



"SHATTERED HEAVEN"

PART TWO

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The super-massive Cultist ship sails through warp speed with little or no grace. It's easy to tell its engines are struggling and its power waning.

As they fly on, one very small ship tractored near the rear of the vessel suddenly loses its connection to the ship. The explosion is brief but powerful.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Everything is exactly the same as before. The bridge is completely silent save for the omnipresent thrum of the engines.

ZORIN sits in the center seat, brooding like a defeated man.

ZORIN

How're we doing?

No one responds for a long moment, lost in their own dark reveries. Eventually, a young Trill male replies.

RIDEK

I think we're okay as long as our engines keep firing like they are.

ZORIN

Anything out there to tell us where we're going?

Siren turns from her console for a moment. We get a glimpse of what looks like an extremely advanced readout, but it seems to be covered by a crude manual control rod.

SIREN

No. I think we're going too fast for us to identify any landmarks before we're out of range.

The Hirogen sighs deeply. This is not going well at all.

ZORIN

And Hatch?

SIREN

Still holed up on the fourth deck.

Suddenly, before Zorin can get any more information, ROL'GIN's voice booms over the comm.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

To all those vessels still journeying with us to this greatest of endeavors, I salute you again.

(beat)

We are just a handful of hours away from our ultimate destination. A world of bounteous riches we will harvest to ensure the survival of this galaxy and her future.

There is a pregnant beat.

Another ship falls behind and explodes. There are about thirty left from the original sixty now.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

So be brave as we venture onward to these new frontiers!

RIDEK

I'd give half my share if he'd shut the hell up.

There is a quiet chuckle, interrupted by Zorin standing. He looks about and toward Siren for a moment, sharing a glance.

ZORIN

I'll be in my room.

He exits.

On the viewscreen, yet another weaker ship falls behind under the tractor beam and explodes, taking two others with it.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

In the room primarily occupied by a large piece of broken and burned machinery, Hatch continues to poke around.

The majority of the floor is covered by waste of all kinds. Empty cases of various sizes, food containers, spent cartridges, the whole works.

There are no PADDs, papers, or any information-holding devices around.

HATCH

What I'm thinking right now is that you're a computer... storage... thingy. If I'm right, beep twice.

Of course, the room remains dead silent.

As he stares, Hatch blinks his eyes heavily. He is obviously exhausted from the recent events.

HATCH

(giant yawn)

Well, whatever you are, you'll be here tomorrow, right?

No response, duh.

After a beat, Hatch exits the room. Before the doors close, however, he takes one last, long look at the device.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR

Zorin walks off the bridge and into a long corridor, weaving past small piles of debris and various crewmen doing work. His presence fills the small space, sometimes forcing the physically smaller people to move out of his way.

As he moves forward, Zorin suddenly stops when he runs flat into a rapidly moving Hatch!

Hatch bounces back with his eyes closed tight. In his exhausted state, his chest is out and Hatch holds a strong attitude.

HATCH

Hey, watch it, ya sack of shi-

Hatch's attitude drops when he looks up.

ZORIN

(harsh)

Sack of what?

HATCH

(extremely flustered)

Uh... sack of... giant... strong... armed...

ZORIN

Shut up.

Zorin moves forward, nearly smashing Hatch into the wall. After taking a moment to recover, Hatch begins to move in the opposite direction.

ZORIN

Don't go that way.

Hatch stops, confused.

HATCH

Uh... why?

Zorin turns to the human.

ZORIN

(no nonsense)

My ship. My rules. You go where I say.

There is a moment of silence, Hatch considering the Hirogen's words. After a moment, it's broken by an intense yawn from the human.

HATCH

Fine. Whatever.

Hatch tries to push his way past Zorin like had been done to him, but it only winds up with him stalled on Zorin's gigantic shoulder.

ZORIN

Where you going?

HATCH

Dunno. I thought I'd wander around.

Zorin begins to walk again, followed closely by Hatch. The few people in their way quickly move. Hatch has to stagger lest he fall over in his sleepiness.

They walk down a tight curve in the hall before slowly coming up on a metal ladder welded into a crudely blasted hole in the floor. Without missing a beat, Zorin begins the descent down into the lower deck.

Hatch looks at his delicate palms and then the cold metal ladder before following Zorin down. We follow him into:

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR (DECK 2)

While Zorin looks comfortable jumping onto the deck plates, Hatch takes a moment to hold his weight and shove himself off. He once again smashes into Zorin.

HATCH

Sorry about that.

Zorin sighs and moves onward.

ZORIN

I would advise you to stop doing that.

Hatch nearly trips on a piece of discarded conduit.

HATCH

(childishly)

Or you'll what?

Zorin doesn't stop moving.

ZORIN

Have you ever experienced sudden decompression?

HATCH

(not getting it)

Nope, can't say I have.

Zorin suddenly turns and grabs Hatch, easily picking him up by the front of his stained shirt! Hatch cries out pitifully at the display of wild strength.

ZORIN

(angrily)

You are only on this ship because we're caught in the Cult's grasp at warp. Do not think for a SECOND that you'll be here any longer than that. So take into advisement that my survival instinct prevents me from opening our bay doors and throwing you into subspace. And don't think I haven't thought about it. It's one of the few pleasant thoughts I have that keeps my mind off this situation.

(beat)

Which I also blame entirely on you!

With the faintest grunt of effort, Zorin throws Hatch into the nearest door. Hatch smashes into it heavily.

HATCH

Ow.

ZORIN

That's your room until we stop. Don't leave it.

Zorin walks away as Hatch stands up painfully.

As he gains his bearings, Hatch stands in front of the door, waiting for it to open.

Nothing happens.

INT. AVALON -- ZORIN'S ROOM

Zorin stomps into his quarters slowly, taking in the air of his newfound lonesome self.

Though the lights are dim, we can make out one very important detail of this room: emptiness. Zorin's room is almost completely empty save for a small desk with its own (ancient looking) computer terminal and a military cot that has seen better days. There are no hunting trophies or weapons to be found in here.

Another odd thing about this room is its cleanliness. Where the rest of the Avalon seems to have a universal dinginess, Zorin's room is as close to perfectly clean as anything in this universe.

Zorin walks further into the room, surveying its perfection. Out the very small window at the far wall, we can see a ship similar in size to Avalon, her rocket engines struggling for dear life. After a titanic struggle, she, too falls apart in the sudden loss of warp power.

ZORIN

Damn waste.

As Zorin moves to lay down on his burdened cot, trying to shut the worries of the current situation from his mind, the terminal at Zorin's desk begins to beep and whine in earnest.

With an exasperated grunt, Zorin moves to it, nearly smashing the console with his powerful fist.

ZORIN

What do you want?

First beset by static and a loud screech, it takes a second for the monitor to clear up with a barely comprehensible image.

Through the static and interference, a woman's face appears, her profile completely overtaking the small view space.

SANDREI

This is Sandrei of Typhon to Zorin of Avalon. You hear me over there?

ZORIN

Yes.

There is a pause as the screen once again falls into white noise.

SANDREI

Oh, so we could reach you on this piece of shit computer.

(beat, interference)

Anyway, one of my boys said they figured a way to use some of the radioactive parts of some of our acquired cargo to get out of these... whatevers Cult's got us in.

ZORIN

(quickly)

What does this have to do with me?

SANDREI

Well, Typhon's got no weapons and you're the last ship standing that could even bloody the cult's lip a bit. My boy says we can give your hull a nudge when we're 'charged', or however the hell he called it, and get you free. Then all you'd do is launch a few of them missiles to distract the cult and we're home free.

ZORIN

I take it you have warp drive?

SANDREI

(laughs)

Goddammit, why would I be sayin' this to you if I didn't? I think I'm starting to see why no one'll deal with you anymore, you cold sonofabitch.

ZORIN

What you're proposing could get us all killed.

SANDREI

I expected you to say that. But you know just as good as me that we could be caught under their damn heels for months doing their slop jobs. And I don't know about you, but I got shit to do that don't involve them.

There is a pause.

SANDREI

You in or out?

ZORIN

(quickly)

Fine. I'll do it.

Pause.

SANDREI

You'll what?

ZORIN

I said I'll do it. Charge your hull and get us out of here. I'll have my launchers ready.

Sandrei laughs loudly and produces a bottle of some illegal liquor from off the screen.

SANDREI

Well, maybe we'll have a chance after all. Hey, when we're out of this shithole I'll put in the good word with some of my suppliers. Hell, we could start up our own trade franchi-

ZORIN

You also realize that there is only one outcome when this is done. They won't let us go easily. Even if we run, they'll go after us. We won't have any option but to fight.

SANDREI

No shit. That's what I got you for, idiot.

Zorin quickly cuts the link and stares out his window. Indeed, not fifty meters away is a very small ship with four of the ugliest warp nacelles in history splayed on its back, all of them slowly building a less-than-healthy glow.

