

BLACK SHADOW

There it was, 'Black Shadow', that vast mass of rock floating before us. How could anything so still be so dangerous? What kind of being would destroy an entire world just to provide itself with energy?

"Stop it!" I told myself, "Stop thinking of them as being like you – the moment you do that you're finished!"

We were getting closer, the huge shield deactivator glowing silently in front of us as the great rock took shape, surface structures becoming visible . . . no-one had got this close to 'Black shadow' and lived, and I was about to fly on top of it!

Suddenly my earpiece crackled into urgent life.

"We daren't go any closer, pilot," the launch-controller says, "Sensors say their shield's almost down, prepare to take off as soon as I give the order, we don't know how long we can hold it."

"All systems operational, weapons check confirmed," I hear myself saying above the sound of my engines, revving behind me.

"You have launch clearance, shield down 3, 2, 1, launch! Go! Go! GO!"

The ship lifts, adrenalin pumps, I realise I'm screaming defiantly into my headset as I power-dive towards the rock's surface – if that shield's not down, I'm not gonna live long enough to regret it.

I suddenly realise I'm through, past the shield, past the asteroid's landing beacons and just above the surface, but where **is** everybody?

PROGRAMMERS:

Is your software good enough for CRL. If it is contact Michael Hodges on 01-985 2391 or write to the ZEN ROOM, UNIT 7D KINGS YARD, CARPENTERS ROAD, LONDON E15 2HD.



There are structures all around me, lights slowly blinking everywhere, vehicles abandoned all over the surface but where are all these ships I was warned of? Was this all some kind of cosmic 'Marie Celeste'?

Then, up ahead, one of those strange spherical buildings seems to be moving somehow . . . wait . . . it's . . . it's

opening!

So much for 'deserted asteroid' . . .