

ROGUE WAVE

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FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - NIGHT

Deep below the surface of an alien ocean, a massive cube-shaped structure stands quietly on the seafloor. A corroded placard with the words "GEOTHERMAL DRILLING PLATFORM 3" is visible on the nearest side.

As we close in on one corner of the behemoth, we see nine two-legged robotic "Jumpers" attempting repairs using their hand-like manipulators. It is dark in that area, the only illumination coming from small spotlights on the Jumpers themselves.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Inside the glass-enclosed, egg-shaped cockpit of one of the Jumpers, JAKE STONE (25) sits waiting for his team to finish their work. He glances at a readout on his dashboard, then presses the tab on his microphone.

JAKE

Got to get that last valve closed,  
Wood. We're not getting paid by the  
hour, you know.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

WOOD (30) the pilot of the nearest Jumper, is attempting to rotate a pressure relief valve on the side of the structure.

WOOD (OVER COMMS)

Yeah, I'm trying, Jake. This is the  
second breakdown this month. Why does  
this keep happening?

JAKE (OVER COMMS)

You want to tell him Snow?

SNOW (20) the female pilot visible in the Jumper next to him, bumps Wood's cockpit with her metal arm.

SNOW (OVER COMMS)

Well, I'm no expert, but it could be  
that it's been a hundred years since  
this beast was last overhauled.

WOOD (OVER COMMS)

Funny.

(grunts as he tries  
to turn the valve)

Dang thing feels like it's fused  
open.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)

Do you need Snow's help?

SNOW (OVER COMMS)

Yeah. Put some muscle in it, boy.

WOOD (OVER COMMS)

If your Jumper has bigger muscles  
than mine, then by all means --

A blast of superheated water suddenly erupts from the valve,  
knocking both Jumpers backwards.

SNOW (OVER COMMS)

Everyone run. It's gonna blow.

As the other eight Jumpers begin tripping over each other  
trying to out of the blast zone, Jake steps directly into  
the boiling water stream and grabs hold of the stuck valve  
with his Jumper's right hand.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake's face begins to sweat profusely as he fights with all  
of his strength to close the valve. A readout on his  
dashboard shows the temperature in his cockpit rocketing  
upwards.

WOOD (OVER COMMS)

Get out of there, Jake. Save  
yourself.

Frustrated at his lack of progress, Jake stops what he's  
doing and pulls a lever near his shoulder.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The right arm of Jake's Jumper disconnects at the shoulder.  
Jake grabs it with his left hand and begins pushing on it,  
leaning the full weight of his Jumper into it.

The blast of water begins to subside, and in a few seconds,  
the valve is sealed. Suddenly, the section they are working  
on powers up, and the lights come back on.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

CHEERS from the other pilots pour in through Jake's comm system as his internal temperature steadily returns to normal. He is busy reconnecting his Jumper's damaged arm when a call comes through.

PLATFORM OPERATOR (OVER COMMS)  
Capital City Control, this is Platform Three. That seems to have fixed it. Thanks again for the help.

CONTROLLER (OVER COMMS)  
Platform Three, this is Control. Hope it holds this time. Okay, all Jumpers line up for the Tram and stand by for departure.

Jake wipes beads of sweat from his face.

JAKE  
(to himself)  
You're welcome.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The other Jumpers all turn and begin to walk. Jake turns his Jumper around and follows them to line up in a single file on one side of the structure. They face an empty and dimly lit monorail track that trails off into the infinite darkness.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake observes his slightly melted Jumper arm through the cockpit glass as he waits for instructions. After a beat, he can take no more.

JAKE  
Drown it!

He reaches out and flips the comms channel on his dashboard to BROADCAST.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Control, this is Jake Stone in Jumper Alpha-Nine. What's the ETA for our ride home?

CONTROLLER (OVER COMMS)  
Alpha-Nine, this is Control. The Tram is delayed for repairs again.  
(MORE)

CONTROLLER (OVER COMMS) (cont'd)  
 Estimated time of arrival is forty-  
 five minutes. Stay off the line and  
 stand by for updates.

JUMPER PILOTS (OVER COMMS)  
 (garbled yelling)  
 Not again! That's bilge water!

Jake keys his microphone, issuing a loud squeal that stops  
 the complaining.

JAKE  
 Control, advising that the repair  
 crew is returning to base.  
 (beat)  
 Tram is not required.

CONTROLLER (OVER COMMS)  
 That is a negative, Alpha-Nine. You  
 are not authorized --

Jake flips a switch, cutting off the controller's suddenly  
 frantic voice.

JAKE  
 (to himself)  
 I'm going to catch heat for this,  
 but --

Jake flips the comms channel to LOCAL.

JAKE (cont'd)  
 What happens in the blue...

JUMPER PILOTS (OVER COMMS)  
 (yelling in unison)  
 Stays in the blue!

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

All nine Jumpers turn ninety degrees to their left with  
 military precision. They are now facing utter darkness.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake taps a button and the words ACOUSTIC MAPPING appear on  
 his heads-up display. Suddenly the view out of his glass  
 cockpit shows a glowing fluorescent-blue landscape. The  
 Jumpers beside him are pulsating green as SOUND WAVES ARE  
 TRANSLATED INTO LIGHT.

A tactical heads-up display pops up on Jake's screen, outlining the route back. In the distance, an odd floating jellyfish shape can be seen.

JAKE  
Departure in thirty seconds, people.  
Last one back buys drinks. Okay, on  
my mark -- mark!

Jake looks down at the timer on his dashboard. It reads 30 seconds...29...28. He grips the control sticks in his hands and closes his eyes.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - LOWER LEVEL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

PEOPLE wearing drab coveralls of various colors move through windowless and dimly lit hallways. They look like drones, ants, just doing their jobs.

JAKE (V.O.)  
I've always been a runner.

A dirty-faced BOY (10) with a wild grin on his face comes sprinting down the hallway, dodging adult bodies left and right.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
My mother always said it was better  
to run toward your problems than from  
them.

The boy runs straight into a UNIFORMED GUARD, who tries to grab him. The boy skillfully ducks below the guard's large hands and then sprints up a steep staircase.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - UPPER DOME - DAY

At the top of the stairs, the boy emerges into a glass-dome-covered city. It is lit by an ARTIFICIAL SUN directly overhead and contains tall glass and steel buildings standing next to grass-covered parks. It is beautiful, but obviously artificial.

JAKE (V.O.)  
But when you grow up in a domed city  
surrounded on all sides by water, you  
can only run so far.

The boy stands there, looking up in amazement at the huge, artificial sky. Through the transparent dome, we can just make out odd shapes passing overhead.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I used to dream of leaving the city.  
Stow away aboard one of the Shippers  
Guild vessels, or even one of the big  
Colonial Guard cruisers. Just run  
away and never look back.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - NIGHT

We move across a dark and featureless seafloor.

JAKE (V.O.)  
But then I learned you can't run very  
far -- even out there.

In the middle of that vast nothingness, we approach a line  
of tall towers jutting out of the silt. They are covered by  
flashing red warning lights.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
We have a border that surrounds and  
protects all of the cities in Civica  
colony from the monsters of the deep  
ocean, the so-called Novum.

In the darkness beyond the border tower, we can just make  
out a floating BUG-LIKE SHAPE with long legs hanging below  
it.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
No one alive has ever actually seen a  
Novum, but old shippers swear they  
are out there -- waiting.

The shape slides back into the darkness and vanishes.

Then a futuristic submarine comes into view as it approaches  
the nearest tower. It slows to a stop.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
That's why no one is ever allowed to  
cross Civica's borders, not even the  
Colonial Guards. Nothing comes in and  
no one goes out. That's the law.  
(beat)  
But it's not true.

The lights on the tower suddenly turn off. The submarine  
powers up and slowly passes the nearest tower.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
When I was ten, my parents crossed it  
in a ship headed west of the colony.  
(MORE)

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
They were part of the Compass Expedition, searching for other people like us, other colonies, other descendants of Old Earth.

As the submarine disappears into the darkness beyond, the tower lights turn red once again.

JAKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
They promised they would be back in a few weeks, and I believed them.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - UPPER DOME - DAY

A thick hand reaches down and grabs the shoulder of the boy. It's the guard, pulling the boy back to the lower levels where he belongs.

JAKE (V.O.)  
Six months later I was adopted by my aunt because my parents didn't keep their promise.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - LOWER LEVEL MOURNING ROOM - NIGHT

A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE wearing slightly cleaner work uniforms, stand solemnly together in what looks like a small chapel, facing an OLDER MAN standing on a low stage. The boy is in the front of the group, staring at the floor.

JAKE (V.O.)  
At their funeral, when I heard the words, "missing and presumed dead," I ran away as fast as I could.

The boy breaks away in a full sprint, heading out of the room and --

INT. CAPITAL CITY - LOWER LEVEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

-- down the long hallway.

JAKE (V.O.)  
That was 15 years ago.

Wiping tears from his face, the boy sets his jaw in determination and picks up speed.



INT. JUMPER - RETURN TO SCENE

Jake wakes from his daydream as a BUZZER IS SOUNDING. He sees the other Jumpers racing away from him.

The determination on his chiseled but unshaven face is identical to the running boy. Some things don't change with time.

JAKE (V.O.)  
I guess I'm still running.

He squeezes his control sticks and takes off after them.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is running in what looks like slow motion along the rocky seafloor beside the raised Tram track, dodging support columns and boulders right and left.

He quickly catches up with the other Jumpers and we can see that small thrusters on their backs are aimed upward, counteracting natural buoyancy and helping them stick to the seafloor.

Jake's Jumper approaches a large boulder, but instead of going around it like the rest, his Jumper reaches out with both of its clawed hands and grabs hold of the rock.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake's face is bathed in sweat as he yells:

JAKE  
Emergency jump!

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Jumper's back thrusters suddenly pivot down and engage, helping Jake leap-frog right over the boulder.

The thrusters then switch direction, pushing his Jumper back down to the seafloor. Jake has now taken the lead.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake is smiling as he pushes his Jumper to full speed.

JAKE  
I'll see you all back home.

The face of the youngest pilot in the group, HERON (16) appears on Jake's display.

HERON (OVER COMMS)  
Someone help me. My air system just failed. I'm down, I'm --

The image cuts to static.

JAKE  
Can anyone see the new guy? He's in trouble.

When he receives no response, Jake pulls back hard on his two control sticks and --

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

-- slides his Jumper to a halt, pivoting around to face backward and stirring up a cloud of silt. As the rest of the Jumpers race past Jake, he sees Heron running right along with them at full speed.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

LAUGHTER in his headset.

