

Chapter 7: A Gift of a Rose

(Navi grunting and struggling)

Bree: You're back in your home, in the back of the ship. Like nothing ever changed.

Navi: What is this? Where are you taking me?

Flo: A temporary holding cell. In the back of the ship.

Navi: There are detention units in the bridge of the ship, if I recall.

Flo: They haven't been used in so long that they're off the oxygen circulation system. So..for now...you're here.

Navi: Where no one can see me. Do you think there's anything suspicious about this?

(An electronic beeping, and heavy metal doors clank and grind open)

Bree: Get in there! (Navi cries out as she is thrown onto a hard floor)

Navi: Don't you see what they're trying to do...

Bree: Shut up! Here, keep her legs pinned...

Flo: Hold still...

Navi: Let me go!

Bree: Here, give me those cables...(Navi groans) Flo, always make sure her hands are bound behind her back. Anything she touches she could use as a tool in a way we can't foresee.

Navi: If you're afraid of me being that smart, why don't you listen to what I say?

Bree: Because it's clear what your objectives really are! Keeping the rest of us down, while you live like a queen! So shut up. You only make me angry the more you talk...

Flo: (With a chuckle) I didn't know you had this in you, Bree..

Bree: And you shut up too! No one's around to listen to your sarcasm anymore. I'm in charge of both of you now.

Flo: Says who?

Bree: Says me, because I'll beat you into the ground if you say otherwise.

Flo: What the hell is wrong with you? (Bree lashes out and Flo cries out in pain)

Bree: I swear, Flo, if you keep this up there will be consequences. And the others won't care. You're just a C level now.

Flo: Bree, you're not in charge.

Bree: Oh, over you, I think I am now.

Flo: Do I need to tell Mo, or Derry? That you...

Bree: Do you think they really care about you, Flo?

Flo: Bree, please just...

Bree: (furious) What are you going to do about it?

Flo: (cowed, quiet. Then, tearfully) Bree, I'm sorry...over all this time...is this what we did to you?

Bree: Shut up! Keep an eye on her, Flo. Bring her food and water in an hour. As for you...you keep your head down and be a good girl. Don't give me any justification. (Strides off. Navi whimpers)

Navi: Flo...please listen to me.

Flo: Please be quiet...

Navi: You know that Jin and I are on to something here...

Flo: Navi, the more you talk, the worse things could get. Please...just be quiet.

Navi: Ok...ok. (Pause) Can you just tell me if Jin is all right? (Flo doesn't answer. After another pause) Ok...I'll be quiet, for now.

(Clinking of glasses. Hun and Mo laugh)

Mo: Here you are, good sir. (Liquid pouring)

Hun: Thank you, thank you. Mana, fill up here, man. And don't drink too much now.

Mana: This is nothing! I could drink you under the table, young man.

Hun: (Sarcastic) I bet you could, I have no doubt of that.

Mo: Everyone (tinkling a fork against her glass) before we dive in, let's all give a round of thanks to our host, who clearly put so much work into this delightful feast.

Hun and Mana: Here here!

Derry: It was nothing. Nothing at all. I enjoy cooking for worthy company. So rare that I get the chance.

Hun: A toast!

Mo: Yes, a toast. (All raising glasses) What to?

Mana: To the order of the ship!

Derry: To no one getting hurt.

Hun: To victory! (They all toast with a clink of glasses. They begin to drink the champagne)
Libby, what's the matter? You look like you're about to start crying.

Mo: Is it about today, dear?

Libby: I'm fine, I'm fine. (Pause) I just don't know if this is something we should
be...celebrating. It was...pretty traumatic...honestly

Hun: We put them in their place! I think that's worth a celebration.

Mana: They were out of line. We helped protect the safety of the ship.

Derry: Yes, we did. Libby, think of it like this. We are celebrating the aversion of a potential
catastrophe. An upheaval in the fabric of the ship's society, an inevitable upheaval, perhaps, has
been managed, without anyone being harmed.

Libby: Ok, yes, but I don't think it merits a dinner feast commemorating it. (Sighs) But it seems I'm alone in thinking that.

Mo: It seems so. Brighten up, dear. Please enjoy the dinner. You were fantastic, by the way. Your deception! Remarkable. I honestly thought you were on their side, until the very end. (Laughing) I can't imagine their surprise when you deactivated the security drones. (Laughs again) And now we're all in this wonderfully comfortable hall, with this wonderful food and drink.

Hun: Our new quarters are incredible. Thank you, Derry.

Mo: We'll all be spoiled rotten in no time.

Hun: No wonder this guy's been getting soft, right Mana?

Mana: Yeah right, you wish!

