



"SHATTERED HEAVEN"

PART ONE

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TEASER

FADE IN:

A CUP

A beat-up, gritty, almost rusted over mug fills our view. Its entire round surface is covered by dents both small and large, and a crack sealed by a white epoxy scars the entire vessel. A sudden gentle breeze catches the steam, sending it to the sky in tiny intricate patterns before gently resuming its more ordered wafting. Our focus slowly pulls back to find the cup resting on a clear glass table, packed with dozens of actual paper magazines and clear Starfleet PADDs.

Behind the dingy cup, a pair of shadows flit back and forth at a rapid pace. A feminine shadow runs a bit faster than the masculine-formed one, moving from a hidden room off screen to another on the opposite side of the modestly sized room.

MELAINIE (O.S.)

Tom, will you stop it!?

Our backpedaling continues past the clear table to a blocky sofa covered in various garments in wildly different stages of cleanliness. Only the tiniest slivers of the sofa's original upholstery can be seen under the clothing, there are so many different piles.

HATCH (O.S.)

But, please! Melanie! I'll get better!

Behind the sofa, a larger table is overloaded with dinner plates, most of them covered with food only half eaten. Some plates near the bottom of several piles are beginning to cover over with a black mold. An insect of indeterminate origin runs out from under an overturned mug and over a plate covered with steaming waffles before running out of frame directly ahead of us.

MELAINIE (O.S.)

You said that last time, Tom. And now look where it's got us!

HATCH (O.S.)

Oh yeah? Well I wasn't the one sleeping around with that pretty boy from the Enterprise!

There is a long pause between the arguing human voices. Our focus continues backward, over a sink packed with so many dingy dishes that any water sprayed

into it would immediately splatter onto the floor. And the rusty faucet continually drips water at a regular pace.

MELAINIE (O.S.)

And I guess that bra I found under the bed last week was yours?

We finally stop behind the tiny kitchen and make a complete turn around. Directly ahead of us is a tiny room, where the shadows have finally stopped moving.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX A -- HATCH'S BEDROOM

Standing on opposite sides of a bed barely large enough for a single person, two people stare each other down. One is an average looking man with straight black hair and an unimpressive build. He wears a simple white shirt and black shorts, both of them wrinkled and unkempt. This is THOMAS HATCH.

His opposite is a human woman completely different from the man. Tall, beautiful, and sporting gold streaked red hair down to her shoulders, MELANIE MOURICK is an icon.

HATCH

I told you, that was a present I bought for you!

MELAINIE

A present, huh?

(pause)

Where was the wrapping? The receipt of sales-

HATCH

(interrupting)

In my pocket!

MELAINIE

(shouting)

YOU WEREN'T WEARING PANTS WHEN I FOUND THEM!

Hatch pauses and looks around the tiny bedroom. Around him, more clothes are strewn about, including a Starfleet uniform but with the infamous red jacket sporting a rather large pink stain.

HATCH

THEY WERE IN MY OTHER PANTS!

Melanie stops arguing and packs more of her belongings into a standard-looking duffel.

MELAINIE

You know what? I'm tired of arguing, Tom. I'm tired of trying to show you a better life. You're a damn slob and a loser, and you'll always be one.

She stops throwing items into the duffel and zips it shut.

MELAINIE

You spent what, two months on a starship before they kicked you off?

Hatch's average face goes red.

HATCH

You promised not to bring that up.

MELAINIE

Well what can I not? You couldn't even survive on a ship for longer than a couple of months before they saw the truth of you. You're nothing but a little loser who loves to be stepped on.

HATCH

That's not true!

Melanie begins to step out of the small room.

MELAINIE

Oh really? And whose dream was it to become a ship captain one day?

HATCH

(points to uniform)
But I AM!

Melanie suddenly bursts with laughter.

MELAINIE

That tiny little piece of flying crap? You gotta be kidding me.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX A -- HATCH'S ROOM

The woman steps around piles of clothing and garbage on her way to the apartment's door.

HATCH (O.S.)
Melanie!

She turns, but her face is already slackened with disgust.

MELAINIE
Tom, grow up.
(looks at room)
No, first clean up this mess. And THEN grow up.
(beat, wistfully)
I really used to believe in you, you know that? I
really thought you'd rise up to meet all those
goals you set yourself up for.

Hatch tries to walk closer to Melanie in the quiet moment, but she slowly heads for the door. His eyes are already swelled with tears. Hers are bone dry.

MELAINIE
But all you did was sit down and fail. You're a
failure, Thomas Hatch. And I can't stand to live
with a man who won't try to fix himself.

Eventually, she's standing outside the door.

HATCH
(crying)
Melanie, please. I just need time... I just need
you...

MELAINIE
(like ice)
Nice try. You should have said that six months ago
when I would have believed you.

She reaches around the door's threshold and taps a hidden button. As she does, a tiny picture slowly falls to the floor. She does not retrieve it.

MELAINIE
I won't be seeing you.

The door closes and Hatch is left alone in his tiny, filthy apartment.

Slowly, very slowly indeed, Hatch sinks to his knees and begins to let the moisture fall from his eyes to the floor.

HATCH
(quietly)
Melanie...

As he looks down, he notices the small picture touching the door. When he picks it up, his tear-reddened eyes immediately harden.

It's a picture of Melanie and a smug looking Starfleet officer in front of the U.S.S. Enterprise museum in New York.

HATCH
You bitch.

Slowly standing, ignoring the painful cracks his knees make, Hatch stalks to the window and small balcony his room sports. The warm San Francisco air buffets his loose hair and clothing, seeming only to spur his tumultuous feelings.

HATCH
YOU BIIIIIIITCH!

Five stories under him, the unmistakable form of Melanie takes one last look at Hatch's apartment before walking toward a sleek Federation shuttle. In fury, Hatch throws the picture at her.

Unfortunately, the angry wind picks the paper image up and sends it flying. Hatch watches it for a moment before running back to his apartment, not bothering to close the door to the outside.

We follow the fluttering picture up into the sky, skirting past some birds on its way up.

We see a faint glimmer of an orange structure.

A white hill pokes out from the bottom of our vision.

Finally, the picture begins to gently descend, and we get a very familiar panoramic view.

At the bottom of the screen, plain letters appear: **San Francisco. 2289.**

Dozens of shuttles and small craft buzz about in the pristine skies as we continue to pull back from this panoramic shot. Very slowly, the city comes into its full and perfect view.

In the background, the shuttle Melanie boarded slowly takes up more and more of the screen, eventually becoming large enough to force us to:

FADE OUT.

End of Teaser

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. LOW EARTH ORBIT

In all her glory, the capitol world of the Federation twirls in perfect serenity. Hundreds of small shuttles and dozens of larger vessels flit about in orbit and on the surface.

Immediately ahead of us sprawls the massive mushroom-shaped spacedock facility, spinning in stark contrast to the world it hovers above.

HATCH (V.O.)
You did WHAT!?!

INT. SPACEDOCK -- DOCKING PORT 5 -- PORT OFFICE HALL

In fitting with its efficient Starfleet mandate, the offices that house the various officials and pencil-pushers of the facility all have the same gray, dull configuration. Long halls full of exactly identical rooms mark this office space, and we follow a good number of them before winding up at the door of one of the thousands of small offices.

Standing at the door of this specific office is Hatch, dressed in his pink-stained red jacket and black pants, both of them ripped open at the knees. His hair is just as mussed as it was before, and his eyes now support two large, red circles around them. In all, he looks like total hell.

In the office, a portly PORT OFFICIAL sits behind a gray desk covered with gray PADDs. His face is impassive and a bit strained. It's clear he doesn't much tolerate Hatch's presence.

PORT OFFICIAL
(plainly)
I'm sorry, Tom, but your schedule's been changed again.

HATCH
And there's no way you can negotiate with them?

PORT OFFICIAL
Negotiate with the Starfleet?
(whistle)
Boy do you have some funky ideas.

HATCH
(whining)
But I've got a meeting with the Starfleet
recruiters tomorrow...

PORT OFFICIAL
Reschedule it.

HATCH
I've already rescheduled three times.

PORT OFFICIAL
Then you're out of luck, son.

HATCH
Can't you... I dunno... put my ship out of
commission for a week?

The official looks up at Hatch with dull eyes.

PORT OFFICIAL
No.

HATCH
What about signing that document that says I'm
unfit to fly?

The official goes back to his PADDs for a moment, but an impatient cough from
Hatch brings him back.

PORT OFFICIAL
I could sign it, but then you'd be out of a job.
And you'd never meet with your recruiter.

HATCH
(exasperated)
Fuck...

PORT OFFICIAL
(sigh)
Watch your language.

HATCH
(childishly)
Make me.

Hatch immediately goes red with embarrassment after the display.

HATCH

Sorry...

PORT OFFICIAL

(sighs)

Just get your things together and prepare your ship for departure. You'll meet with the U.S.S. Diadem in sector zero-zero-three in ten hours.

