

LIMB

The Beginning, Part 1

Written by

Pii Anttonen

LIMB

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BLACK SCREEN. SILENCE.

VOICE OVER

In the beginning of the age of hyperspace journey, a massive transport ship was sent out to colonize a planet in Betelgeuse sector. The ship called Ashtar carried thousands of colonizers. When the ship engaged hyperdrive, the ship disappeared and was never heard of again.

Beat.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Not until almost 800 years later, when human race had spanned to cover almost quarter of the galaxy the contact with the Ashtar people was regained. The people from Ashtar had evolved, spanned across the other side of the galaxy. They had passed humans in scientific progress and changed physically in the process. It was they who contacted humans.

EXT. SPACE

Close on a space station. The design of the station in overall is quite round to make the station rotate more easily to create its artificial gravity.

Ships are fading in and out as they are coming and going from hyperdrive. Several ships are also heading into the large docking hangar of the station.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

A space station was build in the middle of the two empires to make ordinary hyperdrive journeys possible between the two empires located on opposite sides of the galaxy. The station was named Limb.

LIMB

FADE OUT.

BLACK SCREEN. SILENCE.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

This is not the story of that station.

Beat.

White title fades in:

PROLOGUE

100 years later.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

In the background we can see Jupiter. The foreground is filled with Ganymede, the largest moon of Jupiter.

A shuttle fades in from hyperdrive and starts the landing on the moon.

INT. GANYMEDE BASE - CORRIDOR

CAPTAIN PERTUL BAXTER marches in a corridor of the Ganymede base. He is in his early 40's, but tries desperately to look younger. From his general posture we can see that he considers himself to be very important.

The base is clearly still being built. Engineers work on and under several panels in the walls as robots haul heavy equipment and pieces of walls around. It's an organized mayhem.

Baxter has troubles with his important march as he has to dodge engineers and cables going around in the floor.

Finally he comes to a door and pushes a computer panel beside it. Nothing happens. Baxter looks at the panel in confusion and tries again. Again, nothing happens. He looks around for help when an engineer comes behind him.

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ENGINEER

(casually)

You must be new here?

Baxter turns around to face the engineer. The engineer is mildly alarmed when he sees Baxter's rank insignias. He immediately straightens his posture.

BAXTER

I don't think I like your tone

ENGINEER

I'm sorry, Captain. Didn't see the insignias from here.

BAXTER

Then, for all your knowledge, I could've been an admiral.

ENGINEER

That's right. I'm sorry, Captain.

BAXTER

Now, could you tell me why the panel doesn't work?

ENGINEER

Yes, sir. I'm afraid that those panels haven't been connected yet. You'll have to knock.

Baxter can't believe his ears.

BAXTER

Knock?

ENGINEER

Yes, sir. There will be an engineer to make a security id on the other side of the door.

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BAXTER

(to himself)

What kind of a medieval complex is this supposed to be?

(beat, to engineer)

You are dismissed.

The engineer lets out a breath of relief and he quickly leaves to resume his duties.

Baxter turns back to the door and pounds his fist to the door a bit more forcefully than it would've really needed.

After a while the door slides open and another engineer comes out with a handheld sensor device.

ENGINEER

Please place your hand to the scanner to a security id, Captain.

Baxter is about to do so, but gets interrupted.

OLD VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, never mind all that! Let him in!

The engineer stops for a moment and doesn't know what to do. He turns to the voice coming from inside.

ENGINEER

Admiral, the regulations clearly indicate that...

OLD VOICE (O. S.)

I know the regulations! I wrote most of them myself, so I'll get to say when we don't go by them. You can let Captain Baxter in.

The engineer is about to protest again, but then thinks better of himself and indicates Baxter to enter. Baxter does so with a satisfied look.

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INT. BASE - ADMIRAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Baxter enters the office of Admiral Baxter. The office is very impressive with a lot of room. The admiral sits behind his table. In front of the table are two couches. In the background opens a panoramic view to Jupiter. The office is very clean and it has been completed clearly some time ago.

Baxter moves to shake hands with the old Admiral. The Admiral is in his 80's, but still in good physical strength.

ADMIRAL

It's good to see you again, son. Eight years is a long time.

BAXTER

Very long. Especially if you're trapped in some boring scientific deep space mission.

ADMIRAL

You know you had to move out of the spotlight for awhile while they were doing the investigation.

BAXTER

I know. I hope the dust has settled.

ADMIRAL

More or less. I'm not under investigation.

BAXTER

That's good. But things have changed, I see. I was quite surprised to hear that the headquarters had been moved from Earth. Why isn't the base even completed? I think it's a disgrace, thinking of the headquarters on Earth.

Admiral rises from his chair and leads his son to one of the couches. The Admiral himself sits to the other one.

ADMIRAL

A lot has happened since you left. Mostly concerning Ashtar.

LIMB

BAXTER

I've never learned to trust them.

Admiral chuckles.

ADMIRAL

Neither have I, as you know. However, the current situation could prove out to be extremely favorable to us.

BAXTER

How so?

The Admiral moves to his own chair again as he speaks, ignoring the question purposely.

ADMIRAL

I've arranged you out from those stupid science ships. You'll get a command that's far more important.

BAXTER

What command would that be?

ADMIRAL

Patience. Since you've been away for so long, I'll have to fill you in on a lot of things. Thirteen years ago a rebellious group in Ashtar started a wave of violence in central planet of Ashtar. This rebellion was soon defeated, but not for long. For over two years the same group searched for support and people across the Ashtar Empire until the empire practically was divided into two factions. The outcome was a massive rebellion started about two years ago that took the empire to civil war.

Admiral works some commands to the computer in his desk and the window behind him turns into a screen. It displays the galaxy which shows the Earth and Ashtar empires on different sides of the galaxy with large inhabited sections between them.

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ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

The problem with the government of Ashtar was that this had never happened before and so ruling the empire was only possible from the senate building in the central planet. This naturally was a clear target to the rebels and soon all the fighting was concentrated to the central planet where the government defended themselves with everything they had. However, it was clear to them that they couldn't last forever and an official plea for help was sent to Earth. The Earth president decided to support the ruling council and decided that the parliament had to be evacuated as soon as possible. To make this possible, it was decided that the Captain of the space station Limb, Mark Stinson, was to be sent with the shuttle the station had. He left with two other officers from Limb. Once they got there, Stinson found himself from the middle of a pandemonium since the rebels had managed to break the defense lines of the government. He managed to get the parliament members into the shuttle, but was trapped in a tractor beam once he tried to leave the planet. He found no other alternative than to try and engage the hyperdrive while in atmosphere.

Baxter's jaw drops open in surprise.

BAXTER

That's suicide!

ADMIRAL

Well, the thing is that we can't know for sure since nobody has tried it for obvious reasons.

BAXTER

What happened?

LIMB

ADMIRAL

What the simulations has said all along. There was a massive explosion. The only surprising part was how big the explosion actually was. In minutes, it covered almost a quarter of the entire planet surface and that naturally made the entire planet inhabitable. Scientist hasn't been able to calculate the actual power of the explosion to date. We haven't heard from the shuttle ever since. Whether it was destroyed or did it really do an uncontrolled hyperjump, we haven't been able to determine. We can only speculate.

Admiral inputs more commands into the computer and the screen image zooms to Ashtar Empire. However, the colour which encompassed the entire region now disappears and is replaced with a mind-boggling collection of small regions.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

Since the only place where the ruling of the Empire was possible was now destroyed, the planets and small coalitions of planet raced to declare their independence for almost year and a half. Lots of smaller wars have been fought and the overall situation really got out of hands for a while. The situation is starting to stabilize now, but it's far from over. But to really put it all in a nutshell, the Ashtar Empire is no more. Most of the planets that declared their independence during the madness have merged to bigger coalitions, but some of them remain. This means that the former Empire is now thousands of states and coalitions of various sizes. This brings us to you.

BAXTER

Have you finally been able to promote me to a warship Captain?

LIMB

Admiral smiles faintly and puts in more commands to the computer. The map of Ashtar space is replaced with an image of a complex space station. It looks like modules and extensions have been gathered from all over the place and from incompatible systems. It's not at all round in design anymore since new sections have been added just about where there is room and to places where there aren't as well. It's also a lot bigger with a massive docking corridor where ships enter to dock to. Needless to say, it doesn't rotate anymore.

ADMIRAL

Not quite. When Captain Stinson left from Limb to Ashtar, the station was given in command of an experimental robot WND-38. It has been under its command ever since.

Baxter doesn't like what he's hearing at all.

BAXTER

A machine?

ADMIRAL

It's no ordinary robot if you think of that. It's an experimental android, capable of independent thought-imaging and decision making. But I opposed it as well. The cold reality was that it was the only way to compensate the missing of three key officers when they left. After the incident, the border has stayed close ever since so that the station has been of no use and the station was left to its own. Now the command is open and I've arranged you to take it.

Baxter rises from his chair in disbelief.

BAXTER

A civilian station?! You're giving me a command of a meaningless civilian station in a time when I could influence the future of the Earth from a bridge of a warship!

LIMB

Admiral won't have any of this right now and he replies with a stern tone.

ADMIRAL

I know that this isn't your first choice, but you're simply not qualified enough to be placed in a warship command.

BAXTER

That hasn't stopped us before.

ADMIRAL

I know. And that's why you spent the last fifteen years in deep space while I was under investigation. If I'd promote you to a warship Captain immediately after you come back, the whole show would start again.

BAXTER

You know I've been waiting for eight years to get an assignment where I'd had real power.

ADMIRAL

I know! Sit down and listen!

Baxter sits down, still upset.

ADMIRAL

This post is more valuable to us than you can imagine. The Ashtar border is opening again in just a few weeks. The station has been under heavy maintenance and refitting as a collaborative effort by both Earth and some of the major Ashtar states. It's practically a new station. I've been pulling every possible string to keep that chair vacant for your return. You'll be very close to the new Ashtar region and I have some major plans concerning the future of it.

Baxter still doesn't like it.

LIMB

BAXTER

This assignment had better be short! Be where it may, it's still a civilian station.

ADMIRAL

(strongly)

It's as long as I say it will be!

(beat, then more softly)

You'll get your promotion in time. It's not just going to happen right now.

Baxter considers this for a moment and then calms down.

BAXTER

Tell me about these plans you mentioned.

Admiral puts out a slight smile and turns to his computer. To this we...

FADE OUT.

BLACK SCREEN. SILENCE.

A white label appears as before:
THE BEGINNING
4 weeks later.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - LIMB

We see the station as it were in Admiral Baxter's screen. Ships move in and out of the station.

INT. LIMB - RECEPTION AREA

This is a large busy area where all the passengers coming and going goes through the usual formalities. It's fairly calm considering the volume of people. There are Humans and Ashtars mixed. It's clear to see that people are excited about the border opening again.

LIMB

Note: Ashtars look like humans in general except that they all have skin color in different shades of silver. Their hair is only a very thin white remembrance of human hair. Most Ashtars shave their heads from it.

This busy but calm scene is interrupted when a loud shout rises above everything else.

MAN (O. S.)

What!

We close to one of the reception desks where the cause of this shout is giving a full load of rage to a helpless reception officer.

The one with the practiced vocal cords is a tall man in his mid 30's and he has a long hair. He pounds his fist to a computer console with text in it.

MAN (CONT'D)

You're telling me, that the transportation company ruins my luggage, and then I have to pay the damage it causes!

The official attempts to get a hurried comment in places where the man takes a breath, but the man is fast at what he does.

OFFICIAL

Well, the ticket says that...

MAN

(interrupts)

This is robbery! Plain, simple robbery! How do you think I can cope in here without my luggage, and then you have the nerve to try to make me pay for it! I'd have you all sued if it wasn't so expensive and time consuming!

During the last exciting monologue, a woman in her early 40's has appeared behind the man with her bag.

WOMAN

Is there a problem?

LIMB

MAN

I come all the way here and then find a station load of rascals..

WOMAN

(interrupts, more strongly)

Excuse me, what is the trouble?

It takes a moment for the man to realize that someone has managed to cut his vein of outrage. He turns to the woman.

MAN

(unpleasantly)

Now who on earth are you? Can't you see that I'm in the middle of something?

The woman doesn't react to his unpleasant tone and continues in a normal voice.

WOMAN

My name is Tanith Yannbulytshev and I was wondering if I could check in since I don't expect to have any difficulties at it.

MAN

Can't you see that this is important?

TANITH

Well, actually I can't since I just got here.

Without waiting another word, she passes the man and takes his place at the reception desk.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Tanith Yannbulytshev, 8649-D.

The official takes a beat to recover from what happened, but is happy to turn her attention to this more pleasant arrival.

OFFICIAL

Place your hand to the sensor for id, please.

LIMB

Tanith complies. The official takes another double take at what she sees on screen.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Is this true? It says that from this moment on, you are the First Officer of the station.

TANITH

As well as communications and weapons officer, that's correct.

OFFICIAL

Welcome aboard. I have to say that I'm surprised. Usually officers use the staff docking.

TANITH

I know, but I like it this way. You get so lonely in those personal transport ships. Now, if you could arrange someone to take my bags to my quarters, maybe I can help this gentleman in his situation. Oh, and could you put someone to take my cat to my quarters as well. But make sure whoever does that can handle animals. My cat has what I call a strong personality.

OFFICIAL

I'm sure that can be arranged, sir.

She turns to the man who is knocked silent by this turn of events.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Isn't that right?

MAN

(not at all loud)

Right.

TANITH

Right.

LIMB

OFFICIAL

I'm sure the bags can be arranged.
Welcome aboard once again, Commander.

TANITH

(not turning)

Sure. So, maybe we should start again
with you. First of all, what is your
name?

MAN

Henrik Anttonen.

TANITH

Excellent. We're progressing already.
Now I want to know what the reason for
all of this shouting is. And if you
don't mind, I'd like to hear her version
of it first.

Tanith turns back to the Official, who is even more relieved.
She starts to read from the computer console.

OFFICIAL

Well, apparently Mr. Anttonen had a
large container as a part of his luggage
that went into the cargo bay. At some
point of the journey, the container
broke down and it released large
quantities of some sort of fluid that
quickly spread to the entire cargo bay.
Now the company wants payment from him
since they are obliged to refund all of
the ruined luggages.

HENRIK

Except mine, I notice!

Tanith turns back to Henrik.

TANITH

Now, calm down. First of all, what was
in that container?

Henrik takes a beat. Suddenly he starts to look a bit
uncomfortable.

LIMB

HENRIK

Promise you won't laugh.

TANITH

I laugh a lot. I can't see any harm in that. But if it's important to you, I promise I won't laugh.

HENRIK

Orange juice.

Tanith doesn't laugh, but is very surprised.

TANITH

Orange juice? Why on earth would you bring that amount of orange juice with you?

HENRIK

Well, I'm writing this script, you see. And I have these rituals that goes along with my writing and one of them happens to be that I can't write if I can't drink orange juice while I'm at it.

TANITH

You can get orange juice from the station.

HENRIK

Yes, of course, but there are different kinds of orange juices. A whole variety of them!

TANITH

(mildly amused)

Is that so?