With a sigh, Zorin stands and moves past his cot, heading back again to the bridge.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR (DECK 2)

Zorin walks forward, passing Hatch who is still stupidly standing in front of the closed door. Upon closer inspection, however, it's easy to tell he is asleep. And snoring.

With a disgusted sigh, Zorin presses an almost invisible button on the door's frame, waits for it to slide open, then pushes Hatch into the room. The doors close again not a moment later.

As he begins to move forward, a muffled "Thank you" can be made out from behind the wall.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The bridge is just as Zorin left it, every seat taken by someone dutifully manning their stations. The viewscreen is alight with the remaining ships of the convoy.

ZORIN

Cut comm. lines to the Cult ship.

No one responds, but there is a loud BEEP to announce the cut line.

ZORIN

Power the warp engines.

Siren turns to Zorin.

SIREN

Wait... what's going on?

Zorin doesn't reply.

ZORIN

Prepare to engage warp engines on my command.

SIREN

Zorin?

Siren begins to stand to confront Zorin.

ZORIN

Sit down.

Suddenly, the viewscreen goes active when the Typhon's hull momentarily flashes with a bright lightning, pulling away from the cult ship. Her warp nacelles then burst with energy, keeping her still intact!

RIDEK

I'll be damned. They got out of it.

Staring at the action on the screen, Zorin moves to his center seat.

Everyone's eyes widen when the Typhon suddenly moves toward them!

ZORIN

Brace for impact.

EXT. SPACE

The smaller Typhon makes a straight path to Avalon, just barely passing a few ships still loyally tractored.

Almost immediately, the Typhon SMASHES directly into Avalon's hull! Both ships shudder mightily, even as the lightning flashes over both hulls once more.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The bridge is a chaos of rattling equipment, warning klaxons and people thrown to the floor.

ZORIN

ACTIVATE ENGINES!

The only person still at their seat is Siren, held in place by nothing other than the metallic tentacles jutting from her hands! Her face is marked with tears of pain, but she shrugs it off as her splayed fingers do their work.

EXT. SPACE

The Avalon's green nacelles flash brightly as she enters warp speed on her own. The Typhon breaks off not a moment later.

Very quickly, both vessels drop from warp speed, orienting their bows toward each other.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The chaos has quickly died down. The calm is extremely eerie.

RIDEK

There's no way that should have worked.

Before anyone can retort, the viewscreen activates with the drunk face of Sandrei, who is already in the process of shouting a loud whoop of joy.

SANDREI

My god, Zorin. You got one tough ship there. Half expected ya to fall apart as soon as we tapped ya.

Zorin doesn't share in the revelry.

ZORIN

Activate your defensive measures. We won't be alone for long.

Sandrei's face darkens.

SANDREI

See, that's what I hate about you alien cap'ns. You must've sold your sense of humor for those muscles.

ZORIN

(interrupting)
Arm your defenses. We'll speak again when this is over.

Annoyed, Zorin cuts the comm lines.

Immediately after, Siren's console goes wild with a shrill cry.

SIREN

They're coming!

ZORIN

Get a firing solution as soon as you can.

EXT. SPACE

The Cult vessel oozes out of warp more like a silent predator than a starship. As it decelerates, the few dozen ships still tractored are freed, but they all don't move so much as a meter.

A few kilometers away from the Cult ship, the Typhon and Avalon brace for the coming violence.

Instead of either ships closing in to face each other down or engaging in wild maneuvers, the Cult ship simply explodes with the launch of well over twenty missiles, all of them quickly orienting themselves toward the two runaway vessels.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Alert klaxons run wild as the Cult ship unleashes its fury.

ZORIN

(calmly)

Activate countermeasures and prepare to return their fire.

The tension on the bridge builds as the weapons continue their trek forward.

Siren keeps her eyes glued to her console, where a dial retrofitted onto its surface counts down the range of the missiles.

SIREN

Warheads at one kilometer...

(beat)

Five hundred meters...

(shorter beat)

Two hundred...

ZORIN

Fire countermeasures!

EXT. SPACE

The tiny-by-comparison Avalon suddenly orients her nose 'up' and shoots forward! From the back ends of the two crudely-constructed tubes welded to the side of her, the Avalon launches several glowing specks of metal.

Not an instant later, fully half of the missiles veer away from the Avalon and impact the chaff, exploding harmlessly.

Unfortunately, the rest of them continue pursuit of both the Typhon and Avalon. The former ship is a little slower than the latter, and two of the missiles make contact, cracking one of the four nacelles clean off!

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The viewscreen changes to a view of Sandrei and her chaotic bridge. Behind her drunk face run several people in wildly different clothing styles try to put out fires and repair major structural damage.

SANDREI

They got us good, Zorin. I'm gonna pull us out until you can convince 'em to leave.

Zorin's face tightens in anger. Without responding to the female captain, he turns to Siren.

ZORIN

Launch missiles the instant we're in range. Full payload!

EXT. SPACE

The extremely nimble Avalon does a tight barrel roll to avoid another missile and slows to get her own firing solution.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Not a second later, Siren's console beeps a pleasant tone.

SIREN

Got a solution. Their topside power system.

Zorin stares at the very non-majestic cult ship bearing down on them. Several more missiles come their way, but Siren pilots the ship gracefully enough to avoid them.

ZORIN

What're you waiting for? Fire!

EXT. SPACE

Bearing down quickly on the cult ship the Avalon's massive torpedo tubes light up with a dangerous red light.

A moment later, two missiles almost exactly alike to their cult counterparts fly toward the red vessel.

Too big to move away like the Avalon could, the Cult vessel is knocked backward by the powerful impact! The lights and nacelles flicker with the sudden damage and two holes open in its hull, but the weapons do relatively little damage.

And it doesn't take long before the cult vessel responds again.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Everyone is quiet and calm in the chaos of battle.

SIREN

We're out of countermeasures, Zorin.

ZORIN

What did our missiles do?

Siren simultaneously flies the ship through the sea of missiles while looking at instruments.

SIREN

Nothing.

(beat)

Hang on!

The viewscreen suddenly goes white with a powerful impact not a meter before the bridge itself!

The sound of rent metal and shattered equipment is ear shattering. The already dark bridge goes fully black for a long moment.

ZORIN

Get us out of here!

EXT. SPACE

Still reeling from the impact too close to home, the Avalon's movements are sluggish.

Not a second later, several more weapons strike the ship in different areas. Though they don't bore into the hull like the Avalon's own weapons, they do cause the ship to spin dangerously out of control.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Still chaos.

SIREN

The engines are falling apart!

RIDEK

The targeting computer's down!

Zorin sits in his chair through the wildly bucking chaos of the battle, his fingers stuck firmly into grooves exactly matching their widths.

ZORIN

What about the Typhon?

SIREN

I can't see it on the screens. Must have slipped behind something.

The bridge is thrown around once more as another missile strikes! Zorin sits calmly as Ridek takes a face full of plasma and falls to the floor dead.

ZORIN

Contact them!

Siren works for a moment.

SIREN

I think their comms are down. They may be dead in space.

Zorin sits tensely for a long beat, weathering another crushing impact. The Cult vessel is so close, the entirety of the viewscreen is nothing but a blood red field.

ZORIN

Contact Rol'Gin! Tell him we surrender!

Siren nods and gives up on her monitoring.

SIREN

Rol'Gin, this is Avalon. We surrender! Stop shooting. We surrender!

EXT. SPACE

The Cult vessel is directly over Avalon now, every single one of her missile turrets pointed directly at the small ship.

From seemingly nowhere, the damaged Typhon slips into view, her damage proudly displayed.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Siren presses a button to turn the ship's attention away from the Cult vessel to the Typhon.

ZORIN

Nice of them to join us.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE

Zorin, what the hell are you doing!? Shoot them!

But as Sandrei rants on, Rol'Gin's voice overtakes hers.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

My friends, the Prophet is very disappointed in your actions this day. Where we expected you to fulfill your duties to us and to the future, you squandered that opportunity in a futile effort at resistance. It will take our engineers, who should be seeing to this great project, weeks to repair the damage you have so indiscriminately inflicted upon us.

(beat)

While custom dictates we make an example of you, the words of the prophet are clear: "When faced with those without faith, your task is not to destroy them, but to show them the light."

Rol'Gin stops to take a breath.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE

(taking the moment)

But... but they coerced us to escape! THEY fired on you! It was the AVALON's fault. They should be punished, not shown the truth.

(beat)

Which I also FULLY believe in. My whole crew does.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Spare us your pitiful words. We monitored your communications from the moment you contacted the Avalon. If fault resides with anyone, it would be you.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE

But... but that's not fair! We were merely trying to uproot those not truly loyal to the cause. We were inspired by the Prophet himself!

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

(angrily)

Never speak His name in such form again, or there will be nothing to save you from our wrath. We know, Sandrei, where your loyalties truly lie.