(beat)

I trust you got those shielding upgrades for your ship?

HATCH

(obviously lying)

Uh... yeah... last week...

PORT OFFICIAL

Either way...

The large man turns around for a moment and then turns back to Hatch with an oversize PADD in hand.

PORT OFFICIAL

Give this to the captain of the Diadem when you get there, and the next part of your assignment will be downloaded onto it.

Hatch takes the device with an awed expression.

HATCH

Ooh! Must be classified stuff.

PORT OFFICIAL

Or dangerous.

HATCH

Why would they get a private ferryman to ship dangerous...

(realizes, stops laughing)

...cargo...

(beat)

Shit. It was that damn pretty boy... I shoulda saw that coming.

PORT OFFICIAL

Well, whoever assigned this expects you out at sector zero-zero-three in ten hours.
(looks at chronometer)
I suggest you get going.

HATCH

Yeah, yeah. I'll get right on it.

Hatch exits the office, leaving the official to finally get back to work.

INT. SPACEDOCK -- SUBSPACE DISTORTION BAR -- REAR BOOTH

The Subspace Distortion bar is what you would expect from a 23rd century recreational room. People stand tall and proud in their perfectly clean uniforms and civilian garbs, talking and chatting happily. Pleasant music wafts out of hidden speakers in the room, giving everything a very pleasant feel.

Except for a single booth in the back. The light hovering over the small space is shattered and smoking, giving a dangerous ambiance. The music generator is broken and emits only faint sounds of white noise.

In this gloomy scene sits Hatch, his eyes glazed over with the dull look of boredom. His fingernail idly scratches the dirty table he rests on, making a sizable indent in its surface. Sitting next to his idle hand is a tall glass full of a green liquid that gently emits steam.

As Hatch sits, a shadow slowly covers his limited light, almost bathing him in perfect darkness.

BYRON (O.S.)

Damn, you look like hell, Tom.

Hatch slowly looks up, and our focus follow him.

Standing above Hatch is a male of Slavic descent, sporting a beard that extends past his neck and an authentic bomber jacket. His look just exudes the aura of the classic adventurer, and he lets everyone know it. This is ANTON BYRON.

HATCH

What's it to you?

Byron sits opposite of Hatch, taking a moment to check out the various females that walk by the shoddy booth.

BYRON

I'm just saying, when a guy looks like hell,
something's bound to be up.

(beat)

Or he's just a lazy slob who never cares about how
people see or smell hi-

HATCH

(interrupting)

Shut up.

Byron chuckles and holds his fist up, getting the attention of the waitress on duty. She smiles and appears next to the table with a small glass filled with a brown liquid. Hatch watches her leave before turning to Byron's beverage.

HATCH

What the hell is that?

BYRON

(takes quick drink, grimaces)

Deltan vodka... at least their equivalent.

HATCH

I never knew Delta Four had potatoes.

BYRON

(drinks, groans)

They don't.

Hatch watches Byron finish the drink and sniff back tears.

HATCH

What's it taste like?

BYRON

Like a dead chicken.

A dead-pan expression from Hatch.

HATCH

So why do you drink it?

Byron smiles and holds his hand up for another glass.

BYRON

Wakes me up and clears the senses.

(beat)

But enough about me. Why'd you call me over here,
Tom?

Hatch brings out the PADD from before, this time covered with smear marks and fingerprints.

HATCH

I need a copilot.

Using some of the lining of his jacket, Byron wipes the PADD clean. He studies it for only a moment before his eyes go wide and he slams the device down on the table.

BYRON

Hell no.

HATCH

What?

BYRON

Get someone else, 'cause I ain't going.

Hatch's expression slackens.

HATCH

What?

BYRON

You heard what I said. I've got too many things on
my plate to go... there.

HATCH

It's just the U.S.S.... uh...

Hatch tries to reach for the PADD, but Byron stops him.

BYRON

Yeah, captained by the worst asshole in the
history of universe. He busted me a year back for
smuggling a tribble. A damned TRIBBLE for my
girlfriend.

HATCH
Which one?

Byron stops for a moment.

BYRON
I don't remember...
(beat)
But that's not the point. I'm not getting near
that ass.

HATCH
C'mon, Byron. You're the best pilot out there.

BYRON
And don't you forget it.

Hatch smiles.

HATCH
So you'll go?

BYRON
(quickly)
No.

Byron stands and Hatch follows. Their motion knocks over a group of drunk patrons.

PATRON 1
Hey!

PATRON 2
Watch it!

HATCH
Sorry about that.

Hatch runs after a rapidly retreating Byron, making sure to completely evade the wrath of the tousled patrons.

HATCH
Wait!

Byron slips into a massive crowd just outside the Bar's door. Hatch steals a drink from a passing server's tray and downs it before exiting the establishment.

INT. SPACEDOCK -- PROMENADE

The sheer number of people inhabiting the massive promenade is truly astounding. Thousands of different people of different species mull about in perfect harmony, content in their perfect lives and wonderful pastimes. Hatch lumbers through the throngs, keeping his eyes on a rapidly retreating bomber jacket.

HATCH
Byron!

Hatch shoves his way through the thick crowd, bowling past groups of red-jacketed Starfleet officers and brightly dressed, perfectly content people milling about.

HATCH
BYRON!

Still running forward, Hatch gains just enough ground to grab the fuzzy neck lining of Byron's jacket. With all of his strength, he yanks it back.

BYRON
HEY!

With a monumental clatter, both Hatch and Byron, with a dozen other shocked people, fall to the promenade's floor. Byron gets back to his feet instantly.

BYRON
All right, who the hell did that? This thing cost more than your children on the Orion market...

Hatch stands an instant later, holding up his hand to stop the offensive comment.

HATCH
Hey, shut up.

BYRON
Tom? What the fu-

HATCH
(hushed whisper)
Byron!

Still exasperated, Byron tries to turn and get back on his way, helping up a couple of attractive females along his path.

HATCH
Wait!

Without turning back, Byron replies to Hatch's questions.

BYRON
I told you, Tom. You're alone on this one.

Hatch moves to a foot behind the retreating adventurer.

HATCH
But I need a copilot. Desperately!

BYRON
Too bad.

HATCH
(whining)
But Byron!

Finally, with a long sigh, Byron turns to face a pleading Hatch.

BYRON
Look, Tom. I told you that I'm not going to face that jackass again, and I'm sure as hell not going to face him next to the guy who drove his fiancée to tears.

Hatch's face goes blank.

HATCH
Fiancee...?

Byron blushes brightly.

BYRON
(almost giggling)
You didn't know?

HATCH
But... this morning...

BYRON

She left your apartment. Yeah. It's all over the gossip channels.

HATCH

(breathlessly)
Gossip channels...?

BYRON

Tom, you've been screwed over.

Byron looks at a chronometer hidden on his wrist.

BYRON

(cheerfully)
Well, I gotta run. Hot date with a Vulcan priestess.

Byron once again shuffles off into the crushing crowd, leaving Hatch alone with his thoughts.

HATCH

Melanie?

Just as his eyes begin to well with tears of sadness and rage, the starbase's massive wall chronometer suddenly chimes. The pleasant bell tone hits Hatch like a sledgehammer.

HATCH

I'm late!

Hatch runs through the crowd toward a gigantic window with hundreds of smaller starships docked in a perfect order. One such ship, a pitted, broken hulk of crap, is his obvious destination.

EXT. OPEN SPACE

A majestic starship of the venerable Excelsior class floats in space.

She is a gleaming example of the Federation's might and power, her perfect hull shines in the light of a nearby star, perfectly illuminating her pristine registry number:

NCC- 2654
U.S.S. Diadem

INT. U.S.S. DIADEM -- BRIDGE

The starship's perfectly ordered bridge is a marvel of efficiency and cleanliness. Officers and enlisted people move back and forth on pre-ordered paths along pre-ordered time schedules. In the background, information is passed verbally with near robotic ease.

Sitting in the opulent center seat of the massive bridge is a man who looks more bred for command than trained for it. A shock of perfectly groomed blond hair sits with perfectly combed grace on his head. His perfectly blue eyes seem to see all, while his perfect teeth in his perfect, square jaw gleam in even the faintest of light.

This is Captain JAMESON, GRANT JAMESON.

An aide approaches the pretty-boy captain with a clear PADD and a small microphone, prompting him to speak.

The captain's accent is stereotypically middle-American, with no flaws in his speech and with a military air.

JAMESON

Captain's Log, stardate 9613.4. We have been at station in this sector for over six hours, waiting for our courier to arrive and transport this forsaken engine equipment liberated from an unknown archaeological site.

(beat, sigh)

However, I have orders to wait as long as it takes, fully against my wishes and better judgment. It seems Starfleet knows what's best for me and my ship at all times...

Into this scene comes Melanie, fully decked out in a Starfleet uniform, with a commander rank pin on her shoulder.