HENRIK

Yes. A lot of people don't realize it, but it's very important for me to have the right kind of orange juice when I write. And I happen to have a liking on this particular sort. I couldn't make sure if they have it in the station, so naturally I brought my own supply.

LIMB

Tanith takes a beat to take all this in and turns back to the official.

TANITH

Why is the company keeping Mr. Anttonen responsible?

OFFICIAL

Well, it appears that his ticket indicates that he can only take limited amounts of liquids as luggage. It's an old regulation regarding intoxicating substances. I'm just a middle hand here. I can't make any decisions regarding the matter. I tried to tell him.

Tanith turns to Henrik again.

TANITH

Did you know about this regulation?

HENRIK

Yes. But the travel agency said it only meant intoxicating liquids and it would be okay for me to take as much of orange juice I liked.

TANITH

The travel agency said that?

HENRIK

Yes.

TANITH

Did you make them understand that you wouldn't buy a ticket unless you could take the juice with you?

HENRIK

Sort of.

TANITH

And that's exactly why they told you that.

LIMB

Henrik pauses for a moment to think about this.

HENRIK

Oh.

TANITH

Exactly.

Tanith turns to the official again.

TANITH

I'd say it's pretty obvious that we can't settle the matter right now. Is there any reason to prevent him from boarding the station if he promises not to leave until this matter has been settled?

The official jumps to the opportunity get rid of him.

OFFICIAL

No! No, definitely not.

TANITH

Then, if you'd just sign him on board...

Official taps in a few commands in a hurry.

OFFICIAL

Done. Welcome to the station, Mr. Anttonen.

Henrik is a bit confused at the turn of events and doesn't say anything. Tanith turns to him again.

TANITH

Now, if you'll follow me, maybe we can get some ease to your orange juice situation.

She starts to walk away to the crowd and after a moment of hesitation, Henrik follows her.

LIMB

INT. LIMB - MARKETPLACE

The marketplace is a huge open area in the middle of the station where various vendors are selling their all kinds of merchandise in booths they've set up in the marketplace. Bigger shops and boutiques are located on the sides of the area. There are practically no walls, just shop windows and entrances to them. There are also doors to lifts here and there. We can see Tanith and Henrik emerge from one of them.

We arrive at mid-conversation. Tanith seems to know where she's going and Henrik just tries to keep up with her.

TANITH

...the lifts are not just plain elevators. They're actually connected to a large network of shafts so that's how you can go just about anywhere with any one of them.

HENRIK

Didn't know about that.

TANITH

This is your first time in a space station then?

HENRIK

Yes. I hate flying.

TANITH

(amused)

Then why did you come here? When you're on a space station you're practically flying all the time.

HENRIK

I thought that it might be good to my script to get out in the middle of the people. And since the border just opened, I thought that this might be an excellent place to get in the feeling of things.

LIMB

Tanith smiles at this and then stops in front of a cafeteria that says 'Steve's' in the window. Tanith looks at it in confusion for a moment.

HENRIK

Is this the right place?

TANITH

That's what the computer said, but I do find it hard to believe.

HENRIK

Why?

TANITH

It's under regulation that because of health control, all food supplies are to go through official station supplier who then sells it to the habitants of the station. Usually the retail centers are just depressing warehouses with some uninterested guy taking the orders.

HENRIK

But I can see restaurants and other café shops around here.

TANITH

Yes, but all of them has to buy their supplies from the official supplier.

Tanith enters the cafeteria. Henrik follows her.

INT. LIMB - STEVE'S

Steve's cafeteria is a smallish old fashioned cafeteria with about a dozen tables or so. Behind the counter sits an old man, STEVE PETER.

There are only two or three other persons in the cafeteria, but the large windows that cover two sides of the cafeteria gives a direct view to the marketplace so the actual cafeteria feels to be just an extension to it.

Tanith goes to the old man, who turns to Tanith with a slight smile.

LIMB

TANITH

Is this the food retail center?

STEVE

To everything legal, it sure is.

TANITH

I have to say I am surprised. I'm not used to retail centers like this.

STEVE

Well, you know how it is. Crew members often buy just small rations and then eat them quickly between shifts. This used to be a busy station and sometimes the people would really pile up and I used to say that I might as well run a cafeteria while at it. After going on about it for a few years, one security officer said to me that yes, why don't you. And here it is.

HENRIK

So this is quite new of an idea?

STEVE

Pretty much. I've been keeping this for only about...

(thinks)

...about 20 years.

TANITH

Well, I sure am delighted.

STEVE

Glad you like it. I find it quite relaxing to play the bartender these days. My wife used to say that I really changed after this.

HENRIK

Used to say? Does that mean she's passed away?

LIMB

STEVE

Died? Of course not. She just doesn't feel it to be necessary to repeat the same things over and over again.

HENRIK

Oh, right.

Tanith picks up a data disk for her pocket and gives it to Steve.

TANITH

I have a small list of things I'd need during my stay. Could you arrange these?

Steve pops the disk to the counter computer and looks the list trough.

STEVE

This is quite a list. You staying long?

TANITH

Permanently I guess. I'm the new first officer doing communications and weapons as well.

STEVE

Oh, you're part of the new crew. Nice to see new faces. Welcome aboard then, ma'am. My name is Steve Peter.

Steve offers Tanith a hand and she gladly accepts it.

TANITH

Tanith Yannbulytshev. Glad to meet you, but please don't call me ma'am.

STEVE

What do you want to be called then?

TANITH

Tanith will do just fine. I'm not too much into the formalities when they just get in the way of things.

LIMB

STEVE

I think I can live with that.

Tanith looks around the surroundings once more.

TANITH

So does the crew spend their time here?

STEVE

Some of them do. There hasn't been too much crew after the former Captain left for Ashtar and never cared to come back.

TANITH

It wasn't a pretty case. They still don't know whether the shuttle exploded or hurled to an unknown sector of the universe.

STEVE

And since border has been closed, there hasn't been any chance to go and take a look around. I think the situation is still so delicate that they won't care to make an investigation for a while even though the border is open again.

TANITH

You're probably right. But going back to the supplies, do you think you can arrange all of that?

STEVE

Shouldn't be a problem. I can have it delivered to your quarters if you'd like.

TANITH

Good. I'll have to prepare the reception of the new Captain, but I believe Mr. Anttonen here has a problem you can hopefully solve.

STEVE

Oh, the captain is coming today, is he?

LIMB

TANITH

Yeah. A heck of a way to start the first day, but this one absolutely insists on having a formal reception upon his arrival.

STEVE

Oh, he's one of those.

Tanith nods and rolls her eyes. She then turns to Henrik.

TANITH

I think you're grown enough to explain your situation yourself. I really have to go now. See you later.

HENRIK

Ok.

Tanith leaves. Steve waits for a word from Henrik.

STEVE

So, what would be this problem you're having?

Again some of the confidence leaves from Henrik's expression.

HENRIK

Promise you won't laugh.

INT. LIMB - STAFF DOCKING ENTRANCE

The staff docking section is isolated from the public section. The long aisle has five entrances from different docking points.

The important part of the crew is standing in attention at the other side of the aisle facing the entrances. Among them are the new bridge crew we get to know and some technicians and doctors.

Tanith comes running from a lift. She looks at her watch and is painfully aware that she is late. She sighs in relief as she notices that the Captain hasn't arrived yet.

LIMB

TANITH

Thank god. I have a feeling that the new Captain isn't anybody who's bad side you'd want to get in on your first day.

Immediately after that a CLICK can be heard and one of the entrances begins to slide slowly open.

Tanith snaps into attention beside the entrance. When the entrance is completely open, Pertul Baxter steps in. From his posture and expression he tries immediately to give the crew a feeling of absolute authority.

Tanith salutes.

TANITH

Welcome aboard, Captain Baxter. I am your first officer Tanith Yannbulyshev. I also handle the communications and weapons in the bridge.

Baxter looks at Tanith.

BAXTER

A woman? I've never been too keen on having women on my bridge.

Tanith doesn't like the comment but decides to let it go.

TANITH

May I introduce you to the bridge crew?

Tanith steps to the first person in the long line of people standing in attention.

The first one in the line is WND-38, or WENDY. The robot really does look a lot like a human. Her skin looks realistic, but her hair and eyes give away her artificial foundations. The hair looks too polished and her eyes shine quite brightly. Her body is mildly shaped to include female lineaments, but she is not by any means a mannequin.

LIMB

TANITH (CONT'D)

This is WND-38. As you may know, she commanded the station during the time when the border was closed. Now she is positioned as the head of security.

Wendy salutes.

WENDY

For your convenience, I am also often referred as Wendy.

Her voice has an unmistakable metallic clang to it.

Baxter just looks at the android gleefully and doesn't say anything. Tanith waits for a moment and then leads Baxter to the next person in the line.

TANITH

This is Kri Smith. Our new science officer.

Baxter looks at Kri. He is an Ashtar in his middle age, whatever that is in Ashtar life. He constantly has a sour expression since he's not too happy to be here. And here is meaning the entire Earth Republic area.

BAXTER

Ashtar.

Baxter manages to put so much disrespect to the word that Tanith can't believe her ears. Kri on the other hand doesn't have too much respect for this arrogant Captain.

KRI

Very perceptive, Captain.

BAXTER

Kri Smith? I thought Ashtars didn't have surnames.

KRI

They don't. It was given to me to help the bureaucracy when I enlisted. And we all know how much humans adore that.

LIMB

BAXTER

I have heard of Ashtars who had to stay in this side of the border when it was closed, and I have heard of the few who has chosen to enlist to the space force. But what I can't understand is why they're given such high positions in my beloved space core.

KRI

I am fully qualified for this job. And this is a civilian station.

Without knowing, Kri has touched a nerve. Baxter immediately stiffens and his tone grows tenser.

BAXTER

I'll be frank with you. I've never liked nor trusted Ashtars. Even if you were a bit more advanced in technological development, I still find you to be primitive and war faring species that, as far as I'm concerned, has no place in space force.

KRI

That's your opinion. We all do know how peaceful and civilized your history has been. It's also a strange coincidence that the problems in Ashtar started to manifest only after we'd made contact.

Baxter stiffens even more, but manages to keep his composure. Behind him, Tanith bites her finger to stop herself for grinning. She raises her other hand to warn Kri to not to continue. Baxter fortunately is oblivious to all of this.

BAXTER

Dismissed.

Everybody except Baxter and Tanith leave the aisle to various corridors and lifts. Several sighs of relief can be heard.

Baxter turns back to Tanith and she manages to keep her face steady without biting her finger. She clears her throat.

LIMB

TANITH

May I show you around the bridge now?

She leads Baxter to the nearest lift. Before the door close she sees Kri watching from the dismantling crowd at them and shaking his head.

INT. LIMB - LIFT

Baxter never loosens his posture even when the doors close and he and Tanith are alone.

TANITH

Bridge.

The lift comes to life.

BAXTER

I noticed that heads of engineering and medical did not attend the reception. Why is that?

TANITH

Chief of Engineering Larry Play is at the main engineering. He's one of those engineers who don't like to leave engineering once they get their hands to the job. There has been and still is a huge amount of work because of the refitting. He has a passion for his work.

BAXTER

That is not an excuse to not to attend official station functions. I will discuss the matter with him as soon as possible.

TANITH

I've always liked the type. At least we can be sure that he has a motivation to keep the station intact.

LIMB

BAXTER

I did not ask your opinion. When I do require it, I will let you know. Although I can't see that happening in the near future.

Tanith is obviously hurt by this remark.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

What about the chief medical officer?

TANITH

Well, officially we don't have one. After the stations previous chief medical officer was relieved from duty, his second, Desi Rumfoord has been the acting chief. You're supposed to promote her to the full title later today.

BAXTER

I don't like to take orders regarding my crew. I want a full report of this Rumfoord before I promote anybody.

TANITH

Yes, sir.

The lift slows down and the doors open to reveal the bridge. They exit.

INT. LIMB - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The bridge is shaped round except for the forward facing part with the viewscreen which is an ordinary wall. At this time the viewscreen is filled with a forward view.

In the middle of the bridge is a luxurious captain's chair. Behind it is a railing that separates the middle area from the work consoles in the back wall where lower crew members do their various duties. The railing has a hole just behind the captain's chair so that the captain can easily go to his office. The door to it is just in the back of the bridge.

LIMB

Both sides in the front of the captain's chair have semicircular control panels. Another one is a science station and the other is for communications and weapons. Kri is sitting at his science station.

At both sides of the bridge are located two lifts. From another one of them, Tanith and Baxter exits.

TANITH

This is the bridge. The back wall has twelve security, science and engineering consoles. The bigger consoles in the front are main science where Kri is sitting and the other one is my communications and weapons console. The viewscreen can be divided into nine individual images and is used for communications as well as tactics.

BAXTER

Can the weapons control be diverted into another console?

TANITH

For security reasons they can't. May I ask why do you ask this?

BAXTER

It really is not your business, but I would feel more comfortable to have a weapons officer I can completely trust.

Tanith is starting to get tired of Baxter's attitude, but hides most of it.

TANITH

I will try to perform to the best of my ability.

BAXTER

I have no doubt about that. Is that enough remains to be seen.

LIMB

TANITH

Would I be completely mistaken if I'd say you'd prefer male officer in that position?

Baxter takes a long hard look on Tanith. He doesn't like the accusation, but since she is right he won't dig into it further.

BAXTER

Take your station, Miss Yannbulytshev.

Tanith looks back at Baxter for a moment but goes to her console.

Baxter sits at his chair and then pauses as if he's waiting for applause. None comes.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Miss Yannbulytshev, open a station wide channel. I want to make an announcement.

TANITH

Yes, sir.

Tanith taps in a few commands to her console.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Channel open.

Baxter rises from his chair to give an effect. He speaks with a loud voice to make sure nobody misses what he has to say.

BAXTER

May I have your attention for a second please?

His voice booms through the announcement systems throughout the station, including the bridge. Everybody from the rear consoles turns to watch the Captain.

LIMB

BAXTER (CONT'D)

My name is Pertul Baxter and from this moment on I am the Captain of this station. While I am filling this position, I expect this station to function at its full potential at every moment of the day. I will not stand any kind of inefficiency from anybody part of this crew. From visitors and passengers I expect nothing short of abiding every single rule and law set to this station. The crew will also follow the formalities set to station functions and dealings with superior officers so that the station will run as it is supposed to. I want you to remember that what comes to authority, first comes God and then there is me, right above him. Good day. Close channel.

Tanith closes the channel and nods to Baxter.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I will now go to my office. I wish that I'm not to be disturbed.

TANITH

Yes, sir.

Baxter exits to his office.

After a moment Tanith turns to Kri who is doing something scientific on his console. She offers Kri her hand.

TANITH (CONT'D)

I don't think we've actually been introduced yet. I'm Tanith Yannbulytshev.

Kri watches her hand for a moment, not knowing how to react to the gesture, but decides then to shake her hand.

LIMB

KRI

Kri. I really wish you'd ignore that Smith part. It's made up by people who wished to make their world a little more like they like it.

(nods towards captains
office)

So, what do you think of him?

