

ANDREW  
What are you doing, Sergeant? You can't--

HARRY  
Then charge me later, Captain. We've got to save her.

Neeko springs into action, quickly taking down another pair of pirates.

He cheers loudly into the radio as he does it.

NEEKO  
Ten thousand! Twenty thousand!

EXT. "ATHENA" SHARD - OUTSIDE SEVERYN'S SHIP - DAY

The ship's balloon is fully inflated, and it is emitting steam all over the place as it starts up and prepares to leave.

Alexa still lies on the ground on her stomach. In the background, the docking bay opens.

NEEKO (O.S.)  
(faintly, ambient through  
Alexa's helmet)  
That's thirty thousand!

A large, imposing man, SEVERYN (late 40's, white hair, muscular, missing an eye but no eyepatch) comes out. As he walks toward Alexa, she begins to stir.

NEEKO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(as before)

You know, Captain, the one reason I like  
the Union -- Forty! -- is I know I can  
sue you guys if you don't pay -- Fifty!

By the time she realizes who is walking toward her, Severyn  
is there to kick her gun away from her.

ALEXA

(wearily)

S-Severyn...?

EXT. ABOVE "ATHENA" SHARD - DAY

The Silver Gale is doing tricks around the Alliance  
scramblers as they putter along - Harry's being severely  
damaged.

HARRY

Alex?? I think Severyn has Alexa!

ANDREW

(after a beat)

I think you're right.

(after another beat)

There's no way we can take out his ship  
without hurting her...

NEEKO

I can!

ANDREW

What are you, crazy? I don't care how  
fast that stupid plane of yours is,  
there's no way you can get close enough  
before those guns cut you down!

The Silver Gale does a loop and centers itself between the  
two scramblers.

NEEKO

Oh come on, Cap. I've always got another  
trick up my sleeve.

We focus on Neeko's main gun, just under the cockpit. Gears  
on it turn and it extends outward, doubling in size, then  
locking into place.

NEEKO (CONT'D)

Watch this!

HARRY

Wait, what are you doing?

In the distance, Severyn's craft begins to lift off, slowly. As it does, the weather around it seems to change - the clouds darken and swirl around it, the air literally crackles. It is about 20 feet from the ground.

NEEKO

Have you ever seen a rail gun in action, Captain?

ANDREW

That'll destroy the carrier! Are you crazy?

Neeko's gun charges up. We focus on Neeko pulling the trigger.

IN SLOW MOTION:

Electricity streaks across the entire rail gun, preceeding a large projectile bullet that is shot from the front of the Silver Gale, which is thrown back a bit from the backfire of the shot.

As the bullet flies toward Severyn's plane, Severyn's craft suddenly begins to glow. A bluish-white, magnetic energy field is thrown from the plane, as though it were discharging some giant electromagnet.

The field slows the bullet to a halt as the two clash, then eventually sends it flying off in a random direction.

Neeko, Andrew and Harry's eyes widen at what they're seeing.

END SLOW MOTION.

Suddenly, the planes, and indeed the entire island, are rocked by the shockwave from the magnetic discharge.

The planes and various debris, such as the tracks and the farm equipment are all thrown back as well.

The scramblers and the Silver Gale disappear in the jungle.

The weather clears immediately, and Severyn's carrier flies away from the Athena shard.

TITLE ROLLS