MELAINIE

Still late?

Jameson smiles warmly at Melanie as she enters, but he quickly smothers it with false professionalism.

JAMESON

(venomously)

Yes.

MELAINIE

Not surprising.

JAMESON

Just why *did* you recommend this man, Melanie. I understand a past history but...

MELAINIE

Trust me, our 'history' is the last thing on my mind.

JAMESON

Then... why?

Melanie smiles almost devilishly as she brings a PADD out from seemingly nowhere and shoves it in Jameson's face.

As he reads it, his face lights up in a full demonic grin.

JAMESON

That's good.

MELAINIE

He needs to be taught a lesson in responsibility.

JAMESON

(false warmth)

How did I get so lucky with a woman like you.

The captain moves to embrace Melanie, but an outstretched hand stops him.

MELAINIE

Not on duty, dear.

Jameson sits back, an obvious rage barely kept in check.

JAMESON

Of course.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

The interior of Hatch's shuttle is just as the outside. Entire consoles are open and exposed to the elements, some of them faintly smoking. Food wrappers cover most of the floor surface, and small bits of broken technology and other useless knickknacks cover almost every inch of open space.

Hatch sits in the left of two ratty-looking seats, his eyes closed in bliss as he munches on an unhealthy-looking chocolate bar.

HATCH
(mouth full)
Hmm... that's good.

Unfortunately, his mastication perfection is quickly broken by Jameson's loud voice over the comm.

JAMESON'S COMM VOICE
Diadem to courier shuttle. Explain your tardiness.

Hatch's last bite goes down like an un-chewed apple.

HATCH
(to himself)
Damn pretty boy...
(slowly, out loud)
Uh... this is courier shuttle... uh... Gamma.
I'm... uh... experiencing technical... uh...
malfunction...s...

There is a loud sigh over the comm, as well as a few muttered offensive slurs.

JAMESON'S COMM VOICE
Just... orient yourself at the prescribed
coordinates and we'll get this over with.

HATCH
Will do.

Hatch rolls his eyes as he works over the shoddy controls. Even as he touches the buttons, the console wobbles dangerously.

EXT. SPACE

The dinky, battered shuttle slides up next to the massive, sparkling starship.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Hatch sits slumped in his chair as a monotone voice runs over a dull checklist. To his rear in a relatively clean storage area, several gray canisters beam in and rest heavily.

MONOTONE COMM VOICE
Canister A113?

Hatch sighs and opens another chocolate bar.

HATCH
Check.

Another beam-in.

MONOTONE COMM VOICE
Canister A114?

A big bite.

HATCH
Check.

Beam in.

MONOTONE COMM VOICE
Canister A115?

Chewing.

HATCH
Check.

Big bite.

Beam in.

MONOTONE COMM VOICE
Canister A116?

Chewing. Sigh.

HATCH
Check.

A final, extremely large canister beams in, rocking the shuttle violently. Several consoles spark.

MONOTONE COMM VOICE
Final canister transfer complete.

The comm. shuts off loudly.

HATCH
Finally...

Just as Hatch reaches behind him into a small refrigeration device to pull out a beverage in a metal can, Jameson's voice filters in again.

JAMESON'S COMM VOICE
You have it all, Hatch?

Hatch takes a long drink before replying. He savors the tiny revenge.

HATCH
Yes.

JAMESON'S COMM VOICE
Good. I'm sending you the coordinates of your destination.

HATCH
Alright.

The familiar PADD, now almost completely obscured by fingerprints and other stains, lights up with new information. Hatch uses a black-stained cloth to clear the image up.

HATCH
Got it.

JAMESON'S COMM VOICE
Good. They expect you there in four hours.

HATCH
Got it.

Again, the comm shuts off loudly.

Hatch takes one long look at the PADD before tossing it aside and going back to his food.

HATCH
I got it.

INT. U.S.S. DIADEM -- MELANIE'S QUARTERS

Jameson walks into the standard quarters like a triumphant soldier, his chest puffed and his mouth curled in a diplomatic smile.

JAMESON

He's on his way.

Melanie slip from behind a small partition wall clad in only a small towel. While no water drips from her, her post-shower state is apparent.

MELAINIE

Good.

They both smile before running toward each other and embracing in a passionate kiss. Eventually, Melanie breaks it off.

MELAINIE

And you're sure he's headed for it?

JAMESON

The best my ops officer can get it. He'll be cruising through that ion storm before he knows it.

MELAINIE

And he doesn't know about it?

Jameson smiles and looks out Melanie's window, where Hatch's broken shuttle moves off after sputtering and stopping several times.

JAMESON

Not in the slightest.

Melanie smiles and slips down out of our view, dragging Jameson with her.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE

Hatch's tiny shuttle flies through open space at a slow, leisurely pace.

Ahead, just barely large enough to see, a small glowing patch of... something grows slowly larger. Its faint orange glow resembles a newborn star.

And it's apparent the shuttle is headed right for it.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

The cockpit is dark and serene as Hatch falls into view. His eyes are closed in the bliss of a good dream while his mouth barely whispers with whatever he is speaking in slumber land.

HATCH
(whispered)
You can count on me, barney.
(beat)
No, I've had enough beef juice, thanks.

As he shifts about in the shoddy chair, it makes stifled squeals in protest.

HATCH
(same)
That Vulcan mugged me.

As Hatch sleeps, his hands pass blindly over a small table absolutely covered with snack wrappers and empty mugs. His hands knock every item to the floor with a barely audible thump.

HATCH
(same)
Sito, you so crazy.

Soundly lost in his dream world, Hatch is completely oblivious when a red warning light begins to flash rapidly behind him.

EXT. SPACE

The shuttle continues its trek forward, this time almost completely engulfed by the same orange glow we saw before.

As our focus shifts slightly to follow the small vessel, we see the source of the glow.

A plasma storm, easily a light-year wide, blows wildly directly in front of us. Dangerous bolts of energy and power crackle furiously and currents of plasma stream lazily around. Still, the shuttle moves onward.

FADE OUT.

End of Act One

ACT TWO

FADE IN.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Hatch still sleeps even in the face of the maelstrom before him.

HATCH

The parrot owes me a drink.

But he is shaken awake when the shuttle suddenly LURCHES forward from a massive impact!

HATCH

What the hell?

EXT. SPACE

Still moving blindly forward, Hatch's beaten-up shuttle is suddenly slammed by a large, powerful bolt of plasma.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Warning klaxons blare mutely against the chaos of the moment. The cockpit is awash with smoke and flaming consoles.

And one very freaked out Hatch.

HATCH

OH MY GOD!

Another powerful JOLT. Hatch is thrown from his chair and onto the console before him.

HATCH

Goddammit!

After a painful burst of static from the comm system, the shuttle's nearly elderly female computer voice pipes up.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Severe plasma storm ahead. Course change recommended.

Hatch sits up from the console, his face twisted with anger and fear.

HATCH
Thanks a lot.

JOLT! Hatch is again shoved forward, but this time he shoves his right arm forward. The resounding thud and unmistakable sound of a bone snapping overpowers even the storm.

HATCH
AUGH! SONOFA-

JOLT!

Hatch is brought to his knees in pain and the loss of footing.

COMPUTER VOICE
Warning. Severe plasma storm ahead. Course change recommended.

Hatch can't reply, but whimpers in frustration.

JOLT!

Visibly delirious from pain, Hatch falls to the floor of the shuddering, battered vessel.

JOLT!

Every artificial light in the shuttle is suddenly extinguished. Only the menacing orange and white flashes light the small space now.

JOLT!

Hatch is thrown to his right, directly onto his broken arm. He cries out as the shuttle is continually rocked over and over by powerful jolts, Hatch staggers under a nearby smoking console. Sparks from a nearby shorted circuit land on Hatch's exposed neck, making several tiny burn marks.

COMPUTER VOICE
Warning. Structural integrity failing. Evacuation recommended.

In his mask of pain, Hatch looks to the rear of the shuttle, where the escape pod hatch rests. Unfortunately, it's blocked by the pile of Federation crates.

HATCH
(whispered, terrified)
I'm so screwed...

Almost on cue, Hatch's expression causes another powerful JOLT! One powerful enough to knock the crates over. Hatch watches powerlessly as their weak seals pop, sending thousands of tiny little technical chips everywhere. Some impact Hatch's injured arm, which he tries to weakly shield.

Suddenly, a ceiling conduit pops, slowly bathing the entire scene in a thick fog.

Alone, under the console and in near perfect darkness, Hatch curls into the best fetal positions he can muster.

The shuttle jolts over and over again. The hundreds of tiny chips rub against the few larger crates that resist to expel their contents.

The atmosphere gets thicker and thicker, and Hatch slowly closes his eyes. Too weak to resist, Hatch simply succumbs.

As he does, another jolt forces a crate much larger than any other to suddenly BURST open. Its contents, a weird array of black metal and blue pipes, lands on the floor and stops after one bounce.