(very dark)

We know who you represent. You blasphemous heathens will soon learn the message of the prophet or burn under his banner. It is no wonder you wanted to run. You could never hope to see the truth of his message!

Zorin walks over to Siren during the exchange and calmly taps a few buttons on her console.

ZORIN

(quietly)

Prepare for my order.

SIREN

All right.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE

You know nothing of the truth, cultist. One day you will fall like the mountains you build in perversion!

Just before the two arguers begin to shout, Zorin interjects:

ZORIN

(whispered)

Launch!

EXT. SPACE

The Avalon, not turned to face the Typhon, suddenly launches two missiles into open space.

And it doesn't take long for them to curve around and make a direct path to the Typhon!

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The argument dies down immediately.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE
Avalon!? What the hell did you do!?

ZORIN
Ending the argument before it gets us all killed.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE
By destroying us? Zorin, we could have paid you more in a day than what you've seen in your whole miserable life!

ZORIN
(shrugs shoulders)
Live and learn. Cut the signal.

SANDREI'S COMM VOICE
Zorin! Zorin! Stop this! We can't-

Sandrei's voice cuts off in a violent burst of static.

We have a silent beat.

SIREN
The Typhon's gone.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE
Excellent work, Avalon! I knew the Prophet's influence would reach even out here. I thank you from my own heart for your service to us.

The bridge lightly rocks with the impact of another tractor beam.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE
Welcome back to the fold.

EXT. SPACE

The Cult ship lumbers back to the fleet of STILL waiting loyal ships, all of them hanging together in perfect harmony.

Keeping up the rear but still tractored to the bigger ship, the Avalon simply rides along.

As we pull in closer to her newly battle-scarred hull, we notice something very peculiar...

Her hull is repairing itself.

FADE OUT.

End of Act One

ACT TWO

FADE IN.

EXT. SPACE

The cult vessel slowly drops out of warp, dragging along the remains of the fleet under it. The Avalon is still bringing up the rear, her hull almost as we saw it was before the battle. Only a dent or two remains.

As the ships fly onward, we slowly turn away from them to see the ultimate destination of this rag-tag fleet:

A planet, slowly spinning alone against a bright red star.

As the massive ship gets closer, we begin to see the faintest details of small oceans, rugged mountains and wild, immense jungles. While other biomes can be made out, the first three dominate its entire surface.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

My friends, we have arrived. The Prophet, indeed, the universe, smiles on your continued courage and dedication to the cause. I feel nothing but the deepest love for all of you in staying with us, ensuring our continued survival. You have kept my faith in life strong. Be assured I will send my best wishes to the Prophet the next I pray.

The ship slowly comes into a low orbit over the serene world.

Suddenly, the cult vessel's familiar torpedo tubes activate!

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Now let us show you your purpose to us!

Dozens of torpedoes, all of them flying from the cult ship, suddenly are let loose on the world!

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The calming chaos after the battle is just as hectic as before. Several people mill about doing cleaning work and minor repairs while still others tend to those wounded and the now very dead Ridek.

Zorin stands finally from his chair, his massive frame sending painfully loud pops from strained muscles and tight bones.

ZORIN

Get your work done and get out of here...

(the crew stares at him)

NOW!

Some more idle people slither away with rude comments while others keep to their work.

Zorin moves to Siren.

ZORIN

Where are we?

SIREN

It's hard to tell. These screens won't say anything before showing something else. Like the computer's trying to read too much too fast.

ZORIN

(annoyed)

Well, what have you been able to read?

Two clumsy crewmen bump into Zorin from behind. He makes a very loud sigh before turning back to Siren.

SIREN

I think they took us to the edge of broken space,
Zorin.

ZORIN

Broken space? The place where only sublight works...

SIREN

That's it. The good thing is that this is the border, so we can still run if you want.

Zorin looks at the devastated bridge for a moment.

ZORIN

I'll keep it under advisement.

(beat)

How far does broken space go?

SIREN

Nobody's mapped it. I've heard stories it's about
two hundred light years across.

An eavesdropping crewman whistles.

ZORIN

(ice cold)
Get back to work.

CREWMAN

Sorry.

Tense beat.

ZORIN

(to Siren)
Try to calm the computer down and see if you can
find a route for us. For now, we'll stay where we
are.

SIREN

Under THEIR heel?

ZORIN

We'll live longer. Once the Cult is done molesting
us to do their bidding, they'll let us go. Keep
working. We'll free ourselves of this shit
eventually.

Zorin moves back to his seat, bringing up comm. systems.

ZORIN

Isaac, you there? How are my wounded coming?

There is a short burst of static, but Isaac's voice comes through clearly in the end.

ISAAC'S COMM VOICE

Yeah, I'm here. You got four people's heads split
open, Zorin. Three broken arms. And someone had
the good fortune to be impaled by bulkhead through
the throat.

ZORIN

Stop.

ISAAC'S COMM VOICE

Oh. I just thought you'd like to know everyone who keeps getting their ass handed to them because of you.

ZORIN

(annoyed groan)

I'll ask when I want to know that information.

ISAAC'S COMM VOICE

Fine. I'll get back to work.

ZORIN

See that you do.

The comm. goes off with another hiss.

ZORIN

And somebody fix the damn comm.!

EXT. SPACE

The cult ship stops firing. On the surface directly below her, a very large circle is burning with the collected bursts of a good twenty mushroom clouds.

INT. AVALON -- ROOM

On the floor not two feet away from the closed door, Hatch lies flat on his stomach. From his nose emits a faint but nasal snore and his mouth drools profusely.

From the slight damage the room has taken, it's easy to tell he slept through the entire battle.

Fortunately, we don't have to endure seeing him asleep for long, as Hatch suddenly wakes up the instant he sees the flash of explosions on the planet's surface.

HATCH

Huh? Wha...?

Standing slowly, his bones popping louder than Zorin's, Hatch makes his way to the window. From his point of view, the destruction is spectacular yet strangely beautiful.

HATCH
(dispassionately)
Who's being slaughtered this time?

Still stretching his muscles, Hatch turns from the window to scope the room. In one corner sits what might have been a replicator unit, but its cannibalized parts tell of it's now junk status.

With a sigh, Hatch tries to stretch his muscles and move around, but he only causes himself pain.

HATCH
That's it, I need breakfast.

Walking stiffly, Hatch exits.

INT. AVALON -- CORRIDOR

Hatch walks slowly through the corridors of Avalon, looking sullenly at the various people and objects that pass by. As he moves, a low growl emits directly from his slightly larger-than-healthy gut. Hatch sighs in frustration.

Keeping mobile, though the sounds from his stomach grow louder, Hatch approaches a passing crewman who is loaded rather comically with gigantic boxes and repair equipment. He obviously does not want to be disturbed.

HATCH
Where d'ya keep your food around here?

The crewman just passes by.

HATCH
Yeah, thanks, jerk.

Keeping his trek forward, Hatch begins looking left and right to see any marked doors.

Unfortunately for him, his wild eye movement prevents him from seeing another, rather attractive female, crewman with blonde hair and blues eyes, as she literally runs into him! This is CARLISE.

CARLISE
Ow!

HATCH
OW!

Both humans fall to the floor spectacularly. Fortunately, Carlise's better reflexes make her landing far less painful than Hatch's.

CARLISE

(quickly)

Oh my god! I'm so sorry. I wasn't watching where was going and...

HATCH

(sitting up)

S'alright. I enjoy being knocked on my ass every few hours.

Carlise chuckles as she grabs Hatch's arm to bodily lift him up. Her effort is visibly strenuous.

CARLISE

No problem. It's one of my secret joys to knock people over by body slamming them.

There is a light beat...

Before they both begin to laugh.

But it's not for long. Eventually, the two stand in an awkward silence.

HATCH

Well... want some grub?

CARLISE

First we smash into each other then you offer food.

(beat, cutely)

We must me soulmates... Wait, you're that new meat onboard aren't you?

Hatch stumbles a bit, flabbergasted.

HATCH

(stammering)

Well... uh... yeah...

CARLISE

C'mon, I'm just jerkin' ya. I'll show you to where we eat.

They begin walking.

HATCH

You won't go with me?

Carlise suddenly looks uncomfortable.

CARLISE

Nah. I've got... stuff to do.

She points to a distant door.

CARLISE

There.

(beat)

Well, I need to get back to what I was doing.

She begins to leave.

HATCH

Wait!

(beat, shy)

You happen to be the first person I've met since I came... uh, here, that hasn't tried to rape, sell or enslave me. Can I at least know your name?

CARLISE

Carlise, Mr. Hatch. Anything else you'd like to know?

HATCH

Can we see each other again?

Carlise smiles and stifles a laugh.

CARLISE

What are you, twelve? This ship ain't one-fifty meters long. I'd be surprised if we don't smash into each other in the future.

HATCH

I'll keep my ass padded.

Carlise laughs as she exits.

