

## Chapter 9: The Pawn and the Queen

(Tender, emotional music of some sort playing)

Bree: I suppose you don't remember it. Time doesn't mean anything aboard this ship. It was just over a year ago. My birthday. I don't think the others remember or care about their birthdays. But I do.

(Flashback scene)

(The ship shakes violently. A mechanical grinding sound, like metal being ripped to shreds. Frenzied computer beeping. The shaking subsides)

Libby: What happened? Is everyone all right?

Jin: I'm fine.

Mana: Same.

Libby: What was that?

Jin: Libby, pull up the energy output report for this cycle....it should have generated by now. Mana, pull up the stress map for the ship sectors. Enhance on sectors G and H.

Mana: Yes sir....(computer beeping sound) Sector G is completely off-line, sir.

Jin: Damn it! Just like I thought...the gravity turbine needs serious recalibration. That's what's causing all this turbulence. I'm gonna go there myself to look everything over and revise my plans. In the meantime, we need sector G back online.

Mana: What is that? The water collection tanks...

Jin: Obviously very important. We'll need to troubleshoot and reconnect every single computer sensor. If just one is off-line, we could have contamination of the water supply. You know how to run the protocol? Checking and reconnecting the sensors?

Mana: Yes sir. It's just that...it takes hours...

Jin: There's no way around it, I'm afraid. It has to be done. I'm going to the gravity turbine. Please let the C levels know about sector G. I suggest doing a system whereby the C levels use a series of shifts, so the burden is shared. Then, once you let them know, please come to me at the turbine. I think fixing it will be a two person job.

Mana: Yes sir. I'll go speak with the C levels now.

(Cut to the C levels)

Flo: Wow, Bree. You're looking less miserable than usual. What's the occasion?

Bree: (whistling to herself) Libby and Mana didn't tell you? Today is my birthday! A special day that belongs only to me. So please make extra effort to be courteous to me today, Flo.

Mo: You're the only one on the ship who cares about birthdays, Bree. You weren't even born, if I have to remind you. You were hatched. From a frozen egg. In a metal tank, with an electric syringe going into it.

Bree: Yes, but that's still the same as being born! I came into being. Derry is always talking about the importance of ritual and anniversaries. They're the only things we have to mark the progress of time, to give our days meaning! So I'm sorry if you can't enjoy your birthdays the way I can.

Flo: I guess if you have nothing else going on in your life, it makes for a gas.

Bree: Shut up! I'll tell Derry if you're being nasty to me about this. I'm sure he'll take my side. (Pause) Now...I'm going back to my room to change. We should have a nice, proper, pleasant dinner, tonight. In celebration. Libby has some food cultures available...we should all enjoy a wonderful dinner, better than what we normally eat. It will be my treat, to you. (Mo and Flo sneer)

Flo: I might pass. Feeling sick as of right now.

Mo: I know right! (Makes a mocking vomiting sound)

Bree: Stop it! I'm warning, I will bring this up with the A levels! I'll speak with you later in the evening. And try to wear something nicer, if you don't mind. (Leaves the area with a sci fi door opening. Stops) Oh hello, Mana.

Mana: Hello Bree. I have an announcement for the C levels. Are you leaving?

Bree: I'll be back soon enough. Go ahead and tell them, they can fill me in later.

Mana: Very well. We'll speak with you later.

Bree: Good-bye all! (Leaves the area. Mana enters the room)

Mana: Where are the boys?

Flo: Watching movies.

Mo: Or lifting weights.

Flo: Or beating each other up.

Mo: Either way, who cares?

Mana: I do. We all have a lot of work to do. Turbulence from the gravity engine is shaking the ship and knocking entire sectors off-line. We're going to the engine to fix it—we need someone to go to Sector G and make sure the sensors are all back online.

Mo: Every single sensor?

Flo: But that will take...hours...

Mana: That's right, it will. About seven hours. But it's gotta be done. So someone's gotta be there to do it.

Mo: Can't the D levels do it?

Mana: Don't worry, missy, they'll be doing their share. They'll be in the grid beneath the sector, fixing any sensors that don't come online. Someone needs to be there at the console, running each sensor by them. It'll be a much easier job than what they're doing down below. But someone's gotta do it. So figure out among yourselves how it'll be done. If someone isn't at sector G by 18:00 hours, Jin and I will make the choice for you. That's all. Remember...sector G. 18:00 hours. Get to it. (Leaves the room. Mo groans)

Mo: Just when I thought I was done for the day...just when I thought it was safe to relax. You know Hun and I were going to watch a movie later? A nice evening together...