TANITH

He's starting to get on my nerves. And that's an accomplishment. Every single moment spent on this station he has questioned the crew and gave chauvinist remarks towards me. Acts like a spoilt kid.

KRI

Which he is, I've heard. Money is no problem and either he or his father has bought him a career in the space force. We got plenty of those back in Ashtar as well.

TANITH

Where from Ashtar were you from?

Kri pauses before answering. His expression turns even glummer.

KRI

Central planet.

TANITH

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up any painful memories.

KRI

Yeah. Well, the memories are the ones that are good. The reality is the painful one.

(beat, MORE)

LIMB

KRI (CONT'D)

I was in a business trip in the Earth side of the border in an excavation in Dren III. Then all of the madness happened and the border stayed close for so long that I had to start looking for a job. I have to say that you humans weren't too welcoming and I got no help whatsoever. Finally I realized that only place where I could find a permanent job was on space force that swore to be more than a military organization. Fortunately I managed to make my way into science, and here I am.

TANITH

Did you lost much in the explosion?

KRI

What kind question is that? I lost everything! My home town was only sixty kilometers from the explosion site. I doubt there aren't even ashes of what used to be my family, friends and home. You see, we were proud of the fact that we were a family that never left the planet even to take a vacation. When I had to take the trip, I just waited to get back home.

(beat)

But it just isn't there. So I decided to stay here even now when the border's back open. I don't think I could face seeing the remains of the planet. I'm dying to get back to Ashtar world, but not until it's more peaceful again.

TANITH

It must feel so bitter. You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to.

LIMB

KRI

I've been thinking about it a lot as you can probably imagine. I do believe that everyone acted in the moment as they saw is the best. But...

The feeling starts to overwhelm Kri as so many times before. Tanith looks at him with sympathy, but he ignores it.

KRI (CONT'D)

One cannot think what it would be like if it was different... I don't approve what Captain Stinson did. He shouldn't have tried the hyperdrive in atmosphere... And I can't forgive him.

Kri gathers himself for a moment and then returns to his normal expression of bored glumness. He turns back to his work.

KRI (CONT'D)

But what's happened has happened. No point in going about it again and again. It's easier when I concentrate on work.

Tanith shifts uneasily in her chair. What was supposed to be a nice introduction had turned into an uncomfortable scene and she's feeling bad about raising it without being able to give enough sympathy. She isn't sure if anybody could.

INT. LIMB - MEDICAL WARD

The medical ward is a huge space with about 200 beds. Each bed is in its own alcove that can be completely closed and locked.

Near the entrance are doors to surgery, quarantine and chief medical officer's office.

The entrance is its own larger open area where is a small counter behind which a nurse is taking admissions.

LIMB

Acting chief of medical DESI RUMFOORD takes a look at new incomes. They are mostly minor injuries.

Desi has a hardened face showing clear signs of aging even though they originate more from hard life than actual age even though there is plenty of that as well. She is sort of short but nothing phenomenal. Her hair is short and chronically messed up.

Tanith and Baxter enter. Baxter walks in his usual pompous posture and Tanith little behind trying to look as far from pompous as humanly possible.

Baxter goes to Desi and waits for a salute. No such thing comes. Instead that he gets a cold stare in the eyes from Desi. He doesn't like that.

BAXTER

You probably know who I am and why am I here.

DESI

I suppose so.

Her tone is at least as cold as Baxter's. He starts to feel very uncomfortable under Desi's stare and starts pace back and forth.

BAXTER

I took a long look at your record and I have to say that I'm not at all pleased. I read that you were present when the former medical chief made malpractice that forced him to be relieved of duty.

DESI

That's correct.

BAXTER

I'd say that that undermines your credibility to function in this position.

DESI

The investigation board found my actions in the matter to be correct.

LIMB

BAXTER

Isn't it true that you in fact did nothing?

DESI

Absolutely. And that was the appropriate course of action for me. Doctor Scott was in charge of the procedure and I was just an assistant. I was following the chain of command. Isn't that what you appreciate in your crew?

Baxter stops for a beat in his pacing as Desi hit home with her remark. He tries to hide this best as he can and continues his pacing.

BAXTER

Nevertheless, your job as an assistant was also to review doctor's decisions and point out possible errors.

DESI

I did not see an error. Doctor Scott made a choice that was either to save the patient's life or kill him. It was a long shot and he lost. But it was the patient's only hope. I was not responsible.

BAXTER

But wasn't it so, that the patient could've been saved certainly had Doctor Scott chosen to take that course of action.

DESI

Yes, but it would've cost most of patient's brains. He would've remained as vegetable for the rest of his life.

LIMB

BAXTER

Be that as it may, I would've liked to see you gone with Doctor Scott. Under normal circumstances I wouldn't even give you a chance, but I have my orders to promote you to the head to medical, so that's what I'm hereby doing.

Baxter marches out. Tanith gives Desi a reassuring smile, but Desi ignores it. Tanith follows Baxter.

INT. LIMB - LIFT

Tanith and Baxter enter the lift. The doors close.

BAXTER

I want to see that chief engineer right away.

TANITH

Very well. Main Engineering.

A moment passes in silence.

BAXTER

I took the time to check out that Ashtar of us as well. I have to say that I don't trust him too much.

What a surprise, Tanith thinks and rolls her eyes but is careful to hide it from Baxter.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

He has openly admitted that he thinks Captain Stinson did a mistake in Ashtar homeworld. I hardly think that it's officer's business to question his superior officer like that. He could prove out to be an unstable element in this environment.

LIMB

TANITH

Kri has undergone extensive psychological screenings when he joined the space force. And he had to undergo even further tests when he made it to become an officer. In addition to that, he was observed closely during the beginning of his service. I honestly think that we can trust him.

BAXTER

I trust no Ashtar.

Fortunately the doors open at this moment and Tanith can draw her attention to something else than hitting her Captain.

INT. LIMB - MAIN ENGINEERING

The main engineering section is basically a long corridor over hundred meters long and fifteen meters wide. The other side of the corridor is basically a wall of consoles attached to the power core and main computer that physically is a monstrous machine.

Dozens of engineers work constantly on the consoles, but still most of them have to use and check several of them. It's very active place in where a lot of people are constantly running around and talking with raised voices so they can hear each other above the engine noise.

The other side of the corridor is filled with tool cabinets, doors to offices and holes in the wall that function as accesses to the actual engine room and into the engines themselves for maintenance and repairs.

Tanith and Baxter enter to this sea of activity. Baxter tries to locate the chief, but it's hopeless.

Tanith notices this and presses a button in a wall console.

TANITH

Larry Play to port lifts.

LIMB

Her voice echoes throughout the engineering and it doesn't take long until LARRY PLAY comes through the crowd.

Larry is a usual looking fellow in his mid-30's. He likes to keep the old fashioned working engineer look, but doesn't overdo it. He smiles as he sees the new captain and Tanith.

LARRY

Sorry it took me awhile. I have a power distributor down and it needs my loving care.

BAXTER

Why weren't you in the reception as you were supposed to, Mr. Play?

LARRY

Well excuse me, but I had a complete power failure in the lower sectors at the time. That needed to be done fast before the complaints started to come flooding in. You can believe me, it's not nice.

BAXTER

Why didn't you put one of your subordinates or a robot to do the work when you had more important things to do?

LARRY

Couldn't have done that, I'm afraid. All of my team is pretty tied up because of the refits. The group who came to install them did what they were to do and then left it up to us to make it all actually to work with each other. Human and Ashtar designs aren't too compatible, you know. And robots? I don't trust them one single bit. Everything that runs with electricity breaks for sure. And it usually does so right now. I wouldn't want one of those things breaking up to me while doing something critical and with that blow the place up.

LIMB

BAXTER

Don't you like your work, Mr. Play? I bet there would be plenty of people who would like to take it from your hands. People who would find the time to attend important station activities.

LARRY

(smiles)

Oh, now don't get me wrong. I curse the day I decided to take on to this line of work, but it's the only thing I could imagine doing. What I'm just saying is that I don't respect machines. At all.

BAXTER

I think you should, Mr. Play. I think you, as the rest of the people should appreciate the achievements that our great republic has made to better the lives of everyone living in it.

Larry can't believe what he's hearing. He thought these kinds of fellows only existed in recruit posters. He looks at Tanith to see if Baxter's for real and she shrugs.

Larry turns back to Baxter.

LARRY

Very well, Captain. But I would ask you to not to call me Mr. Play. I'm not too fond of my name, as you may imagine. I've suffered for it throughout my childhood.

BAXTER

So you don't even like your name, Mr. Play. I think everyone should be proud of their name and their family. That's one of the most profound values I've been raised to.

LIMB

LARRY

I don't doubt it. If that's all, I'd really need to get to work on that distributor. Did you know that without power the only way to operate doors is using hands and the people won't take that very easily?

BAXTER

That is all, Mr. Play. I presume that from now on you'll be where you're expected to be.

LARRY

Yes, Captain.

Baxter turns to leave, but turns back to Larry suddenly.

BAXTER

And, Mr. Play.

Larry has already directed his attention to other matters and is surprised to hear that voice and that name again. He nevertheless turns back to Baxter.

LARRY

Yes?

BAXTER

I presume that you will assign someone to take that warning sign off. It does not belong here.

Baxter points to an old warning sign warning people of low gravity.

LARRY

Well, we've left it there as a kind of memory of the original station. This is the very center of the old station so the gravity was lower here when the station still made the artificial gravity using centrifugal force.

LIMB

BAXTER

(coldly)

Mr. Play, if you want memories, then go to a museum. This station represents the latest technology and discipline the space force has to offer and that old sign doesn't fit to that image. I will return tomorrow to make sure it has been removed.

Larry is about to argue, but thinks the better of it. He knows that it wouldn't have any effect anyway.

LARRY

Yes, sir.

BAXTER

Excellent.

Baxter enters a lift and Tanith follows. Tanith turns towards the doors before Baxter does and Larry rolls his eyes to Tanith. Tanith smiles back and signs him to stop it before Baxter sees it.

The lift doors close. Larry sighs of relief. He shakes his head and takes some tools and a rope from a nearby cabinet.

He looks around to see any idle engineers and spots one.

LARRY

Hitoshama!

KAIYA HITOSHAMA is a young engineer. She has just come to the station and is a bit baffled from the sheer size and volume of the machinery. She comes to Larry.

HITOSHAMA

Yes, sir?

LARRY

You're new, right?

HITOSHAMA

That's correct. I graduated a couple of months ago and this is my first assignment.

LIMB

LARRY

Good. You're with me. We have to check out power distributor C7.

HITOSHAMA

Wouldn't a robot do the job a lot faster?

LARRY

(smiles)

No. And besides, you so called engineers these days don't even know what this job is all about. Come with me and you see what it's like to actually repair something and not just stare at a computer screen.

Larry takes off. Hitoshama looks behind him feeling a bit baffled, but takes a toolkit and goes after him.

LARRY (CONT'D)

C7 is in a really nasty place, so we'll see if you're really up for the job.

They go to one of the access tunnels to the engine room.

INT. LIMB - ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The engine room is huge machinery crammed in as tight as they possibly can. Between the monstrous machines are dimly light corridors just wide enough for a person to walk on them. Ladders and various crossroads make the corridors a huge maze between the machines of various sizes.

In some points there are control panels for general use or for maintenance of a specific machine. Because the technology comes from many different sources there are sometimes large caverns between machines when they're not possible to get any closer. In those places the corridors have railings to prevent engineers from dropping down or get electrocuted or fried from touching the wrong machine.

Larry smiles as he gets back to the maze. He really likes the place. He checks that Hitoshama following him and starts to lead her to the maze.

LIMB

Hitoshama watches around her in amazement. She hasn't seen anything of this magnitude ever before. She looks up and down and sees how the same kinds of corridors are going below and above her in many levels.

LARRY

Been here before?

HITOSHAMA

No, sir.

LARRY

Well, these are the famous engineering corridors. They speak a lot about them in the academy, but you won't even get a slightest idea on what it's really like before you've experienced yourself. The engine room contains over 600 kilometers of these corridors on 25 levels. To familiarize all this is virtually impossible so you'll have to have your hand console with the map with you at all times. I expect you brought one?

Hitoshama gets a horrible feeling when she realizes that she didn't bring one.

HITOSHAMA

(embarrassed)

No, sir.

Larry throws one to her over his shoulder. Hitoshama catches it.

LARRY

Never, ever come to the corridors without one. I can't stress the issue enough. Don't even consider coming here without your hand console. It can tell you to where you should be heading and always points you to the nearest exit.

Larry points to an orange touch button on the ceiling of the corridor.

LIMB

LARRY

You see these buttons?

HITOSHAMA

Yes.

LARRY

They're scattered all over the corridors. It's an emergency signal. If you push one you'll immediately cause an alarm in the main engineering and we can immediately see where you are and send a rescue party immediately.

Hitoshama looks at her console and is still is a bit ashamed for not taking it herself.

HITOSHAMA

I'm sorry about the console, sir. I just didn't think about it when you called me so suddenly.

She sees something strange in her console and stops.

HITOSHAMA (CONT'D)

Wait a minute! This is odd.

Larry stops as well and looks at Hitoshama.

HITOSHAMA (CONT'D)

I'm picking up an unusual signal.

Larry comes to look at her console also and scans the area with his own console as well.

LARRY

That's strange. What do you make of it?

HITOSHAMA

I don't know. I've never seen a signal like that. What is it?

LIMB

LARRY

I'm not entirely sure, but I have a hunch that this is something I'd expect to find from a history book. It looks like radio waves.

HITOSHAMA

Radio?

LARRY

An old communication method involving electrical signals broadcasted in high frequencies. But it hasn't been used in ages. We'd better check it out. I'm sure that whatever it is, it shouldn't be here.

HITOSHAMA

It's coming from that way.

Larry takes off to the direction that Hitoshama indicates and she follows.

After a moment they come to a massive cavern where there is nothing but empty space in all directions. They can't see how big it actually is because only the corridor is lighted.

HITOSHAMA (CONT'D)

Why there is so much wasted space in here?

Their voices echo eerily in the cavern.

LARRY

It's because of the Ashtar machinery. Human machines are designed so that they can be packed pretty tightly together so they won't waste space. And so is the Ashtar machinery. Unfortunately the designs aren't a 100% compatible, so there are few caverns like this. I hate to say that this is one of the largest though.

They come to the middle of the bridge corridor when Hitoshama stops.

LIMB

HITOSHAMA

It's right beneath us.

Larry peeks over the railing, but can't see to the bottom of the cavern because of the darkness.

LARRY

Give me a flashlight.

HITOSHAMA

I didn't bring a flashlight. Don't you have one?

LARRY

I didn't bring one either. Are you sure you don't have one?

Hitoshama takes a quick look at her toolkit, but she knows it already.

HITOSHAMA

No, sir.

LARRY

Never come to the corridors without a flashlight.

HITOSHAMA

Says you.

Larry takes another peek down the cavern, but it's hopeless to see anything.

HITOSHAMA (CONT'D)

So what do we do now?

LARRY

I want to know what's down there and I want to know it now. It doesn't belong here, that's for sure. I'd really like it away from my engines whatever it is.