Hatch walks forward and enters the door he was shown, taking a quick look back at Carlise, who also happens to be glancing back...

INT. AVALON -- GALLEY

Hatch walks into the galley, which really isn't much of anything. Only half a dozen small, wooden tables are arranged in neat rows at the opposite end of a makeshift kitchen, which is eternally bathed in steam and smoke itself.

Only about three people occupy the small room, one of them is our very own doctor: ISAAC, who is sitting alone picking at a large bowl of blue soup. Hatch makes his way forward.

HATCH

Hi.

Isaac barely makes the effort to look up.

ISAAC

What?

Without the invitation, Hatch sits down.

HATCH

So... what's up?

ISAAC

(slurps soup)

Get out.

HATCH

Aw, c'mon. I still gotta thank you for healing me up back in the day.

ISAAC

...And I told you not to thank me.

Hatch is confused visibly.

HATCH

Why not?

ISAAC

Because little shits like you used to... used

to...

(sighs)

I just watched three people die this morning. Get out before it's four!

Hatch is taken aback.

HATCH

Geez... something twisting your underpants?

Isaac brandishes his spoon like a knife.

ISAAC

I just told you what's fucking bothering me. Get out of this room. Now.

HATCH

(oddly unaffected)

Not before I get some food.

Isaac rolls his eyes and grabs another bite. Hatch still doesn't move.

HATCH

Anything good?

Isaac plays the ignore game. A rather large vein sticks out from his forehead.

HATCH

Fine.

Standing from the creaky stool he sat upon, Hatch walks the ten or so meters to the steaming kitchen.

Inside is a cacophony of pots, foodstuffs and liquids, all of it a mess.

Hatch stares for a long moment, but quickly grabs a loaf of some kind of bread and goes back to his seat.

ISAAC

What are you doing?

HATCH

(duh)

Sitting down.

ISAAC

Why?

HATCH

Why not?

ISAAC

Because I just told you to fuck off.

HATCH

Well, I don't know anyone else here, so I'm sitting with you.

Isaac chuckles.

ISAAC

You're damn lucky keeping all those casualties alive got me so exhausted.

As he laughs, he tries to eat, but both quickly fail. Eventually, Isaac violently smothers his head in his palms.

HATCH

Want to talk about it?

Silent beat accentuated by the constant white noise of the room.

ISAAC

You've got no idea.

Hatch takes a large bite of his bread.

HATCH

Well I won't until you tell me.

ISAAC

No... you've never seen what I have. Hell, I bet you never seen a good fight.

HATCH

Nope... can't say I have. Though I did see some nasty stuff with the Klingon conflicts last week on holonetwerk...

(beat)

Never mind.

ISAAC

Whatever. You ain't never heard the sound of grown men and women at the end of their lives... ain't never seen that last breath...

HATCH

Well... being a doctor... I guess it's an occupational hazard-

ISAAC

(interrupting, shouting)

Don't you ever fucking talk to me like that! You weren't there on Jushai! You didn't see your own fucking brother's legs suddenly fly away from a mine. You never saw your own home burned and robbed by cowards who ran from your own side!

HATCH

I... take it you... saw it.

In a particularly violent moment, Isaac stands and throws the bowl across the room! The blue liquid flies everywhere.

ISAAC

Yes, you sonofabitch! I WAS! I was a combat medic on my own home when... when it...

HATCH

When it was destroyed?

ISAAC

Plowed under the goddamn dirt!

HATCH

...By who?

Isaac doesn't reply but instead moves to exit the room.

ISAAC

Just shut up about it. And never talk about it again in front of me. I got no problem turning people into corpses that deserve it.

Hatch gulps as Isaac exits.

But his growling stomach soon takes over and he gets back to the bread.

HATCH

Would'a tasted better with some butter...

As he eats...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The bridge is noticeably much cleaner and repaired, but it is still far from pristine. Zorin and Siren sit at their stations listening to Rol'Gin give yet another long sermon.

On the viewscreen, the large swath of burned ground still is washed by black smoke, curling out like long tentacles over a massive area.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

...And so it was not the man from Frol'gala who sold the sacred wine, but the very Guide of the Prophet himself. And when Torreth spoke, he spoke not to the wine seller, but to the very Guide himself. "Fear not," said he, "For I bring tidings of joy and peace for the future. Your choice is wise." And Toreth proved his newfound repentance by killing the sinful wine seller with his own blasphemous wares.

(beat)

And thus proved to all that the words of the Prophet guide all. His message guides all of our actions from simple steps to monumental decisions. He has seen all and knows all. Blessed be who knows the Prophet's word, for he knows the very route of destiny.

SIREN

(to herself)

If I hear much more of this, I'll find some sacred wine...

Zorin nods from his seat. His focus is concentrated on the small viewscreen where the small fleet and the burning world are prominently displayed.

As she speaks, Rol'Gin continues his sermon:

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

This leads me to another aspect of the wonders of the Prophet's words. From his emergence so long ago to deliver us from the strife of our time, to us working each and every day to bring his vision to fruition. It is us, those who cannot share in the Prophet's wonders, who must simply trust in his message, that truly enjoy his message. We live knowing his words but not what they mean. We only trust they will bring us to the glory and prosperity of the future.

(beat)

Now, join me in a moment of reverence for the message I have imparted to you. Let us bow our heads in joy and wonder for his crushing truth!

Finally, Rol'Gin's voice goes silent. There is a loud sigh of relief bridge-wide.

ZORIN

How's my ship looking?

A few people look around and mumble positive remarks.

SIREN

Looks good from here, Zorin.

(quieter)

If you wanted to punch it...

Zorin moves to a repairman's work and easily removes some heavy panels while talking to Siren.

ZORIN

(same)

When the opportunity comes.

Siren nods.

The work continues in peace for a moment.

Before it's shattered by a slightly burned and hysterical crewman, JARESH, running right before Zorin!

JARESH

Zorin!
(beat, takes breath)
The engines...
(breath)
Burning...
(clutches chest)
Had to close the blast door!

Siren suddenly looks up in alarm.

SIREN

What!?

Jaresh is calmed for a moment to speak.

JARESH

In the fighting... a cult torpedo hit the right
side engine... Hories had to shut down the reactor
before it blew. But now... something popped and
the entire room is burning! I had to...
(beat, moan of regret)
Close the blast door. Hories and Vrell are...
dead.

Some react with horror. Zorin takes the flood of news in stride, keeping his cool
for everyone else.

But a careful look at the throbbing muscles in his temple and neck show that he
is one unhappy Hirogen.

ZORIN

Get Isaac over there when the flames die. How do
the engines look now?

Jaresh is calmed somewhat further by Zorin's cool demeanor.

JARESH

Well, we've always just let them... fix themselves
after we screwed up before. But... I don't know
about this time...

Jaresh looks down in shame.

JARESH

I'm sorry, Zorin. Looks like we're royally screwed this time.

Siren's face sinks.

SIREN

When do you think we could go to warp?

JARESH

I don't even know how this ship powers itself! I just put out the fires and replace the broken stuff, you stupid bit-

ZORIN

That's enough!

(beat)

Get back to work, Jaresh. I'll give you new commands if and when I see fit.

JARESH

(defeated sigh)

Fine. I'll just... go.

Jaresh exits slowly, his emotions still on the edge.

SIREN

We need warp engines Zorin. When the Cult start tractoring us again and we don't have warp engines to follow suit...

ZORIN

I know. We blow, just like all those others. We fall behind, the tractors rips us to shreds.

Unfortunately, just as there seems to be a moment of peace...

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Well, my dearest friends and comrades. My people have told me that the world below us has calmed enough to allow our holy feet to touch down upon. Be joyful and prepare your minds, as this moment will be the first of many that sees his word come to fruition!

EXT. SPACE

The Cult ship suddenly angles downward, beginning a slow and easy descent down into the atmosphere of the empty planet.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

Hatch walks confidently into the familiar room, his head clear and stomach quite full of food.

Now energized, Hatch immediately begins to investigate the strange device yet again. He pokes, prods and sniffs areas around the strange thing.
It's clear this is his mission.

HATCH

Okay... you don't seem to affect any power systems...

(beat)

And you gotta be important if you've got a whole room to yourself...

Hatch presses his palm to a dark, flat surface, obviously hoping to activate a touchscreen.

HATCH

C'mon... gimme just one hint! Spark! Blow a fuse!
Let me know I'm just not completely wasting my time.

As expected... there is no reply.

Hatch sighs and slumps to the floor, sitting cross-legged in front of the black device.

HATCH

I spend my whole time on this damn ship looking at this pile of... whatever. You know, I could go back to my shuttle and get out of here. But where will I go? There's a big ass "Cult" ship out there that just murdered an entire planet for no reason. I doubt they'd let ol' Tom go just for kicks. I could hitch a ride on another ship bound for Earth, get out of this whole nightmare. Go back to my little apartment... clean it up a bit... Then try to get my life back together.
(beat)

I could sue that bitch and her boyfriend for their little prank and get them fired. God knows they deserve it. I could even play the sympathy card and get chicks way hotter than Melanie...