After another impact sends the shuttle reeling, the device suddenly seems to activate. A faint glow begins to grow around the object and everything around it.

EXT. SPACE

As the storm rages, the tiny shuttle slips into its plasma folds. The same faint glow radiates from the vessel's small cockpit.

FADE OUT.

SLOW FADE IN.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE -- LATER

The cockpit is still and serene. All traces of the thick smoke are but thin wisps on the floor. The area is dark and cold, but still.

And still under the console, the injured Hatch sleeps.

EXT. SPACE

The storm is long past and the area around Hatch's broken shuttle is as calm and empty as space normally would be.

Except for a small dot of motion in the background.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Hatch slowly begins to stir back into consciousness. His right arm delicately held by his left and his neck burned badly by the spark shower, Hatch is very much a physical mess.

Hatch's eyes move under his eyelids rapidly, slowly gaining speed until he GASPS back into his waking state.

HATCH
I'm alive...?

Still holding his arm, Hatch slides out from under the console, making very sure to push all the chips out of his way.

Slowly, he stands, weathering the loud POPs his bones make in protest to his actions.

HATCH
How long was I out?

Hatch stumbles around the cockpit, crunching dozens of chips left and right. He sneezes after taking in a long breath.

As he moves forward, Hatch stumbles on the small device. He's too injured to pick it up, and his neck won't allow him to look straight down, so Hatch has to back up almost to his scorched chair.

HATCH
Hello, what's this?

The device is now dead, a black lump of metal on the floor. Hatch immediately forgets it and turns to the console behind him.

Still weak and in pain, Hatch struggles to find any semblance of functionality in his ship.

HATCH
...Computer?

He gets no response.

HATCH
Computer, status on the warp core?

No response.

Hatch stands silently for a moment, hopeful for a response, but of course, gets none.

Slowly readjusting his weight, Hatch moves to his chair, prodding it lightly with his knee. Though a good amount of soot and black material falls off, it convinces Hatch it's sit-able.

In sitting down, Hatch cries out again from both his arm and his neck sliding along the neck rest. But he does slowly sit.

Holding his right arm in his lap, Hatch brushes the blackened console before him roughly. To his disappointment, every button is dead.

In the face of the completely lifeless shuttle and the vastness of space before him, Hatch does the only thing he can: sit there.

HATCH
...At least life support works.

EXT. SPACE

As the shuttle lists dumbly in space, a tiny speck of motion slowly grows larger.

It's approach is almost sickeningly fast, and the dot quickly coalesces into a definite shape.

A ship not longer than 200 meters suddenly orients itself above Hatch's shuttle. Her triangular hull slowly opens along the bottom and completely swallows the smaller vessel.

INT. UNKNOWN BRIDGE

Our P.O.V. is behind the bald head of a large male entity sitting in the bridge's center seat. The lights are down to an almost pitch-black level, so no truly discernible traits of anything can be made out. In fact, the only thing we can really make out is the bridge's minuscule viewscreen, which only displays an empty starfield.

CAPTAIN

Do we have it?

FEMALE VOICE

We got it. Bay doors closed... now.

The captain stands and reveals his face: he's Hirogen!

CAPTAIN

And the lifesign aboard?

The Hirogen turns to the source of the previous female voice. She stands when she sees him on his feet. Though we can't make out any facial features, we can make out a slim body frame and a long head of flowing hair.

FEMALE VOICE

Stable.

The Hirogen grunts.

CAPTAIN

Then let's get rid of it.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Hatch is once again holed up under the console, holding a fire extinguisher between his legs in the most pathetic attempt at weapon-holding ever.

HATCH

(to himself)

It's all right, Tom... it's just a Catian freighter that went off course... yeah... they saw me and are going to give me a ride home...

As he speaks, the shuttle rocks lightly as if someone kicked the hull. Hatch's expression sinks.

HATCH

Oh, who am I kidding? They're gonna kill me!

(beat)

Why does this always happen to me!?

Hatch brandishes the foot-extinguisher as best he can, preparing for the inevitable. After a moment of silence, he sobs a little.

INT. HANGAR DECK

The dimly lit hangar deck of Hatch's captors is small and completely bare of any decoration or panels. A odd feature near the rear of the area we can see is a staircase on the floor, which seems welded completely down.

Into this room enter the Hirogen captain and his female second. In the brighter light, we can see his battle-scarred face and bulging muscles and her sensual body. Her face, however, is blocked by a fearsome-looking helmet and mask.

FEMALE

Atmo reading from the shuttle is normal. Its hull composition is standard but... primitive.

CAPTAIN

What do you think we'll get for it?

The female is silent for a long while, studying every inch of Hatch's vessel.

FEMALE

Not much.

CAPTAIN

Enough to get to the next port?

Another pause.

FEMALE

Maybe.

After a sigh, the Hirogen walks up to the shuttle and kicks it with all his might. The shuttle actually sways several feet.

CAPTAIN

What if we chop it?

FEMALE

According to this, we'd get more cash...

CAPTAIN

How much?

Pause.

FEMALE

Honestly, it'd be more profitable to just let it go.

(beat, suddenly)

WAIT!

The Hirogen turns to her.

CAPTAIN

What?

FEMALE

The lifesign... it's human.

CAPTAIN

And?

FEMALE

Don't you get it? It's a HUMAN shuttle. They pay up their gas-holes for Earth ships.

The Captain's face perks slightly.

CAPTAIN

But how can we be sure it's human?

The female walks behind the Captain and smashes the helmet down atop his head. She remains completely hidden by his massive frame.

FEMALE

Check out it's hull construction. Only the rarest ships have that kind of metallurgy in this galaxy.

CAPTAIN

(awestruck)
Human ships...
(disgusted, gruffly)
Worthless piles of junk...

FEMALE

(calming tone)
Come on, any source of money is good enough,
right?

After a long, powerful sigh, the captain relents.

CAPTAIN

You're right.
(beat)
Let's flush the vermin out of our new boat.

The hands vanish behind the Hirogen and we soon hear muffled footsteps behind him.

Only a moment later, they return with two old looking revolvers in each palm. The captain takes one in hand and pockets the other.

INT. HATCH'S SHUTTLE

Hatch's face is streaked with tears as he weathers the creepy sounds of the two people outside pounding their way in.

His face crunches into its tightest possible grimace when he hears the unmistakable crunch of a powerful metal jaw turned onto the hull. The voices of the people outside are warped and muffled, giving them all the creepier tone.

HATCH

(to himself)
Alright, Tom. You can do this. You can beat 'em
off like all those girls back on Risa...

The whine of the intruding machine quiets, replaced by the deafening thud of a massive hull section slamming to the floor.

HATCH

They're comin' in. And they're gonna get a face
full of my... feet.

Nursing his arm, Hatch waits.

The Hirogen steps into the shuttle first, brandishing the revolver cautiously.

CAPTAIN
Where is he?

The female enters on the heel of the Captain, keeping a massive rifle between her arms.

FEMALE
Front section. Under a console.

CAPTAIN
Like a rat.

The duo shuffles forward, crunching heedlessly over the spilled chips. As they approach, the Hirogen captain stamps heavily on the device, crushing it completely.

CAPTAIN
Damned mess in here.

FEMALE
What do you expect? It's been out here for years.

Hatch scrunches himself tighter under the console, trying to hide in the dim shadows. Unfortunately, he forgets his arm and he smashes it under his legs.

HATCH
ARGH!!!

With one bound, the Hirogen jumps on Hatch and yanks him out from under the console. The female comes up behind him in a good jog, bringing a suddenly bright light to bear on Hatch's face.

CAPTAIN
Who are you!?

The Captain shakes the stupefied Hatch about, causing him to wince in pain.

FEMALE
Look at his arm.
(beat)
And his neck.

Hatch stays stock still as he's looked over.

CAPTAIN

Must have been a pirate raid. Shoot him up and send him to Isaac.

FEMALE

You got it.

The Female walks over to Hatch, suddenly producing a gigantic needle attached to a small vial of medicine. In doing so, she drops the light.

In the moment before the drug is forced into his body, Hatch sees the face of the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on. Even surpassing Melanie by many factors.

Unfortunately for him, the drug takes full effect seconds later and Hatch faints dead away.

CAPTAIN

And get someone in here to clean this mess up.

INT. SICKBAY

As with the rest of the ship, the sickbay of this vessel is badly lit and almost barely functional. Only one operating table sits in the small medical ward, but it's obvious from the two other broken stumps on either side of the room it used to be able to handle more.

The Hirogen enters first, carrying the unconscious Hatch easily in his arms. The woman follows his heels.

CAPTAIN

Isaac! Get in here!

From behind the partition slips a human almost matching the Hirogen in muscle mass, and obviously much more advanced in his attitude. His dark skin reacts with the dark lighting, giving him a wraith-like appearance all around. His bright eyes and brighter, slightly crooked teeth only add to his creepy-looking persona. This is ISSAC SAROLA.