HITOSHAMA

How? It's impossible to see down there.

Larry ponders the problem for a moment and makes a decision.

LIMB

LARRY

I'll go down there.

Larry takes the rope that was hanging from his belt and starts to attach it to the railing.

HITOSHAMA

Oh? So you have got a rope and the tools, but you couldn't bring yourself around to taking a flashlight.

Larry glares at her, but she smiles at it.

HITOSHAMA (CONT'D)

But seriously, it could be dangerous down there. If you touch the wrong machine, you could get fried in a heartbeat.

LARRY

Whatever is down there hasn't, so I presume that there's nothing lethal there.

Hitoshama takes a worried look down the cavern. Larry finishes attaching the rope and tries his weight on it. He climbs to the railing.

LARRY (CONT'D)

When I shout, pull me up again. If I shout horribly, don't bother.

HITOSHAMA

What if I'd go? I'm lighter.

LARRY

Are you making remarks about my weight?

HITOSHAMA

No, I just...

LIMB

LARRY

(interrupts)

I'm sure you are right, but don't you think that I have a little bit more experience to face whatever's down there?

HITOSHAMA

That depends on what the whatever is.

LARRY

That's true, but I think I at least have better chances at getting it out of there safely. I won't let a rookie to go down to the engine core.

HITOSHAMA

I don't know about that safe bit. You forgot to take the flashlight.

Larry sighs and goes to the other side of the railing and prepares for the decent.

LARRY

Are you going to remind me of that flashlight for the rest of my life?

HITOSHAMA

(smiles)

Yes.

LARRY

Brilliant. Just remember to pull me out when I shout.

HITOSHAMA

Wait! How are you going to see down there without the flashlight?

Larry thinks for a moment.

LARRY

Give me your hand console.

Hitoshama complies.

LIMB

HITOSHAMA

What're you going to do with it?

LARRY

I'm going to set the screen brightness to maximum for both of the consoles. That should give me at least something to work with.

HITOSHAMA

That's quite clever. How did you figure that out?

LARRY

(grins)

Experience.

Before Hitoshama has anything to reply, Larry starts the decent downwards. Hitoshama watches him go and safeguards the rope.

The rope is made of a material that you can get an easy grasp of, so Larry is able to decent fast but safely.

After a moment he reaches the bottom. He feels the ground with his foot and notices that its plane and that he can safely walk there.

He takes the consoles and sets the brightness to maximum and gets some visibility, but not too much.

He looks around and after a moment he notices a package in the ground with an antenna sticking out from the side of it.

He kneels beside it but makes sure that he doesn't touch it yet. He scans it. He looks up and sees that Hitoshama is watching from the corridor.

LARRY

Is there a computer console anywhere near you?

Hitoshama looks around and notices one just where the cavern ends.

LIMB

HITOSHAMA

Yes.

LARRY

Go there and make a cross reference to the databanks. I found a package that has some sort of powdery substance in it.

Hitoshama runs to the console. She taps in a few commands.

HITOSHAMA

I'm ready.

Larry makes some further scans.

LARRY

Ok, the stuff is comprised of about 76% of potassium nitrate, 13% of carbon and 11% of sulfur.

Hitoshama taps in the numbers and waits for a result. The console BEEPS.

HITOSHAMA

I have a match.

(beat)

That's odd. this one is from the historical database as well.

LARRY

What's the prognosis?

HITOSHAMA

It's apparently an old substance known as black powder.

LARRY

Well, that's nice. What does it do?

Hitoshama reads the computer screen further and suddenly her eyes widen.

HITOSHAMA

Explodes.

LIMB

Larry jumps back, loses his balance and falls on his back.

He gets up and scans the package further. He sighs. He is even more careful. He doesn't care to fall down on it.

LARRY

Tell me more. How powerful is it? Does it combust easily? Anything!

HITOSHAMA

It's not too powerful. It was used in low-powered weapons. It doesn't detonate too easily. It was mainly used in excavations of soft alloy.

LARRY

Check what the nearest machines are and how well they are protected. I want to know if this can cause any damage.

Hitoshama taps more commands to the computer and reads.

HITOSHAMA

It's one of the major air vents. Very well protected. I need to know how much of the stuff you've got there to know whether it can cause damage.

LARRY

About a kilo.

Hitoshama taps in a few calculations.

HITOSHAMA

Couldn't even scratch the paint. Only danger could be the smoke that could cause something in the equipment. And it could cause a fire alarm which causes the immediate shutdown of this part of the engine room. It could cripple the station for hours. But if it explodes with you in there, there wouldn't be much from you to be buried.

LIMB

LARRY

How soothing to know. Have you any idea as to what the radio device does in this?

HITOSHAMA

I was just reading about ancient bombs and it was usual that radio devices were used as remote detonators.

LARRY

Great. What if we'd just block the signal?

HITOSHAMA

That could be the exact thing that signals the thing to explode.

Larry sighs and ponders the situation again.

LARRY

Hitoshama.

HITOSHAMA

Yes, sir?

LARRY

Come a bit closer so we can talk easier.

Hitoshama goes back to about the middle of the bridge corridor and peeks down to Larry.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm going to stay here and try to get as much information about this thing as I can. In the meanwhile, you go back to the main engineering and gather a group to analyze the signal and build something to simulate it. Then bring it here. And take something we can carry this thing with. Even if it doesn't help if it explodes, I don't still want to carry it around with my bare hands.

LIMB

HITOSHAMA

Yes, sir. What are you planning?

LARRY

I want to take this thing to main engineering where we can blow it up in a controlled environment. Oh and remember: When you complete the transmitter, do not turn it on! It could detonate the bomb!

HITOSHAMA

Yes, sir. Um, how am I going to get to main engineering when you have both of the hand consoles?

LARRY

Just follow the plates on the floor. The smaller the number, the closer you are to an exit.

HITOSHAMA

Okay. What if the bomb explodes while I'm gone?

Larry watches her and shrugs. The question doesn't require an answer. Hitoshama understands and starts to leave.

LARRY

Hitoshama!

Hitoshama looks at him once again over the railing.

Larry doesn't like the idea, but realizes that there is no choice.

LARRY

You'd probably better inform the Captain.

Hitoshama nods and is off. Larry looks at the bomb and sighs. He sits beside it.

LIMB

INT. LIMB - MAIN ENGINEERING

Baxter enters from a lift in fury.

Larry is just coming from an access tunnel on his back. He carefully moves a bag with the bomb over him and a technician takes the bag. The technician quickly takes the bomb to a nearby table.

Larry climbs out of the tunnel and helps Hitoshama out as well. Baxter charges to Larry immediately.

BAXTER

What is the meaning of all this, Mr. Play? How is it possible that you've allowed a bomb to be placed in my station?

LARRY

Maybe we should discuss that later. My first priority right now is to make it harmless.

BAXTER

How is it possible that our sensors haven't detected it?

LARRY

The bomb is made of antique technology and materials that we don't scan for anymore.

BAXTER

How is it possible that anyone could get to the engine room to do this? I suspect inside help.

LARRY

Look around you. This place is in a constant state coordinated chaos. Nobody can look at all of the people who come and go. And the engine room maze is easier to hide in than to keep visible.

LIMB

Another technician comes to Larry and gives him some kind of complex container. Larry takes it to the table with the bomb. Baxter is close behind.

LARRY (CONT'D)

This container should block all radio signals and dampen the explosion. I've left a transmitter to the exact place where the bomb was found so even if someone is tracking the signal it's impossible to tell that the bomb has been moved and doesn't blow it up because of that. That of course isn't much help if he's decided to blow it up right now anyway.

BAXTER

You mean that you do not know when it is supposed to explode?

LARRY

That's right.

BAXTER

What if the time is now?

LARRY

At least we won't miss it.

Baxter takes a nervous glimpse at the bomb and then turns to leave.

BAXTER

I am too valuable person to stay in potential danger. I will monitor the situation from the bridge and I expect to be advised of your progress at all times.

LARRY

(sarcastically)

Of course you are.

Baxter doesn't catch the tone as he's too busy to leave. He enters a lift quickly and is gone.

LIMB

LARRY (CONT'D)

Well thank you very much for help.

Hitoshama comes to Larry worriedly.

HITOSHAMA

Shouldn't we cover the bomb already?

Larry thinks for a moment.

LARRY

I think I have an idea that might pay off.

He goes to a wall communication panel and presses a button.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Security.

LARRY

I presume that you're aware of our situation.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Completely.

LARRY

I think I could isolate the frequency so that you could make a station wide scan to reveal the receiver.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Could that reveal that we've found the bomb?

LARRY

It's impossible to say. For all we know, he/she/they might already know about it, but determining from the fact that we're having this conversation I'd say that they don't know. However, I can't say how long this goes on like this. I don't even know if there is a person to make the decision.

LIMB

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Do you assume that we should take the chance?

LARRY

I don't know, but I'll assume that we all want to catch the guy who did this instead of just standing and waiting for this thing to blow.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Agreed. Please resume. I will notify the bridge.

Larry lets the button go and the channel closes. He turns to Hitoshama and signs her to help him with the bomb.

LARRY

We need to do this quick. We can't keep the bomb in the container if we're going to isolate the signal, but we need to get it inside the container as soon as possible when the scan is done in case the detonator notices that something's wrong and decides to blow this thing.

Hitoshama nods and Larry takes the bomb. He keeps it just over the container and Hitoshama prepares to seal the container as soon as Larry drops it.

A third ENGINEER comes with a scanner and works furiously with it. He is definitely not happy about having to be in such a close proximity with the bomb.

ENGINEER

Got it. The frequency is 103.7 megahertz FM band.

LARRY

Open a channel to security.

The engineer goes to the communications panel.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Security.

LIMB

LARRY

The frequency is 103.7 megahertz FM band. Are you ready to do the scan?

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

We are prepared.

LARRY

Ok. Let me count down for you so we know when to panic. How long does the scan take?

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

About three seconds.

Larry looks at Hitoshama. He doesn't like it.

LARRY

Guess we have to live with that. Or die if it goes to that.

(beat)

Counting down. Three. Two. One.

INT. LIMB - BRIDGE

Tanith, Kri and Baxter are in their positions. Several n.d. crewmembers work in the rear consoles.

Kri works his console.

KRI

I have located the destination of the signal. It is in transport ship Grosh from the former Ashtar Empire.

TANITH

It's in docking port 42.

Baxter opens a communications channel from the panel in his chair.

BAXTER

Security!

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

We're on our way, Captain.

LIMB

Tanith's console BEEPS.

LARRY'S COMM VOICE
Engineering to bridge.

Tanith opens the channel.

TANITH
Speak.

LARRY'S COMM VOICE
I was just informed that the signal has
ceased. Apparently whoever handled the
matter tried to blow up the bomb.

TANITH
Is everything alright down there?

LARRY'S COMM VOICE
Yeah. It was a close call, but we
managed to seal the bomb before it
happened. It's sitting in a container
now with no intentions to blow up in
near future.

Tanith turns to Baxter. He is furious. He rises from his
chair.

BAXTER
Get rid of the bomb right away!

LARRY'S COMM VOICE
Gladly, sir. Engineering out.

As the channel closes, Tanith's console lets out an alarm and
she turns quickly back to her console.

TANITH
Grosh is trying to break free from the
docking clamps! We should let them go
before they rip the station apart.

BAXTER
No! Hold it with everything you've got!
Under no circumstances we'll let the
bastards go.

LIMB

Tanith can't believe this.

TANITH

Captain?

BAXTER

Do not let them go!

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Bridge, this is security.

Baxter goes to his chair to open the channel.

BAXTER

This is the bridge.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

We're at port 42 now, but the computer has sealed it off because they are apparently trying to separate by force.

The bridge takes a mighty jolt that nearly throws Baxter off his feet. Master alarm starts to yell.

BAXTER

Can't you bypass?

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

There is a personnel airlock for emergencies, but by the time my people will get to the spacesuits it will most likely be too late.

BAXTER

You don't need air.

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

That is correct.

BAXTER

Then you will go on your own.

LIMB

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

I would advise against that, Captain. I am just a one individual and we have no information as to how many people the ship contains.

BAXTER

Go! Now!

WENDY'S COMM VOICE

Yes, Captain.

Baxter closes the channel in frustration. The station starts to shake and rumble. Tanith and Kri exchange a worried look. Tanith turns to Baxter.

TANITH

Captain, we need to release the ship. It's a big transport vessel with powerful engines. It could rip the docking claws and possibly half of the module right off the station!

BAXTER

I am getting tired of your attitude, Miss Yannbulytshev! We will not let the bastards go!

Another jolt shakes the station and more alarms start to flash and yell.

LARRY'S COMM VOICE

Bridge? What the hell is happening over there?! The station is falling apart! If you don't let go of that ship right now, it will probably ruin half of the station and I will not feel like repairing it all.

Tanith looks at her console that is practically a flashing red light by now. Kri's is the same. She looks at Baxter once more. He has a determinate face. He is not going to give up.

The shaking increases and her console sends out a mighty whine. In a flash she makes up her mind and taps in a few commands.

LIMB

Immediately most of the warning lights die out and the master alarm silences. The station doesn't even shake anymore.

After a moment Baxter watches in fury and horror as the Grosh takes distance to the station. He turns to Tanith.

BAXTER

What happened?

Tanith replies without hesitating.

TANITH

The docking clamps failed. There was nothing I could do.

BAXTER

Fire!

Tanith works for a moment. They see from the viewscreen how she manages to take a shot, but before the torpedo reaches it, the massive ship phases out of normal space and goes to hyperdrive. The torpedo vanishes with the transport.

Baxter kicks his chair in frustration.

BAXTER

Shit!

Tanith watches her console in bewilderment. She thought she had a clear shot. Kri works with his console.

KRI

Captain, I believe we did manage to damage the ship. It has materialized again and seems to be unable to reenter hyperdrive.

BAXTER

Where is it?

KRI

Just a few thousand kilometers from here, but taking distance as fast as she can.

LIMB

BAXTER

Miss Yannbulytshev, prepare the shuttle.
We're going to pursuit.

Tanith turns to Baxter in surprise.

TANITH

Me? But I'm not a pilot!

BAXTER

What? Who is then?

INT. LIMB - DOCKING PORTS

Wendy comes in from the personnel airlock. A group of worried security officers waits for her.

OFFICER 1

I can't believe it. It just took off.
It's amazing that you managed to keep in
the docking bay without being sucked
out!

WENDY

It is not anything we should divide our
attention to.

OFFICER 2

Are you alright?

WENDY

It was just a bit of wind. Hardly
anything capable of damaging my systems.

Wendy goes to the nearest commpanel and opens a channel.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Bridge, this is security. The ship broke
free. I was unable to board it.

BAXTER'S COMM VOICE

We know. Fortunately Miss Yannbulytshev
was able to damage its hyperdrive. It is
escaping with normal drive only, so we
are going to pursue it with a shuttle
and you will join us.

LIMB

WENDY

As you wish.

BAXTER'S COMM VOICE

And one more thing, lieutenant.

WENDY

Yes, Captain?

BAXTER'S COMM VOICE

How fast you can learn to drive a shuttle?

WENDY

Captain?