HERON (OVER COMMS)  
What happens in the blue...

JUMPER PILOTS (OVER COMMS)  
(yelling in unison)  
Stays in the blue!

JAKE  
Drown it!

Jake sets his jaw as he pushes his Jumper to maximum speed --

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

-- kicking up a cloud of silt behind him. As we rise up from the seafloor, the group of Jumpers quickly shrinks from view. Ahead, we see the floating jellyfish shape we saw before is actually a huge, submerged city.

## EXT. CAPITAL CITY - CONTINUOUS

Capital City is a massive, two-kilometer-wide domed structure with a series of rings and cylinders hanging below, which gives it the distinctive jellyfish shape. At its top, a rotating beam of intense white light pierces the dark ocean all around.

Small objects can be seen moving to and from the city. They are FUTURISTIC SUBMARINES that look more like spaceships than anything we are familiar with.

THRUSTER SOUNDS as one of these vessels slides into view.

## EXT. MESSENGER - CONTINUOUS

From the outside, the cargo submarine Messenger looks like a gray metal guppy, thick at the bow and tapered at the stern, with a small glass and metal bulge on top. We approach the bulge and pass through to see:

## INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Captain MARCUS COAL (65) is rising from a rear stairwell of the ship's oval-shaped bridge. His constant frown and gruff exterior hide a man who puts his crew above all else.

THREE CREW MEMBERS are standing together at the bow. They are facing away from their captain and don't hear him enter. Coal absentmindedly strokes his scraggly beard and then clears his throat.

COAL

So this is what you people do when  
I'm off the bridge.

Two of the three, started by their captain's voice, move quickly back to their stations.

ROE MOSS (30) slides into her rear acoustics station to Coal's immediate right. She's a by-the-book former Colonial Guard officer who still wears her hair in a slicked-back and ultra-short, military cut.

ROE

Haven't been back to Capital City in  
a long --  
(abruptly sits at  
attention)  
-- no excuse for leaving my station,  
Sir.

Coal suppresses a smile as he looks forward through the wraparound viewport at the approaching city.

COAL

Relax, Roe. You're not on a Colonial ship anymore. Besides, I get a little overwhelmed myself whenever I come home.

She looks up at him.

ROE

Are you from here, Sir?

Coal's thin smile fades.

COAL

Long ago.

Coal looks down at the small rectangular chart table in the center of the bridge. Floating above it and displayed in solid 3D is a miniature model of his ship.

COAL (cont'd)

Are we cleared for docking, Gemma?

GEMMA LIN (60) the only person who didn't rush back to her station, is leaning against the forward guard rail looking at him serenely. She takes a sip from her antique porcelain tea cup before answering in a calm and reassuring voice.

GEMMA

Capital City dock control confirmed us at Epsilon Six. Everything is running smoothly.

Coal next turns his gaze to ARJUN NADEE (30), the ship's pilot, in the forward helm station. With his dark features and long wavy hair is a bit too handsome for his own good. Arjun doesn't look back but seems to shrink as his captain drills holes in the back of his head.

COAL

Epsilon? You couldn't get us something above the sanitation level?

Arjun pivots in his chair to face him.

ARJUN

Sorry, Cap. That's all we could afford. They -- raised dock fees again.

Coal glares at him.

COAL

Arjun. Tell me you didn't gamble away our docking money again.

Arjun starts to protest.

COAL (cont'd)

On second thought, don't answer that.

Coal looks at the pair of old shoes on the seat of the Engineering station to his left and shakes his head.

COAL (cont'd)

Any idea where my Engineer is? More importantly, has she heard from the construction team? My door better be ready or heads will roll.

ROE

Stacy told me they're ready and waiting for us at the dock.

Coal sighs, then scans the faces of his crew.

COAL

Forty-eight hours, people. I want us in and out of here. If we keep our mouths shut --

A beat as he looks directly at Arjun.

COAL (cont'd)

-- and avoid attracting any undue attention, we could soon be very rich.

ARJUN

Let's not forget, extremely famous.

COAL

I can do without that.

Gemma looks at Arjun, then Roe, and then back to the captain.

GEMMA

Your crew knows how important this is, Marcus. They won't let you down.

COAL

Alright, First Mate. Take us in.

Gemma walks over and slides gracefully into the forward Navigation chair next to Arjun, placing her teacup in a special holder. She then looks to her right and nods at Arjun, who slides his hands along his console.

As the floor of the bridge begins to tilt gently forward, Coal walks around the chart table and bends down close to Arjun's ear.

COAL (cont'd)  
 (whispering)  
 Just try to stay out of any bar fights this time. Okay?

INT. CAPITAL CITY - THE DIVE BAR - LATER

Jake casually lifts his three beer glasses as a bar fight sends a body soaring right past him. He winds his way through the bodies to a table in the back where the two Jumper pilots who we heard in the opening scene are waiting.

The man, Wood, is a hard worker and a good friend, but his mind is always working on six things at once. The woman with him, Snow, was the best student back in mechanics school but her small body size tended to make others underestimate her.

They each grab a glass from him as he walks up.

SNOW  
 A toast to Jake Stone, the best mechanic in Capital City.

WOOD  
 I'm drinking a toast to that kid who suckered you into buying us all drinks.

SNOW  
 (ignoring Wood)  
 That was quite a trick you pulled out there, using your Jumper arm as a lever arm.

JAKE  
 Whoever "Archie Medes" was, he had some good ideas.

WOOD  
 It's "Archimedes."

JAKE  
(ignoring Wood's  
correction)

By the way, thanks for helping me out during the race, you two. I really needed to blow the last of my credits buying you all bad alcohol.

Snow and Wood share a look, then clink their glasses together.

WOOD  
To bad alcohol!

Snow notices the sullen look on Jake's face.

SNOW  
So how'd it go with the union reps?

Jake takes a sip of his beer.

JAKE  
They were -- surprisingly nice.

WOOD  
So, they didn't ground you for racing again?

JAKE  
No, they grounded me, but they were surprisingly nice about it.

SNOW  
That's not fair. We were all racing.

JAKE  
They said I'm a bad influence on all of you.

WOOD  
Well, that's true.

SNOW  
What are you going to do now?

JAKE  
I guess I need another source of income. You both have second jobs. Any openings there?

Wood and Snow almost spit out their beer, then look at each other dumbfounded. Snow looks back at Jake.

SNOW

You actually want to work in this city's thousand-year-old fusion reactor?

JAKE

I'm sure it's not that old.

Snow pokes Wood's arm.

SNOW

Haven't you noticed how our skin tends to glow at night?

Wood pulls his arm back, and glances nervously around the bar.

WOOD

Hey, keep it down, would you? I might want to have a girlfriend someday. Or maybe even, I don't know, children?

Snow glances sideways at Wood.

SNOW

Do you think your skin is the only thing affected by the radiation?

Wood looks at his lap, and then back at Jake.

WOOD

You do not want to work with us. Trust me.

Heron, the 16-year-old pilot who tricked Jake during the race, walks up just then. He's a tall lanky kid with too much confidence for his age.

HERON

No hard feelings, hey Jake-O?

Snow slams her drink on the table and steps in front of Heron, looking like she might punch him.

SNOW

Go back and drink with the others. This is a private --

JAKE

It's okay. There aren't any rules in Jumper racing. I should know since I invented the sport.

Wood raises his glass.



WOOD

To what happens in the blue.

Heron pushes past Snow.

HERON

Yeah, but I do feel bad about that trick, Jake. To pay you back, I wanna tell you about a job you might be interested in.

Jake takes a drink, staring at his friends, not really listening.

JAKE

I'm listening.

HERON

My older brother just got a job working for your old boss, Malcolm.

JAKE

Did he now?

HERON

Yeah, and I heard him talking to his buddies about a cargo ship that docked today for salvage upgrades.

Wood raises his glass again.

WOOD

A toast to the relic hunters. May the secrets of the Pre-Fall world --

JAKE

(interrupting)

I don't do that kind of work anymore.

HERON

Yeah, well this isn't bodywork. Apparently, they've got a Jumper that needs upgrading as well, and I thought of you.

JAKE

Why would they want me? Malcolm and his people can handle that.

HERON

My brother said Malcolm screwed the upgrade design, big time, and the ship's captain fired him on the spot.

(MORE)

HERON (cont'd)  
I'd say the job is yours if you act quick-like.

JAKE  
(nodding)  
Appreciate the heads-up.

Heron raises his mug, then spins around and walks away, dodging chairs and bodies like he's still in his Jumper.

HERON  
(over his shoulder)  
The ship's called Messenger and it's docked on Epsilon -- Bay twenty-three.

Jake downs the last of his beer and slaps the top of the table.

JAKE  
That's it for me.

SNOW  
So soon? The night's --

Jake pats his two friends on their shoulders.

JAKE  
I wasn't kidding when I said I'm broke and need a job. If this Jumper upgrade is real, I need to get on it before someone beats me to it.

He glances at the others in the room.

JAKE (cont'd)  
I can't afford to lose twice in one day.

Jake turns and jogs toward the exit. Snow watches him leave.

SNOW  
Always running, isn't he?

WOOD  
Yeah. I guess if I'd grown up like him, I wouldn't rest much either.

SNOW  
Why's that?

WOOD  
(shrugging)  
Resting gives you time to think.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - EPSILON DOCKS - LATER

Jake steps out of the elevator with his tool bag, and into a large curved room filled with Jumpers moving crates back and forth while overhead cranes move the larger items.

It's VERY NOISY in there and we see Jake asking a passing DOCK WORKER for directions using sign language. The worker walks him down to the far side of the curved back wall. At a large door with the number "23" written on it, the worker stops and opens the door.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - BAY 23 - CONTINUOUS

As Jake steps inside the MUCH QUIETER BAY, he freezes when he sees the vessel inside. It's the cargo submarine Messenger, now sitting in the dock with its large forward cargo door wide open.

JAKE

Whoa, that's a Proteus class! I've never seen one of these up close before.

The dock worker pulls his earphones down to hear him better.

DOCK WORKER

That's because they're relics. Might as well call them Pre-Fall and put 'em in a museum.

JAKE

(shaking his head)  
No, this is a classic! First-generation hulls last forever. "Solid cast and built to last," is the saying.

The dock worker shakes his head, resets his earphone, then walks away. He hits the switch to close the bay door as he leaves. Jake stares at the ship a moment longer, then heads toward it.