Flo: Are you two back on?

Mo: I believe so. He's actually been sweet these last couple days, for the first time in months. (Sighs) It was going to be such a lovely evening. But we never can get away from work, can we?

Flo: Hmm...

Mo: Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

Flo: I think so. But how....exactly, would that work?

Mo: Let's consult our more mechanically inclined crew mates...

(Sci fi door opening)

Nut: Seven hours? Are you kidding me?

Mech: That's practically an entire day's shift. And it's already three o'clock! It won't get done till almost midnight.

Nut: We were gonna play some serious table tennis later. We got a score to settle. And some bets to make, too.

Mo: Well we had plans too, but Jin and Mana don't care. Sector G is the water collection sector. If it goes off-line, we could have ship-wide water contamination. So it's getting done tonight. We don't have a choice.

Mech: Can't the D levels do it?

Mo: We've been over everything, Mech! It has to be one of us. (Sighs) Now. We have a plan. Bree is...in a mood today, you might say. Which we can use to our advantage. Perhaps...she would like to do the honors, for the evening.

Mech: Ok, ok. What were you thinking?

Flo: We can get her down there, to Sector G.

Mo: Leave that to us.

Flo: But our question is, once down there, she could just turn around and leave once she knows why she's there. Is there a way to...

Mo: Keep her there...for a while? Just until the job is done, that is.

Mech: Hmm...if I recall, Sector G is halfway between the bridge and the back. There's only one hallway leading back to the front of the ship. If everything is off-line, we can't do anything electric. But then neither can she.

Nut: We could rig the door open with some cables and pulleys, then drop it. Then it won't open until everything is back online.

Mo: It won't open until she's completed the job! (Laughs) Brilliant. Well, what do you say? Will you rig the door for this little plan?

Nut: I don't know, that is pretty mean. Locking her down there like that.

Mo: Do you want to do the job then for her?

Mech: (Sighs) I'm not going to be down there for seven hours, Nut.

Nut: Yeah, that does sound pretty awful. All right...we'll do it. But it was your idea, not ours.

Mo: I will take, all the credit. Go on and work the door, boys. I'll go inform the birthday girl of our special celebration.

(Knock on a door)

Bree: Hello?

Mo: Bree? Hi, it's Mo. Can I come in?

Bree: Why of course. I hope you've been getting ready. (Door opens)

Mo: I have, as a matter of fact. You know, I was thinking about it...you had some good points about birthdays. Anniversaries, rituals, needing to mark and celebrate the passage of time. (Chuckles) I guess I've just been a little moody lately. Hun has that effect on me when he's acting up. You know how he is. (Beat) So I think we should celebrate your birthday. I talked with Flo and the boys, and we're all going to chip in to give you a real birthday dinner. A celebration worth remembering.

Bree: (Joyful) Thank you! Thank you Mo, that really means a lot to me. You see? Anniversaries and occasions are worth marking. Oh, I'll gladly do the same for you when your birthday comes.

Mo: Thank you, Bree. I know you will. Now, we're getting the meal ready. It's going to be down in Sector G.

Bree: Why there? Why not the mess hall? Sector G is so far away.

Mo: There's more space there! In those spare rooms by the water collection tanks. Also....(giggling) Libby says she has a store of wine down there that we can have. She keeps special liquids like that near the water tanks. Her little secret, she said. But for tonight...it'll be your treat.

Bree: Thank you so much! I'll get ready. When is everyone meeting there?

Mo: In an hour. 18:00.

Bree: I'll see you then! Oh, this is just wonderful. Thank you again, Mo!

Mo: It's my pleasure, Bree. I'll see you soon. (Leaves, the door exits)

Bree: Oh, I can't believe it. Maybe things will change around here. (Sighs happily) Things are gonna change around here.

(Mech and Nut grunt and adjust a heavy metal pulley)

Mech: Almost! (Grunts) There. That should do it.

Nut: So what will make it drop?

Mech: This cable. (Tugs a metal cable) Which we will be holding from the shaft in the upper sectors.

Nut: (Laughs) Wow, this really is something. (Mood darkens) I don't know, Mech. Isn't this kinda wrong? Seems pretty bad what we're doing to her.