ISAAC

What is it?

FEMALE

Human. Broken right arm and burned neck. Smoke inhalation damage.

Isaac steps completely from behind the partition, revealing a traditional long medical coat, but this one uniform black. He produces several small scanning devices and syringes from the jacket's pockets.

ISAAC

Put him down and get out. I'll call when he's awake.

The Hirogen displays uncharacteristic gentility in putting Hatch down, but is quickly covered.

CAPTAIN

Not a moment later, Isaac. I'll be outside.

Leading the woman outside, the Hirogen stomps out of the sickbay.

The moment he leaves, Isaac goes to work. He quickly passes two devices over Hatch's burns and broken arm. While they don't immediately heal, the burns look considerably better and the arm loses much swelling.

Dropping the devices, Isaac then shoves a syringe into Hatch's neck, causing him to gasp in the pain of consciousness.

HATCH

OW!

Isaac suddenly moves to Hatch's right and effortlessly RIPS his entire right sleeve off, ignoring Hatch's girlish whimper of pain.

The two stare at each other for a second, sizing up the man across from him.

Hatch suddenly lunges forward, using his drug-induced clarity to attempt escape!

But Isaac is much faster than Hatch, and he simply reaches forward to grab Hatch's injured arm. After another girlish cry of pain, Hatch relents and goes back to his previous position.

HATCH

Who are you?

ISAAC

Your doc. Now shut the hell up.

With no bedside care, Isaac produces a lime green fabric from under the medical table and begins wrapping it around Hatch's arm.

HATCH
OW! Hey! A little bedside manner would go a long way.

Isaac ignores Hatch verbally, but does roughly squeeze the injured arm.

HATCH
Jesus Christ!

It only takes a minute to wrap Hatch's arm completely. Isaac then moves to the other side of the sickbay and produces a clear container of water. He moves back to Hatch.

ISAAC
Dip.

HATCH
What?

ISAAC
In the water.

Not waiting for Hatch to move, Isaac grabs the injured arm again and slams it into the basin. The wrapping hardens into a full cast immediately.

HATCH
Hey, cool. And it doesn't hurt.

Isaac's eyes roll even in the dim light.

ISAAC
Don't thank me. I mean it.

Isaac puts his equipment away in a shadowed corner and raps roughly on the sickbay's door.

ISAAC
He's done.

The doors squeal open to emit the flustered Hirogen and the woman.

CAPTAIN

How is he?

ISAAC

He's fine. The drug I gave him'll keep him awake but painless for a while.

The Hirogen moves over to the stunned silent Hatch.

CAPTAIN

I'm Zorin, the captain of this vessel. Who are you and what were you doing out here?

Still stunned by the recent events and ZORIN'S manner, Hatch doesn't speak for a moment.

All it takes is for Zorin to flash his firearm for Hatch to speak, however.

HATCH

I'm Thomas Hatch. I'm supposed to deliver a shitload of Starfleet... stuff to a colony in this sector... I think. I was caught in a plasma storm and knocked out.

ZORIN

Starfleet?

Hatch looks confused.

HATCH

Starfleet!? You know, most powerful group in space? Based offa Earth?

Every occupant of the sickbay is suddenly flustered.

FEMALE

Earth?

ZORIN

(quickly)

What do you know of Earth?

Hatch is obviously now more perplexed than frightened.

HATCH

Uh... home of Humanity... seat of the Federation... blue skies and bitches...

ZORIN

Stop.

Zorin takes Isaac and the woman aside out of the sickbay.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Zorin's face is twisted in confusion.

ZORIN

What the hell is he talking about?

ISAAC

I have no damn idea. Must be space-sick. I vote we space him.

FEMALE

Isaac!

ZORIN

(ignoring the banter)

He's not making sense. Starfleet? The Federation?

Zorin's eyes narrow.

ZORIN

Cultist?

The other two suddenly strike very uncomfortable positions.

ISAAC

Damn good possibility.

All three share worried looks.

FEMALE

(weakly)

He... could have read something recently. It doesn't look above him.

ZORIN

Unlikely. He seems too familiar with the stuff he's saying. Almost like he's been taught to say it.

Zorin's heavy eyebrows furrow, staring into sickbay.

FEMALE

So what do we do with him?

The woman and Isaac slowly look with Zorin, where Hatch sits on the table, staring at back them with interest. In a gesture of friendliness, he meekly waves at them.

INT. SICKBAY

Hatch watches the trio enter the room once again. The woman takes point.

HATCH

Uh... what's going on?

Diplomatically smiling, the woman offers her arm for Hatch to take. As he does, his eyes wander to her hand, which causes him to scream.

In the light, her hand looks to be covered with dozens of open, black holes! Some even large enough for him to see the bones underneath.

She, however, seems to ignore Hatch's expression.

FEMALE

I'm Siren. Welcome aboard the Avalon, Thomas Hatch.

Even though her face is the pinnacle of beauty, Hatch is so focused on her mutilated hands that he quickly faints.

FADE OUT.

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

FADE IN.

INT. AVALON -- HATCH'S ROOM

Hatch wakes up on the floor of a room completely devoid of any furnishing or decoration. His arm still bound in the instant-cast, it takes several minutes for him to stand.

HATCH
What the hell is going on?

As he does, Hatch looks immediately around the room, noticing first a gigantic brown stain on the wall closest to the door.

HATCH
Ew.

As he looks about, Hatch stares out the window, where the stars streak by lazily.

HATCH
We must be at low warp.

As he looks, however, the stars suddenly revert back to normal, becoming the familiar pinpoints of light.

And then the ship suddenly LURCHES forward!

HATCH
NOT AGAIN!

Thrown to the floor loudly, it takes a moment for Hatch to stand. As he does, the entire room begins to rattle violently!

HATCH
We're under attack!

As he comes to this decision, Hatch moves to the small window the room still has.

As he gets there, Hatch's eyes widen to their full capacity.

HATCH
My god...

EXT. SPACE

The Avalon, in all her glory, sails through open space. Slowly, however, her brow begins to point downward.

We follow the ship down, all the way into the atmosphere of a gorgeous blue planet!

As she impacts the air, her hull begins to glow a faint red.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The nearly pitch-dark bridge is a flurry of activity as the ship descends, intermittently shaking softly from atmospheric bumping.

ZORIN
Hull status?

A crewman, GOR'TIEN, Orion, turns from a console to the left.

GOR'TIEN
Uh... heating up.

Zorin sighs and leans forward in his large chair, obviously made just for him to replace a previously existing chair.

The tiny viewscreen displays a wild pattern of flames above everything else.

ZORIN
Time to land?

The same woman, SIREN, turns from a front console, easily readable as the helm.

SIREN
Just a few more minutes, Zorin.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Avalon goes into a brief nose dive, breaking swiftly through thick clouds to finally see the first hints of land masses.

As she slows down, Avalon's hull quickly cools, but several scorches still mar her surface.

INT. AVALON -- HATCH'S ROOM

Hatch stares out the window as the ship easily twists and turns in the planet's pristine sky.

HATCH
Oh wow.

From his point of view, the ship suddenly makes a sickening turn left, causing Hatch to cough up some non-existent lunch up.

When the turn is complete, Hatch's window is overtaken by a massive city.

EXT. TYVOR CITY

Tyvor city is a jewel among jewels. Most buildings shine in the sunlight, their whitewashed sides kept perfectly bright. The few towers that dot the skyline are as natural looking as any spire, and there is no spot of pollution anywhere.

In the near distance, a perfectly blue ocean sparkles.

The Avalon flies slowly over the buildings, weaving past other departing and landing vessels on her way to a massive circular space port.

EXT. TYVOR LANDING PAD

A smooth circle of flattened earth serves as the Tyvor landing pad. Already, a good dozen ships sit at various places on the area, none of them more than a few hundred meters long. Avalon slips into the crowd easily, landing as close to the center of the ring as possible.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR

In a dark corridor much like all the other ones on Avalon, Zorin and Siren walk intently forward.

SIREN
What did you say you were doing?

Zorin flashes a gun in a hidden pocket at his hip.

ZORIN
I'm taking him with us.

Siren is silent for a moment.

SIREN
Why?

ZORIN
Because I fully intend to get him off my ship
right now.

SIREN
But we could use him.
(serious, whispered)
If he's really Cult...

Zorin stops.

ZORIN
I know. I know.

SIREN
He's too dangerous to just let loose.

ZORIN
(firmly)
And he's too dangerous to be kept here.

They continue on, quickly turning a corner. After a moment, they have to swerve to avoid a large pile of dark debris.

SIREN
Then let's just kill him.

ZORIN
And risk having a dozen hunters on us?

Siren's face lights as she gets it.

SIREN
Dump him with Vellik?

Zorin sighs lightly.

ZORIN
Dump him with Vellik.