INT. LIMB - SHUTTLE BAY

Tanith is waiting outside the airlock to a shuttle when Wendy joins her from a lift.

TANITH

You mean you really learned to pilot a shuttle in ten minutes?

WENDY

Sort of.

TANITH

Sort of? I don't think I like the direction this is going.

WENDY

I was able to familiarize and memorize all the basic functions needed to pilot a shuttle. However, because of the lack of allocated time I was not able to acquire any kind of experience on how these functions work in practical situations.

TANITH

Perfect...

LIMB

WENDY

Where is Captain? I thought he was attending this flight.

TANITH

Yes, he is. He insisted it, but told me to go ahead and then castled into his office. I just can't understand what goes in his mind. I mean...

Tanith is interrupted by the arrival of Baxter from the same lift Wendy used. He doesn't regard the waiting officers but marches directly into the shuttle. Tanith and Wendy follow.

INT. SHUTTLE

Baxter is already sat to the captain's chair when Tanith and Wendy come into the control cabinet.

Baxter turns to Wendy.

BAXTER

Miss Yannbulytshev informs me that the pilots for this shuttle have not arrived yet, but that you are capable of piloting this shuttle.

WENDY

Technically that is correct. However, I must warn you that...

BAXTER

(interrupts)

Take your seat and do your duty! The Grosh isn't coming any closer.

Wendy takes the pilot position. Tanith sits to the co-pilot chair.

WENDY

Initiating the launch procedures.

Wendy works for a moment and the shuttle comes to life with a soft hum.

LIMB

She takes her time, though. She makes all the procedures very carefully and even Tanith grows a little impatient.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Separation.

EXT. LIMB - DOCKING BAY

The shuttle separates from the docking clamps and slowly goes forward in the docking tunnel where several other ships and vessels are docked as well.

So very slowly.

INT. SHUTTLE

Baxter nearly rips the armrest of his chair when he notices that Wendy has no intention of increasing speed.

BAXTER

What in world is this?! We're in a hurry!

Wendy doesn't react to Baxter's growing frustration.

WENDY

I am aware of that. This is just what I tried to warn you about. I have familiarized myself only with the example flight found from the end of the appendix of the first chapter of the Shuttle Pilot's Handbook, Volume 1. These are not the circumstances presented in the book.

BAXTER

Just step on it! You know how to do that, do you?

WENDY

If you refer to utilizing full speed, I do. But I do not recommend that.

LIMB

BAXTER

Now!

(to Tanith)

You and your brilliant idea.

At that moment a lot of thoughts race into Tanith's mind, but every one of them would result a court marshal, so instead of killing Baxter, she turns to Wendy. Wendy hesitates for a moment, but her programming only allows one thing.

WENDY

As you command, Captain.

Baxter looks pleased of himself when Wendy taps in the command and in a blink of a eye the long docking tunnel just disappears and stars begin to move slowly on the screen.

BAXTER

How much lead do they have?

Tanith reads her console.

TANITH

Only about two million kilometers. Their speed matches ours.

BAXTER

Weapons?

TANITH

It is a transport ship. No weaponry.

BAXTER

Could we fire from here?

TANITH

This is a shuttle, not a warship,
Captain.

Baxter falls deeper into his chair. He is not happy.

BAXTER

Could we outrun them with hyperdrive?

LIMB

WENDY

That is not a plausible scenario. Even the shortest jump would take us several million kilometers in front of them. They would alter their course before we could get to them.

BAXTER

That is not a problem. We just need to get them to slow down for long enough.

Tanith is surprised to hear this.

TANITH

Captain?

Baxter ignores this and keeps his focus on Wendy.

BAXTER

Can you do it, lieutenant?

WENDY

In theory, but...

BAXTER

(interrupts)

Then do it! Shortest possible hyperjump. Then a full turn and best possible speed towards the Grosh!

Wendy looks at Tanith. Tanith smiles reassuringly to Wendy. She's been there. Finally Wendy turns back to her controls.

WENDY

(quietly)

This scenario was not presented in the example flight found from the end of the appendix of the first chapter of the Shuttle Pilot's Handbook, Volume 1.

Tanith looks at Baxter, but he doesn't react. He has a determinate look in his face and maybe even a trace of smile. This is what he has the hunger to do. He can almost imagine himself in the command of a warship.

LIMB

WENDY

I must warn you that this jump will be somewhat different from what you've experienced. Because of the small mass of the vessel and the shortness of the jump, it will have unpleasant side effects.

Tanith doesn't like the sound of this. She is about to ask more details from Wendy, but is too late.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Energizing.

Tanith immediately drops to a limp body and everything around her just turn into a chaotic blur. She is horrified by the experience and is about to scream when it all ends as abruptly as it began.

She quickly tries to get herself around to the real world, but her head is still blurry. She looks at Wendy and isn't too surprised to see that Wendy is not affected. Then she turns to look at Baxter and her spirits rise immeasurably when she sees that Baxter is crawling back to his chair from which he obviously has fallen from.

Baxter manages to get himself to his chair.

BAXTER

Report.

Tanith has cleared her head to the most part and examines her console.

TANITH

Grosh is slowing down. It has detected our jump.

WENDY

We are approaching at full speed.

Tanith leans to Wendy so that she can speak to her without Baxter hearing them.

TANITH

Not bad from a rookie.

LIMB

WENDY

As a matter of fact, because of my inexperience, there was a five second delay in the turn after the jump.

TANITH

I think we can skip the court marshal.

Tanith goes back to her console. Baxter looks at them and doesn't like this sort of distraction.

Tanith's eyes widen with surprise.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Two warships have materialized to intercept the Grosh!

She turns to Baxter, who smiles. He stands up from his chair.

Tanith looks at her panel again.

TANITH (CONT'D)

The Groth has stopped. I think we got them without bloodshed.

Baxter ignores the comment.

BAXTER

Maintain course and speed. Magnify to the main viewer and open a channel to both warships.

TANITH

Channel open.

BAXTER

This is Captain Baxter to warships. Fire at will!

Tanith shoots up from her chair.

TANITH

What!?

LIMB

We can see in the screen how the massive warships begin to bombard the transporter. It doesn't take it very long and the transporter is destroyed in a matter of seconds.

This time Tanith really has it and she turns to Baxter in fury. She simply can't control her rage anymore, but screams from the top of her voice.

TANITH (CONT'D)

What was the idea in that! What?! They had stopped already! We could've made interrogations and find out what all of this was about! We don't even know if there were innocent bystanders aboard that ship! We have nothing at all!

Baxter is not about to stand that kind of talk for a second, but turns as about as red as a lobster being boiled.

BAXTER

Listen to me, Commander! I am a superior officer and you have no right to question my orders! I have no intention of explaining my orders, not now and not in the future! Sit down, man your post and shut up or I'll relieve you from duty before we reach the station!

Tanith is about to sit down, but Baxter goes to another round.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

If I see a stunt like this from you again, you won't even get a chance to be a passenger in a space vehicle without an armed guard! If I'd get the chance, I'd demote you where you stand, but unfortunately those decisions have to be run through admiralty! I've never witnessed such a behavior in my life!

Baxter's another volley of accusations really heat up Tanith again and she is about to respond.

LIMB

WENDY

Excuse me.

BAXTER

What?!

WENDY

I am sorry to interrupt your conversation, but may I direct your attention to an escape pod that was launched from the Grosh.

Baxter looks once again at Tanith, but has calmed down for the most part.

BAXTER

Now sit down!

Tanith sits down and Baxter returns to his chair. She taps in a few commands to her console.

TANITH

I read one faint life sign on board.

BAXTER

Set an intercept course.

WENDY

Yes, Captain.

TANITH

(quietly)

Should we blow that up too?

BAXTER

I heard that, Commander.

Tanith slams his hand to her console to sooth her nerves and calms down a bit.

EXT. SPACE

We see the shuttle closing on the small escape pod.

LIMB

INT. SHUTTLE

As before.

TANITH

There is one Ashtar on board. He seems to be unconscious, but otherwise in relatively good shape. What should we do?

Tanith waits for a reply. None comes. She turns to Baxter who watches her blankly. Apparently he doesn't have a clue. He turns to Wendy.

BAXTER

Lieutenant, initiate the usual rescue procedures.

Wendy turns to Baxter.

WENDY

Captain? May I remind you that...

BAXTER

(interrupts)

Yes, yes, I know, I know. The first appendix of the first chapter of the Shuttle Pilot's Manual, Volume 1.

TANITH

You are a Captain. I thought knowing these sort of things were a part of the rank.

BAXTER

Shut up.

INT. LIMB - STEVE'S

Tanith is drowning her frustration to a drink by the counter. Larry, Wendy and Desi are there with her. Steve sits in his chair behind the counter.

She takes a long drink from her glass and puts it back to the counter.

LIMB

TANITH

I mean, that bomb wasn't even so dangerous!

Larry is a bit uncomfortable, because he was one of the few who were threatened by the bomb, but he decides not to raise the issue.

TANITH (CONT'D)

But no sir! Mr. Big Shot has to blow up everything in the name of peace and integrity! If he really enjoys those sorts of things then be my guest. You should've seen his face when they did that, he was so full of himself. But there's no point in coming to me to complaint if the investigations don't go too smoothly.

DESI

I know the sort a bit too well. The happiest they are when they get a big gun and a moving target.

Larry empties his pint and stands to leave.

LARRY

I don't even bother to say anything. I mean, everything's been said about that kind of people and there still isn't anything you can do about it.

(beat)

He wasn't too keen on letting that ship go, then. A few seconds more and it would've left with the clamps and a half of the module with them.

TANITH

Oh yeah, I forgot about that. They did fail. It takes two weeks to repair them, remember?

Larry is a bit confused at first, but gets the drift.

LIMB

LARRY

(dry)

I see. By the way, the port docking tunnel is closed for a few weeks and the shuttle is docked to port 12.

TANITH

Why's that?

LARRY

The ingenious idea from our beloved Captain to use full speed in the docking tunnel has fried pretty much every single system in the sector. And guess who's got to make it all work again?

Larry takes off. Tanith watches him go before returning her concentration to her drink.

TANITH

We don't even know how many people were on that ship, but she wasn't a one man ship, I can tell you that.

Desi hears this, but doesn't bother to answer. Tanith's frustration just grows within her.

TANITH (CONT'D)

I mean, it didn't have weapons, that ship. We didn't even try to make a contact!

The frustration turns to grief. She is about to leave when a very drunk voice can be heard from behind her.

MAN

I know that bastard! I know all about him and the likes of him!

Tanith turns to look the causer of the voice. It is a man in his late 50's that is dressed in ragged clothes and is quite literally filthy from head to toes.

LIMB

MAN (CONT'D)

Bought a career with his father's money!
 Even I'd be more qualified to command
 the station! He and the bastard father
 of his have been under investigation
 dozens of times. But somehow the
 investigators and judges have all been
 fired before the process has gone
 through. You should stuff 'em all to the
 nearest airlock and put them to take a
 spacewalk without suits. I'd have 'em
 all shot before they are born.

The man suddenly lost his confidence when he sees that Tanith just stares at the entrance in horror. The man turns to watch and it is nobody else than Baxter watching him with a murdering glare.

The man quiets down and Baxter walks to him. He says nothing and the silence brings around an unbearable tension.

BAXTER

(calmly)

Security chief. I'd appreciate if you'd
 do your duties and escort this gentleman
 to the nearest brig.

Wendy activates immediately and takes the man gently but firmly and escorts him out of there. The man doesn't put up a fight.

When Wendy and the man have left, Baxter takes a one long cold look around the place and then walks out without another word.

Only after Baxter has disappeared to a lift, Tanith can relax again. She turns back to her drink.

TANITH

Baxter never comes here. How on earth
 did he manage to come in right this
 moment?

DESI

Those kinds of people have the kinds of
 radars that tell them every time someone
 mentions their name.

LIMB

Tanith chuckles softly, but Desi didn't meant that as a humorous remark. Desi empties her drink and leaves.

Tanith takes a long look at her drink and then empties it as well. Steve takes the glass.

STEVE

Want another?

Tanith thinks for a beat.

TANITH

Why not.

Steve takes a bottle under the counter and fills the glass again.

STEVE

It's sad to see what state he's in these days.

TANITH

What? You mean the Captain? I think he has everything just as he wants them to be.

STEVE

I didn't mean him. I meant the drunk. Don't tell me you don't know who he is.

TANITH

I have to say that I don't.

STEVE

He is Malcolm Scott. The former chief of medical.

Tanith is surprised to hear this.

TANITH

Really? Poor man. I thought this would be the last place he wants to be after what happened.

LIMB

STEVE

Well, he did spent most of his life in this station. Couldn't see himself leaving even after what happened.

TANITH

How does he make a living?

STEVE

He doesn't. He gets something from the space force because of his service years, but he has to live in the cheapest decks. Especially now that the border is open again and the rents went trough the roof.

TANITH

That's terrible to hear. What I've heard they made an unnecessary example out of him.

STEVE

Don't know about that.

(beat)

But all we've been talking about corrupt Captains and poor fates. Perhaps we should think about something else for awhile before you get too drunk.

TANITH

I'm not drunk.

She takes a sip from her drink to prove the case.

STEVE

Maybe not, but you're getting there.

TANITH

Perhaps. I'd like to think something else, but for some reason I can't bring myself around to it.

STEVE

Maybe I can help you in that. My new assistant is coming to make his first shift.

LIMB

TANITH

What? An assistant? I thought you never left this place.

STEVE

That was true. But I'm not what I used to be sixty years ago. I need some time off once and awhile. This is the first time I try it though. We'll see which one cracks up first. Me or my wife.

TANITH

Who is this new assistant then?

STEVE

I believe you get to meet him soon enough.

And soon enough, Henrik walks in from the back of the place. He smiles although he is terrified of what's going to become of this.

HENRIK

Well, good evening, Commander. Nice to see you again.

Tanith is pleased to see a familiar face that isn't related to her work. She smiles faintly.

TANITH

I'm surprised to see you at that side of the counter, Mr. Anttonen.

HENRIK

Please do call me Henrik, Commander.

TANITH

Only if you stop calling me Commander.

HENRIK

Sounds fair.

Steve rises from his chair.

LIMB

STEVE

I'm sorry to interrupt, but I think I'll be going then. It terrifies me because this really is the first time. Are you sure you can manage it?

HENRIK

Yes, I think so. Seeing as we did go through it about six times. And I won't handle the stock. Just run the bar.

STEVE

Coffee shop.

HENRIK

Right.

STEVE

Now remember that all you have to remember is to take drinks from the right bottles and ask for fingerprint signing before handing out anything. And press that...

HENRIK

(interrupts)

...that big red button over there if something goes wrong and you'll be here in a heartbeat. I remember.

Steve looks around to see if anything else is to be mentioned. He takes a couple of steps to the exit and looks thoroughly lost.

HENRIK (CONT'D)

Just go and have a fun evening. I'll see that everything goes smoothly around here.

STEVE

Right, right. I'll be... off, then.

Steve goes to the door and takes a final look at all of this before going out. Henrik smiles to this and turns back to Tanith.

LIMB

HENRIK

So, where were we?