(pause, laugh)

Is that all I can think about? I just had my life handed to me at the ass end of a gun, and here I am talking about picking up some tail. What kind of man am I?

Hatch looks to the device for something, but gets nothing.

HATCH

Well? What the hell am I!?

Grabbing a piece of heavy metal littering the floor, Hatch THROWS it at the device!

HATCH

ANSWER ME!

Suddenly, surprisingly, the room suddenly bursts into life! The few remaining glass globes suddenly glow with a multitude of color and previously dark, crystal-glass devices thrum with power.

And in that same screen Hatch tried to push before... a text message suddenly appears:

Hey, Tom.

Off Hatch's dumbfounded and astonished expression, we...

FADE OUT.

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

FADE IN.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

The message displays bright and clear on the screen, a small testament to the great power running through the rest of the room.

And Hatch is still on his backside, staring at the screen in wonder.

HATCH

What the hell...?

The screen blinks off for a moment before a new message appears.

Why did you throw that at me?

HATCH

Uh...

Do I make you mad or something?

Hatch is completely stunned.

HATCH

Um... no. Not really.

Well, you seemed really mad. Want to hear a joke? Jokes always make me not mad.

HATCH

(weak smile)

Sure. Tell me a joke.

After he speaks, Hatch slides closer to the screen, enthralled by it.

What do you call a targ in a Terran wedding dress?

There is a long, silent beat. Hatch runs his fingers slowly over the screen, studying its every activated detail.

HATCH

What?

REALLY MAD.

Hatch doesn't pay attention to the screen, looking beyond and around it.

HATCH

What is this? Gotta be some kind of interactive... program... thing.

Program? Is that all you think of me?

The message is compounded by a rude electronic beep from the device.

HATCH

(still snooping)

Well... what else would... you?... be?

Hatch stumbles behind the device, somewhat clumsily due to his still cast-sealed arm.

As he moves, another screen facing him activates.

I could be anything I want to be; a pilot, an engine person, and even a captain.

HATCH

Sure, if you say so.

Rude.

HATCH

(to himself)

I wonder how this stayed here so long?

Nobody was interested in me.

HATCH

How very interesting.

(beat, looks about)

Looks like someone threw crap around like I did.

It hurts when they throw things.

HATCH

Probably tried to sell you, didn't they. Some kind of entertainment program would probably do pretty good in this hellhole.

Rude.

HATCH

But I guess you never talked to them... did you?

No. They were mean. Not like you, Tom. You are very nice.

HATCH

Yeah, thanks.

Hatch looks for once not past the device, but right at the screen.

HATCH

You know... you're the first one to say that in a
LONG time.

Why wouldn't anyone else say that?

HATCH

Well... there was Melanie... Byron... everyone who
saw me different. A whiny loser... asshole...
lazy... All of it...

Nobody saw you for you?

Long beat.

HATCH

No... I guess not. But it was mostly true. It was
me.

Not true.

HATCH

(sarcastic laugh)

Yeah, you must be programmed for feel-goodness.
Whoever built this ship must have had one bruised
ego.

Let me show you who you are.

The screen goes black...

...For a very long time.

HATCH

Huh... must have shut itself off.

The screen suddenly reactivates.

No, I'm still here. I just can't seem to find anything.

HATCH

I don't understand.

I can't find anything. Nothing about you. Or me. Or anything.

The ambient noise around the device suddenly increases dramatically. Some of the loose debris around Hatch begins to vibrate rapidly.

HATCH

What's going on?

Going down!

EXT. SPACE

In the atmosphere of the burning world, the fleet slams into the air roughly, turning the entire sky into a rolling fireball.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

The viewscreen is red with tongues of flame.

ZORIN

Status of the hull?

SIREN

We're still holding together, Zorin.

ZORIN

Distance from surface?

Siren goes back to her console after the bridge rocks from a nasty impact.

SIREN

Not too long.

(shudder)

I hope.

Zorin looks resolutely forward as the viewscreen calms down, giving us a great panoramic view of the world rapidly coming toward them.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE

Looking up from under a particularly lush alien tree, we watch the entire rag-tag fleet land on the scorched ground just barely beginning to cool.

Each ship sets down one at a time, finding a relatively flat landing surface before touching down. Several ships sink a few meters into the ground, their immense weight too much for the weak soil.

The Avalon is one of the last ships to touch down, far outside from the center of the group but not too far away.

And hovering above them all, the Cult ship slows and begins a slow circle over the entire area, keeping a dark vigil over their enslaved quarry.

As the ships settle in and people begin to disembark, a familiar voice filters not over a comm. system, but over a plethora of massive speakers stuck on the ugly ship's underside.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

My friends, welcome to our destination! I promised to you previously that I would reveal the reason for our long journey here, and as the Prophet minds his words, for they are true, I will tell you. This world is rich in the very materials needed to build a firm foundation for the future. Strong stone and thick mortar will be what you will quarry for us here. I know your hearts are strong with the words of the Prophet, and your backs should not fall behind.

(beat)

We will stay aloft, offering words of encouragement and keeping the prophet's blessings in our prayers. The Prophet himself wishes you good fortune.

As we pan down to get a good look at the plethora of people cautiously stepping out of their ships, we see the general look of hopelessness and apathy that seems to have pervaded this entire galaxy. Not a one looks defiant at the cult message or their looming vessel. They simply begin to unload tools and clear the burned ash over the ground.

As they work, our focus turns to the Avalon, her ramp extending painfully slow either as a byproduct of her recent damage or a simple unwillingness to work.

INT. AVALON -- DEVICE ROOM

Hatch is sitting cross-legged before the blackened device nursing his cast.

HATCH

So you really don't... know... anything about what happened to you before a few years ago.

Yes.

HATCH

Not even a serial number?

No.

HATCH

(getting bored)

Huh.

But I know you.

HATCH

But you just said you didn't know anything.

Don't be a smartass.

Hatch's head jerks up in surprise.

HATCH

What?

Someone is coming.

HATCH

Wait... how do you?

But before he can get a response, all the activity, the lights and sounds, in the room dies at once, suddenly leaving Hatch alone in the dark.

HATCH

...Hello?

Just as suddenly, a rap on the door startles Hatch to his feet.

CARLISE (O.S.)
Hey, you there, Hatch?

In the dark, we can get just a hint of smile from Hatch.

HATCH
Yeah.

CARLISE (O.S.)
C'mon, Zorin told me to find you and take you down
to the bay.

Hatch suddenly gets very nervous.

HATCH
Why?

CARLISE (O.S.)
The hell would I know? He gives orders, we follow,
we get paid. Not that complicated. Now get outta
there before I pop that cast of yours off.

Hatch takes one last look at the now completely inactive room before moving to the door.

And it doesn't open.

HATCH
The hell?

CARLISE (O.S.)
Oh yeah, we got plenty of time to sit here and
talk about our personal lives, Hatch. It's not
like there's a gigantic cult ship over our heads
that just nearly kicked our asses into space dust
or anything.

As Hatch tries to pry the door open with his good hand, the portal suddenly opens, ejecting him into the hallway almost as violently as his first entrance into the room previously.

CARLISE
So glad of you to join me.

HATCH

Sorry, I just had... computer troubles.

CARLISE

Sure, that's what you probably always say. C'mon, we may get there just in time to have Zorin shoot us.

HATCH

(deadpan)

What?

CARLISE

But he won't be mad about it.

As Carlise walks away, Hatch obediently, albeit shakily, follows.

INT. AVALON -- SHUTTLE BAY

The shuttle bay is full with just about everyone who works on board Avalon present. People of very mixed races mill about fine-tuning bits of equipment, polish things to perfection or just loiter about and look busy.

Isaac walks between them all, his face a stone mask, passing out water containers and first aid packs.

ISAAC

Watch it out there. Keep drinking and don't wind up on the fuckin' ground. I ain't helping anyone today if they wind up in my sickbay.

Hatch follows Carlise closely, nearly walking on top of her to keep from being drawn into the crowd.

Hatch points to Isaac as discreetly as possible.

HATCH

Whassup with all these outbursts?

CARLISE

He gets like that when we have wounded. Whenever he has to patch up a skinned knee he remembers his painful days in the war.

HATCH

War...?

Oddly, their path ends just before she runs into the very cross-looking Isaac.

CARLISE

Here he is, just like Zorin said.

Isaac passes out a few more kits before turning to here.

ISAAC

Good.

Without saying a word, Isaac moves to Hatch and grabs his cast.

HATCH

Hey! What the hell are you-

With a sickening SNAP!, Isaac smashes the cast with a sharp blow with his leg. Hatch cries out in agony.

HATCH

What the.... the fuck... was that for?

ISAAC

Arm's healed. Didn't need to keep it on anymore.