The duo finally stops at a door sealed by a massive metal bar. Though it looks to weigh several hundred pounds, Zorin hefts it easily, throwing it to the floor.

The thud is powerful enough to rock the entire area.

We follow Zorin's gaze as he begins to pry the door open.

INT. AVALON -- HATCH'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Hatch is still staring out his small window when his door suddenly squeals open.

HATCH
The hell?

Before Hatch can turn, Siren and Zorin are standing behind him.

ZORIN
Come with us.

HATCH
I don't... I don't understand. What do you want
with me?

Zorin grunts and grabs Hatch's shoulder, throwing him toward the door.

ZORIN
Move!

With no choice, Hatch exits his bare room.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR

Still closely followed by the two powerful beings, Hatch tries to hide his anxiety.

HATCH
(to himself)
It's all right, Tom. It's nothing. They're not
gonna kill you... yet.

The three continue onward, they pass several crewmen in regular clothing doing routing maintenance.

HATCH
Um... they the crew?

It takes a long moment before Zorin replies.

ZORIN

People who join us for a cut of whatever profit we make.

HATCH

I see. How many you got?

Siren glances at Zorin with a worried look, mouthing "no" to him. Zorin nods a negative nod.

ZORIN

Thirty two.

After several seconds of silent striding, they arrive at a larger set of doors. Hatch stops.

HATCH

So what do you do out here exactly?

Without wasting a moment, Zorin walks in front of Hatch into the room beyond, replying off his shoulder.

ZORIN

Waste disposal.

INT. AVALON -- SHUTTLE BAY

The shuttle bay is exactly the same as it was before, with only one exception: Hatch's shuttle has been moved to the farthest end of the room closest to the back wall.

A group of twenty people mull about in the bay's center, quietly waiting.

HATCH

So what's going on? Party? Welcome the new guy celebration...?

As Hatch yammers on, Siren goes to a console near Hatch's shuttle, tapping in a short sequence.

HATCH

This better not be some sort of hazing ritual among you weirdos-

Interrupting Hatch is the horrible squeak of metal rubbing against metal. Hatch stops on a dime at the noise.

HATCH
The hell?

But that is not the end. Hatch is suddenly tripped off his feet as the floor drops from under him!

HATCH
Oh shit!

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- LANDING PAD

While the Avalon rests on the soft earth, her bottom bay suddenly begins to drop at a slow pace. It takes a moment, but eventually there is a sizable ramp leading directly to the ground from Avalon!

We tighten onto this image until we again see Hatch, struggling to keep his footing on the new incline.

HATCH
Well, that was cool.

As he stands in awe, the group standing on the ramp easily descends, each of them jovial at the sight and feeling of the turf. As they disembark, Hatch is quickly left alone.

Until Zorin, Siren and Isaac appear behind him.

ZORIN
Let's go.

Prodded by his powerful shove, Hatch almost runs down the rest of the ramp. The other three lazily stroll down.

When everyone is on solid ground, Zorin retrieves a small remote from a pocket at his left sleeve and presses its single button. The Avalon's ramp snaps up suddenly and loudly. Eventually, all four begin to move from the ship and toward the city.

HATCH
So... um... how'd you guys meet?

Isaac paces Hatch and intentionally smashes his shoulder as he passes.

HATCH
Rude!

After glancing back at Zorin, Siren moves next to Hatch.

SIREN
You can call us...traveling business partners. We go where the work is.

Hatch nods absently, staring at the wide variety of ships assembled around. None of them look very sturdy or powerful, most of them seeming to be held together more on hope and faith than anything else.

HATCH
So... where are we, anyhow? Are you taking me to a Federation envoy or something?

Still in front of Hatch, Isaac's eyes roll mightily.

ISAAC
For your information, little man, we're here to make sure you don't get your head full of ideas of escape.

HATCH
For your information... shut up.

Hatch seems to enjoy the ribbing, but Isaac continues onward.

Eventually, the group winds its way out of the landing bay and into a massive open space full of wandering patrons and vendors selling their wares.

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- MARKETPLACE

The marketplace is a chaos of people of all species trying to pass their wares onto others. Voices of all pitches and tones shout their prices into the atmosphere while streamers and confetti flutters about like snow.

Hatch walks forward slowly, his mouth agape in awe at the entire spectacle.

HATCH
Wow...

Still enthralled by the area, Hatch doesn't notice a garishly dressed merchant sliding up next to him.

MERCHANT

(very quickly)

Excuse me, fine sir. You look like a human who needs only the finest in life. I've got the whole collection of ancient Risan dinner plates.

(half a beat)

Don't like dinner plates? Fine, I got the entire Hirogen battle order scroll in my other pocket. All seventeen thousand distinct orders and smells for you, the discriminating customer.

HATCH

What?

To keep Hatch out of the loop, the merchant begins to circle like a vulture, his bright clothing making an entrancing aura.

MERCHANT

That's right, all the ancient items from across this universe. Need a diamond all the way from M106 to give to your sweetie? Just gimme a ring and you'll have it in your hold by tomorrow. That not enough, you say? How about filmbook programs from across the stars, even from the human territories? That good enough for ya?

HATCH

(slow, dumbly)

I... I don't... know...

As Hatch stays completely disoriented by the merchant, he fails to notice a second being of the same species approaching, this one less decorated, but holding a nasty looking gun in his hand.

MERCHANT

Fine, I can see you're not the type to fall for all these petty schemes. Tell me, do you believe in the seven pantheons of Rigel? Of course you don't, but I can get on in on a scam on those who do.

(reveals a large bead)

I'll sell you a good hundred of these for a reasonable price, and you gouge those suckers for all you can. Good deal?

The alien behind Hatch slowly raises his gun against Hatch's dumbfounded head.

HATCH
Um... no... thanks.

Just as the accomplice is about to blow Hatch away, a silvery flash suddenly smashes THROUGH his wrist!

ACCOMPLICE
AUGH!

Our focus turns around to see the accomplice in full view, holding his perforated wrist in a gentle hand.

Standing behind him is Siren, her face curled in anger and pain. And her hole-filled palm full of small, silvery tentacles! Hundreds of them, all protruding from said holes. Small droplets of blood drop from those that were previously inside the arm of the alien man.

It takes a moment for Hatch to catch up.

HATCH
Siren?

In a split second, Zorin is before the merchant, grabbing his bright clothing and ripping it open!

ZORIN
Damned thieves!

Under the merchant's robes are an array of various small items of artificial construct, and even more oozing organic... things.

MERCHANT
Now, now, sir. I'm just a businessman. Put me down!

Zorin nods, and begins to lower the merchant.

MERCHANT
Thank you, kind sir. Can I interest you in some Tarkalean-

Zorin PUNCHES the merchant's lights out before stooping down to take his money pouch.

Hatch has to shake himself back to reality.

HATCH

What the... hell just happened?

Zorin looks over the injured accomplice before answering Hatch.

ZORIN

Thieves. Known for baffling targets before they're killed.

HATCH

But what did I have?

Zorin snorts a laugh at the joke.

ZORIN

Does it matter?

HATCH

I would think so. Where are the security personnel? Shouldn't the planetary authority be involved in this?

Zorin stifles laughter as he tosses the captured cash to Siren.

ZORIN

(whispered to Siren)
Keep him under your sight.

SIREN

(sigh, whispered)
Fine.

Amazing to Hatch, no one in the crowd around him seems to notice the recent commotion save a few interesting glances around and a few disparate people taking every item off of the unconscious merchant.

Eventually, Hatch's gaze goes to Siren's hand, where her 'tentacles' slowly revert back into her flesh. We can tell it's incredibly painful, but she doesn't cry out.

HATCH

Oh my god...

He watches as the tendrils completely integrate back into Siren's skin, making the faintest sucking sounds as they settle in.

HATCH
Does that... hurt?

Siren sighs a cleansing breath, willing the obvious pain away.

SIREN
Not a lot.

HATCH
How'd you get 'em?

Siren looks Hatch in the eye, her own eyes colder than even space itself.

SIREN
If you ask that again, I'll send them through your neck.

HATCH
Oh... okay.

At this moment, Isaac shows up with a mouth full of some kind of pastry.

ISAAC
What'd I miss?

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- ALLEY -- LATER

Very much later into the day, the same group wades through the crowded city, avoiding potential scalpers and thieves through intimidation and slipping through empty walkways.

Bringing up the rear is Hatch, his arms overloaded with dozens of containers of various sizes. The strain is incredible on him, but he endures it. As they pass into an empty alley between two shining buildings, everyone stops, even Hatch.

HATCH
(straining)
Hey, guys, I appreciate you letting me help you, but
(shouting)
Can we take a break for a minute!?

Zorin and Isaac sigh heavily.

HATCH
I'll take that as a yes.

Hatch drops the items without a single ounce of care for their contents. Loud cracking and smashing sound reverberate through the alley.

HATCH
Oops.

ISAAC
(whispered)
Fuggin' idiot.