TANITH

I believe I asked you to not to call me commander.

HENRIK

Right. So what should I call you?
Sylvia?

TANITH

Why would you want to do that?

HENRIK

It's as good of a guess as any, I guess.
I don't have a clue as to what is really
is.

TANITH

Should I be offended? I did tell it to
you.

HENRIK

Please don't. I have a terrible memory
for names. I never learned the names of
everybody from my classes in school.
That's why I called you Commander. It
can be read from your collar, so I
thought it was fairly safe.

TANITH

Just call me Tanith.

HENRIK

Tanith. Right. I'll try and remember
that.

TANITH

I really am surprised to see you at that
side of the counter.

HENRIK

You should be surprised to see me at any
side around here. I usually never go to
bars.

LIMB

TANITH

Why's that?

HENRIK

Everybody I know just comes around these places to get drunk. I myself find the taste of alcohol quite horrible and the prospect of poisoning my brains to uncontrollable state is quite terrifying. I can't see how people can insist that it's relaxing.

TANITH

Maybe you just don't know the right people.

HENRIK

I'd like to think not. Seeing what you're drinking.

Tanith takes a look at her drink.

TANITH

This is not common for me. It's been a hell of a day.

She takes a sip.

TANITH (CONT'D)

But let's not talk about that. I just started to get rid of the feeling. Tell me, are you coming to do this every night now?

HENRIK

No way. I think Steve gets a nervous breakdown if he stays away too long. It was quite a task to make him realize that this was a good idea. Once or twice a year is a more plausible hypothesis.

TANITH

(chuckles)

I can believe that.

LIMB

HENRIK

But I might come around more often to give him a hand. As he says, he's not what he used to be sixty years ago.

TANITH

Why do you do it?

HENRIK

I thought it'd be good for the script I'm working on. You know, seeing and meeting people. Getting away from the keyboard now and then. Just the stuff my parents used to try to get me to do.

TANITH

That's nice.

HENRIK

And I need the money.

TANITH

(smiles)

Naturally.

HENRIK

But I'll tell you that I'm scared stiff. I'm not a people person, so I'm kind of worried how's this going to work. I mean I'm unsocial beyond words, but as I said, I have to see and meet people so I can write.

TANITH

You don't seem unsocial. Actually you appear quite the opposite to me.

HENRIK

That's what people tell me. I do need and enjoy company sometimes. Like now. But usually, I think I just fake it well.

Tanith empties her glass.

LIMB

TANITH

So tell me, how the script is coming along?

HENRIK

Surprisingly well. If people get past the enormous info dump in the beginning, they should be home free. It's not the best way to start a story, but this is kind of a follow-up to a series of short stories I was working on years and years ago, so I had a lot of back story that I needed to hand out before I could write anything new. I hope it's not too much.

TANITH

Hard to say. Have you found relief to your orange juice situation?

HENRIK

(smiles)

Actually, I have. Steve has a nice supply of it.

TANITH

And is it as good as the one you had found before?

HENRIK

It's better.

TANITH

(smiles)

Glad to hear that. I have to say that I haven't ever thought that there were different kinds of orange juices.

Henrik shrugs.

HENRIK

Well, I've never understood how people can find so many differences from wines. I think they all taste just as horrible as the other.

LIMB

TANITH

Never thought about it that way. But I'm afraid I'll have to get to bed now. It looks like I'm going to have a terrible day tomorrow.

HENRIK

Do you want to talk about it?

TANITH

No. And even if I'd want, I couldn't. I just look forward to the few hours of unconsciousness where I simply don't remember the whole thing.

HENRIK

Familiar feeling. Well, sleep well.

Tanith goes to the door.

TANITH

I hope so too. I'll scream if I don't.

EXT. SPACE - LIMB

A large passenger vessel is coming for docking.

INT. LIMB - BAXTER'S OFFICE

Baxter's office is quite a big of a space capable of holding receptions and other official functions. What makes it look bigger is the fact that Baxter hasn't decorated the office with anything. He hasn't even brought a chair for guests. The back wall of the office opens up to a panoramic view to space.

Baxter is reading something from the screen in his desk. Whatever it is, it doesn't make him too happy.

His door chimes, but if he hears it, he ignores it.

After a moment, the door chimes again and again Baxter ignores it. Finally the door just opens and Tanith enters, but doesn't advance from the door.

LIMB

Baxter just quickly looks who it was who entered and then quickly turns the screen off. He turns to Tanith seeming very annoyed.

BAXTER

You should know that it's not appropriate to barge into my office like that.

TANITH

I'm sorry, Captain, but I rang. It seems that the chime is not functional.

BAXTER

That is not of your business. Come in if you must so we can get this over with. I'm busy.

Tanith comes to Baxter's desk. She doesn't feel very comfortable in this office.

TANITH

Permission to interrogate the prisoner.

BAXTER

Who?

TANITH

The man who we picked up from the escape pod.

For some reason Baxter seems very uncomfortable and even alarmed about this prospect.

BAXTER

(urgently)

Is he awake?

Tanith is surprised from Baxter's reaction.

TANITH

Not yet. But Doctor Rumfoord says that he could wake up any time now and should be strong enough for interrogation.

LIMB

BAXTER

Unacceptable. Inform the Doctor that the prisoner must be kept constantly under artificial unconsciousness.

TANITH

Captain?

BAXTER

I've arranged a transport to the headquarters for him. The escorts should be here in about a week. Before that, the prisoner will be kept unconscious at all times for security reasons. He must not be awake even once during his stay.

Tanith can't believe what she's hearing. Once again.

TANITH

Captain, I must object. It would be absurd to waste all this time and leave such a good opportunity to know what's going on around here. I urge you to reconsid..

Baxter slaps his hand on his desk in fury.

BAXTER

(interrupts)

Commander, that was an order!

He calms himself for a moment when he sees that Tanith is silent. He continues so calmly that it's almost menacing.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

You already have disobeyed my orders once this week. I'd really urge you to consider before you question me again. I can assure you that the consequences would be drastic. I believe I have shown immeasurable patience over your behavior, but I recommend that you return to your station and forward my orders to sickbay. Immediately.

LIMB

Tanith has to count to ten and clamp her fists as tight as she can to control her temper.

TANITH

Yes, sir.

She leaves as fast as she can walk. Baxter turns the screen back on and starts to read it once again.

EXT. SPACE - LIMB

Most of the lights are out and external activity on the station is minimal. The station has entered the night shift.

INT. LIMB - MARKETPLACE

The last vendors are packing their stuff as most of them have left already. In the background we can see Steve turning off the lights in his establishment.

INT. LIMB - CORRIDOR

Kri enters from a lift to a dimly light corridor. The corridor is a part of a resident sector, so that there are doors to apartments along both sides of the corridor.

Kri goes to one door and presses the chime. He waits a moment before Tanith opens the door. She looks both ways of the corridor.

TANITH

Hi. Were you followed?

KRI

Why would've I been?

TANITH

Never mind that. Come in.

Tanith lets Kri inside to her quarters.

INT. LIMB - TANITH'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Tanith's apartment is far from Spartan. She has filled the place with furniture's of eastern design and hanged colorful drapes to cover every inch of the apartment.

LIMB

A black cat lies in a large divan and seems relatively happy about her life.

TANITH

I don't like the idea that Captain would know that we've having this meeting.

She notices that Kri takes in the colors.

TANITH (CONT'D)

So how do you like my world?

Kri takes looks around.

KRI

It's... different to what I've used to.

Kri looks at Tanith. He notices that she expects some further comments. He isn't good at this.

KRI (CONT'D)

It's very nice.

Tanith smiles to him.

TANITH

Glad you like it. It took some time to make it like this.

Kri notices the cat on the divan.

KRI

I see you have a cat.

Tanith sits to the divan beside it. The cat doesn't react.

TANITH

Yes. I've had her for about seven years now. I simply can't imagine myself living without one. Her name's Eight.

KRI

Eight?

LIMB

TANITH

I'm terrible at coming up with names, so I decided to give her a number instead. I've always liked number eight for some reason.

Kri doesn't see the logic.

KRI

I see the logic. I'm more of a dog person myself.

TANITH

Do take a seat.

Kri sits to a nearby wicker chair covered with another colorful drape. It doesn't feel too comfortable, but he hides it to the best of his ability.

Tanith has turned serious.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Did you get it?

KRI

You have to understand that I was only a common scientist back in Ashtar. I don't have any contacts to high places.

TANITH

I understand that.

KRI

So I had to do it the hard way. You know the theory on how everybody is connected to anybody by six points.

TANITH

Yes.

KRI

It just happened that one of my colleagues was promoted to a governmental job in one of the major powers in Ashtar. So I asked her, and she asked her boss.

LIMB

Tanith is getting eager to hear the outcome.

TANITH

Yes?

KRI

And her boss asked from his relative,
who had a friend in a high place.

TANITH

Yes?

KRI

See, this is why it took me a few days.

TANITH

Yes, yes. But did you get it?

Kri takes a data disc from his pocket and hands it to Tanith.

KRI

Yes, I did.

TANITH

Fantastic. Thank you.

She takes the disc and goes to a wall. She moves one of the drapes and it reveals a wall console behind it. She ties the drape so that she doesn't have to hold it while she operates the console.

She puts the disc to the allocated slot. Kri joins her at the console.

A lot of data and a cross section of a transport ship of Ashtar design appear on screen.

TANITH

Have you gone through this data yet?

KRI

No. I came as soon as I got it.

TANITH

And the captain didn't see you receiving this.

LIMB

KRI

I used the console in my quarters. I think you're being a bit paranoid about the Captain. I agree that he's an ass, but you're acting like he's a criminal.

TANITH

That's just what I'm trying to find out.

KRI

Not everybody you don't like have to be criminals.

TANITH

I know. I just need to get this matter a bit clearer. I think the fact that Captain doesn't allow anybody to see the prisoner is suspicious.

KRI

He is just concerned about security.

TANITH

You know, I'm really surprised. I thought you'd be the last person defending the Captain.

KRI

I am. I'm just urging you to remember that you just might be overreacting.

TANITH

I know. I just really, really need to shed some light on this.

KRI

I understand that. And I did get you that disc.

TANITH

And you have my gratitude.

KRI

Let's see what it says, then.

She starts to go through the information.

LIMB

TANITH

The Grosh. Number 01938-2388. Built by
the Sherton Corporation.

(beat as she reads
further)

Yes, yes, yes, yes. But where is it
stationed? Who owns it?

Kri can do nothing but try to read as Tanith goes through the
text as fast as she can.

TANITH (CONT'D)

There it is! Owned and stationed in
Kl'tor. Do you know anything about it?

KRI

No. I presume it's one of those one
planet autonomies.

Tanith starts to hit commands to the computer.

KRI (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

TANITH

I want to know more about that planet.
It might give us another lead.

Another screen full of information comes to the screen.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Not too much.

KRI

Can't say I'm surprised. It's probably
one of the minor border planets.

Tanith taps in a few more commands. Something attracts her
attention.

TANITH

That's strange.

KRI

What?

LIMB

TANITH

There's an awful lot of export from the planet for a minor border world. And there's more. All that cargo seems to have the same destination.

KRI

Where is that?

TANITH

Right here.

KRI

Meaning what?

TANITH

Meaning this station.

Kri's attention has been wakened now as well.

KRI

You mean it stays here?

TANITH

No. I'll try to see from the logs where their final destination is.

Kri watches as Tanith tries to access the logs.

KRI

It could be just normal trading.

TANITH

I don't think so. And probably you don't either. What's strange about is that the shipments began immediately when the border was opened. There has been unusually heavy traffic from there. We know that Ashtars aren't too keen on trading with humans.

KRI

And humans not too keen to trade with Ashtars.

LIMB

TANITH

Precisely.

KRI

But this might be an exception to the rule.

TANITH

It could. But why does all of the transports are headed to human space? To have business deals with humans is unusual. To not have any with other Ashtar worlds is...

Kri finishes the sentence for her.

KRI

...unheard of.

TANITH

I was thinking more in the lines of impossible, but the idea's the same.

Tanith is having problems in accessing the logs. She gets the same error message again and again.

TANITH (CONT'D)

What's this?

KRI

What?

TANITH

I can't access the logs.

KRI

That's unusual. Maybe the problem is in this console. Try accessing something else.

TANITH

Right.

She opens a random cargo log and it opens as it should. She tries the Grosh logs again, but to no avail. She tries a few more.

LIMB

TANITH (CONT'D)

It's as if all the cargo logs concerning the ships coming from Kl'tor are crypted.

She decides it's no use and turns the console off. She turns to Kri. Kri doesn't know how to take all of this.

KRI

I admit that the situation seems somewhat curious, but there's not enough evidence to back up any conclusions.

TANITH

That's right. And that's precisely why I want to go there.

KRI

Go where?

TANITH

To Kl'tor. And I want you to come with me.

Kri is surprised at this.

KRI

Me? Why?

TANITH

It's an Ashtar world. I don't know what to do there even if I'd get there. I need someone to guide me.

KRI

I don't know. I'm still not convinced. And besides, it's not our problem.

Tanith becomes heated about the subject.

TANITH

It becomes my problem, when I see a civilian ship destroyed right in front of my face because of it!

LIMB

KRI

Because of what?

TANITH

I don't know!

KRI

Well, that's just it. You are creating a problem that might not exist. I don't have enough information to make an opinion, but it just might be that you're creating this because of your hatred towards the Captain.

TANITH

This has nothing to do with the Captain!

KRI

How could it not have? Who else could've blocked the logs?

This sinks to Tanith. It's like the whole thing would've cleared on her mind. Kri is also surprised when he realizes he has brought another thought to the discussion by accident.

TANITH

That's it! That's why the captain doesn't want the prisoner to be conscious. He must be involved to all of this! Probably his father too.

KRI

You're being paranoid.

But the edge from Kri's tone has died as his mind works to the same direction as Tanith's.

TANITH

Ok, come on. What's there to lose, anyway? If I'm right, we can reveal the whole thing and hopefully will get Baxter off the chair. And if it turns out I'm just being paranoid, we'll get a nice vacation and you get visit Ashtar again and we come back.

LIMB

Kri turns silent. He goes back to the chair he was sitting in earlier. He sits heavily to it and starts to look at the opposite wall with somber expression.

KRI

I'm not sure I wish to visit Ashtar. It might be too... painful.

Tanith realises that she hadn't even thought of that.

TANITH

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... I'm afraid this is becoming a recurring theme.

KRI

That's alright. I can't expect everyone to watch out their tongues just because of my past. It's just that the thought of visiting there is... Well, I don't know what to think about it.

Tanith kneels beside him. She looks him in the eyes.

TANITH

I understand. And I'm sorry. But this is important. I just have to go there. I have to know. I can't sleep in peace before I do.

Kri looks back at her. He considers for a moment and then lets out a heavy sigh.

KRI

All right. I will join you.

Tanith smiles at him.

TANITH

Thank you. This means a lot to me. And I can only guess what this means to you, but you help me and I'll try to help you as best as I can.

Kri nods at her.