Derry: My friends, these new accommodations are your just rewards. All the good and hard work you've done on your respective journeys has led you here. Everything has a season, an old proverb from Ancient Earth goes. There is a time for struggle, hard work and suffering, a season for maturity and increased responsibility...but also a season for luxury and comfort, of reaping what one has sowed.

Mo: I'll drink to that!

Mana: Here here!

Derry: Indeed, friends, a time to rest, and enjoy. (Beat) However, we will eventually need to return to work. Mana, as you are now the ship's chief engineer, you will need to assume the high level duties previously carried out by...a certain young mutineer.

Mana: Ah, there's nothing to it. I've been following along with his work for years. I can do these jobs as well as him, if not better!

Hun: Love the confidence on display. Love it.

Derry: I'm glad to hear. It may be some time before work resumes the level of intensity it's been at for the last few months. The cycle of repairs is currently up to date. But eventually the cycle will begin anew. I believe it is neither good for us or the C levels to have such a...tight supply of manpower. That's why I think it is time to hatch a new class of lower levels from the embryos. Accelerated development. For approximately a year they will need to be cared for intensively. But by the end of a year, when it comes time for the next repair cycle, they should be able to help in some capacity.

Hun: Just one year? That's how long it takes to develop them?

Mo: That gets them to about 12 years of normal development. The frozen embryos are in stages. Some are actually embryos, some are fetuses, the most developed are at 3 years of development. We get another 3 years of development through an intensive hatching process. Then we get another 6 years from 1 year, through an accelerated childhood. I looked after you C levels when you were hatched...I suppose you don't remember. Wiping the snot from your noses, giving you pages to color. Remember that, Libby?

Libby: I do. As I did for you, when you were hatched...

Derry: 5 new additions to our crew should be sufficient, I believe.

Mana: All right, we'll get on it.

Libby: Derry?

Derry: (Over the talking of the others) Yes?

Libby: Can I have a word with you? Alone...

Derry: Of course, my dear. I'll be in my study later tonight, if you wish to come by.

Libby: No. I mean now. I want to talk to you about something urgent.

Derry: Very well. (The two get up, and enter through a sci fi door. The sound of the others gradually fades away)

Libby: Derry, I need your assurance that Jin and Navi won't be harmed.

Derry: Of course they won't be harmed! I gave you my word on that before they interrupted the rehearsal. Why do you doubt me already?

Libby: You just gave the order to hatch more embryos. That sounds like you plan on eventually replacing them entirely.

Derry: I would do nothing of the sort. Although a larger pool of crew members does provide a sort of discipline in of itself.

Libby: Keep in mind that Jin and Navi may still be needed on this ship. Mana and the others haven't taken on their duties quite yet. They may find that they're incapable of doing what Jin and Navi can do.

Derry: I am already aware of this, Libby. You should stop entertaining such suspicious notions.

Libby: (firmly) And keep in mind that there are things that I do, that the others may find difficult to replace. That's why you should take me seriously, when I say Jin and Navi's safety is a condition of my support.

Derry: (tense) Understood.

Libby: (Tense) Good.

Derry: Is that all?

Libby: Yes. Yes it is.

Derry: Try to enjoy the evening, Libby. You seem in need of some relaxation.

Libby: Thank you, Derry. How considerate of you...

(Grunting, heavy footsteps as Jin brought to the back of the ship)

Mech: I can't see a thing...they really need to give us brighter flashlights.

Nut: Tell me about it...and that smell (gags) Those two D levels really lived down here for years?

Jin: Yes, they did. And so will you, eventually. If it suits Derry.

Mech: Well, that's going to be you for now! Trying to revolt and overthrow the whole ship. Just like Derry said you would!

Nut: Just like Derry said you would! (Laughs) He sure is pretty smart, that Derry.

Jin: Watch your step. The catwalk is warped in the middle.

Mech: Shut up! Not another word.

Jin: It's coming up...right here...(Nut cries out and falls down with a metal bang. Jin chuckles)
Told you so.

Mech: I said shut up!

Nut: Yeah, we're capturing you after all, in case you forgot! (Quietly) Ow...that hurt...(a beat.
Metal clanking and grinding)

Mech: Your new home. An old gear casing, right in between the gravity engine and the protein pools. With the addition of some metal bars...

Jin: Those look freshly welded. You should have used bigger electrodes for the arc welder. Those joints are deformed. I could probably kick it down and break through.

Mech: What are you talking about?

Nut: Why are trying to help us capture you?

Jin: Because I'm not your enemy! I have no conflict with either of you. Derry's the one pulling all the strings. Getting you all to carry on with the normal way of doing things, even though it's going to get you all killed!

Nut: Derry told us not to listen to you! Said you'd try to trick us.

Mech: So shut up. (menacing) I'm not going to ask again...

Jin: Ok...(a beat. The metal door is shut and locked. After a pause..) I am kind of hungry, if you guys have any spare rations...