Finally relieved of his burden, Hatch rests on a building's side. As he does, another figure arrives from the shadows. This is VELLIK.

VELLIK (O.S.)
What you got for me this time, Zorin? Something bright, I hope?

ZORIN
Come closer and you'll see, Vellik.

From the darkness, Vellik shuffles forward. While his features are mostly humanoid, a horrible scar covers his entire right side, almost completely obscuring it. The most striking feature, though, is his right eye socket. Where his eye should be, a glowing orb that pulsates faintly takes its place.

Siren moves to Zorin as the man shuffles about.

SIREN
(whispered)
Zorin, tell me you're sure about this.

ZORIN
(whispered)
Best way to get him off our backs.

ISAAC
(whispered)
We'd better get a damned big payoff for this.

When Vellik sees the bundle Hatch had been previously carrying, his face droops.

VELLIK

Not the normal crap you lay on me again, Zorin.
You know how much my clients hate that.

Zorin is not intimidated.

ZORIN

I see your clients weren't happy with your last
exchange.

Vellik smiles and looks into the Hirogen's eyes.

VELLIK

(short laugh)

Yeah. They took my eye for those busted circuit
chips.

(beat)

You ever seen a Bo'trin spice addict angry?
Violent shits they are. Broke my left hand before
I shot him.

HATCH

That's horrible!

Vellik moves to Hatch in a sudden, terrifying move.

VELLIK

What's it to ya?

Even more sudden is Vellik taking in a long whiff of Hatch's body!

VELLIK

You know what it feels like to have your eye
pulled out while you're held down by two guys
bigger than that ship you flew in on?

Hatch backs up further onto the wall he was resting on.

VELLIK

(beat, scoots closer to Hatch)

Hmm... maybe I can sell you on one of the lesser
markets. Maybe Groe'kir. Yeah, maybe get enough
cash to buy some ointment for my eye.

Hatch looks around desperately, looking for any help he can get.

Unfortunately for him, Zorin, Siren and Isaac are walking away!

HATCH
Guys!? HELP!

As he cries, Vellik suddenly grasps Hatch by the neck.

VELLIK
Scrawny fella probably can't take much work.
Probably have to sell you to the Ereth'lanar lords
first...

Zorin and Isaac continue forward, but Siren takes one look back, her face clouded with indecision.

HATCH
HELP! PLEASE GOD HELP!

Vellik's grip tightens, shutting Hatch up.

VELLIK
Ain't no one gonna help you now, kid. You're
mine.

Off Hatch's terrified expression, we...

FADE OUT.

End of Act Three

ACT FOUR

FADE IN.

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- ALLEY

Hatch is still held by the throat against the wall. Vellik only smiles a predatory grin as he looks over his new ware.

VELLIK

That's right. Show me your strength. Gimme all you got! Might even get you sold to the labor camps...

Hatch's face begins to turn purple from the pressure. His eyes roll back slowly, giving him a horrible look.

HATCH

Help...

With one last ounce of strength, Hatch tries to raise his arm to reach for the still retreating trio.

HATCH

Please...

VELLIK

Ain't got a good voice. You'll do no good on any showboat...

(beat)

You're one tough sumbitch to place, you know that?

Ain't got no strong back or pleasing face. Shit, I don't think I'll get much for you anywhere. Damn Zorin.

(turns to Zorin)

DAMN YOU! Damn cheat.

(to Hatch)

He cheats me all the time. Always dropping his useless shit on me. Gets me hurt. Real bad.

Sometimes, I just want to hurt him back, you know?

Vellik's grip suddenly increases dramatically!

VELLIK

But seeing as he's not here, and I've got a useless turd of a specimen... I'll just hurt you.

Gasping in terror and pain, Hatch begins to weakly pound on Vellik's arms with his un-casted arm, to no avail.

VELLIK
That's right... fight back. Show me your strength.

Nearing blackness, Hatch weakly raises his cast-wrapped arm and drops it on Vellik's head!

VELLIK
OW! Dammit!

The man releases Hatch, dropping him to the ground. Hatch gasps and coughs loudly.

VELLIK
Son of a bitch!

From a pocket, Vellik suddenly reveals a short, rusted knife!

VELLIK
I'll kill you!

Hatch reels weakly, trying to stay awake as Vellik grabs his hair and yanks it up, exposing his neck.

Laughing in sick joy, Vellik moves the knife down slowly, relishing the moment.

VELLIK
Here we go, just as I like it.

Just as the knife touches flesh, Vellik drops the tool silently, his heavy weight following quickly onto Hatch.

It still takes several minutes for Hatch to get up and see clearly what happened.

Blood oozes from a dozen holes at the top of Vellik's burned skull, and standing right before him is an awestruck Siren, her hands quickly returning to normal.

HATCH
(coughing)
You... saved me...

Zorin and Isaac show up a moment later.

ZORIN
(fleeting anger)
Fully against what I ordered.

HATCH
Why?

Siren moves to help Hatch up, and talks to both Zorin and him simultaneously.

SIREN
Look at the way he resisted Vellik, Zorin. Look at
how he fought him off with his own injured arm.
This guy isn't any Cultist.

HATCH
Cultist?

Zorin ignores the question.

ZORIN
He hit Vellik with a duranium-hard cast on the
head! And now we don't have a middleman!

ISAAC
You sure screwed up this time, Siren. Nice knowin'
ya.

SIREN
You think so? Look at this.

Siren makes sure Hatch is fine before stooping down and yanking a concealed necklace from Vellik's still neck. The emblem on it is a vaguely avian form with deadly looking corners and spines.

ISAAC
Goddammit!

ZORIN
He converted.

SIREN
And he was going to sell us out through him.

Siren points at Hatch for emphasis.

HATCH

Wait... why am I so important? What did I do!?

Zorin's face wrinkles in pure anger at Siren, but when she slams the offending necklace into his hand, Zorin relents.

ZORIN

Let's get back to the ship.

They all begin to walk.

ZORIN

But pick that up, we'll sell it somewhere else.

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- LANDING PAD

Siren, Isaac, Zorin and Hatch move ever closer to Avalon on a suddenly clear landing pad. Hatch is again loaded with containers, but the pile isn't nearly as big.

HATCH

Hey, why's the pad empty?

Isaac looks around quickly, brushing his hand over a concealed weapon.

ISAAC

This doesn't feel right.

ZORIN

Keep going. Probably some prospector found some minerals in a nearby lode. That's all.

As they walk forward, Hatch notices several humanoids milling around the perimeter of the ring, each of them wearing bright red clothes of different styles.

HATCH

Hey, guys, you see those...

SIREN

Shut up and keep moving.
(to Zorin)
Think they see us?

ZORIN

It's impossible not to.

HATCH
Who are these guys?

SIREN
SHUT UP! Keep walking.

Unfortunately, Siren's outburst brings the attention of a few people around the edge of the ring.

ISAAC
Shit.

ZORIN
Move, don't run!

Though they continue walking toward the lonely Avalon, the group's pace is markedly faster.

HATCH
Why don't we run? What the hell is going on? Who are they?

No one answers him, they just keep running.

Until...

PLEASANT VOICE
Excuse me.

While Isaac, Siren and Hatch continue to move, Zorin suddenly stops.

PLEASANT VOICE
Please stop.

ZORIN
Do it.

They stop and turn.

Standing right behind them is an extremely tall man, human, and with thinning golden hair. This is ROL'GIN.

ROL'GIN
Thank you for stopping. I trust you know what organization I represent?

While Zorin, Siren and Isaac nod affirmative, Hatch says:

HATCH

No.

Rol'Gin looks genuinely surprised for a moment, but buries it.

ROL'GIN

Why, I represent those who will save this galaxy.

Rol'Gin flashes a necklace around his neck, and it's the exact same as the one Vellik wore.

ROL'GIN

We are the children of truth and the light, sir.
We represent the last vestiges of good and honor
in this galaxy.

Hatch looks awed at the spectacle, but Siren and Isaac look more ready for instant combat than anything. Zorin is impassive.

HATCH

Interesting. Do you know where the Federation is?

Suddenly, everyone's eyes glue themselves to Hatch. While Zorin, Isaac and Siren seem to be trying to will him dead, Rol'Gin and his cronies again look shocked.

ROL'GIN

Sir, you seem to have us at a disadvantage. We
didn't know the... Federation was around here.

Hatch nods almost knowingly.

HATCH

Oh, thanks anyway.

Rol'Gin smiles as the matter finishes and turns back to Zorin.

ROL'GIN

I trust you own the nearby vessel?

ZORIN

I do.

Rol'Gin looks at the Avalon for a moment, not hiding a look of disgust.

ROL'GIN

Have you ever considered trading it for something we can provide?

(beat)

Something possibly less likely to fall apart at the seams?

Though he appears cowed, Zorin's anger rises again.

ZORIN

Unfortunately, I've grown attached to my vessel. I thank you for your offer, however.