LIMB

KRI

I'll contact the officials of Kl'tor and try to arrange things for our visit. I presume I know the procedures better than you do and know how to get things done. I had to do it all the time when I tried to get something done in the department of sciences back in the central planet. But how do you intend to get a permission to go there? If Captain Baxter really is involved, I don't expect him to give permission.

Tanith thinks about this.

TANITH

You're right. But I think I just might have a friend of a friend of a friend who could help us on this one.

She goes back to the wall console.

INT. LIMB - SHUTTLE BAY

Baxter comes out from a lift steaming with rage.

Tanith is waiting for this just outside the shuttle airlock. Kri is carrying a container with supplies and quickly disappears to the shuttle when he sees the state in which Baxter is.

Baxter is carrying a hand console that he nearly throws at Tanith's face.

BAXTER

What in the world is going on around here!?

This time Tanith keeps her voice perfectly calm as she knows that she has the upper hand.

TANITH

We're going to pay a little visit to Kl'tor and do some investigations regarding the incident with the bomb and the destroyed transport.

LIMB

BAXTER

It is out of the question! I order you to stay in the station! An investigation will be commenced by space force command!

TANITH

I just feel like popping out on a trip. And wouldn't you agree that it's better to start when the trails are still fresh.

BAXTER

I would not! You don't even have a pilot!

TANITH

Of course we have a pilot. Sub-lieutenant Demidov arrived three days ago and has been itching to get his hands on the shuttle.

BAXTER

I'm giving you a direct order to not to go!

TANITH

I'm afraid I can't do that.

Baxter's rage escalades to a stage where he is in danger of breaching an artery.

BAXTER

You dare to disobey a direct order again? I will throw you out of here personally. You will never serve in my beloved fleet again.

The more enraged Baxter gets, more relaxed Tanith appears.

TANITH

I wouldn't dream of doing such a thing. It just so happens that I have other orders that contradict yours and I'm afraid they're from a higher ranking officer than you.

LIMB

BAXTER

What?!

TANITH

You see, I have direct orders from Admiral Gersten to investigate this matter and leave for Kl'tor immediately.

Tanith gives a hand console that she had been hiding behind her back for the entire time. Baxter takes it from her and his rage turns into frustration.

When he finishes the document he looks directly into Tanith's eyes with murdering glare.

BAXTER

I will have your head for this.

He turns around as goes to the lift. Only after he's gone Tanith can breathe freely.

Kri comes back from the shuttle.

KRI

That was quite a scene. I admire you for the performance.

TANITH

I enjoyed it. But we should better get on our way before he finds a way to stop us.

KRI

Agreed.

They both enter the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Tanith takes the co-pilot seat as before and Kri sits to one of the back seats.

In the pilot seat sits sub-lieutenant UDAY DEMIDOV. He is in his late thirties and seems quite enthusiastic at getting a go in the shuttle. He's making some last minute checkups.

LIMB

TANITH

All set?

DEMIDOV

Pretty much. We're ready in just a few minutes.

TANITH

Take us out as soon as possible.

DEMIDOV

No problem, Commander.

TANITH

I presume you've had more thorough training than the first appendix of the first chapter in the manual?

DEMIDOV

Lieutenant?

TANITH

Never mind.

Tanith looks at Kri who looks outside. He seems to be in his thoughts. Tanith is a bit worried about this.

COMM VOICE

You are cleared for departure.

DEMIDOV

Roger that. Separation sequence.

Tanith turns back to her console.

INT. LIMB - DOCKING CORRIDOR

The shuttle separates from the docking clamps and starts to go forward along the massive corridor. It doesn't go full speed, but a lot faster than it did when Wendy was driving at first.

LIMB

INT. LIMB - BAXTER'S OFFICE

Baxter watches grimly outside through the panoramic window and sees the shuttle emerge from the docking corridor. It takes speed and after taking some distance, it fades out to hyperdrive.

Baxter watches still for a moment and then turns to his desk and starts to hit in some commands.

EXT. SPACE

We see a calm planet that for some reason is covered in grey. But the color is not smooth, but coarse, revealing geometrical shapes on the surface. Only few small clouds appear above the surface.

The shuttle fades in from hyperspace and takes orbit.

INT. SHUTTLE

Tanith joins Kri in the back section of the shuttle where Kri is working on a console.

TANITH

So, what have you been able to arrange?

KRI

Kl'tor is an aspiring democracy, so it is ruled by a government headed by what you would call a president. I have been able to arrange a meeting with him.

TANITH

With the president himself?

KRI

Yes. I was surprised by it as well, but it seems that you can go far in this planet if you're a Commander, Commander.

TANITH

Is that usual?

LIMB

KRI

Far from it. But as we know, this planet's government seems to have warm relations with humans.

TANITH

Interesting. When is the appointment?

KRI

They said we could pay a visit as soon as we arrive.

TANITH

Now that is odd. You'd think that a president would be pretty busy.

Kri just shrugs.

TANITH (CONT'D)

What else can you tell me?

KRI

The planet is a one big metropolis. The entire surface is covered with buildings. There is heavy mining underground which is the only source of income for the planet has. All other resources are exported from other worlds.

Tanith nods.

TANITH (CONT'D)

Keep digging up more information.

Kri nods. Tanith goes back to the co-pilot seat.

TANITH (CONT'D)

How soon do we land?

DEMIDOV

I just got the go-ahead. I'm taking this down.

TANITH

Good.

LIMB

EXT. Kl'tor - day

The shuttle glides through the skies as it enters the atmosphere.

EXT. KL'TOR - SPACEPORT - CONTINUOUS

The public spaceport is a busy place with ships of all shapes and sizes going in and out. There are people everywhere and all the pilots need to be very careful so they don't do any damage when landing and taking off.

The shuttle hovers above the port for awhile until attendants manage to get an opening for them to land.

The hatch opens and Tanith and Kri come out. Two Ashtar officials are there to meet them.

OFFICIAL 1

Are you coming from outside of this planet?

KRI

Yes.

OFFICIAL 1

Please follow us.

The officials lead Tanith and Kri towards a huge reception building. Tanith is a bit worried.

TANITH

What's all this about?

KRI

Just routine custom procedures. Everybody must go through them.

Tanith is relieved.

TANITH

Oh, good. You know, maybe I am getting a bit paranoid.

LIMB

INT. SPACEPORT RECEPTION AREA

Tanith comes through a door to the very crowded reception area where Kri is waiting for her. Tanith looks like the routine custom procedures were lengthy and unpleasant.

TANITH

I can't believe it took all that time. I can't imagine a thing about myself or my body they didn't inspect and record.

KRI

This your first time in Ashtar side of the border?

TANITH

Yes.

KRI

That means they don't have anything about you in the central data banks and therefore they had to record everything.

TANITH

It wasn't pleasant, I'll tell you that.

KRI

You do the same things to first time arrivals from Ashtar.

TANITH

We do? That's terrible. What did you have to go through?

KRI

I was born in Ashtar, remember? I only had to show them my ID.

TANITH

Great.

They start to advance through the crowds. Tanith sees that they are going towards a section where an entire wall is lined up with some sort of one person pods that shoot away at incredible speeds through tubes they're in. Most of the people there are heading to the tubes as well.

LIMB

TANITH (CONT'D)

What are those pods?

KRI

They are our primary transportation system in planets like this that are made up of just one city. They are a lot like your lifts except that the network is a lot more complex.

TANITH

I can believe that. The proportions are a bit bigger than in a station.

She watches as a couple of pods shoot off at incredible speeds.

TANITH (CONT'D)

The speeds they use seem to be a bit uncomfortable. Is it dangerous?

KRI

Not at all. Of course the speeds would be too much for a person to handle, so the passengers are induced to an unconscious state for the journey. It feels like it all happens in a blink of an eye.

TANITH

I don't know if I like the idea. What if something goes wrong?

KRI

What do you mean?

TANITH

I mean, if I don't wake up.

KRI

Those kinds of accidents are very rare. And I haven't heard of a single case where a Doctor wouldn't have been able to revive the passenger. You'll get used to it.

LIMB

TANITH

How fast do they go?

KRI

About mach 30.

TANITH

But doesn't that mean that it still could take some time to go from place to place? Doesn't it corrupt your sense of time if you're unconscious for the whole time?

KRI

It's a side effect we've accepted. And you'll get used to it.

Tanith isn't so sure if she likes this system at all.

TANITH

Right.

They have advanced in the crowd so that they come to the pods and it's their turn to take a ride.

KRI

Just dial the address to the presidential reception area and you'll be there before you know it. The address is 394-48932.

TANITH

394-48932, right. What if I dial the wrong address?

KRI

That is virtually impossible. The addresses differ so much from each other that you'd have to make a really lucky mistake to end up in a wrong place.

Tanith goes to the pod. It seals itself immediately and Tanith notices that it's uncomfortably small in the inside. A small dialing keyboard is placed just under her hand. She dials.

LIMB

INT. PRESIDENTIAL RECEPTION AREA

The reception area is a huge room designed to comfortably house large amounts of people, but there is nobody there except Kri and a RECEPTIONIST behind a desk.

There are pictures of former presidents on the walls, but otherwise the interior is very functionally designed. A table is beside one wall. A can of water and a couple of mugs are on it.

A pod arrives to the tube in one wall of the area and Tanith steps out from it. She looks a bit baffled at being there. Kri takes her hand and helps her from the pod.

She takes in her surroundings.

TANITH

Incredible. It was just like a blink of an eye. How long did it take?

KRI

Just a little over half an hour. We are practically on the other side of the planet.

TANITH

Amazing. I'm surprised that I don't feel like I've been unconscious for all that time. Shouldn't I at least feel groggy?

KRI

I could explain you the technology, but I suspect that you're not really that interested. And besides, we should be meeting the president.

TANITH

You're right.

They go to the receptionist who smiles politely to them.

RECEPTIONIST

May I help you?

LIMB

KRI

Yes. This is Commander Tanith
Yannbulytshev and I am Lieutenant Kri
from space force. We set an appointment
with president Artesh.

Receptionist checks something from her computer and smiles
again.

RECEPTIONIST

That's correct. Mr. President is
expecting you. You can go right in. It's
that door.

Receptionist points to the door beside her desk.

KRI

Thank you.

Receptionist just smiles as Kri and Tanith go to the door. At
the door Tanith turns once again to look at the Receptionist
and notices that she has not moved a muscle. This for some
reason freaks her out and she grabs Kri's arm.

Kri turns and Tanith points the Receptionist.

KRI (CONT'D)

What?

TANITH

Look. She hasn't moved.

KRI

So? Certainly you can see that she is a
robot.

Tanith lets Kri's arm go in embarrassment.

TANITH

Oh, I... Um...

KRI

Let's just go in.

TANITH

Right. Let's.

LIMB

They enter the president's office.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

President Artesh's office is surprisingly small but tidy office with a desk and two chairs in front of it. There are some more personal items on the desk, but otherwise the decoration in the office represents the same functionalism that the reception area.

PRESIDENT ARTESH himself is an aging Ashtar. He smiles broadly to the arriving Kri and Tanith and he has come to the door to meet them.

Everybody shakes hands with each other.

ARTESH

Welcome, welcome.

TANITH

Thank you, Mr. President. And we want to thank you for seeing us in such a short notice. I know you must be terribly busy.

ARTESH

Nonsense. It's rare that we get such extinguished visitors from the Earth side. It's only a pleasure. Please do sit down.

Artesh leads Kri and Tanith to the chairs in front of his desk and takes a seat behind it himself.

TANITH

You're flattering me. I'm just another Commander.

ARTESH

Do not undermine yourself, Commander. I'd call that an achievement. Would you like anything to drink perhaps?

TANITH

No, thank you.

LIMB

KRI

I could accept a cup of Ashtarian tea if it's possible. It's been a while.

ARTESH

Of course, of course.

President Artesh presses a button on his desk.

ARTESH

Bring a cup of our best tea and a glass of brandy for myself, please.

RECEPTIONIST'S COMM VOICE

Certainly, Mr. President. Is that all?

Artesh looks at Tanith again.

ARTESH

You are sure that you don't want anything, Commander?

TANITH

No, thank you.

ARTESH

As you wish.
(to COMM)
That is all.

RECEPTIONIST'S COMM VOICE

I'll bring it in a minute.

Artesh closes the channel.

ARTESH

Now that we've got that settled, maybe you did have something to discuss.

TANITH

That is correct. I expect you have heard of the incident in our border station Limb, Mr. President.

LIMB

ARTESH

Indeed. Such a terrible incident. It's fortunate that nobody got hurt.

TANITH

I'm surprised to hear you say that. One of your transports was completely destroyed and the crew perished entirely save the one we picked up from an escape pod.

There is a quick crack in the President's smile, but he immediately covers that up. The Receptionist comes in carrying the tea and brandy. She gives the mug to Kri and puts the glass on Artesh's desk. Artesh doesn't touch it.

ARTESH

Thank you.

Artesh turns back to Tanith. The Receptionist leaves.

ARTESH (CONT'D)

Of course I meant that nobody on the station got hurt. I assure you that I was shocked to hear that the terrorists were from our transport. We have commenced extensive investigations.

TANITH

May I inquire your progress? Have you found out anything?

ARTESH

You have to understand that we've just began. But at this point all evidence seems to indicate towards a terrorist organization we've had troubles with before.

TANITH

Oh? What is that?

President seems uncomfortable of the direction this is going.

LIMB

ARTESH

It's just a local organization that's made occasional strikes in here. This is the first time they've operated elsewhere, though. We've been after them for quite a while with some success.

TANITH

Do you know what the goals of this organization are?

President grows more uncomfortable by the minute and has troubles hiding it.

ARTESH

We don't know exactly, but I'd expect it's about independence, honor, religion and the other usual excuses.

TANITH

You mean you've had no contact with them?

President can't hide it anymore.

ARTESH

May I ask you a question, Commander?

TANITH

Of course.

ARTESH

What is it that you're doing here anyway? I hope you don't think this to be a rude question, but I was under the impression that an investigation team under the command of Admiral Baxter was appointed to arrive here in about a month.

This draws Tanith's interest.

TANITH

Admiral Baxter?

ARTESH

LIMB

Yes.

TANITH

Well, we're doing a kind of preliminary inquiries. This is all unofficial of course.

ARTESH

I see. I am of course at your disposal.

TANITH

I appreciate it. I do still have something else to ask.

Artesh moves uncomfortably in his chair, but manages to smile again.

ARTESH

Of course.

TANITH

We've examined your trade shipments and found out that all of your trade is directed to Earth space. This is not normal, I believe.

ARTESH

It's not normal, but I can't see anything wrong with it. Quite the opposite. We are a border world and it's favorable for us to direct our trade to the other side of it.

TANITH

What I was wondering was that the shipments in and out of Kl'tor began immediately when the border opened. How were you able to achieve relations so quickly?

ARTESH

Well, even if the border was closed, the normal communication channels were functional. Now, if you don't mind, I do have other meetings to attend to.

LIMB

Tanith and Kri rise from their seats. President does the same and smiles again.

TANITH

Of course. I thank you for your time.

ARTESH

Not at all. Are you staying in Kl'tor?

TANITH

Yes. I would like to investigate a bit further now that I've come this far.