HATCH

You lunatic! I only had it on for A DAY!

To Hatch's surprise, however, he notices quickly that his arm is indeed perfectly healed.

HATCH

Oh... whaddaya know?

Isaac rolls his eyes and shoves a water/aid kit into Hatch's chest.

ISAAC

Keep drinking and don't wind up in my sickbay, all right?

HATCH

Yeah... sure.

Isaac moves on.

CARLISE
You two've hit it off pretty good.

HATCH
(failed sarcasm)
Yeah. He's my best bud in the whole world.

CARLISE
Okay...

She moves to an unoccupied corner of the bay, somewhat close to Hatch's ignored shuttle. Propped up on a wall is a stocky machine covered with more rust than any kind of instrumentation.

CARLISE
C'mon, this is what Zorin wants you to do.

Hatch moves up and takes a long gander at the thing.

HATCH
What is it?

CARLISE
(duh)
Laser drill.

HATCH
Oh.... so what does it do?

CARLISE
Mows lawns to perfect size. What the hell do you think it does? Drill. You're going to be part of the primary quarry group.

This time, Hatch keeps his mouth shut, simply following Carlise's hands and words.

CARLISE
This button here hovers you to your location, just lean in the direction and you go there. This one activates the drill. Just make for damn sure it's pointed down before you do it, m'kay?

Hatch points.

HATCH

And this button?

Carlise is silent for a long moment.

CARLISE

Probably best if you ignore that one.

HATCH

Gotcha.

(beat)

Any reason I'm doing this and not being handed a shovel and pail or something?

Carlise stifles a laugh with a concerned look.

CARLISE

This piece of junk's exploded the last three times we've tried to use it.

As Hatch gulps a long swallow, Carlise exits.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- WORK SITE

Obviously several hours later, a good portion of the burned ground has been carted away in favor of a hole comparable in size to the Cult ship hovering above, but only a meter or so deep. Several burned hulks of metal that previously were laser drills dot the landscape, leaving only three in active service. Hatch is, fortunately, one of the lucky ones.

As he works, Hatch has to wipe copious amounts of sweat from his brow just to see the people working around him.

Crewmen both uniformed and not, alien and human work in tandem loading gigantic crates full of stones and smaller pebbles and hauling them into the cargo bays of every ship. Some of the smaller vessels are already full, but larger ones like Avalon still have a lot to go.

The only disturbing thing about this scene is the now very common appearance of Cult members milling about, shouting prayers to the Prophet and just being general nuisances. Some of the more physically imposing cultists walk calmly around the edges of the work site, keeping a constant, armed to the teeth, vigil on the place.

Taking a sip from a nearly empty water container, Hatch slowly gives up on work and sits heavily upon his floating machine.

HATCH

This is nuts.

CARLISE (O.S.)

You got that right.

Hatch looks directly behind him to see a sweat covered Carlise approaching.

HATCH

Hey, what brings you to my humble corner?

CARLISE

Believe it or not, constantly shoveling dirt and rocks into giant containers can really tire a girl out.

HATCH

I would have no idea.

CARLISE

It's true.

HATCH

Wow.

Hatch notices Carlise looking at his water cup.

HATCH

(handing it over)

Here.

CARLISE

You don't mind?

HATCH

Nah, I can tough it out.

CARLISE

Thanks.

She puts it away in a pocket somewhere on her person.

HATCH

So... what brought you aboard this ship of fools?

CARLISE

(no nonsense)

The money. I won't lie. I used to be a runner on some godforsaken junk transport before we were shot down by some pirates. I found Zorin in a spaceport, he offered me more money to work for him, and the rest is history.

HATCH

Money, huh?

CARLISE

What, you don't care about cash? You some kind of monk or something? Your clothes seem stupid enough.

HATCH

(small laugh)

Nah, it's just that... where I'm from, stuff like money just doesn't really matter. Not a whole lot really did.

CARLISE

Spoiled life, huh?

HATCH

Yeah. Looking back, it really was.

There is a long silence here, accented by the suddenly setting sun.

HATCH

Never saw a sunset like this before.

Carlise doesn't reply but simply reaches into her pocket to remove Hatch's water and a strip of what looks like well dried jerky.

HATCH

Little snack before you get to work?

CARLISE

You wish.

With a quick motion, Carlise dunks the strip into Hatch's water, listening to a sudden sound of boiling liquid.

HATCH

The hell?

CARLISE

Intestinal tissue of a Tarkalean rabbit. Dissolves
in water to make-

(takes a drink)

The best stuff out there.

Carlise's upper lip is stained with a brown sludge as she offers the canister to Hatch.

CARLISE

Want to try? It can make a whole day of work feel
like a minute with a Pleasure slave.

Hatch sniffs the bottle before jerking away in revulsion.

HATCH

Oh hell no! That's disgusting!

Carlise's expression suddenly darkens.

CARLISE

What the hell? Take it!

HATCH

I said no, that's why.

Carlise tries to force the water into Hatch's face, which he quickly slaps away.

CARLISE

What's wrong with you?

Hatch has to knock the canister to the ground.

HATCH

Leave me alone!

Carlise reaches to grab the water.

CARLISE

(venomously)

Pathetic. I thought you were a good guy.

Carlise walks away as she sips the gross concoction. As she moves, her steps become increasingly erratic.

Unfortunately, it's at this very moment when a Cultist, armed with a rifle forged seemingly of pure black metal, approaches Hatch.

CULTIST

You there. Why are you not working?

HATCH

(thinking quickly)

Uh... engine overheated. I'm cooling it.

CULTIST

By talking with that woman?

HATCH

She, uh... has a very calming demeanor?

The Cultist raises his weapon to Hatch's chest.

CULTIST

Refusing to work is a violation of the Prophet's most high of commands. You have blasphemed and insulted him.

HATCH

Oh shit.

CULTIST

In accordance with His law, all blasphemers must be shown the light.

Fortunately, before the man with the gun can do anything, Rol'Gin's booming voice roars over everyone on the ground.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

My friends, I commend you for all your effort this day. Our prayers did not go unanswered as you have all performed beyond even our wildest imaginings. For a reward, I command all of you to halt your machines and enjoy one night of rest as we anoint your vessels with the blessings of the Prophet.
(beat)

But before we go, I implore you to pray with me.

The Cultists work site-wide all bow their heads in unison, followed by several of the more cowed workers. Hatch notices that those from the Avalon, Isaac, Siren and Zorin specifically, keep their heads high and proud.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

"All-knowing be he the Prophet who chose to enlighten us with his wisdom and message that we may join in his light."

The people around follow the words as best they can, turning the field-turned-hole into an audible mess.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

Thank you.

Very quickly, people from every ship throw their tools down and move toward their own homes. Hatch watches for a long moment, keeping vigil over the cultists still milling about. Some of them seem to carry around large containers full of some thick liquid.

ZORIN (O.S.)

Hatch! Get back here!

Startled back into reality, Hatch abandons the drill and moves to the Avalon.

But just before he gets there, a rustle in the un-burned jungle behind the ship catches his eye. He moves around the ship slowly.

ZORIN (O.S.)

What the hell are you doing?
(barely audible)
Siren, get him.

As Hatch stares into the shadows beyond the vessel, he can barely make out the outline of a humanoid shape. Two large eyes, wide and unblinking, stare right at him. The image is, of course, quite unnerving.

SIREN

Hatch? What is it?

Hatch can barely take his eyes off the humanoid.

HATCH

Don't you see it?

SIREN

See what?

Though Hatch doesn't see it, Siren gives a hand signal to Zorin, to which he nods and boards the ship.

HATCH

Over there... those eyes.

SIREN

Listen, we have to get inside now. You can show us later.

Hatch slowly peels his eyes away.

HATCH

You didn't see that?

SIREN

No, now go.

Hatch takes one last look into the jungle, only to find the shape gone.

HATCH

Yeah... whatever.

FADE OUT.

End of Act Three

ACT FOUR

FADE IN.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- WORK SITE -- MORNING

The sun of the empty world is just barely peeking over the horizon, bathing everything in a dull red light. Already, a few dozen people from various ships are hard at work tilling more ground for quarry while several others loiter about waiting for more light.

And above, the Cult vessel still hovers over them all, both her speaker and weapon ports aimed straight down.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- AVALON RAMP

Sitting at the edge of Avalon's still extended ramp, Hatch sips from a new water container. Above him the rest of the crew sits and cleans equipment and eats a meager breakfast.

As he sits for a long moment, he's suddenly surprised by a gentle hand on his shoulder.

HATCH
(surprised yelp)
Hey!

CARLISE
Hey yourself.

Carlise sits close to Hatch. He obviously is quite uncomfortable.

CARLISE
Look, about what happened yesterday. I just...
um... I'm just not used to anyone...

HATCH
S'alright. Just don't use that again... with me
around at least.

CARLISE
Fine.
(beat)
Just... I gotta know why. No one's ever said no to
it before.