INT. MESSENGER - CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

STACY COAL (25) is walking around in a dirty t-shirt and sweatpants, barefoot, with a large mug in her hand. Jake walks up the sloping door ramp, sees her, and then spots the Jumper standing motionless in the back of the rectangular room. He hesitates a moment before stepping inside.

JAKE

Hello. I'm -- I'm the guy they hired to upgrade your Jumper.

Stacy ignores him as she inspects a large, unattached door leaning against the side wall of the bay. Jake tries to look casual as he walks right past her to the Jumper and sets his tool bag down. He looks back at the big door she is inspecting.

JAKE (cont'd)

You realize that when you mount that door, it won't be able to open all the way with this Jumper inside, right?

She answers without looking at him.

STACY

Noticed that, did you? Well, the engineer who designed it obviously didn't and neither did the idiots who came to install it.

Jake shrugs.

JAKE

Don't blame them. They're just bolt-turners who would get fired if they questioned their boss's designs.

STACY

(without turning)

And how would you know?

JAKE

I used to be a bolt-turner who got fired for questioning my boss's designs.

She finally turns to look at him. She's almost as tall as him and underneath the grime and sweat, she might be attractive.

STACY

Who are you?

JAKE

Jake Stone. I've been called the best mechanic in Capital City.

She looks at him a moment, sizing him up.

STACY  
Have you now?

JAKE  
Yeah, actually. Just a few minutes ago. Those very words.

She shrugs and turns back to the door.

STACY  
(dismissively)  
Whatever. We probably can't afford you now because we gotta get a new split door made.

Jake looks at the door, then back at her.

JAKE  
You ordered a split door and they built you a solid one? That doesn't make sense. Malcolm may be a jerk, but he's never...

Jake's eyes widen and his face turns suddenly pale.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Heron, you baseborn son of a --

Stacy turns to look at him.

JAKE (cont'd)  
I'm sorry -- I need to go.

Jake grabs his tool bag and runs to the exit.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - BAY 23 - CONTINUOUS

As Jake runs out of the opening and down the door ramp, he slams right into Captain Coal.

COAL  
What the bilge were you doing on my boat?

Stacy is just coming out of the Messenger behind him.

STACY  
He's the guy you hired to upgrade our Jumper.

COAL  
I didn't hire anyone.

Coal glares at Jake and looks like he might punch him.

JAKE  
(blurting out)  
I can fix your door problem.

Coal stops, looks back at Stacy, then again at Jake.

COAL  
(incredulously)  
Can you now?

JAKE  
(stammering)  
Don't mount it on a hinge. Use a slide mount. But instead of the standard horizontal placement, you mount the rails on the ceiling. The door gets stored up there when not in use. Problem solved.

A beat.

COAL  
All right, that's an idea I hadn't thought of, but it's more than just a clearance issue. I ordered a split door pressure rated to nine and instead, they gave me a class-seven solid door. It's worthless.

JAKE  
You don't need a class-nine door.

Coal's eyes burn holes in Jake.

COAL  
You're going to stand there and tell me what I don't need on my ship?

Jake takes a breath and then faces the angry man.

JAKE  
The Proteus hull is one of the strongest ever made, but your interior cargo bay is only pressure-rated to seven. Installing a class-nine inner door is just a huge waste of money -- and time, which you seem to be short on.

Coal stares at him in silence, no indication of what he's thinking.

JAKE (cont'd)  
 Uh, plus, a new door would take at least two weeks to fabricate. And if you use the vertical mount I suggested, you could be out of here by tomorrow and --

Stacy puts a finger to her lips.

STACY  
 (loudly whispering)  
 Know when to stop talking.

Another beat, then:

COAL  
 What's your name, kid?

JAKE  
 (swallowing first)  
 Jake. Jake Stone.

COAL  
 Stacy says you work on Jumpers. How good are you at driving them?

JAKE  
 There's no one better in Capital City, both in and out of water.

COAL  
 Is that so? Well, Jake. Do you like living in Capitol City?

JAKE  
 I don't know. Never had a chance to leave.

COAL  
 Wanna?

STACY  
 What? Are we taking on passengers now?

COAL  
 (ignoring her)  
 We're running a skeleton crew right now and I could use someone skilled at moving cargo. The pay is standard wages plus room and board.

STACY  
 (incredulous)  
 Wait. You're offering him a job? Tell  
 me you're not serious, Dad.

Jake looks at Stacy and then back at Coal. Coal keeps his  
 eyes trained on Jake, then reaches out his hand.

COAL  
 What will it be, Jake? I won't ask  
 again.

Jake only hesitates a moment before shaking his hand.

JAKE  
 I accept. And thank you, Captain.

Coal turns back to Stacy.

COAL  
 Now we need to find another crew to  
 install this door. I don't want  
 Malcolm's people touching --

JAKE  
 (interrupting)  
 Malcolm's people didn't screw up your  
 door.

Coal stops and turns back to face him. Jake takes a big  
 breath before continuing.

JAKE (cont'd)  
 I used to work for Malcolm. I saw the  
 plans for this door in his office  
 about a month ago. He had just fired  
 me because I was always arguing about  
 his designs.

Jake glances at Stacy.

JAKE (cont'd)  
 Anyway, I was mad, and I knew this  
 door would be better anyway, so I --

COAL  
 What are you saying?

JAKE  
 I changed the order when he wasn't  
 looking. I obviously didn't know it  
 was your ship until --

A LOUD CRACK SOUND as the LIGHTS GO OUT.



INT. CAPITAL CITY - THE DIVE BAR - LATER

Jake is back at the bar with Wood and Snow. He's holding a bag of ice against his left eye.

SNOW

I can't believe you told him what you did, right after he offered you the literal job of a lifetime.

Jake winces from the pain as he adjusts the ice pack.

JAKE

They were being so generous, I just -- felt the need to be honest.

He glances at them both for a beat.

JAKE (cont'd)

Okay, I'm an idiot.

SNOW

But, an honest idiot.

WOOD

More than that, you turned down a chance to escape this --  
(gestures to the bar)  
-- this prison.

Jake takes the bag from his eye, revealing a red and swollen cheek. He then glances down at his beer on the counter and sees a fly spinning around inside.

JAKE

It's not that bad here.

He reaches a finger in and pulls out the fly, then sets it gently on the bar top.

WOOD

Not so bad? Have you forgotten the power blackout on level six last month? Or the monthly food rationing?

SNOW

Or the lack of non-radioactive work for most of us?

JAKE

Okay, I get your point, but --

WOOD

No buts, Stone. You're an idiot.

Jake places the ice bags on the counter and then finishes his beer.

JAKE

I'm an idiot who now needs to look for another job. I guess I'll see you two tomorrow.

As he heads for the exit, Wood looks at Snow. They both shake their heads.

WOOD

Idiot.

Snow watches Jake leave.

SNOW

Yeah, but he's our idiot.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - LOWER LEVEL HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

Jake is walking down a dimly-lit hallway filled with PEOPLE wearing old, faded coveralls. He looks at their grim faces as they pass. A few look back but no one acknowledges him.

In contrast, Jake is wearing clean, blue coveralls and his hair is wet and combed back. While he looks cleaned up, his face says he's had a bad morning. A clock on the wall reads 08:05.

He looks up and sees Stacy standing in front of his apartment door. She's cleaned up since he last saw her, and is now wearing a colorful but badly-wrinkled dress and shiny shoes.

As he approaches her from the rear, she reaches out and adjusts a small hand-written sign hanging on the door that shows his name.

JAKE

You know the lower levels have a dress code, right?

Stacy spins to face him, then looks down at what she's wearing.

STACY

Am I underdressed?

She tries to press out a wrinkle. The whole thing is pretty wrinkled so it doesn't help.

JAKE

No. You're wearing a dress. This is a working-class neighborhood. Nice clothes aren't allowed.

He gestures down at his plain coveralls.

STACY

I wish I'd known that. I hate this getup. I only bought it for my mom's funeral last year.

Jake looks awkwardly at the people passing them in the hallway.

JAKE

I'm sorry. I lost both of my -- ah -- so you've never been to Capital City's lower levels before?

She looks up and down the hall.

STACY

No, but it's more spacious than I imagined. Must be nice to live here.

JAKE

You're joking, right? This place is a dump.

STACY

It must be great to be so rich that you complain about living inside the biggest city in the entire colony.

JAKE

That's wild, coming from someone whose family owns their own cargo ship. Someone who can come and go whenever and wherever they want.

A beat, and then Stacy laughs.

STACY

We have very different backgrounds. To me, shipboard life is cramped, boring, and --

Another beat as she looks him over, then turns away.

STACY (cont'd)

-- lonely. But I can see why someone from the city might find it freeing.

Jake looks at his door, and then back at her.

JAKE

Ah, I'm sorry. Do you want to come in? You can see for yourself just how luxurious my big city apartment is.

STACY

Oh -- I can't stay. I just wanted to tell you that we're leaving this morning. My Dad got that crew to work on the slide mount all night. We're aiming for a departure at oh-nine-hundred.

Jake glances at the clock on the wall.

JAKE

That's in less than an hour. So, why did you come all the way down here?

STACY

My dad, at least after he saw the new door in place, decided to forgive you. He said his offer still stands. If you -- that is -- assuming you haven't already found a better job.

JAKE

Yeah, ah, no I haven't found another job, yet. But -- I just started looking.

He looks again at the people passing him.

JAKE (cont'd)

Listen, I do appreciate what you're saying, but your father wasn't being serious. Nobody makes that kind of offer without strings attached.

STACY

Listen to me. Captain Marcus Coal doesn't make decisions lightly, especially when his ship and crew are involved. If he thinks you can help us, then you should consider coming with us.

JAKE

I've never even been on a ship. I don't think I'm the guy you're looking for -- I mean, what he's looking for.

She studies him a moment before speaking.

STACY

Honestly, I don't know why I  
bothered. Our ship leaves at oh-nine-  
hundred whether you're on it or not.

With that, she turns and walks away. Jake watches her disappear into the crowd. He then opens the door to his apartment and walks in.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - JAKE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The room looks more like a garage than a living space. The center of the room is taken up with the lower half of a multi-colored and partly-assembled Jumper. Additional spare parts are lying everywhere.

Jake walks over to sit on the edge of his bed which is pushed over to a corner to make room. He looks up at the Jumper.

JAKE

Looks like I might have to sell you  
to pay my rent, buddy.

He glances around at the spare parts.

JAKE (cont'd)

But I guess that won't happen until I  
put you back together.