Mech: SHUT UP! (Punches Jin in the stomach. Jin grunts in pain, but laughs through his pain)

Jin: Ok, ok. Sorry. Being quiet now. (Pause)

(A coms device beeps. Mech answers it)

Mech: Yeah? What is it?

Hun: (Over the device) Is the prisoner secured?

Mech: Yeah.

Hun: Good. Now get up here at once. There's a leak in one of the coolant tanks.

Mech: Can't you get it? We're all the way in the back of the ship, we just got here.

Hun: That's not my role anymore. I have data from the ship's engineering plans to analyze. So get up here...now. You have an hour to report to deck, or else disciplinary actions will follow.
(Coms shuts off. Mech growls)

Mech: Goddamn it, goddamn it...

Nut: Do we need to go?

Mech: We? No, no...I'll go. Goddamn, I have a long way to go. You stay. Keep an eye on him. And don't talk to him! Don't let him touch anything. Here...use these. Tie his hands up behind his back, so he can't pull any tricks.

Nut: You got it!

Mech: Stupid, worthless, up-jumped, pompous, golden boy, piece of...(leaves the area)

Nut: Ok, ok. Hold still.

Jin: No problem. (Sound of restraints fastening)

Nut: All right. Not going anywhere now, huh? (Chuckles nervously)

Jin: Nope. I guess not. (After a pause) You know, those welds still look pretty brittle... You may want to look into that.

Nut: Shut up! And don't try to escape! (Beat. Then, timidly...) Please...

(Navi's holding area)

Navi: (Grunting, straining) Almost...out....no! (Slumps forward) I can't....they're too strong. I have to try...I have to figure something out. (tries again. Fails, painfully) I'm sorry, Jin. I'm sorry, Cus. I'm doing the best I can. (Takes a deep breath) I'll get out. Eventually. I know I will. I promise, I will....

(The metal door to the area opens. Navi recoils, scrambles over to the corner)

Navi: Flo? What are you doing here? (Pause) And what is that...

Flo: Shhh...(opens the cell door and steps inside) Please don't be alarmed. There's nothing to be afraid of.

Navi: Am I being moved, what's going on?

Flo: (Pause. Then, calmly) I wanted to give you something.

Navi: Give me what? (Pause) Flo, are you well? You look...you look as though you've been crying.

Flo: I'm fine. Just as I've always been. (Pauses. Then, sighs deeply and paces around the cell) You know, I've always been a C level. I suppose, once, I was a child, beyond any sort of ranking. But then I was a C level. Mo told me. Libby and Mana told me. Jin, and Derry told me...They said I could advance. That if I worked hard and acted well, when a spot opened...well, I always just stayed a C level. It was fine. Never cared too much about it. It was growing flowers that I cared about. In my greenhouse, 12 soil beds, all the nitrogen and carbon dioxide levels at my control. So that's what I did. I grew flowers.

One year, I grew lilacs. The C levels bickered and fought with the B levels. At one point, it seemed like they were going to go to war. Eventually, they sorted it out. Compromises and reforms. My lilacs died. I grew more flowers.

Another year, I grew tulips. Jin came forward, the way he does sometimes, all bright and shiny with bold ideas. We were going to sort things out! Finally. A new way of doing things. That was a few years ago, when the biggest issue was how much time on the entertainment consoles we should be allowed. (Chuckles) We figured it out, eventually. The tulips died. So I grew more flowers.

I grew orchids, honeysuckles, daisies. Every year a new struggle. The metal of the ship never changes. We'll never leave this place. We'll fight, clean the metal, repair the metal, grow flowers, then grow old. What'll happen to me when I die? (Emotional beat) No one seems to know. What happens to my flowers when they die? They wilt and then they're gone. Don't concern yourself with it too much. New flowers will grow in their place. (Takes a deep breath)

Now everyone's fighting again. Just like they always do, inevitably. They fight over the ship, they fight over each other, they fight over the screens. I just grow flowers (chuckles). I suppose that's all I can really do. (Navi's metal bindings become undone)

Navi: What are you doing? Are you freeing me?

Flo: No. Just freeing your hands. I don't know what's going on. I can't...even if I wanted to. I just grow the flowers here. But...if...if what you're saying, about a new world is possible...I did want...to give you this...for what it's worth. For whatever, it's worth. A red rose. I grew roses for you. I can't say much. Was never good at it. And the flowers I grow all eventually die. So take this, Navi. It's all I have to give.

Navi: Thank you. It's...beautiful. (Pause) But it will die too...

Flo: I hope not. I hope you can keep it alive...

Navi: I'll do all I can.

Flo: I know you will....Good night, Navi.

Navi: Good night, Flo. And Flo?

Flo: Yes?

Navi: Thank you.

(Flo quietly exits the cell, gently closing the metal door behind her)