HATCH

But it's the... the... What the hell is that?

CARLISE

It's just the intestinal tract of a-

HATCH

Yeah, exactly.

CARLISE

What's so bad about that?

HATCH

Nothing... except how it's totally ew.

CARLISE

The hell's your problem? You can't say you don't have anything like that where... wherever you're from.

Hatch cringes at some uncomfortable thoughts.

HATCH

Yeah... there's a few things back home. But I just... don't like 'em is all.

CARLISE

Why not?

Carlise looks genuinely interested, a very odd change. Hatch has to smile at the sincerity.

HATCH

Well, there was one time when I was at the academy. Some other students brought in some herbs from some other planet. Let's just say, it didn't go over well with me.

She leans in closer.

CARLISE

What do you mean?

HATCH

(very uncomfortable memory)

When my friends gave some to me, um, how can I say it?

(beat)

There was an explosion from my person? Let's just say I now tend to say no to any kind of stuff.

Carlise laughs loudly.

CARLISE

(between hearty chuckles)

That's the funniest... my god... That bad?

HATCH

Yeah.

CARLISE

Okay, I'll just keep it away from ya.

Carlise slips an arm over Hatch's shoulder.

CARLISE

I'll see you later.

As she walks away, Rol'Gin's familiar voice booms once more.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

Arise, children of the universe! Arise and complete the task the Prophet has laid out before you! Whisper a prayer and gather your strength. We will continue watching you from on high with hope in our hearts and love on our words.

With that eerily nice comment, the entire camp suddenly explodes with activity, mostly also helped with the sudden arrival of the same dozens of Cultists from before, dragging people out of ships and forcing others back to their equipment.

As the Avalon's crew descends, Zorin stomps to the top of the ramp to get a good look at his ship. He seems extremely interested in the hull itself. Hatch looks up.

HATCH

What'cha lookin' at?

Zorin barely looks down.

ZORIN

Get to work.

Hatch shrugs and walks away.

Siren and Isaac move up to Zorin a moment later.

SIREN

What did they do last night?

ISAAC

I heard something like someone tapping the hull
from my room for a couple of hours.

ZORIN

So did I.

Zorin descends the ramp and into the field to see his ship in greater glory.

As he does, Siren's jaw drops.

ISAAC

My god...

All atop the Avalon and every other grounded ship is a thick layer of a quickly
drying substance, though almost impossible to see in the red morning.

SIREN

What is that?

As she speaks, a small trickle of the liquid drips to the ground, staining the grass
red.

ZORIN

Blood. They painted my ship with blood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- WORK SITE -- EVENING

Once again drenched with sweat, Hatch staggers back to Avalon after another
day of hard labor. Several people lie on their backs or stomachs at random points
of the camp, all dead or dying. The schedule is getting brutal.

As Hatch makes it to the ramp, where a group of more muscular crewmen load a few of the massive containers of stone and dirt into the cargo hold, his head turns to the sudden sound of a twig snapping. He misses the ramp and walks to the edge of the burned ground.

HATCH

Okay, this is nuts.

(louder)

Who's out there!?

No reply. No sound.

HATCH

I saw you last night. I know someone's out there.

Prove to me I'm not insane!

Quiet.

Zorin peeks around from the ramp.

ZORIN

Hatch, get in here or I'll leave you out!

Hatch walks up to the edge of the ground slowly, keeping a keen watch.

ZORIN

Enjoy the outdoors.

Zorin's head disappears and the ramp begins its ascent into the ship.
Hatch keeps walking forward, his knees brushing against the foliage.

Suddenly, the sound of rustling grass startles Hatch.

HATCH

What the?

A humanoid figure, slightly smaller than the one seen before, suddenly SMASHES past Hatch and runs into the camp!

HATCH

HEY!

Hatch turns to pursue, but is suddenly stopped by a hand reaching out from behind him and grabbing the neck of his shirt. Hatch is pulled bodily to the ground.

Though he isn't knocked out, Hatch is dazed from the impact with the ground. His vision goes blurry at the now two humanoid figures approach and lean over him.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- JUNGLE -- NIGHT

Hatch comes to well into the night, though that is a little difficult to tell through the thick plant life.

Directly in front of him lies a very small shuttlecraft just barely larger than a standard escape pod. Its dented and blackened hull shows both its age and state of total disrepair. To his right, a small lamp glows before a pile of fried electronics and a plate of very unappetizing food.

As he looks around, Hatch quickly notices that his hands are firmly tied behind his back.

HATCH

Um... hello? Anyone out there? Look, I'm sorry if
I pissed you off or something. If you let me go I
promise I won't say anything about you to anyone.

In response, the rear end of the tiny craft suddenly opens, emitting two figures of the exact proportions of before. In the very dim light of night and the small lamp, Hatch can make out strong facial ridges and bone protrusions on both the male and female aliens. Ridges distinctly Xindi primate in origin.

The male approaches Hatch with feigned toughness. The female holds a worried look.

AZEL

Who are you?

HATCH

I'd rather know the names of my very nice hosts if
I could.

The male produces a tiny knife easily intended for food and shows it to Hatch.

AZEL

It doesn't matter. You won't live long enough to
care.

As he tries to act tough, the female suddenly sighs and approaches Hatch.

SHERA

I'm Shera and this is my idiot cousin Azel.

HATCH

And I'm Tom Hatch. Nice to meet you both. Now, about these little ropes here? I've got an itch on my chin and I'd like to scratch it at any time.

(no response)

Any time you like.

Long beat.

AZEL

Why do we always pick the most annoying ones?

SHERA

(to Hatch)

We'll untie you when we get what we want.

HATCH

(duh)

And that is?

AZEL

(more mock tough guy)

Get us off this planet and we'll think of not killing you.

HATCH

Well, see, that's gonna be a problem. It's not my decision to leave anything. Well, except the ship, but Zorin closed that by himself.

AZEL

Told you. The annoying ones.

Shera sighs.

SHERA

You see, we're on the run from... them.

HATCH

(quickly)

The cult?

SHERA

Yes, the cult. We've been on the run for a few months.

HATCH
Why?

SHERA
Will you shut up for one little second!?

HATCH
Shutting up.

SHERA
Good. But our shuttle is out of fuel.

AZEL
We thought we'd be safe at the edge of broken space... but then you all showed up escorted by that huge monstrosity.

HATCH
Well I wouldn't call it so much of a monstrosity as a bigass... yeah. You're right.

SHERA
So we need anyone's help in getting on their ship and flying out of here. We can't pay but Azel's a good mechanic.

AZEL
And Shera here can fly just about anything built.

HATCH
While I appreciate the sales pitch, it's just not my decision. I'm sorry. I'm just as stuck as you two.

AZEL
Dammit.

Azel reaches around and, with the tiny knife, cuts the rope around Hatch.

SHERA
Can you at least sneak us on your ship or something? If we can sleep in a glorified escape pod for a few months, we can manage any space you can get us.

Hatch rubs his wrists.

HATCH

Are you that thick? I just said it's not my choice.

Azel whips out the knife again.

AZEL

Then we'll just kill you and find someone else.

Azel's knife slowly reaches Hatch's cheek...

HATCH

Go ahead. I still said I can't do a thing for you.

SHERA

At least suggest something and let US do the work.
We just need SOMETHING.

Hatch stays still for a long time, his eyes darting about from the dull knife to both aliens.

HATCH

I've never been much of an idea man either.

SHERA

Not even a suggestion?

HATCH

If you're fucking desperate enough to kidnap me,
you gotta be good enough to sneak aboard any ship
you want.

SHERA

Not really. This is the first time we've tried
anything like this.

HATCH

Well, it shows.

Azel drops the knife.

AZEL

She's right, man. We just need something.

HATCH

Fine... fine. But I'm gone after this.

(beat)

You could try to sneak onto the ship when the work detail comes in tomorrow evening. Try to blend in.

AZEL

That sounds good!

HATCH

Wait! No... Zorin stands there all day, he'd notice you.

(he thinks)

Hey... wait a minute. Just tell me one thing.
Why're you running?

Shera takes a step forward.

SHERA

Long story. Now think of something else.

He seems to drop the question.

HATCH

(smirks)

You could always jump into one of those dirt containers and hope they take you aboard.

AZEL

Sounds good!

SHERA

It'll have to do. Thanks, Tom Hatch. Just follow the cut grass to get you back to the clearing.
We'll see you on your ship.

Azel and Sera move into their craft.

HATCH

Hey, wait! I was just joking! It won't work!

SHERA

But we've got nothing else. You don't understand how desperate this is. If the Cult catches us...

HATCH

Say no more. I understand death threats. I've gotten more than a few recently.

SHERA

Go back to your ship and try to keep some containers close to the back of the ship. We'll take care of the rest.

Shera walks into the craft.

HATCH

This is completely insane. I have to be dreaming.