There's a KNOCK ON HIS DOOR. He walks over and opens it to see Snow standing there. She pushes past him into the room. Jake looks outside, then closes the door and faces her.

JAKE (cont'd)

So, what's up?

SNOW

I saw her leaving. The girl in the  
sleazy dress. I thought you were  
supposed to be out looking for a job  
this morning.

She looks around the room, then her eyes land on his messy bed.

SNOW (cont'd)

Instead, you're in here grappling  
some random girl like you --

JAKE  
Hold on. I'm not --

She gestures to the bed.

JAKE (cont'd)  
I mean, I didn't --

SNOW  
You don't lie very well, Jake. You never have.

JAKE  
That was the woman I told you about. From the cargo ship. She just offered me the job again.

SNOW  
Wait. After her father punched you in the face? What did you say?

Another KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

JAKE  
(yelling)  
Come in!

Wood slides the door halfway open and it sticks there. He pulls harder until it opens and walks in.

WOOD  
You got a rusty door there. You need to -- oh hey, Snow. Didn't see you there.

JAKE  
While I always appreciate the random visits from you two, today is not the best --

SNOW  
(to Wood)  
She was just here. The girl from the ship. She offered Jake the job again.

Not really listening, Wood picks up a small part from the floor and tries to place it on the Jumper.

WOOD  
I'm sorry, what girl?

Snow walks over to Wood, and then turns to face Jake.

SNOW  
The girl from the cargo ship.

Wood suddenly starts paying attention and faces Jake as well.

WOOD  
Oh, that girl. What did she want?

Snow punches his shoulder.

SNOW  
I just told you. She offered him a job on their ship.

WOOD  
Oh, yeah? Well, congratulations, Stone. When do you leave?

Jake takes the metal part from Wood and places it on the floor near the Jumper.

JAKE  
I turned it down.

SNOW  
What?

WOOD  
Again, I'll say it. You're an idiot.

JAKE  
No seriously. I'll find something here. And --  
(gesturing to the Jumper)  
-- I've still got work to do on this. I'm not exactly desperate for credits yet.

WOOD  
I'm afraid you are, buddy. The reason I came over is that I overheard the block manager this morning saying she was going to give you your eviction notice today.

Wood looks again at the Jumper.

WOOD (cont'd)  
And unless you can come up with two month's back rent before then, you are sleeping out in the hallway tonight.

JAKE  
She can't do that.

SNOW  
She can and she will, Jake. Bottom dwellers like us don't have a lot of say in this city. If this job offer is real, then you need to take it.

WOOD  
When does the ship leave?

JAKE  
In about a half hour.

WOOD  
What? You've gotta go, man.

SNOW  
Yeah, grab a bag and get out of here.

She looks around the apartment.

SNOW (cont'd)  
We'll box up your stuff and store it at Wood's place until you get back.

WOOD  
Wait, my place?

SNOW  
Just grab a bag and go. You can't mess this up.

Jake looks at them both, then walks over and gives them both a hug.

JAKE  
Thank you -- both of you.

He turns and grabs a bag from the corner, dumps its contents onto the floor, and starts stuffing it with clothing. Wood leans in close to Snow.

WOOD  
(whispering)  
So you want to tell me why you and Jake were in his apartment all alone?

She looks at him and gently touches his cheek.

SNOW  
Buy me a proper dinner tonight and I'll tell you all about it.

(MORE)



SNOW (cont'd)  
(whispering in his  
ear)  
Then we can plan our own escape.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - BAY 23 - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

The DEPARTURE ALARMS ARE BLARING as the main door begins to close. Just before it slides shut, Jake dives through the opening and doesn't slow down until he runs up the Messenger's loading ramp and --

INT. MESSENGER - CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

-- into the ship. Stacy is standing there with her arms crossed.

STACY  
Cutting it a little close, aren't  
you?

JAKE  
It's called a "dramatic entrance."

The cargo bay is now nearly filled with a bunch of crates. Stacy points to the Jumper now standing in the front of the bay.

STACY  
Stow your gear there. I'll get you  
settled after we're underway.

He nods as Stacy presses the switch to close the door. As Jake sets his bag down, the door seals itself with a DEEP THUD.

STACY (cont'd)  
Stay here until I come and get you. I  
don't need you getting in anyone's  
way.

Without another word, she opens a side door and steps through it, leaving him all alone. He looks up at the Jumper and pats its arm.

JAKE  
Good to see you again.

EXT. CAPITAL CITY - MINUTES LATER

Below the large dome of Capital City, a small outer door slides open, revealing a dark rectangular tunnel.

Lights turn on in the tunnel showing the Messenger inside, slowly backing out.

As it reaches open water, the ship pivots to the right and turns on several small external lights. It then powers up its twin side thrusters and heads steadily away from the city.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Stacy slowly climbs the last few treads of the rear stairwell. Gemma, Arjun, and Roe are all seated at their stations. Coal is facing away from her at the forward command station, staring into the darkness ahead. Stacy quickly slides into her engineering chair in the rear.

COAL

Something you want to tell me?

Stacy looks at Gemma sitting in the navigation chair next to where Coal is standing.

GEMMA

Sorry. I detected the extra mass when we left the dock.

Arjun pivots around with a smirk on his face.

ARJUN

This is why I never try to smuggle women aboard. Ship's too damn sensitive to weight.

STACY

I can explain.

Coal, still facing away from her, raises a hand.

COAL

Let him explain.

Stacy glances over to Roe, takes a breath, then leans down and speaks to her console.

STACY

Jake Stone. Report to the bridge.

A few awkward moments pass in silence.

ARJUN

Do you think he -- does he even know how to get up here?

COAL  
He'll figure it out.

Silence. Then APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS ON METAL FLOOR. Then another moment of silence.

JAKE (O.S.)  
Um -- permission to come up to the bridge?

Coal finally turns around to face the stairs.

COAL  
Granted.

Jake's head slowly rises out of the stairwell. He sees four sets of eyes on him as he takes the final steps. Only Stacy is facing away from him. When he reaches the top step, he stands with his legs wide and hands clasping his clothing bag.

JAKE  
Thank you for reconsidering me, Captain. I appreciate the chance --

Coal raises his hand, and then looks at Stacy.

COAL  
Reconsidering?

STACY  
You said we needed a loader. Someone to work the Jumper. I thought --

COAL  
I said let him tell me.

JAKE  
Am I -- am I not supposed to be here?

COAL  
Give me two reasons not to turn around and haul your ass back to the docks.

Jake glances at Stacy and then back at Coal.

JAKE  
I can operate your Jumper.

COAL

Everyone on this bridge does more than one thing on this ship and every one of them is the very best at what they do. So what else can you offer me?

Jake stares out the viewports for a moment then straightens his back.

JAKE

I fixed your door.

COAL

You broke my door.

JAKE

What I mean is that I'm a problem solver. I've solved every single problem that I've ever been presented with. It kind of comes naturally to me.

Coal studies Jake for a moment, then nods his head.

COAL

Very well. Everyone, this is Jake Stone. He'll be our new "hatchling" for the next few weeks. Stacy will be in charge of educating him about ship operations.

Coal then turns his back to Jake and looks out of the forward viewport again.

COAL (cont'd)

You're dismissed.

Jake looks confused, but then Stacy ushers him back down the stairwell. Before heading down herself, she turns to glance back at Gemma, who nods reassuringly. Stacy nods back and then follows Jake down.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Stacy meets Jake at the bottom of the stairs. They are standing in the Galley, the only real leisure area of the vessel. On one side is the cooking area with its wraparound counters and twin cylindrical food processors. On the other side is the dining area with its rectangular table and six chairs.

On the other side of the table, a simulated wood carving of the Messenger is embedded in the wall. Other walls contain recessed shelves containing cups and mugs of various sizes and designs.

STACY

This is the B-deck. Its use should be obvious.

JAKE

That was a little tense up there. You should have told me that your father didn't--

STACY

Starboard is where we make food and port side is where we eat it.

JAKE

Thank you for inviting me aboard. Seriously, I really needed this job.

Stacy looks shocked by his kind demeanor.

STACY

Oh! Well, to be honest, I felt bad after my father punched you in the face. You looked like one of those sad puppy drawings.

JAKE

What's a puppy?

STACY

Do you not read books? Little animals? Four legs? People used to keep them as companions before the Fall.

JAKE

We don't have Pre-Fall books in the lower levels. Most of what I grew up reading were old engineering manuals.

STACY

That's sadder than the puppy story. So, again, starboard and port. Tell me that you know what those mean.

JAKE

Sure. That's Shippers' talk for right and left. I remember that both left and port have four letters.

STACY

Only when you're facing the bow. It's the opposite when you're facing the stern.

Jake looks left and right.

JAKE

I'm confused already. Which way is the bow?

STACY

I overheard you bragging to the dock worker that you knew all about the Messenger's hull design.

JAKE

You heard that? Well, looking at a model is different than standing inside the actual ship.

Stacy points to the carving on the wall.

STACY

That model is facing forward.

JAKE

(nodding)

Thanks. That helps.

Stacy points to a narrow hallway on the other side of the staircase.

STACY

Forward are the six bridge crew quarters, with two shared heads at the end of the hall.

JAKE

Six? But I only saw five people counting your father.

STACY

We're missing a full-time engineer. I'm filling in that spot while Gemma, our First Mate, takes over for me at navigation.

JAKE

Which one was Gemma?

STACY

You can meet everyone later.

She turns and proceeds down the second set of stairs to the next level.

INT. MESSENGER - STAGING AREA - CONTINUOUS

This is a small empty rectangular area with doors on all sides.

STACY

This is the C-deck and this space is what we call our staging area.

She points to a door on the left.

STACY (cont'd)

That door leads to our medical bay and hyperbaric chamber. Which side of the ship is it on?

Jake looks behind him, then back at the door.

JAKE

We're now facing aft, so that's starboard. Right?

STACY

Don't guess. Be sure. In an emergency, your life, or one of ours, could depend on you knowing directions.

JAKE

It's starboard. And the matching door on the right -- I mean port side is your dive locker, right?

STACY

That's right.

Jake pivots around and points to a floor hatch under the stairs behind them.

JAKE

So that must be the hatch to your D-deck. Can I see that next?

STACY

Be my guest, but there's nothing to see down there but compressed air tanks and --

Jake yanks opens the small hatch and climbs down a recess ladder into --

INT. MESSENGER - D-DECK - CONTINUOUS

-- a cramped space with a low ceiling. Behind him a stack of large air tanks and on the other side, two long boxes sitting on rails.