Mech: (Chuckles) Relax! It's just a prank. Someday she'll look back at it and laugh. Besides...do you want to be the one here for seven hours? Uploading every single sensor in the sector?

Nut: No, I guess not. (Pause) Yeah, a birthday prank. I like that. We'll have to do more of those.

Mech: And if she's fast, she can get out faster than seven hours.

Nut: And the D levels will be helping her.

Mech: See? It's not so bad. (Distant footsteps) She's coming. Let's get out of here. I got a score to settle with you in the rec center.

Nut: I get first serve this time...(The two sneak away, as Bree enters the sector)

Bree: Hello? Is anyone here? Mo? Flo? (Pause, footsteps) Mech? (Sighs) Maybe they're not here quite yet. What room was she talking about, with the water tanks. Is it this one, down the hall...Why aren't the lights turning on? "Lights! Temperature control!" Nothing works, what's going on. (A loud metal clang as the door slams shut. Bree cries out in shock) What was that? Oh my god, what is this...(Bangs on the door) Help! The door won't open. (Cries in frustration and beats on the door angrily) Somebody come help me!

Mo: Bree! Is that you? I'm speaking through your wristband. The coms device in Sector G isn't working. Are you there?

Bree: Yes, the door is shut. The lights are off, nothing's working. What the hell is going on?

Mo: Bree, listen. The entire sector has been knocked off-line by turbulence from the gravity engine. The D levels are going underneath it to reconnect everything. But they need you to use the console to check the sensors and make sure that every single one works. Then the door will open.

Bree: Every single sensor? But there's hundreds of them...

Flo: (Over the wristband com) Two thousand to be precise.

Bree: Flo? What are you doing with her? What's going on?

Mo: I'm sorry Bree, but it's the only way to get the door open. There should be a console there in the hall.

Bree: You did this on purpose! You lured me down here so I could....(her voice trails off in enraged crying)

Mo: I'm sorry, Bree. We can't get the door open from our end. It's the only way. (Bree cries out)

Bree: You did this to me! Admit it, Mo! (Sobs. No response from Mo on the other end. Bree sobs for a few minutes. Flo can be heard snorting and chuckling. Mo snaps at her)

Mo: Flo, shut up! I'm sorry, Bree. There's nothing we can do from up here. I'm going to patch the D levels in so you can speak with them. Mo over and out. (Bree screams and cries)

Bree: This was supposed to be a good day. Just once, I was supposed to have a good day...(coms device clicks on)

Jan: Hello?

Cus: Bree? Is that you?

Jan: We're underneath Sector G. We need you to go over to the console. Do you see it?

(Bree gathers herself, and quiets her tears. She moves to a console)

Bree: Yeah. The screen is dead though.

Jan: Try it now. (Console screen beeps and powers up). How about now?

Bree: Yeah, it works.

Jan: Cus! We got the console circuit online. Now we can get started with the rest. Ok, Bree. Go to the folder in the top right corner of the screen. Click on it, and look down at the bottom. There should be a file called master sensor table. Do you see it?

Bree: (After a moment of crying) Yeah, I see it.

Jan: Ok...now select the first entry. (Bree sobs softly. After a pause) Bree, do you see it?

Bree: Shut up, ok! Just give me a minute. We go when I'm ready. I outrank both of you, so you don't tell me what to do. (A pause)

Jan: We're stuck here too, you know. If you could just...

Bree: Jan, shut up right now! No more talking. I'm clicking the first entry. It says that it's offline.

Jan: It's offline, Cus.

Cus: All right, I have it right here. (Crackling of an arc welder) Ok. Just had to adjust the weld a little. How about now?

Bree: It's online.

Jan: Good. (Sighs unhappily) Only one thousand, nine hundred and ninety nine more to go...

(Scene transition)

Computer Voice: Sector G, fully back online.

Libby: Finally. I was getting worried there.

(Sci-fi door opens)

Bree: Libby? Are you..busy right now?

Libby: (pauses) Bree! Oh, um...I was just going through the Archives to help Jin. He needs me to find the blueprints for the gravity turbine. But I can take a minute....what's going on?

Bree: Well...I hate to bring it up again...

Libby: (sighs a little) Bree...

Bree: I can't get them to respect me, Libby! No matter what I do they always treat me like trash. They pulled a prank on me...they said they were having a celebration, a nice big fancy meal...and I figured, since it is my birthday after all, they were gonna do something nice for me for once. But no...they trapped me in Sector G and made me...(cries) stay there for eight hours, to get the whole sector back online. None of them helped. Not one.