AZEL

I could poke you a few times to wake you up.

Hatch turns around.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE -- WORK SITE -- NEXT DAY

As Hatch struggles to walk back to the ship, obviously dehydrated and weak, he notices the same two burly crewmen struggling to load another crate onto the ship.

FRELNICK

Damn this one's heavy.

GRUNCH

Got that right.

Both of them grunt and moan as the crate is heavily placed into the now full hold of the Avalon. Hatch's shuttle is crammed as far into the back as possible, but even it is covered by crates. Only a very narrow path to the only door out of the cargo bay remains crate free.

Zorin walks up the ramp from an unheard conference with another captain and a Cultist guard.

ZORIN

Avalon crew to me!

Elsewhere, other captains make similar calls.

The small crew assembles extremely quickly, all of them as soaked and tired as Hatch.

ZORIN

I've been told that we've finally hit quota and we'll be out of here soon.

GRUNCH

Where're we going, Zorin?

ZORIN

That's the only mystery. They're not saying.

ISAAC

That's insane! They could take us anywhere!

ZORIN

And we won't stop them. Sandrei put us on their black list already. We won't run. Trust me Isaac, when they're done with us, they have to let us go. Just a little longer.

ISAAC

You better be right about this, Zorin.

Before Zorin can make a reply, the Cult ship's speakers suddenly roar with a loud squeal of feedback. Most everyone covers their ears.

ROL'GIN'S VOICE

As your noble captains have informed you, your hard toil has finally filled our quota of building material from this world. My heart sings with joy for you, one and all. You poured your blood and tears into this labor with nary a complaint. The Prophet's words have come true this day. Blessed be they. Now, I implore you to board your vessels and prepare to leap into orbit. From there, we will escort you to the next step in this monumental journey.

The crews of all ships slowly file on board, almost all of them resigned to their fates.

INT. AVALON -- SHUTTLE BAY -- LATER

A few hours later, Hatch sits alone in front of his shuttle, using a dirty cloth to try and wipe off some of the grime stuck to the hull of his shuttle.

As he works, the muffled voices of Azel and Shera can be clearly heard from a crate at the other end of the bay.

AZEL (O.S.)
Hello? Tom Hatch? Anyone?

SHERA (O.S.)
Shut up! Anyone could be outside.

AZEL (O.S.)
But I got dirt in my-

SHERA (O.S.)
Will you shut up!?

Hatch chuckles.

HATCH
Need some help?

AZEL (O.S.)
That you, Tom Hatch? Can you get us outta here?

Hatch wades his way over to the crate.

HATCH
Just give me a moment.

With a violent motion of his own, Hatch slaps the small locks on two sides of the crate. Azel and Shera spill out clumsily, both of their bodies completely covered with dirt.

AZEL
Thanks. I was beginning to suffocate.

HATCH
No problem. I'm surprised you did it.

SHERA
It wasn't easy. We had to stay in there for a few hours.

AZEL
Speaking of that, got any food?

HATCH

Sorry.

SHERA

A place to hide?

HATCH

Not really.

AZEL

Then what are we going to do?

Hatch smirks.

HATCH

You could go back in there.

AZEL

Absolutely not!

Shera looks away from the men to Hatch's shuttle.

SHERA

What about that?

HATCH

What?

(turns)

My ship?

AZEL

It's yours?

HATCH

Yeah.

Azel takes a long look at the vessel.

AZEL

Sorry to hear that.

SHERA

Please, let us stay there.

HATCH

I don't know... it's a real mess in there.

AZEL
(enthusiastic)
We'll clean it up.

HATCH
And it doesn't really work anymore. I kind of...
it's not important.

SHERA
He can fix it.

AZEL
(a smile)
Sure can.

Hatch looks about, especially when the sound of heavy footsteps approach.
But when they fade, he sighs.

HATCH
Fine. Come on.

The trio slowly moves through the crates and into the shuttle through the hull still gaping at its side.

EXT. SPACE

The Cult vessel takes the Avalon and all the other ships under its wing once again.

INT. AVALON -- HATCH'S SHUTTLE

As Hatch sits in the very same seat he was in before, Shera easily takes the other. Azel pokes around the extremely messy back.

AZEL
You're damn right it's a mess in here. How can anyone live like this!?

As he moves, Azel crunches dozens of small chips.

HATCH
I wasn't living like this... not exactly.

Hatch snatches a magazine of ill repute from Sera as she reaches into side pockets of the cockpit.

Azel makes it to an engineering console in the back and pops it open. He whistles.

AZEL

Man... this is an antique! Shera, come here! Look!
Not even a biopack or anything!

HATCH

Yeah... antique...

Shera follows her cousin's word and leaves the chair. As she sees what Azel sees, she too whistles.

SHERA

This thing must be a real bitch to fly. No neural interface at all.

HATCH

That hurts you know.

Hatch pokes around a bit as the aliens look over his shuttle. As his head bows, he is oblivious to Isaac walking in.

AZEL

Hey, I can see one of your problems right here. A power coupling's fused. I'll just...
(beat, technical sounds)
there.

Hatch's shuttle suddenly roars to life! Lights activate everywhere and the nacelles begin to glow a healthy blue.

SHERA

Told you he could fix anything.

In the bay, Isaac stumbles back and onto his rear by the shock of the shuttle, knocking him out of view.

But Hatch's attention is locked at the main console. It's flashing like mad.

COMPUTER VOICE

Warning. Klingon territory breached. Warning.

Hatch looks up in true horror.

HATCH
Klingon...?

COMPUTER VOICE
Warning. Qu'onos orbit. Advise immediate warp
drive activation. Treaty violation in effect.

HATCH
Qu'onos?
(beat)
No. It's just a dream... no.

COMPUTER VOICE
Warning. Klingon territory breached.

The console below Hatch shows a map of nearby space, the neutral zone
between the Federation and Klingon empire clearly shown. And Hatch's shuttle is
indeed in direct orbit over the Klingon home world.

HATCH
It can't be!

In an instant, Hatch is gone from the shuttle and out of the cargo bay.

AZEL
What's gotten to him?

SHERA
Dunno.

Unfortunately, it's at this moment that Isaac gets up and leaps over to Hatch's
shuttle to investigate the disturbance. Thanks to the hole in its side, the human's
eyes make immediate contact with the Xindi's.

Both parties are silent for a moment. Isaac's eyes suddenly twitch wildly.

ISAAC
GODDAMN MURDERERS! ON THIS SHIP!

Isaac is in the shuttle in seconds. As we pull away, sounds of horrible violence
filter through.

INT. AVALON -- BRIDGE

Zorin is at his seat as the ship rocks from another activation of the Cult tractor beam. The viewscreen shows motion not a moment later.

ZORIN

Projected course?

SIREN

Can't tell yet.

The comm squeals again, though not a horrendous as before.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Dear captains, I must ask you to brace your crews
for a particularly rough voyage, as this final leg
is stressful for vessels not equipped for travel
in this area.

ZORIN

(nervous)

What is he talking about?

SIREN

He can't be serious.

ROL'GIN'S COMM VOICE

Please brace... now.

The viewscreen suddenly shifts beyond the planet into the empty space behind it.

SIREN

He's taking us into broken space!

ZORIN

He can't. We'll be trapped with no warp.

SIREN

I don't think so...

Indeed, the viewscreen suddenly lights up with a powerful blast of light, followed by the familiar tunnel of entry into warp speed!

ZORIN

What the hell?

But before anyone can make any kind of observation, the bridge suddenly ROCKS with a powerful impact!

SIREN

Something's really, really wrong!

ZORIN

You think?

As the bridge crew struggles to work and stay in their seats, Hatch stumbles into the small room. Zorin notices him quickly.

ZORIN

Get him off my bridge!

Amazingly, Hatch retains his footing as two people responding to Zorin's order fall to their faces.

ZORIN

What the hell are you doing!?

The bridge lurches again!

Like a broken man, Hatch looks to every wall, looking for something specific.

ZORIN

Answer me!

Hatch suddenly looks at a vaguely rectangular shape on one of the walls and moves toward it.

SIREN

Hold on!

The rock is powerful enough to finally knock everyone to the floor!

On his knees, Hatch finally sees his objective, resting with him as if it had always been there. A simple rectangle of dark metal. One side is completely blank while the other...

HATCH

Please... don't be what I think you are. Oh god
please...

Hatch grabs the blank rectangle and flips it, even in the face of the violent warp speed.

...And he faints when it's flipped over. Hatch drops the object.

Our focus suddenly is over the prone Hatch, pulling up from close all the way up to the ceiling. We get a faint glimpse of the object and the vaguely familiar arrowhead symbol etched at the top...

EXT. SPACE -- CONTINUOUS

We pull back from the bridge to the outer hull of the vessel. As we gradually see more and more of the ship, her name, displayed proudly even in this storm, can finally be made out:

U.S.S. Avalon.

End of Act Four

To Be Continued...