Jake stares at the boxes as Stacy climbs down the ladder to stand beside him.

JAKE

This is the beating heart.

Stacy looks around the room, then at the boxes.

STACY

Beating heart?

JAKE

In design school, the Proteus class is known for its battery sleds. My instructor called it an "elegant solution to a complex problem."

She looks at the boxes and then around at the space.

STACY

Well, I guess we take it for granted. No one ever comes down here, so out of sight, out of mind.

Jake takes two quick steps forward, and both sleds move instantly backward a few centimeters.

JAKE

Amazing. I mean, every ship has to balance the weight and movement of people inside to remain horizontal, but using your batteries as counterweights is brilliant.

STACY

Glad you're impressed, but speaking of moving people, we need to get going.

Stacy starts to climb the ladder back to C-Deck.

JAKE

Why does everything in this ship come in pairs? You have two batteries down here and two identical corridors leading to the cargo bay. It all seems kind of redundant.



STACY

Redundancy is the lifeblood of a deep-water vessel, especially a small cargo hauler like ours. You always want backups. Backup doors, backup power, backup people.

JAKE

Is that what I am?

She proceeds up the ladder without answering.

INT. MESSENGER - STAGING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Stacy walks to the far end of the staging area and presses a panel next to the rear door. It slides open and they step through.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

They enter in the middle of a U-shaped corridor and Jake follows Stacy to the right. The corridor is short with two doors spaced evenly on the right side.

STACY

These are deck crew quarters and there are two more in the starboard corridor.

JAKE

So, six rooms on B-deck for bridge personnel and four down here. This layout is coming back to me now.

He placed his hand on the wall without doors.

JAKE (cont'd)

For instance, I know that behind this bulkhead is your shuttle lockout chamber, and straight back, taking up the entire rear section of this deck is your main equipment storage room.

She shakes her head.

STACY

Wrong.

She walks to the end of the corridor and taps the wall panel next to the last door on the right.

JAKE  
Wrong? What's back there?

STACY  
I'll show you later.

The door slides open and Jake walks over and peeks inside.

INT. MESSENGER - JAKE'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

It's a small but functional room with a narrow bed on one side and a small L-shaped desk on the other. There's a monitor near the ceiling at the foot of the bed and another one above the desk. The walls have numerous embedded shelves and drawers.

Jake steps inside and sets his bag on the bed. He then turns back to her.

JAKE  
This is mine?

STACY  
All four deck crew quarters are empty, so you have your pick. I just thought you might like some privacy and this room is the farthest from anything.

JAKE  
Privacy is nice. So, what do I do now?

STACY  
Well, speaking of privacy, the first thing you need to do is take off all of your clothes.

She steps into the room and walks straight toward him, then deftly slides past and sits down on his bed. She then slowly opens a large drawer next to it.

STACY (cont'd)  
And toss them all into your recycler.

Jake winces.

JAKE  
Do I smell that bad?

STACY

Ships are a closed system. Even with the carbon scrubbers, we essentially breathe each others air.

He steps toward her and starts to remove his shirt.

JAKE

Do we need to conserve water as well?  
Group showers?

She ignores his attempt at humor (or whatever it is) and walks past him to the door.

STACY

If you dump your clothes now, you'll have new ship coveralls in about an hour. Come up to the galley when you're dressed and I'll introduce you to the rest of the crew.

She looks back at him, now shirtless, and pauses a moment to take it in.

STACY (cont'd)

You can ask if any of them want to shower with you at that point.

She pauses a moment longer, then steps out. The door seals behind her. Jake shakes his head.

JAKE

(to himself)  
Don't mess this up.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Stacy slaps her forehead as she walks down the hall.

STACY

(to herself)  
What the bilge are you doing?

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - AN HOUR LATER

Jake rises slowly up the stairs and peaks into B-deck. Gemma is at the counter to his right boiling water. Roe and Arjun are on his left, sitting across from each other at the big table. He pauses there a moment, hesitant to enter.

ROE

Everyone knows the Fall of Man was caused by a rock that fell from the ice ceiling and cracked Earth Colony's dome. That's where the term, 'The sky is falling!' comes from.

She rolls a dice and moves a small colored stone on a hexagonal board between them.

ARJUN

That's a children's story. Just like manufactured people and monsters beyond the borders.

Arjun rolls his dice and it comes up with double sixes. He smiles.

ROE

I don't trust you. We need to swap dice.

GEMMA

So you're not afraid of the Novum? You'd be willing to cross the border if the Council ever allowed it?

JAKE

I would.

Everyone jumps when they hear Jake's voice.

GEMMA

Ah, there he is.

Gemma walks over and gives him a warm motherly embrace.

GEMMA (cont'd)

Welcome aboard, Jake. I'm Gemma. Would you like something to drink? I have an excellent assortment of teas.

JAKE

Okay, but I've never actually had tea before.

Gemma beams as she returns to her boiling pot.

GEMMA

Wonderful. Let me be the one to introduce you. Please have a seat at the table.

Jake takes a nervous look at the other two crew members sitting at the table. They are both staring intently at a board game on the table without saying a word.

JAKE

I thought Stacy would be here.

Roe drums her fingernails on the tabletop.

ROE

Some of us have duties to perform.

Arjun quickly stands up and reaches out a hand to Jake, who shakes it.

ARJUN

I'm Arjun, ship's pilot, and that's Roe, acoustics. Always glad to have another crew member aboard. It's hard to play Hex with five.

Jake stares at him blankly. Arjun points to the board on the table.

ARJUN (cont'd)

Hex. Surely you've heard of it? We have game night at least twice a week when we're underway.

Jake sits in the chair next to Arjun and looks around the room.

JAKE

Game night? You don't have a sun. How do you know when it's night here?

Gemma brings tea in a large mug for Jake and sits it on the table.

GEMMA

For Shellbacks, night is somewhat of a state of mind since we have to cover the bridge around the clock.

ARJUN

If you need help adjusting, you can set the lights in your quarters to automatically dim between --

Roe kicks her chair back and stands.

ROE

If the hatchling indoctrination is over, I have work to do.

ARJUN

I apologize for my crewmate's behavior. In addition to being the best acoustics officer in the colony, she's also head of security, so she has to maintain a certain gruff --

Roe lunges at Arjun and grips him by his jaw, holding it inches from her face.

ROE

You forgot to add that I'm a much better Hex player than you. And I never cheat.

ARJUN

Hey!

She cracks a wry smile as she releases her grip on his jaw, then extends her hand to Jake.

ROE

Welcome aboard, Jake. In all seriousness, this is a good crew. Learn the ropes, do your job, don't get in anyone's way -- especially mine -- and you'll do just fine here.

Jake shakes her hand and nods. Just then, Stacy jogs down the stairs from the bridge and stops at the bottom, staring at Jake.

STACY

Captain wants to see you.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Jake climbs the stairs to the bridge. Coal is standing at the bow facing him.

JAKE

You wanted to see me? Ah, sorry, I mean, you wanted to see me, Captain, Sir?

COAL

This isn't a Colonial Guard ship or Shippers Guild vessel, so I'm not strict on formalities. Just pick one and be done with it.

JAKE

I understand, Sir.

Coal motions to the pilot's station next to him on the starboard side.

COAL

Have a seat.

Jake walks around the chart table and sits in the chair. It's plush and contoured and Jake visibly relaxes as he sits back.

COAL (cont'd)

I require every one of my crew to be familiar with all bridge stations.

JAKE

Redundancy is the lifeblood of a deep-water vessel.

COAL

I see Stacy has been teaching you.

A beat as he sizes up Jake.

COAL (cont'd)

I contacted your former boss after you came aboard. I asked him why he fired you.

Jake frowns.

COAL (cont'd)

He called you a "rogue wave." He said you brought chaos to every single project you worked on.

JAKE

He's an idiot who couldn't stand the fact that my ideas were always better than his.

COAL

Well, that "idiot" also said you were the best and brightest mechanic he's ever worked with, even though you've had no formal engineering training.

Jake sits there unable to respond. Coal smiles.

COAL (cont'd)

You're at a loss for words. Good. That means you're ready to learn.

JAKE

Learn?

COAL

I'm willing to teach you how to operate all four bridge stations, right now, if you're willing to learn.

JAKE

I thought I was just hired just to drive your Jumper and load crates.

COAL

If you just want to be a loader, there's nothing wrong with that. But, I have a feeling you want more.

JAKE

I do -- Sir. I do want more.

COAL

Then shut up and let me teach you.

Jake nods and Coal begins his first lecture.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - FOUR HOURS LATER

Jake comes down the stairs to find Stacy and Arjun sitting at the table eating.

STACY

Lunch is in the warmer. Gemma made something wonderful. I don't know what's in it, but it's delicious.

ARJUN

How long did Captain have you up there?

Jake looks at the clock on the wall.

JAKE

Just over four hours. My stomach is empty but I think my brain is full.

Jake walks over and fills up a plate full of food, smells it, then heads over to the table and sits next to Stacy. Arjun looks at him, then Stacy.

ARJUN

I don't think I ever got the full systems rundown when I first came aboard.



STACY

I remember that day. You tried to convince us all that you already knew everything about everything.

Arjun's face turns red but he tries to hide it.

ARJUN

I simply wanted to make a good impression. Your father was -- is -- a legend in the cargo-running business. I just wanted him to like me.

At that moment, Coal jogs down the staircase.

COAL

I still like you, Arjun. And now I would like you to take over the helm for me. I need to use the head and it may take a while.

Without waiting for a reply, Coal spins around the staircase and heads toward the crew hallway.

COAL (cont'd)

(yelling behind him)

You have the bridge.

When his quarters' door slides shut, Arjun stands up.

ARJUN

Well, that was unfortunate timing.

STACY

(grinning)

He's now going to tease you relentlessly for at least a couple of days.

Roe pops her head up from the lower stairs just then.

ROE

Who's teasing whom? I want in on this action. And what smells so good?

JAKE

That would be me. Stacy showed me how to recycle my old clothes.

Roe and Stacy both stare with mouths open, then Roe fondly pats Jake on the head like a pet.

ROE

New guy with the quick one-liners.  
Nice job.

ARJUN

(shaking his head)  
I'm going to the bridge.

As Arjun jogs up the stairs, Gemma steps out of her quarters down the hall and glides into the galley.

GEMMA

Is everyone enjoying my stew? I hope  
there's enough.

As Gemma and Roe move to the mess counters, Stacy leans over to Jake's ear.