Libby: I'm sorry, Bree. That was cruel of them.

Bree: So can you get them to stop?

Libby: Stop what?

Bree: (building in intensity) Treating me like filth?!

Libby: (annoyed) I can tell them to stop pulling pranks, yes. They should have been honest with you. But I can't make them be friends with you. You need to manage this yourself. You're a fully grown C level, just like them. This is...just part of the way things are. And besides...that was an essential repair you carried out. No one wanted to do it, but it still needed to be done.

Bree: Fully grown? You make me sound like something in a petri dish.

Libby: That's not what I meant, Bree. You're an adult.

Bree: I suppose that's why none of them care about birthdays. No one was born here...we were all just hatched from the embryo pods. And then just put to use...

Libby: I can't solve these problems, Bree! This is the way things are. Now please...I have work to do. Derry may have more insights into this than me. I've run out of advice to give you!  
(Silence) I need to get back to work.

Bree: (tearfully) Ok. Ok....(leaves)

(Sci-fi door opens)

Bree: Jin?

Jin: Hey, Bree. How are you?

Bree: I'm good...are you...busy?

Jin: No, not right now. I still have to change some parts for the gravity turbine, but I'm taking a break. Come on in. Can I get you anything? (Pours a drink) This stuff is really good, if you want some. A high fructose solution, Libby synthesized it the other day.

Bree: Thank you...(sighs, and takes a deep breath) It happened again, Jin.

Jin: With the others?

Bree: Yeah. They made it look like we were all going to have a big celebration...it's my birthday after all...then they all trapped me down in Sector G, made me do all the work to get it back online.

Jin: Oh, Bree, that's awful. I'm sorry...(to himself) So that's how the sector got back online.

Bree: There's nothing I can do! The more I tell them to stop treating me like that...I just sound so stupid, so weak...They just laugh and keep doing it more. Is there anything you can do?

Jin: Yes. (Stern) There is. I'm going to give each of them a double workload for one day as punishment for this. That's no way to treat a fellow crew member.

Bree: Oh, Jin...thank you, but...

Jin: I've been clear with them plenty of times. I take their mistreatment of you as direct disrespect to myself.

Bree: They'll take it out on me! If you punish them...they'll know it was because of me. Please...is there another way?

Jin: (Deep breath) I understand. Very well. I'll talk with them about this. One on one. I suppose Derry would prefer it done that way, too. He never wants me to intervene too much in your social lives. 'An inappropriate direction of authority', he says. He thinks that you all need to be free to manage your relationships. Our job should only be to facilitate things, for the necessary functioning of the ship.

Bree: Yeah...he tells me that too. And I'm trying real hard to be strong and stand up for myself...but when you're always outnumbered....

Jin: I understand. Well, (trying his best to comfort Bree) In the future, if there's an undesirable job such as that, I will directly assign roles and shifts, so that it's carried out fairly. (Beat) And I promise you I will never treat you like that. Ever.

Bree: (Warmly) I know. Thank you. (Pause) Well, I don't want to take up too much of your time. Be too much of a burden.

Jin: No worries, Bree. You're not a burden at all.

Bree: You're sure you're not busy? I don't want to interfere with any work you have to do.

Jin: It's all right. Like I said, I'm taking a break. And besides, the well-being of those aboard the ship are my business. It's as much my responsibility as the repairs and the engineering plans. Here...(pours two glasses of the fructose solution) A toast. To your birthday. Happy birthday, Bree.

Bree: (Laughs happily) Thank you, Jin.

Bree: (Voice-over) You always are willing to talk to me. You let the conversation go on long enough for me to feel safe again. You're never in a hurry. You know how much it means to me....you want me to feel good again. But the conversations always do have to end, eventually. I can't...just be with you always, you have other things to do. So, eventually...I leave. Go do work. Find something to do. The others are sometimes kind to me. Especially if it's just one on one. But they always seem like they want to be somewhere else. Like...they're gonna get dirty if they spend too much time with me. So I go back to my room. A few things of mine...a few pairs of clothes. An electronic tablet with some old stories on it, from Ancient Earth. A little doll...when I was a child. Libby said all hatchlings have some items like that in their first year, for enrichment. But that all the others got rid of theirs when they got older. Except for me...Libby was my 'enrichment manager'. Not my parent...I never had a parent. My 'enrichment manager'....I lie down on my bed, and look at the metal of the ship. Looking up at the dark ceiling...imagining the space beyond. Wonder if you're doing the same. (Cries softly)

Bree: The stories from Ancient Earth tell of princes and princesses, of love and romance. You're like one of the princes in the old stories. There's always a curse, or a tower with a locked

gate...some reason they can't be together. But they always end up together in the end. So I'll wait...I'll wait for you, Jin. I know someday love will conquer all...that's why I'm going to save you now. I'm going to save your life....just you wait....