Artesh starts to lead them to the door.

ARTESH

Then I presume you have arranged accommodations?

Tanith looks at Kri. Kri realizes that he hasn't.

KRI

Well, actually...

ARTESH

Then let my secretary take care of it. I'll make sure that she arranges the best we can offer for you.

Artesh opens the door for them.

TANITH

I thank you.

ARTESH

My pleasure. You can call me any time if you need further assistance.

KRI

Thanks for the tea.

ARTESH

Good afternoon.

Artesh closes the door behind them. As soon as he's alone, the smile disappears from his face.

LIMB

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR

Tanith and Kri emerge from a regular elevator to a luxurious corridor as you'd expect from a five star hotel.

They look at the room numbers and start to advance in the corridor.

TANITH

I wonder why they only gave us one key.
You don't expect that it'll work on two
doors?

KRI

You never know.

TANITH

And it has only one number in it.

KRI

Perhaps the suite is divided into two
separate apartments.

TANITH

That's got to be it. I think we're here.

They stop to a door and Kri makes sure the number is the same as the one in the key. He puts the key to the slot beside the door.

KRI

We'll soon find out.

COMPUTER VOICE

Welcome Mr. & Mrs. Yannbulytshev.

Kri and Tanith look at each other in horror as they realize what the computer just said. The door opens.

They turn to look inside the suite. It's a large luxurious room, perfect for a married couple. And in the middle of the room is a large double bed. They watch this without words and after a moment Kri turns to Tanith.

LIMB

KRI

You're sleeping on the floor.

INT. SUITE - LATER

Kri comes from another room of the suite looking very refreshed.

KRI

It's been a while since I've had a proper shower.

Tanith looks to him from a wall console she's working on.

TANITH

Really? You didn't smell like it.

KRI

I meant a proper Ashtar shower. It took me quite awhile to get used to those you use.

Tanith can't imagine. And decides she doesn't even want to. She makes a mental note to not to use the shower.

Kri goes to a comfortable armchair and starts to read a book. Tanith looks at him.

TANITH

So, how are you managing?

It takes Kri a moment to realize that she had to speak to him. He looks at her over the book.

KRI

What do you mean?

TANITH

I mean being back in Ashtar.

KRI

Oh that. Pretty well. It's been nice to get a taste of the tea after all this time.

LIMB

TANITH

I could talk to Steve about it. I'm sure he could arrange some to the station.

KRI

No, that's ok. I'm sure it wouldn't be the same anyway.

TANITH

You're sure?

KRI

Yes.

At this point Kri notices how worriedly Tanith watches him. He puts the book down.

KRI (CONT'D)

I'm not cracking up, if that's what you're concerned about.

TANITH

Good. I just feel that I'd feel responsible for it if it'd overwhelm you.

KRI

It does not. I don't even think about it that way. We're here to do a job and that's my primary concern.

TANITH

Ok. Speaking about a job, I think I've found something.

Tanith turns back to the console.

KRI

Do tell me.

TANITH

The logs of departing transports are blocked in here as well, but I've managed to gather some more information from other sources.

LIMB

KRI

Like where?

TANITH

Flight controller reports, fuel vendor accounts and non critical sources like that that people haven't bothered to cover up.

KRI

How is it possible that you have a kind of security clearance to access those logs?

TANITH

Well, as you said, being a space force commander does count for something around here. And I've straightened a few corners here and there.

KRI

So you don't have a security clearance high enough.

TANITH

No, but that's not the point now. The point is that I've found that all of the transports are not only directed towards Earth space, but to Sol.

KRI

What does Sol have that's so interesting?

TANITH

Earth.

Kri thinks about this.

KRI

It is true that humans have a deep passion towards their planet of origins.

LIMB

TANITH

And that means that a major part of our economical and political power is still located in Earth.

KRI

This is an interesting detail, but I can't see what this means to our investigation.

TANITH

It means that I want to speak with the president again.

Tanith starts to work with console.

KRI

What, now?

TANITH

Now.

KRI

I don't think that's appropriate. It's kind of late.

TANITH

So? He said we could call any time.

KRI

Yes, but you know what that means.

TANITH

Yes, I do. But I don't like him.

Tanith grins evilly to Kri and then turns back to the console.

After a moment a quite baffled and annoyed President Artesh appears to the screen.

TANITH

I am sorry if I'm bothering you Mr. President, but you said I could call any time.

LIMB

It takes a few seconds for Artesh to get to his presidential posture and after he does, he starts to smile again.

ARTESH

Not at all, Commander. How can I help you?

TANITH

I'd like to speak a bit more about the terrorists.

ARTESH

I really thought we had covered that subject already.

TANITH

Well, we did a part of it. But I was thinking about what we discussed earlier and I wondered why the attack was targeted towards us.

ARTESH

Commander, you should be experienced enough to know that there is little logic to terrorist activities in general.

TANITH

I disagree. Usually a terrorist is a person who believes in something so badly that he or she is willing to give his or hers life for it. A person, terrorist or no, doesn't do that for light reasons.

Once again Artesh's politeness starts to wear down as he understands the direction the conversation is going.

ARTESH

That is your opinion, Commander.

LIMB

TANITH

Yes, it is. Now, I've been going through some of the data I could find about departing transports. It wasn't easy considering how most of them are blocked for some reason, but I did find interesting details.

ARTESH

And what would they be?

TANITH

I already knew, was the fact that all trade from your world is directed towards Earth space. What I find really suspicious is that all of the cargo goes through Limb and to Sol. And more precisely earth.

This time Artesh's smile disappears altogether.

ARTESH

May I ask how did you gather this information, Commander?

TANITH

No. It was relatively easy to track the trails to Limb. Probably that's why the terrorists chose it as a target. After that it was quite a work to actually get a certainty that every single cargo box continues to planet Earth.

ARTESH

Commander, I try to be as cooperative as I can, but I'm afraid these matters are none of your business.

As much to her own surprise as to the surprise of the president Tanith raises her voice quite a bit. She is determined to get on with the investigation.

LIMB

TANITH

They are if they concern the safety of my station! I want to know more about these terrorist. I want to know about past targets and everything that has been ascertained about the organization. I want to know if there are any consistencies giving us leads to the their true aims.

Artesh becomes quite heated about the subject as well.

ARTESH

I cannot give you that information off hand.

TANITH

Then tell me why all the cargo are headed to a single destination. It is simply impossible that that could be a plausible way of conducting trades. Everybody knows that!

ARTESH

The way we sell our own natural resources are not any of your business! It just happens that the Interplanetary Corporation offers the best prizes!

This hits on Tanith. She suddenly understands everything.

TANITH

(to herself)

Interplanetary Corporation. Of course.

Artesh is very angry and upset because he knows he made a bad slip.

ARTESH

If you really must talk to somebody about the terrorists, I suggest you turn to General Kroshtam. He's the defense minister. I'll arrange him to meet with you. Now, if you don't have anything else. Good night.

LIMB

Artesh closes the line before Tanith can answer. She turns away from the console deep in thought.

Kri looks at her blankly.

KRI

What's Interplanetary Corporation?

TANITH

It's a company that refines natural resources into usable forms. Like jewelries, ornaments, fuel and other usable forms. And it also sells them forward to factories and other companies who wish to do the same.

KRI

So how is this so crucial to this case?

TANITH

Interplanetary Corporation was founded and still headed by Tetsuzo Baxter. He is the father of Admiral Baxter.

KRI

And the grandfather of Captain Baxter. I see where you're going.

TANITH

This explains a lot of things. For example why Captain Baxter was stationed to Limb in the first place. He's not suitable or even competent to command a civilian station. But he is very suitable at making sure that everything goes well with the transports in the station and to keep an eye of the overall situation near the border.

KRI

I thought that people in high places in the space force aren't allowed to have connections to private companies just because of this.

LIMB

TANITH

They aren't. But that's one of the things that father and son Baxter has been under investigation. And we have to remember that grandfather is in the top of Interplanetary.

KRI

But still, don't the Kl'tor people have the right to make trade with whoever they want to.

TANITH

Yes, but when every single cargo container is going to the same address, it can't be good for the people. Where do they get supplies? Where is the private business? This will be very profitable to the people, yes. But only to a very small, selected part of them. And the Baxter family definitely has their spoon in this soup.

Kri thinks about this.

KRI

Perhaps you're right. And we definitely have grounds to investigate further. What do you suggest?

TANITH

Well, we can be sure that when the investigators under Admiral Baxter's command come here, they'll more likely hide every bit of evidence than come forward with it.

KRI

So what do you suggest?

TANITH

First of all, I need to make another call. How do you dial to Limb from here? I want to talk to Wendy.

LIMB

INT. LIMB - SICKBAY

Baxter, Wendy and Desi are beside the unconscious Ashtar. There are screens around the Ashtar that indicate his somewhat inactive state.

BAXTER

Is everything as it should be?

DESI

Yes. There has been nothing out of the ordinary. It should be safe to keep him unconscious for the time being.

BAXTER

Good. The escorts will pick him up tomorrow. I want you to keep him unconscious until that. They will then decide when to wake him up. Probably not before they reach headquarters.

DESI

Yes, sir.

WENDY

Has there been any success in determining his identity?

BAXTER

No. And I don't think that's our concern anyway. There will be a formal investigation in headquarters.

DESI

That is led by Admiral Baxter?

BAXTER

Yes. I for once couldn't think of anyone more suitable for the job.

WENDY

Yes, Captain.

LIMB

BAXTER

Well, I think this is all. If you'll excuse me, I have other duties to attend to.

Baxter leaves. Desi and Wendy turn to look the Ashtar.

WENDY

How do you suggest we should proceed?

DESI

I don't know. If all that what the Commander told you is true, we should do something before we let the bastard take this person.

WENDY

But do we have enough grounds for mutiny? It is a serious offence.

DESI

I don't know. At least it's very close.

(smiles)

But I know I'd enjoy giving a little fear of god to the bastard.

WENDY

So you think we should proceed as planned?

DESI

It could be fun. But we need someone to help us.

WENDY

I am sure we can count on chief engineer's assistance.

DESI

No, we need someone who doesn't bring too many suspicions to Captain. Someone who could get very close without triggering a volley of sarcastic remarks from him.

Wendy computes the information.

LIMB

WENDY

I believe I know such a person.

INT. LIMB - STEVE'S

Doctor Malcolm Scott is drooping in a table holding an empty drink. He is oblivious to his surroundings.

Then he senses that someone has approached him.

WENDY (O.S.)

I require your assistance.

Malcolm turns to Wendy in surprise.

INT. KROSHTAM'S OFFICE

Defense minister Kroshtam's office is pretty similar in design as President Artesh's. The room is bigger however and there are more seats around the room and the walls are decorated with diplomas and medals.

MINISTER KROSHTAM herself is tall in stature and is quite an impressive sight in her uniform. She appears to be in her sixties but has taken the age with dignity and pride. Her impatient nature is reflected from her every gesture. She doesn't like to waste time.

An assistant lets Kri and Tanith in. Kroshtam stands to greet them.

Tanith and Kri shake hands with the minister.

TANITH

I appreciate for meeting with us,
Minister.

Kroshtam doesn't smile and doesn't seem too pleased about having to meet them.

KROSHTAM

Of course. Now could we get this over
with as soon as possible? I have a war
to prepare.

Tanith is sitting down, but stops midway of the move and just

LIMB

stops to stare at the minister who has already sat down. Minister doesn't smile or give any other indication of her thoughts.

KROSHTAM (CONT'D)

I was joking. Now please sit down.

Tanith and Kri sit down.

KROSHTAM (CONT'D)

I believe you wished to discuss about the terrorists?

Tanith is still surprised about the joke and doesn't know whether to take it seriously.

TANITH

That's correct. First of all I was wondering if we are dealing with a single movement or are there several of them.

KROSHTAM

That is still under investigation. You know how it is with terrorists. You can never know what's going on.

TANITH

I find that a bit surprising. Everyone I've discussed about this has said the same. But they've also said that they have been around for quite a while. Why aren't the investigations going anywhere?

KROSHTAM

Are you making accusations?

TANITH

No, but I'm just wondering if the investigations are really going so slowly, or is it just that you don't want to give information about them?

LIMB

KROSHTAM

Commander, this is a delicate situation. There have been terrorist activities, yes. But we haven't simply found any consistencies or similarities with the individual attacks.

TANITH

How they are usually conducted?

KROSHTAM

Very similarly to the strike in your station. They use unusual materials for explosive devices that we don't include in regular scans. We've updated our databases as much as we can, but they always seem to be one step ahead of us.

TANITH

Has there been any logic in the targets?

KROSHTAM

As I said earlier, we have found none. We have no idea as to what their aims might be.

TANITH

That's what I've been told. Could you give me any examples?

KROSHTAM

I don't remember them all, but there have been strikes at fuel deposits, spaceports and mines to name a few.

TANITH

But don't those targets would indicate to the economical targets? Mines, spaceports and the sorts.

Kroshtam is growing increasingly impatient to the situation.

LIMB

KROSHTAM

I said that these were just a few targets. There have been strikes at other places as well. And besides, this is Kl'tor. If you put bomb to any given place in this planet, it will affect economy.

TANITH

Have there been a lot of deaths in these strikes?

KROSHTAM

Thankfully, no. The targets are usually more material ones. But there has been cases of people going into the wrong place at the wrong time.

TANITH

How have the police and military forces responded?

KROSHTAM

We have made raids and strikes, but there has been little success. Now, if you don't mind, I do have other responsibilities.

Kroshtam stands up without waiting for a reply. Tanith is a bit surprised, but stands up as well. Kri does the same.

TANITH

Well, I thank you for your time. There is one more request, though. Do you have a database on the terrorist attacks?

KROSHTAM

Naturally.

TANITH

Would it be possible to get a copy of it?

Kroshtam starts to lead them to the door.

LIMB

KROSHTAM

That might be difficult. You must understand that they are information concerning national security and are therefore of a confidential nature.

TANITH

I understand that, but I was thinking that...

KROSHTAM

(interrupts)

I'll see what I can do. Goodbye.

TANITH

Well, it was nice to...

Kroshtam closes the door between them and cuts Tanith's sentence.

She goes back to her desk and starts going through some paperwork. Soon she starts to tap her fingers to the desk as if she was waiting for something. She looks at her desk console every now and then.

After about a minute the console lets out a sound. She immediately pushes a button and reads something from the screen. For the first time, we see her smile.

She turns to another console in the wall behind her. She taps in a few commands.

President Artesh appears to the screen.

KROSHTAM

We got them.

President smiles.

ARTESH

Good. I'll inform the others immediately.

The screen goes off. Minister Kroshtam turns back to her desk with a look of relief.

LIMB

INT. LABORATORY

We see a huge laboratory with hundreds of scientists. We PAN around the room watching the various duties the scientists do. There is no indication as to what the purpose of this facility is.

After a moment we see too travel pods leaning against the back wall. The camera starts to go closer.

When we get really close to the pods we can see two figures inside the pods.

The figures are Kri and Tanith, both unconscious for the travel. The pods have been snatched from the tube while en route.

We PAN closely to their unconscious faces.

THE END

TO BE CONTINUED...