STACY

(whispering)  
Meet me outside your quarters in an  
hour.

With that, she heads down the hallway and disappears into her quarters.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - ONE HOUR LATER

Jake is waiting outside of his quarters as Stacy turns the corner of the hall. She's barefoot, wearing a clean tee-shirt and shorts. When she sees him, she stops and motions for him to follow.

He follows her around the loop to the matching corridor on the starboard side, which looks the same except it has two sets of doors on both sides of the hall. Jake stops and points to the first door.

JAKE

This leads to your shuttle lockout,  
right?

She nods and motions him forward, so he proceeds to the second door. This one doesn't have a normal panel with simple open and close markers. Instead, it's a full computer screen on which she taps a series of commands.

In a moment, the door slides open. Stacy motions for him to enter first. Jake leans forward and looks inside to see --

INT. MESSENGER - REC ROOM LOCKOUT - CONTINUOUS

-- a small chamber that looks like an elevator. Jake steps inside and Stacy follows. As the door reseals itself, Jake finds himself inches from Stacy. He looks down at her bare legs and feet, then at his coveralls and work shoes.

JAKE

Now I feel like I'm the overdressed one.

She doesn't respond and in the silence, Jake hears the SOUND OF AIR HISSING. Then the second door slides open.

INT. MESSENGER - RECREATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jake follows Stacy into a large empty room, larger than any except the cargo bay. The walls, floor, and ceiling are an identical light gray, and the room is tapered at the far side, matching the shape of the rear half of the Messenger.

JAKE

So it's a storage bay with absolutely nothing stored inside. Now that's clever.

Stacy moves to the middle of the space and looks up at the ceiling.

STACY

Stacy's Gym.

A LOUD HISSING SOUND fills the room as white powder starts billowing out from corner cylinders.

Jake panics as the particles begin to swirl in a torrent all around them, and colorful shapes begin to appear in its midst. Jake grabs Stacy's arm and pulls her close.

JAKE

(yelling)  
What's happening?

As soon as he says those words, the hissing stops, and the swarm solidifies. Jake finds himself standing --

INT. MESSENGER - STACY'S GYM - CONTINUOUS

-- in the middle of a workout room, complete with mirrored walls, a couple of treadmills, and numerous free weights. Jake finally lets go of Stacy's arm.

JAKE

You should have warned me that you had a Recreation Room. I almost had a heart attack.

STACY

(smiling)

It wouldn't be much of a hazing if I had warned you. Have you seriously never been in a Rec Room before?

JAKE

No. I mean, I know how they work -- at least from an engineering point of view. Utility fog, right? Little nano-scale machines that link together to form any shape, but -- to see it working in real life is -- incredible.

STACY

I can show you how to create your own space. We all get a bit sick of being stuck together in the same ship, day after day. This is how we stay sane.

JAKE

Can I create anything?

STACY

Almost anything. Do you have something in mind?

Jake thinks for a moment.

JAKE

I saw a painting once called, "Earth jungle with waterfall." It looked peaceful.

STACY

A lot of people try to imagine what Old Earth might have looked like. I've seen some crazy ideas.

JAKE

Like?

STACY

Oh, you know. Impossibly large spaces, like sky domes so tall you can't see the sunlight rail. Looks like the sun is just floating up there. Weird things like that.

(MORE)

STACY (cont'd)  
A waterfall sounds nice, though.  
Arjun and I can help you build  
something later. He's the real  
expert.

Stacy heads to the treadmill and steps on.

STACY (cont'd)  
For me, this is how I like to relax.

As she starts to run in place, she glances back at Jake and winks.

STACY (cont'd)  
Next time we come here, you'll need  
to dress more accordingly.

Jake looks down at his coveralls and smiles. He then walks over to the free weights, pulls his coverall down to his waist, and starts lifting. He catches Stacy's reflection in the mirrored walls.

She's watching him and he's watching her.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - LATER

The door to the lockout chamber slides open and Jake and Stacy walk out, each glistening with sweat and laughing.

Roe is coming down the corridor wearing workout clothes as well. She freezes when she sees them together.

ROE  
You didn't wait for me.

Stacy sees Roe and then steps awkwardly away from Jake's side.

STACY  
I -- I'm sorry, Roe. I forgot we were  
going to work out together.

ROE  
You forgot? We work out every single  
day at this time.

Arjun comes around the corner just then. He starts to open the shuttle lockout door, then sees everyone standing in the hall looking at him.

ARJUN  
Oh! Am I interrupting?

Roe takes Arjun by the arm and leads him back down the corridor. Stacy watches them go but doesn't say a word.

JAKE  
Is there a problem?

After a moment, Stacy proceeds down the corridor without looking back.

STACY  
I'll talk to you later.

INT. MESSENGER - ROE'S QUARTERS - LATER

Roe's quarters look like Jake's but more lived in. Items of clothing hanging on wall hooks and several small framed artworks adorn the walls. The DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS.

ROE (O.C.)  
Shh.

The BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN. A moment later, the door slides open abruptly and Stacy steps in unannounced.

STACY  
We need to talk --

She freezes when she sees Roe lying on top of Arjun in her bed. There's a sheet covering them but they look naked.

Stacy stands there a moment, then turns and leaves. The door slides shut behind her.

Roe rolls off of Arjun and lies on her back, staring at the ceiling. Arjun sits up and looks at the foot of the bed. We can see he was wearing pants after all.

ARJUN  
I hope that was worth it.

ROE  
I said I'll do your chores for a week, and I will.

He glances over at her, but she doesn't look back. He gets out of her bed and pulls his shirt back on as he heads for the door.

ARJUN  
That's not what I meant.

Arjun leaves. Roe lies there staring at the ceiling, then grabs her pillow, covers her face, and YELLS.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - LATER

Stacy is standing in the corridor just down from Jake's quarters. She glances nervously behind her, then starts walking down the hall.

She stops just outside his closed door, then freezes. She holds her breath, listening for sounds inside.

She stares at the door buzzer, then shakes her head in frustration as she turns and heads back down the hall.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - NEXT MORNING

Jake and Gemma are in the galley making breakfast. Stacy enters from the bridge crew hallway. Her hair is messy and she looks a little disheveled.

Jake looks at her, then at Gemma, before returning to his duties. Gemma looks up and sees her.

GEMMA

Good morning, dear.

STACY

Is it morning? I had the midnight to four shift and my internal clock's a bit off.

JAKE

We're making breakfast if you're hungry. Gemma is showing me how your food processor works.

Stacy grabs her mug from the wall shelf and heads to the coffee pot.

JAKE (cont'd)

I was going to try some of that this morning, but it doesn't smell like coffee.

She pours steaming brown liquid into her mug, then holds it up to her cheek like a cherished possession.

STACY

(whispering to her  
mug)

Don't listen to him. He doesn't understand.

Gemma leans over to Jake.

GEMMA

It's mushroom coffee. Disgusting stuff, if you ask me.

Stacy shakes her head as she walks to the table.

STACY

(to her mug again)  
Don't listen to her either.

Just then, THE FLOOR SHIFTS SLIGHTLY causing those standing to sway. Then Coal comes down the stairs, closely followed by Roe. There is an awkward moment between Stacy and Roe but neither speaks.

GEMMA

Are we there already?

COAL

We're a kilometer away from Lion City and holding station.  
(beat)  
When you're ready.

Gemma nods and hands her ladle to Jake, then looks at Stacy.

GEMMA

You and Arjun have the bridge.

Gemma then follows Coal and Roe down the stairs to C-Deck.

JAKE

What's going on?

Stacy refills her mug and walks toward the staircase.

STACY

Just stay here and eat your breakfast.

As she disappears up the stairs to the bridge, Jake looks at the stairs going down.

INT. MESSENGER - SHUTTLE LOCKOUT - CONTINUOUS

The door slides open and Roe and Gemma enter the shuttle lockout room. Coal follows them in and then checks the readout on the wall panel next to the floor hatch.

COAL

Just stick to the plan, okay? With any luck, they'll be watching us and not you.



GEMMA  
Isn't it the other way around?

ROE  
Do you think we're being followed?

Gemma pulls on the lower hatch and it begins to rotate open.

GEMMA  
We just completed the final upgrades  
for deep salvage work. Of course  
we're being followed. Every pirate in  
the colony is probably --

COAL  
Just follow the plan. We're  
completely on our own out here.

Gemma climbs down a small ladder inside the hatch opening.  
Roe hands her a small bag.

ROE  
(to Coal)  
Do you still think it was a good idea  
to leave the Guild?

COAL  
I thought Colonial Guards hated the  
Shippers Guild.

ROE  
They're leeches, charging credit to  
protect vessels that are already  
protected by us.

COAL  
Us?

ROE  
Them. But, for what you're  
planning -- what we're planning --  
having some backup, even paid backup,  
seems logical.

COAL  
Logical? Maybe. But not profitable.  
They take ten percent of whatever we  
salvage, remember?

Coal looks at her sternly.

COAL (cont'd)  
Do we have a problem with this?

Roe straightens her back, then continues down the ladder.

ROE

No, Sir. We'll get the package and meet you afterward, as planned.

Coal looks down the shaft to Gemma.

COAL

Remember, the shuttle's now listed under the name, "Dulcinea." If you don't mention the Messenger, you should be --

GEMMA

We'll be fine, Marcus.

Gemma reaches up and pulls on the hatch, which begins to lower into place.

GEMMA (cont'd)

See you in a few hours.

Coal nods as he watches it close.

INT. MESSENGER - AFT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake is standing just outside the door to the shuttle lockout, listening. He silently backs around the corner.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Outside view of shuttle detaching from the underside of the Messenger, then heading away. After it leaves, the Messenger heads toward the Outpost in the distance.

INT. LION CITY - MAIN DOCK - LATER

The dock is smaller than the one in Capital City and a bit rundown, but otherwise a similar design. The Messenger lowers its main cargo door.

Jake, visible inside the jumper, walks calmly down the ramp carrying two of the crates they brought from Capital City.

Coal and Stacy walk down the ramp behind him and step off to the side. They watch Jake carry the crates to the other side of the dock, deftly maneuvering around other boxes and other pieces of equipment.

COAL

Not bad.

STACY

Okay. We're going for supplies. Back in a half hour.

As Coal continues to watch, Stacy jogs back to the ship and meets Arjun walking down the ramp pulling a small cart. The two then walk across the dock toward the main exit.

As they walk away, an old-fashioned bell rings out inside the docks. Coal frowns, then signals to Jake as he is returning. Jake nods to him, then moves directly toward him. Once there, he powers down the Jumper and slides out.