(The bridge of the ship)

Mana: So Mech was looking at me all pissy. He was in one of his moods. 'Why do I have to do this, why do I have to do that? Why are you treating me unfair?' I says... 'I wouldn't ask you to do anything I haven't done a million times. We need to service the central block of the gravity engine. So quit crying, and get to work!'

Hun: Hmm...seriously.

Mana: Why is it tough? I've done it a million times. Yeah it's a pain in the ass to crawl up into the shaft. But those cylinders in the gravity engine? I can change em in five minutes. No sweat!

Hun: Some people just won't take responsibility for their attitudes.

Mana: I know right! And he didn't even do that great a job. All worked up and pouting...he was so caught up in his head that he didn't even notice he was using the wrong routing laser!

Hun: Nut's even worse. Everything he does is sloppy. I told Derry priority number one with the new hatchlings is to get rid of those two. We could skip a rock across the embryo bay and it would land on a better future mechanic than either of those two.

Mana: Yeah. Well, they....can...do well. When properly motivated. I just wish they weren't such brats all the time. We just gotta get them to focus.

Hun: Oh no. I think by now we've identified some consistent tendencies. They're no good. Gotta get rid of them, just the same way we flush out the protein pools.

Mana: Well, yeah, but...

Hun: Don't worry, my friend. We'll be getting rid of them. We're gonna get this place running properly for once. Now, we need them for right now.

Mana: That's for sure.

Hun: Priorities number one and two are the prisoners. Once we take care of them...

Mana: Take care of them? What do you mean by that?

Hun: Well...(confidence falters) I'm not...entirely sure yet. We might still need them. Or Jin at least. Look, prioritize. We're going to address them, then worry about the others later. So keep vigilant, maintain service to the ship, but keep the C levels on rotation for guard duty. Ok? Sounds good?

Mana: Huh, right! You sound like you know what you're talking about...

Hun: What was that?

Mana: I'm going to sleep! Wake me if there's another revolution or something...

(Ambient noise of the ship)

Nut: (whispering) Hey...Mech. Look...you think he's asleep.

Mech: I dunno. Let's see. Jin. (Louder) Hey Jin! I guess so.

Nut: Awww! He looks so peaceful.

Mech: Here, I know...(snickering) Let's throw a little screw at his head. (A small sound of metal pinging. The two laugh) Here...let's try another one.

Nut: Let me try! (Metal sound again. They both laugh) Wow, he must really be out of it.

Mech: Trying to start a revolt will do that to you.

Nut: Does this mean we can go now? I mean, if he's asleep...he ain't gonna be up to nuthin.

Mech: I'll ask upstairs. They'll probably need one of us to stay guard at all times.

Nut: Yeah. That's probably true. (Pause) I can take the first shift if you wanna get going. Just come back in a few hours or something.

Mech: Sure. If you don't mind...thanks.

Nut: I'll be right here.

Mech: And I'll go up to the rec center. See you in a bit. (Walks off. Nut whistles and paces around for a few moments. The metal pinging sound again, as he begins throwing bolts at Jin's sleeping head. He giggles along)

Nut: Simple pleasures. Simple pleasures...(footsteps return) What are you doing back so fast?

Mech: (Sighs) I realized there's nothing to do up there. Watch the same stupid old cinemas...try to chase the girls around just like every other stupid time.

Nut: And besides, they're both busy. Doing...something or other.

Mech: (Bored, unhappy) Yep. Another night in paradise.

Nut: Living the dream...(pause. Then, after a beat, the metal pinging sound again. They both struggle to suppress laughter)

Mech: How is that not waking him up...

Nut: Quiet! We don't want to actually wake him.

Mech: All right. (Pause) Want to play a game of cards?

Nut: Sure. What do we bet with though?

Mech: I don't know....