Rol'Gin nods deeply before looking at his aides.

ROL'GIN

Very well. Know this, a fleet of those loyal to the people I represent is in orbit at this very moment, and they expect every able ship to join them before this city falls into night. Refuse, and we will have no choice...

HATCH

(nervously)

No choice but to what?

ROL'GIN

Why, this entire city will burn.

Rol'Gin waits one second before walking away, leaving the foursome alone.

HATCH

Who the hell does he think he is?

SIREN

You really don't know, do you?

Astounded, Siren and Zorin share a look.

ZORIN

Get back to the ship and we'll talk.

INT. AVALON-- EMPTY ROOM

A small room is suddenly aglow with artificial light as Zorin takes his first steps into it. From a mysteriously empty pattern on the floor, this used to be a conference room of sorts, but that time is long past.

In the full light, it is easy to tell that the inside of the Avalon is not well maintained, but neither is it completely corroded.

Siren and Hatch walk in last, Isaac just avoids the room.

ISAAC
I'll be in my room.

When Hatch finally sets the bundle of things in his arms, Zorin turns to him.

ZORIN
All right. Talk. Where are you from?

Hatch is taken aback, but replies in turn.

HATCH
Um... from Earth. Where most humans come from?

ZORIN
Fine, you won't say where you're from. What were you doing when we found you?

HATCH
I don't understand! I told you, I'm from Earth!
I've got an apartment in San Francisco.

SIREN
(tiredly)
Just answer his second question.

HATCH
I told you that before. I was transporting some things for Starfleet before I was caught in some kind of plasma storm. I got knocked out and I found myself here.

ZORIN
You swear by this?

HATCH
Why wouldn't I?

Siren moves next to Zorin.

SIREN
Thomas Hatch, the last records of the Federation or the Starfleet disappeared over one thousand years ago.

Hatch suddenly stares at Siren and Zorin... and laughs.

HATCH
Oh man, that's rich. Me, a time traveler? You've got to be kidding.

Zorin looks at Siren for a moment.

ZORIN
Fine, don't believe us. In the future, the next time you run into a Cultist like the man we ran into, you keep your hole shut. Understand?

This shuts Hatch up.

HATCH
Cultist? Those guys we met back there?

ZORIN
Yes.
(pause)
What do you know about them?

HATCH
Other than the fact they're a bunch of guys who love to dress in red and threaten to burn cities... not much.

SIREN
Have you heard of the Cataclysm, then?

HATCH
Uh, can't say I have.

Zorin sighs loudly.

ZORIN

You mean you don't know ANYTHING?

Hatch is still innocently inquisitive.

HATCH

Should I?

SIREN

(patronizingly)

Before the Cataclysm that shattered the galaxy, one single group rose above the chaos of the time to give a promise of hope for the future. Unlike the Federation of old, this new group, lead by The Prophet, promised genuinely that the future would be glorious for all species... provided they joined them.

HATCH

(disbelieving)

Okay... why do you call them cultists?

ZORIN

Because they're the Cult of Those who Walk in the Light. Religious fanatics who live only to add more members to their fold and rape and plunder those who aren't.

HATCH

But... but that's... impossible. The Federation...

ZORIN

Is DEAD, Hatch. Dead and buried like everyone else who fought the cult.

Hatch falls back to a nearby wall and collapses onto the floor.

HATCH

That's... not true. You're lying! You have to be lying!

ZORIN

And why would I do that?

HATCH

You... you're just PIRATES! You took my ship and took me somewhere else... it's still 2289... IT HAS TO BE!

In an instant, Hatch is on his feet and out of the room.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Hatch runs as fast as his legs will carry him through the Avalon's corridors, his eyes filled with tears of pain and anger.

HATCH

It's a nightmare... I'm still asleep in the storm... I'll wake up any minute.

Hatch stumbles forward, avoiding random crewmen who pass by, trying to get into any door that will take him.

CREWPERSON

Hey, you lookin' for something?

HATCH

Leave me alone!

Hatch turns and sprints in the opposite direction of the crewman. Eventually, he passes by the same corridor he was previously in.

HATCH

What is this?

He continues to run, always going forward. Eventually, Hatch's breathing goes shallow, forcing him to slow down.

HATCH

Can't be...

Hatch keeps moving, eventually slowing down to a slow walk, forcing him to hold his side in pain.

HATCH

It can't...

Eventually, Hatch is exhausted enough to have to hold his side and the wall for support.

As he walks, one door suddenly opens on its own! Unfortunately, it's the very one he throws his weight on at that moment.

His landing into the room is loud.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

Hatch remains on the floor for a moment, catching his breath.

As he stands, however, his forlorn mood is suddenly covered by a look of awe.

HATCH
Wow...

We slowly turn to see what Hatch is looking at.

Whatever this room used to be, it's nothing more than a burned wreck now, but that still doesn't seem to dull its mystery. Globes and platforms of what looks like glass shine in the dull light, each of them making the room seem to dance.

In the center of the beautiful chaos is a blackened column of machinery that used to have obvious importance based on the amount of readouts and shattered displays surrounding it. Most of the external machinery is either blackened by some fire of the past or simply gone, most likely stolen.

HATCH
What is this?

INT. AVALON -- EMPTY ROOM

Back in the same room as before, Zorin and Siren stand quietly.

SIREN
He took that well.
(beat)
Still convinced he's a Cult spy?

Zorin nods.

ZORIN
I can't be sure of anything right now.

They stay silent for a moment.

SIREN

What about the Cultist back there? What're we going to do?

ZORIN

The only thing we can. Let's go.

Zorin begins to move to the door.

SIREN

What about Hatch?

ZORIN

So long as he keeps quiet, we'll ignore him.
(beat)
Now let's go.

Siren sighs and follows Zorin out.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The lights on the bridge are a little brighter than before, giving us a good view of the room. It's small, not particularly well kept or comfortable, but it is busy. People go back and forth between barely functioning consoles to report some new status or kill time.

The only two empty spaces on the bridge are the helm console and the center chair, which Siren and Zorin take respectively.

ZORIN

Prepare for liftoff, helm.

SIREN

Yes, Zorin.

Siren gets to work diligently.

EXT. TYVOR CITY -- LANDING PAD

The pad is completely empty save for Avalon now.

Slowly, a small whine begins to build from the rear of the ship. A small whine that becomes a rumble. A rumble that becomes a roar.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the Avalon lifts off the ground, first retracting her front landing legs and then her rear.

After several seconds, the Avalon suddenly orients her nose skyward and blasts off into space!

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The tiny viewscreen comes to life with a beautiful panorama of stars.

SIREN

We're in low orbit, Zorin.

ZORIN

Prepare to receive communications.

The crew settles into a dull rhythm. They've done this before, and no one is happy.

Eventually, the comm suddenly activates in a painful shriek of static.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Welcome up here, Avalon. Please join us at these coordinates. That is all.

Zorin looks to a woman manning a console to his right.

FEMALE CREWMAN

We got 'em.

ZORIN

Set course.

Siren doesn't reply as she works.

EXT. SPACE

Avalon lazily flies forward. In the distance, about sixty ships of various sizes and shapes all congregate together with no organization or pattern. Most are easily recognizable as ships that were on the landing pad earlier.

But hovering above this little fleet is a massive vessel easily six hundred meters long. Its hull is the same blood red of the cult clothing earlier, giving it all the more dangerous look.

Dutifully, the Avalon enters the fleet under the huge Cult vessel, sliding into the group like any other lowly vessel.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

Hatch studies the contraption with all the analytical skill he can muster.

HATCH
Now what were you?

He tries to tap some consoles, but everything is dead.

HATCH
Come on...

As he works, Hatch doesn't react to Rol'Gin's voice as it filters over the comm.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE
Welcome, all loyal vessels, to a great endeavor.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The bridge crew is silent as the message continues to play.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE
We stand at a crossroads of history, good citizens
of life. The time of order has passed long ago,
and chaos has reigned long enough.

EXT. SPACE

The fleet is suddenly all set upon by dozens of tractor beams! Each of them emitting from the Cult vessel. No ship does so much as move.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE
So, with all of your agreement, we will take you
to a world to gather a most holy of substances to
be used in this, our greatest hour of need.

The Cult ship and the tethered ships all move as one, eventually gaining a good amount of speed.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

Hatch studies the strange machine as Rol'Gin continues to ramble.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

We are very pleased to see this much support for our cause. It warms the heart of every member in the fold to see the galaxy united on this common front.

(beat)

Indeed, the citizens of Tyvor city shouted with joy as we razed their homes for the future good, harmonious in their praise for all of you brave ship captains.

Hatch stops cold.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

No one reacts to the news.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

So now, be as joyful as the people below you as we journey forward!

The comm goes dead only a second later.

ZORIN

Those bastards...

EXT. SPACE

The tractor fleet suddenly jumps to warp speed.

FADE OUT.

End of Act Four

To Be Continued...