JAKE

Am I doing something wrong?

COAL

No

Coal walks past Jake to the Jumper's hatch.

JAKE

I thought moving cargo was why you brought me aboard.

COAL

Well, not today. There's been a Captain's Challenge. Only ship captains are allowed to move cargo for the next thirty minutes.

JAKE

Is that some ancient tradition or do you win a prize for moving the most boxes?

COAL

Both actually.

Coal opens the hatch.

COAL (cont'd)

So just sit back and let me show you how an old Shellback does this.

As Coal climbs inside the Jumper, Jake stands there awkwardly, then steps to the side and sits on a nearby stack of small boxes.

The Jumper powers up and walks back inside the cargo bay.

A few seconds later, it comes waddling out of the cargo bay and down the ramp carrying one of the smaller crates.

The Jumper's foot slips on a wet spot on the deck, and Coal struggles to maintain balance, almost dropping the crate. Jake leans back against the stack of boxes and smiles.

JAKE

This ought to be fun.

INT. LION CITY - JOEMART - CONTINUOUS

In the nearby food market, Stacy and Arjun arrive pulling their small cart. Arjun looks up at the main sign as they enter the square. It reads JOEMART.

ARJUN

It's a joke I'm not getting, right? Why is every market in every outpost called that? I know they're not owned by the same person, and no one is rich enough to have a franchise this extensive.

STACY

I think it has something to do with you and Roe sleeping together.

Beat.

ARJUN

I—I'm not sure what to say. I had assumed that by now, you two would have worked things out between you.

She takes one of the bags from the cart and starts filling it with produce.

STACY

So, why did you do it?

Arjun still looks aghast.

ARJUN

I don't know what to say, other than I'm sorry. We shouldn't have, and I'm sorry you walked in on us like that.

She smiles as she smells a piece of purple fruit, then puts it back and picks up another.

STACY

Oh, you don't need to pretend anymore. I know you two didn't do anything. That was a show for my benefit.

Arjun breathes a sigh of relief.

ARJUN

So, you two have spoken. That's good.

STACY

No, but I knew. You two are more alike than you want to admit. You're both very secretive about your past and your personal lives. You're also both extensive planners. Neither of you could ever just 'jump into bed' with someone on a whim, let alone each other.

He smiles at the comment.

ARJUN

You know, she promised to do my chores for a week for my part in her little ruse. I would appreciate it if you don't tell her that you know just yet. I'm rather enjoying the break in duties.

She laughs and continues down the produce aisle, stopping now and then to poke or smell the various fruits and vegetables displayed there. Apparently the conversation is finished.

ARJUN (cont'd)

By the way, I'm not secretive about my past. My life is an open book, and a rather dull one if truth be told. I don't talk about it simply because there is nothing to tell.

Stacy stops what she is doing and looks directly at him.

STACY

My father has a saying: The best way to keep a secret is never admit to having one. She stood there staring at him intently, silently waiting for an answer.

ARJUN

You are very much like your father.

STACY

You changed the subject. I'm sure a former government spy or arms dealer would do something like that.

ARJUN

There. You just did it. Right there.

STACY

What did I do?

ARJUN

You made a very probing statement, hoping to elicit an unconscious facial reaction from me. Your father does the same thing. I should wonder about both of your backgrounds, to be honest.

She gives him an innocent, 'who me?' look, then turns back to her fruits and vegetables, as if the discussion had never happened. Arjun decides it's his turn to probe.

ARJUN (cont'd)

So, how about you? Are you a planner as well, or have you and Jake made the jump yet? We all see the way you two look at each other. Or should I say, avoid looking at each other.

Stacy hands him her filled bag, and grabs an empty bag from the cart.

STACY

Go check out the grain section, would you? Gemma asked me to add rice to my shopping list.

He looks questioning at her, then realizing the conversation is truly over, turns and does as she asked.

INT. LION CITY - BLACK MARKET - CONTINUOUS

In a maze of dark alleys in the seedier part of Lion City, Gemma and Roe walk together browsing the many vendors selling unknown things in small unmarked bottles.

ROE

Can't say I'm a fan of this place. Everyone here looks like a criminal. I can see it in their beady little eyes.

Gemma walks next to Roe but her eyes are scanning the dark corners.

GEMMA

From what I know of your past, I can understand why you feel that way, but these people are harmless.

Roe stops in her tracks, her face suddenly flushing with rage.

ROE

What do you know of my past?

Gemma places a gentle hand on her shoulder.

GEMMA

I know you were stationed in a Rehab Center with some of the Colony's worst offenders. Is that why you left the Guard?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

How does it feel?

INT. COLONIAL REHAB CENTER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A LARGE MAN is holding Roe from behind with his massive arm wrapped tight around her neck. He moves his vile mouth close to her ear.

LARGE MAN

I said, how does it feel, little girl?

He thrusts his hips against her backside, and Roe moans in pain.

LARGE MAN (cont'd)

Can you feel me inside you?

Roe's wearing a black guard uniform and she's fighting to hold back from screaming.

She closes her eyes, almost like she is giving in. Then, in a swift movement, she throws her head violently backward, smashing the man's nose.

Stunned, he releases her and steps backward, revealing the makeshift knife in his hand, covered in blood.

THREE GUARDS rush in and subdue the large man, knocking the knife out of his hand and dragging him to the floor. He doesn't fight back, but just kneels there, laughing.

One of the guards looks up at Roe.

GUARD

You're bleeding bad, Roe. Go get that taken care of. We got this bastard. He'll do another six months for this little stunt.

Roe doesn't respond, but calmly bends down and picks up the bloody knife. She examines it, then looks at the man kneeling before her. She leans in close to his face and stares into his cold eyes.

ROE

Do you want to know how it feels?

She smiles as she stabs him in the stomach then twists the knife back and forth. The man's eyes bug out and he screams in pain.

She pulls the knife out and drops it on the floor. She then turns and walks away as the man continues to scream behind her.

INT. LION CITY - BLACK MARKET - BACK TO SCENE

Roe smiles at the memory, which quells her anger.

ROE

It was just a job. I got tired of it and so I left.

A BANG in the distance alerts them both.

ROE (cont'd)

(whispering)

I suddenly wish I had brought a weapon. The Messenger should be docked by now. Maybe I can run back and grab one.

Gemma continues the act of browsing the merchandise as she gives Roe a subtle side-eye.

ROE (cont'd)

You know I was joking, right?



GEMMA

I do. I also know that we were secretly scanned for weapons when we passed that last stall. Besides, we're safe here as long as we play the game.

Roe tries to mimic Gemma's unconcerned demeanor, but can't stop glancing behind her.

ROE

This is a game to you?

BOBBY (40) a large muscular man quietly approaches them from the rear.

GEMMA

Dance. I should have said dance.

Bobby is suddenly right behind Roe, who pivots like a trained fighter to face him, crouched low and arms in a fighting posture. Gemma puts a hand between Roe and Bobby.

GEMMA (cont'd)

This gentleman is our escort.

(then to Bobby)

Aren't you, Bobby?

Bobby takes a step backward and bows to Gemma.

BOBBY

At your service, Auntie. Can't be too careful these days. No telling who'll wander in out of the blue.

Gemma looks at Roe, who reluctantly relaxes her posture.

GEMMA

(to Bobby)

I'm here to see the Butcher. He's expecting me.

Bobby bows again and walks toward a glass-windowed shop nearby. Above it is a sign that reads NICK'S BUTCHER SHOP. Gemma nods back and motions Roe toward the door.

ROE

(whispering)

Auntie?

Gemma gives her a look and then follows Bobby's lead.

INT. LION CITY - NICK'S BUTCHER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Gemma and Roe enter a small room with a large table in the middle and numerous cabinets along the walls. An old, obese man with a greasy bald head, NICK THE BUTCHER (60) rises from his chair behind the table.

NICK THE BUTCHER

Auntie! It's been far too long. Come have a drink with me.

He reaches out a chubby, sweaty hand and pulls a chair out for Gemma, motioning for her to sit. Gemma doesn't move a muscle.

GEMMA

I'm sorry, Nick, but as usual, I'm under a tight deadline.

Gemma glances at Roe who hands her the small bag she has been carrying. Gemma reaches in and pulls out a handful of silver coins and then lets them drop back into the bag.

GEMMA (cont'd)

The price we agreed upon. You can count if you don't trust me.

Nick ignores the coins and stares at Roe.

NICK THE BUTCHER

We are forgetting our manners, Auntie. You've neglected to introduce your lovely companion.

(to Roe)

And you are?

ROE

I'm the person who will make your life more complicated than it needs to be if you don't produce the item we came for.

A heavy silence fills the air. It is finally broken by Nick's throaty laughter. He then turns back to Gemma as Bobby sets a small case on the table.

NICK THE BUTCHER

I must say that I was quite surprised when you contacted me about acquiring this particular item. I was under the impression that you are a strictly law-abiding citizen these days.

GEMMA

My employer has a need that I am obliged to fulfill. Why it is needed does not concern me.

(her eyes narrow)

Nor should it concern you.

NICK THE BUTCHER

Ah, but these are troubling times, don't you agree? We are both breaking several Colony laws just by standing in the same room as this item.

Gemma leaned in close.

GEMMA

(in a hushed tone)

Then I believe we should conclude our transaction as quickly as possible.

Nick's jovial face is suddenly replaced by a menacing one.

NICK THE BUTCHER

I believe that my risk requires additional compensation. A twenty-five percent addition, to be precise.

Gemma glances at Roe and then back at Nick.

GEMMA

You have never reneged on a deal before, Nick. This is quite unlike you.

Nick nods to Bobby who picks up a small box and holds it up to his ear as he steps over to the corner. Nick then turns his attention back to Gemma.

NICK THE BUTCHER

As I said, these are troubling times.

Gemma glances at Roe and then back at Nick.

GEMMA

Are we going to have a problem?

INT. LION CITY - MAIN DOCK - CONTINUOUS

As Jake is sitting, watching Coal slowly (and inefficiently) unload the crates, he sees FIVE SHADY-LOOKING MEN walking nearby. One of them is speaking into a communications device as they pass.

SHADY MAN

There's no ship called "Dulcinea" in  
the main dock. Must be on the other  
side of the --

He pauses as he puts the device up to his ear.

SHADY MAN (cont'd)

Right. We're heading back now.

JAKE

(to himself)

Dulcinea?

As they jog toward the exit, Jake jumps up and follows them.