Nut: How about these....(metal pinging sound again. The two laugh) This will be our money.

Mech: Deal. (Shuffling of cards) All right. Here you go.

Nut: Hit me. (Cards ruffle). Hit me. (Card sound) Hit me...damn it! (Mech laughs)

Mech: Gimme some of those.

Nut: Hey! We didn't make a bet.

Mech: Ok, ok. That was a warm-up round. Now. My turn. I'm going in in with...five.

Nut: Ok. I'll deal...(Electronic PA system crackles to life)

Hun: Mech! Are you there? I can't see anything...no cameras in that sector.

Mech: Yes, we can hear you.

Nut: Yeah, loud and clear.

Hun: Why are both of you down there? The prisoner only needs one guard.

Nut: I dunno, just thought Mech here might need reinforcements.

Hun: Mech, get up to the bridge now! Mo is going to have you go to the embryo hold and open some of the tanks. We're hatching five new crew members. And I'll warn you both right now...the days of us coddling and nurturing you are over. Get your act together, and stop screwing things up. Or else the new arrivals will take your places, and you'll be in the very back of the ship, cleaning the gravity engine turbines with a toothbrush. Hun, over and out. (PA system turns off)

Mech: And fuck you too!

Nut: Yeah! Fuck you too.

Mech: Like he could get rid of us if he wanted to. A few days in the front of the ship now and he thinks he's a god.

Nut: Yeah! Seriously. Who does he think he is. (Pauses) You think he really could have us sent back?

Mech: No. I don't think so.

Nut: If he's trying to have us hatch more embryos that could someday replace us, we just shouldn't do it!

Mech: Then him and Mana will do it. (Sighs) I'll go help them with it. It's probably nothing to worry about. Just a lot of bluster. I don't think things will ever change on this ship.

Nut: No. I don't think they ever will. (Pregnant pause. Then, a loud farting sound. Mech gags in disgust, Nut erupts in gales of laughter)

Mech: Disgusting! Why the hell did you do that?

Nut: (Barely able to talk through laughter) You seemed...you seemed...like you needed some cheering up. I just wanted to distract you, is all. (Resumes laughter. Mech slowly breaks down, and joins him in laughing)

Mech: I'm gonna get you back for that.

Nut: Oh are ya now?

Mech: Oh yeah. You won't see it coming either.

Nut: I guess I'll have to be on my guard.

Mech: All right...one more hand. Then I'll go on my way. Five of these...

Nut: Oh no. We are raising the stakes, my friend. 10.

Mech: Oooo, living dangerously. I like it. Deal me in.

Nut: All right...let me shuffle these real quick...(shuffles the cards) Do you think we're doing a good job here, Mech? With the prisoner and all?

Mech: Yes, Nut. We're doing fine. Don't let Hun get in your head.

Nut: Just that the bars look a little weird. We might need to touch them up. Don't want him to just break through them, do we?

Mech: They're fine, I'm telling you. (Pause)

Nut: Just that, well...you wouldn't let them send me down, would ya?

Mech: (Pause. Then, with tender sincerity) No. I wouldn't let them do that to ya, buddy.

Nut: And me neither. Uhm, I mean...them to you.

Mech: I know what you meant. And thanks. We'll stick together.

Nut: Yeah, we will. (Pause) You lost by the way.

Mech: Wait...what...(Beat, then Nut erupts into laughter, Mech scowls) Ok. One more hand, then I go...

(Back in Navi's holding cell)

Navi: Ok...just wait. He'll be on his way. Just wait...be patient. (Sighs, takes a deep breath). Be patient. Have faith.....have faith...

(A distant whistling. Navi flinches in fear. The whistling draws closer, and the voice of Cus becomes audible)

Cus: Oh, another day, another day. Another job, another pay, another pay...another loose wire...a pray, a pray...(Chuckles) Ok. Sector J-8. Boiler engine wires faulty. Ok....let's get under those floor tiles. (Wrenches at the metal bars) What are these doing here?

Navi: Cus! Oh thank God, I'm so glad to see you!

Cus: Jannie! What are you doing here?

Navi: I'll explain everything! But I'm locked in right now. You'll have to let me out!

Cus: I don't have a key! (Pause) But I do have this here laser torch.

Navi: Yes, that will work!

Cus: Stand back, Jannie! I'm gonna get you free. (Sound of the laser torch slowly cutting through the metal bars. Cus grunts in exertion. Then, with the torch sound releases, and the remnants of the metal bars fall to the ground with a loud clang) Are you all right?

Navi: Right as rivets! I'm free! Oh, Cus! I knew you would come! Come here!

Cus: Ah, Jannie!

Navi: Cus cus! I missed you so much!

Cus: I missed you too. But I knew I'd see you again, before too long. (Pause) Now what happened to ya? Why are you in this cell?

Navi: (After a pause) So much has happened, since I saw you last. And I promise, I will explain everything. But the root of it is this. Jin and I want to get everyone off this ship, Derry and the B levels want to keep us on it, till we die. We tried to do something about it, so they locked us both up down here.

Cus: How could they do that to someone like you, Jannie?

Navi: We're gonna beat them, Cus. We're gonna figure out a way. But for now...(takes a deep breath) Now that I'm free...I need to get to a communications console. You know those, right? There are a few throughout the ship, that have connections to all the consoles and all the sectors. Voice-over link up to the PA address system.

Cus: I do know those! There's one not too far, closer to the boiler.

Navi: I don't know where Jin is at. That's why I need to get to the communications console to send out a message. Then I can find out exactly where he is, and rescue him. (Pause) Will you come with me, Cus? It's going to be dangerous....I can't guarantee your safety. If you want to

just, fix the boiler electrical problem, go on like you never saw me...I can manage. Get you out of harm's way.

Cus: (Beaming) I knew this day would finally come. When you'd ask me to get in trouble with you, so we can make things better for us all. You don't worry a thing about me, Jannie. I'm with you to the end.

Navi: Oh Cus! (Embraces) My brother, until death!

Cus: And you, my sister, for life!

Navi: For life! (Pause) All right, let's go. I think I remember this hall from a while back. If we go down the corridor to the right, we'll end up in the oxygen filtration center. From there, the communication console isn't far.

Cus: All right, let's go! (Hurried footsteps, suddenly grind to a halt) What?

Navi: Flo! (In horror) What are you doing here?

Cus: Jannie, is this a trap?

Navi: I...don't know...(pause) Is it, Flo? Are we trapped here?

Flo: (Sighs, and takes a deep breath) You're not. I didn't see anything. I hope to, one day. But for now...Navi?

Navi: Yes?

Flo: Where is it?

Navi: Where...(realizes what Flo is talking about) Yes, of course. I didn't forget. (Lifts a metal plate, with a grunt) I kept it safe, here. While I was signaling to Cus. (Reverently) And I'll continue to keep it safe.

Flo: Thank you.

Navi: Thank you, Flo. (Beat) I promise you...this will all be worthwhile. You'll see.

Flo: I know it will. Good luck, Navi.

Navi: Thank you again, Flo....(Cus and Navi run off across the metal grates with loud clanking footsteps)

(Alarm going off)

Computer Voice: Unidentified motion in Sector K-6. Unidentified motion in Sector K-6.  
Unidentified motion in Sector K-6...

Mo: What...(keyboards clicking) She escaped! How did this happen, where is Flo...(intercom)  
Derry?

Derry: (Over coms device) Yes?

Mo: Rat girl slipped out of her cage. I think Flo let her out.

Derry: Hmm...well, that is most concerning then. We'll need to get her back, won't we?

Mo: Let everyone know, we'll get a search party together...

Derry: I don't think that will be necessary. I'm pulling it up now...they seem to be going for a communications console in the east wing of the boiler section. They are trying to find Jin, I gather. Fortunately for us, there is only one entrance and exit to that section. They are going to bottle themselves in. We don't need to draw too much attention to this incident. Send Bree. She will find Navi, and escort her back to her cell.

Mo: Just Bree? How will she be able to do that alone?

Derry: Because...she will be armed. I will speak to Bree on this matter.

Mo: Ok. So you're taking care of it then? Do I need to do anything?

Derry: Thank you, Mo. But no need. I indeed, will take care of it. Derry, over and out. (Coms device powers down)

Derry: Interesting dilemma I find myself in. Right now their Queen is pinned down. But my higher level pieces are also pinned down as well. Libby and Mana have sympathy to Jin and Navi, I can tell. So any overt or obvious executions could cause me problems further down the line. So how then...how to defeat their queen?

Derry: (Chuckling) Ah, a wonderful, elegant solution. Take the queen out, by making it seem to be through the volition of another. A little pawn of mine, primed and ready. The queen is about to make her long, diagonal move across the board. But she will land, directly in the path...of Bree. (Coms device) Bree?

Bree: Yes?

Derry: It's time to officially earn your promotion. Navi has escaped, and is making for the communications console of the east boiler section, sector H-5. She is undoubtedly trying to contact Jin. Get to her before that happens. She cannot contact Jin. We need to sway him to our side.

Bree: Yes, understood.

Derry: And Bree...in the armory cabinet in the main hall...you will find a magnetic pistol. It fires metal charges at hypersonic speeds, capable of killing cleanly and swiftly. Obviously, be very careful of it. But also be mindful of your safety.

Bree: Yes, I will.

Derry: Once Navi is secured, we can talk about the conditions of Jin's release. Godspeed, Bree. And be careful. Be mindful of your safety in this undertaking.

Bree: (controlled anger) Don't worry about me. I know what to do....

Derry: I know you do. Derry over and out. (Coms device beeps off)

(Nut paces back and forth, whistling)

Jin: Where did Mech go?

Nut: Oh! Hey there. I guess you're awake. He went up to the embryo hold. He's gonna help them hatch some new people.

Jin: Hatch new people? How many? Why?

Nut: I don't know. I just know what they tell me and that's all they told me.

Jin: That's not good. That's...really, not good...I take it Hun is in charge now?

Nut: Yeah. Mana does what you used to do. And Hun and Mo do what Mana used to do.

Jin: And Libby?

Nut: I think she's still there. I really don't know. I've just been down here this whole time.

Jin: Right. (Pause) Do you like it with Hun being in charge?

Nut: (Sighs) What does it matter what I like or don't like?

Jin: That's not true. (Takes a deep breath) You know, Nut...if I ever, mistreated you, or was unfair when I was in charge...I'm sorry. I know I made some mistakes, but I never intended for things to go like this for everyone.

Nut: I know. It's not your fault. You were always good. I never had anything against ya. (Pause) Honestly, I kind of miss you being in the big seat. Hun...he's a right asshole, he is.

Jin: Thanks. That's good to hear. (Beat) That's a bad sign that they're hatching more embryos, you know.

Nut: Yeah. I guess it is.

Jin: I think they're intending on replacing us, eventually.

Nut: Yeah...sure looks like it, doesn't it? Look, Jin...I got nothing against ya. But I do need to do a good job guarding ya and all. If I make any screw ups...

Jin: You could be in line to be replaced. Ok...I'll be quiet.

Nut: Thanks. In a few minutes I'm gonna go get some food for you. I'll try to come up with something more appetizing than what you had last.

Jin: Thanks, I appreciate it. (Pause) You know...Nut...one last thing, and then I swear I'll be quiet. These bars really do have some problems with the welds. I know you guys threw this cage together really quickly, but those joints are genuinely deformed. It could fall apart on its own. (In a quiet, urgent voice) I don't want you to get in trouble for something like that. That could look

really bad to the upper levels. Just get the arc welder, and go over the joints again, with bigger electrodes. The Class 6 ones. That'll do the trick.

Nut: (Nervous breathing) Ok. One sec, lemme just do that real quick. I'll be right back. (Walks off. Sound of tools being rummaged through, Nut banging his head on a metal surface and letting out a grunt of pain. Then a whirring sound, and an arc welder can be heard) All right Jin. Stand back. Don't want you to get in the way of this. (The sound of metal being welded) All right. This one. And then this one. And then this one. Perfect! (The arc welder powers down) Appreciate it, Jin. Like you said...I don't want to get in trouble for something stupid like a cage falling apart.

Jin: I understand.

Nut: Ok. I'm gonna go off and get you dinner now.

Jin: Thanks. Extra fructose pellets, please. If you can manage.

Nut: I'll see what I can do. (Walks off. Jin waits a moment for him to get out of earshot, and then begins to chuckle)

Jin: Sorry, Nut. I'll say it wasn't your fault. You should have used smaller electrodes for these welds, not bigger. Just a firm...kick (Grunts, and wrenches at the bars. There is a metal clanging sound, and the bars pop off and clatter to the ground) Like opening a door. And then just...use the edges, to cut these...(uses the bar edges to remove his hand restraints) All right...I'm out. Now...I gotta find Navi. (Takes a nervous breath) If Derry has done anything to her...I swear, I'll kill him with my bare hands....