INT. LION CITY - NICK'S BUTCHER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Roe is subtly moving closer to Gemma, eyes searching the  
room. Gemma looks relaxed and unafraid.

NICK THE BUTCHER

The only problems in my shop are  
those you bring yourself, Auntie.

Gemma looks at him coldly.

GEMMA

You and I have a long history  
together, don't we?

The Butcher's face softens.

NICK THE BUTCHER

You and I were both born here,  
Auntie, way back when it was still  
called "Singapura."

He spots one of his men in the back looking confused by the  
change of topic, and his dark demeanor returns.

NICK THE BUTCHER (cont'd)

But those days are long gone, aren't  
they? The Colonials make the rules  
now and their percentages can not be  
bargained.

Nick smiles.

NICK THE BUTCHER (cont'd)

I am but a poor businessman who must  
shift with the currents if I am to  
stay afloat.

GEMMA

Very poetic, Nick, but then you leave  
me no choice.

Gemma lifts her bag of coins, jiggles it, then hands it back  
to Roe.

GEMMA (cont'd)

I will simply take my problems and  
leave. My employer will of course be  
disappointed to hear of my failure.

She turns to leave but then the five shady-looking men that  
Jake was following enter the shop and fan out. Each of them  
pulls out a metal pipe and holds them menacingly.

NICK THE BUTCHER

I'm afraid that your employer will  
hear nothing of this.

INT. LION CITY - BLACK MARKET - CONTINUOUS

From the street outside the butcher shop, Jake arrives just  
in time to see what's happening through the windows.

He thinks for a moment, then starts to inhale and exhale  
very quickly (for reasons that are not yet obvious.)

INT. LION CITY - NICK'S BUTCHER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Roe moves fast, grabbing the pipe from the nearest man and  
striking him with it. Like a dancer, she then drops low and  
sweeps the next attacker across the ankles with her  
outstretched leg, dropping him hard to the floor.

His pipe rolls to Gemma, who kicks it at another man about  
to grab Roe from the back, striking him in the face.

Gemma then side-steps an attacker, tripping him as he sails  
past. In less than five seconds, all five men are lying on  
the floor in varying degrees of pain.

Bobby grabs Gemma's arm with one massive hand, immobilizing  
her. Roe, with a pipe in each hand, moves toward him.

SIX MORE MEN appear from the back of the room, each carrying  
metal bars.

Jake bursts in at that exact moment.

JAKE  
(yelling)  
Guards are coming! Guards are --

Jake slumps against a storage bin, panting heavily.

All heads turn toward Jake, surprised by the outburst. Nick looks out the windows and then back at Jake.

NICK THE BUTCHER  
Who are you?

Jake ignores him and looks directly at Gemma.

JAKE  
Sir. I know you said to stay at the ship, but --

Jake pauses to catch his breath.

JAKE (cont'd)  
-- a shuttle carrying Colonial Guards just docked. I overheard them saying something about a Butcher.

Jake drops to his knees, wheezing.

JAKE (cont'd)  
I ran all the way here. I think they're less than a minute behind me.

Gemma turns to Nick.

GEMMA  
Unless you would like to join me in a Rehab Center, I think we should conclude our business immediately.

Nick nods to Bobby, who grabs the case and hands it to Roe in exchange for the bag of coins. Nick then nods to his men, who pick up their injured people and scamper for the exits.

NICK THE BUTCHER  
Until our next meeting, Auntie.

Roe takes one last look around and then follows Jake to the door. Gemma nods to Nick and then looks at Bobby.

GEMMA  
Good to see you again, Bobby.

Bobby waves as she walks out the door.

INT. LION CITY - SMALL DOCK - MINUTES LATER

Gemma, Roe, and Jake stop at the entrance to a smaller dock. We can see the Messenger's shuttle on the far side.

GEMMA

That was a clever ruse, Jake, but you should not have interfered.

JAKE

Interfered? I don't mean to boast, but I think I saved your lives.

ROE

We were handling things pretty well before you showed up, hatchling.

GEMMA

Fist-fighting over salvage rights is a time-honored tradition.

JAKE

From what I saw, they had metal bars in their fists.

GEMMA

And sometimes those traditions become deadly. But again, you risked more than our lives by interfering.

JAKE

I don't understand.

GEMMA

I need you to head back to the Messenger now, Jake, but make absolutely sure no one follows you.

JAKE

Okay, but --

GEMMA

Tell no one that you were here. Not even the captain. Do you understand?

JAKE

No, but I'll do as you say.

As Gemma and Roe walk quickly toward their shuttle, Jake jogs away in the opposite direction.

INT. LION CITY - MAIN DOCK - MINUTES LATER

Jake reaches the main dock and catches up with Stacy and Arjun just before they reach the Messenger. Without saying a word, Jake grabs a bag from Stacy and walks with them back to the ship. Coal is just stepping out of the cargo bay.

COAL  
(to Stacy)  
Signal the dock master that we're  
ready to leave.

Stacy nods and then notices a small object in her father's hand. Her face lights up.

STACY  
You didn't...

Coal smiles as he lifts his hand to show her what he's carrying. It looks like a tiny green hat with a small round head and four brown legs sticking out from underneath.

JAKE  
What the bilge is that?

Stacy takes the small trophy and shows it to Jake.

STACY  
This is a Shellback, Jake. The  
namesake of those of us who choose to  
travel with our homes on our backs.

COAL  
(to Stacy)  
Put it on the bridge. Someplace where  
it won't get broken. I had to work  
hard for this one.

Stacy follows her father into the ship. Jake is the last one in and pauses to take one last look around the dock. He spots two of the men from the fight, standing at the dock entrance. Their faces are scanning the ships, moving toward him.

JAKE  
Bilge!

He quickly turns away and then runs into the Messenger as the door lifts into place.



INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - TWO HOURS LATER

Jake is seated at the Acoustics station while Arjun and Stacy sit at Helm and Navigation. Coal stands at the forward Command station, staring out of the forward viewport at the darkness.

ARJUN

Turning again.

The floor banks gently to the right as the ship makes a turn. After a moment, the ship flattens again.

STACY

(to Arjun)

I'm reading a course of two hundred sixty degrees and holding. Local current shear is minimal.

COAL

Distance to final coordinates?

STACY

If we maintain this heading, we'll be there in just under an hour.

COAL

Anything in our wake, Acoustics?

Jake jumps when he realizes the Captain is now addressing him.

JAKE

Uh, if I'm reading this screen correctly, there's nothing behind us. Or ahead of us. Or anywhere within sonar range.

STACY

(to Jake)

Just say negative.

JAKE

Negative.

COAL

He's learning, Stacy. Besides, too much information is better than not enough. Especially now.

JAKE

If I can ask a question, I assume we have been doing this zigzag pattern for the past two hours to confuse anyone who might be following us.

Coal turns to look at him.

COAL

What's your question?

JAKE

Who might be following us? And why?

Coal turns back to the viewport without answering. A moment later, Stacy stands and stretches.

STACY

I could use some coffee. Does anyone else want anything?

ARJUN

I'll take some of your delicious mushroom coffee if you don't mind.

Stacy gently punches Arjun's shoulder.

STACY

You're learning.

She walks back toward the stairs, pausing at Jake's station, then looks back at her father.

STACY (cont'd)

Taking your acoustics officer with me.

Coal doesn't respond and she doesn't wait for him to. She takes Jake's arm and pulls him down the stairs behind her.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - CONTINUOUS

At the bottom of the staircase, Stacy puts a finger to her lips, signaling silence, and then takes Jake by the hand and leads him down the crew quarters hallway. At the second of three doors on the left, she opens it and pulls him inside.

INT. MESSENGER - STACY'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Stacy's room is identical to Jake's except that she has clothing scattered everywhere. She sits down on her bed while he stands near the doorway as it closes.

JAKE

Are you trying to get me thrown off the ship?

STACY

Relax. I just brought you in here so that we could talk about what happened after our workout, and I didn't want my father or Arjun to overhear.

JAKE

Oh -- okay.

He rotates her desk chair around and sits down.

JAKE (cont'd)

You know, you don't owe me any kind of explanation. If you and Roe are --

She laughs, then takes a moment before answering.

STACY

No, it's not like that. Well, maybe it is. I guess it's complicated. But, what I'm trying to say is that I think that when she saw us together after our workout, she thought -- you know -- that we were --

JAKE

We were -- what?

She rolls her eyes.

JAKE (cont'd)

Oh.

He feels his face turning red.

STACY

Listen. I just wanted to clear the air. We work together and it's a small ship. Am I making any sense?

Jake looks at her, then at the floor.

JAKE

You are, and I should say that I'm sorry for making that joke about showering together when I came aboard. That was inappropriate.

(MORE)

JAKE (cont'd)

I really need this job and I don't want your father to think I'm unable to work with, you know, someone I find attractive.

Stacy raises her eyebrows in feigned shock.

STACY

So you think Arjun is attractive? Or is it Roe? I'm not sure you're either of their types, but I can put in a good word if you want.

Jake smiles.

JAKE

You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

STACY

A little. But I'll -- reluctantly admit that I am somewhat attracted to you as well.

JAKE

Really?

STACY

I said somewhat. You're -- different from anyone I've ever met.

JAKE

Different?

STACY

In a good way.

JAKE

Is that why you went against your father's orders and brought me aboard?

She stares at him for a moment, but instead of answering, she turns, opens her door, and walks out.

STACY

Now that that's cleared up, I'll make the coffee while you get the mugs.

Jake stays there a moment, shakes his head in confusion, then follows her out.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - ONE HOUR LATER

Coal is in his usual position at the bow, while Jake, Stacy, and Arjun are seated back at their stations.

STACY

We're here.

COAL

Bring us to a full stop, Helm.

ARJUN

Answering full stop.

Jake sees a blip appear on his acoustics screen.

JAKE

Sir, I just --

STACY

It's the shuttle. Gemma just signaled.

COAL

Right on time. Tell her to come on in.

INT. MESSENGER - SHUTTLE LOCKOUT - MINUTES LATER

Gemma and Roe are emerging from the open floor hatch as Jake follows Coal and Stacy into the shuttle lockout. Coal lends a hand helping Gemma up the ladder. Roe climbs out on her own, carrying the case.

COAL

Any difficulties? Did anyone follow you?

GEMMA

No to both questions.

Gemma glances at Jake as Roe hands the case to Coal.

ROE

I believe this is yours.

Coal takes the case and heads to the door.

COAL

Let's go take a look.

INT. MESSENGER - STAGING AREA - CONTINUOUS

As they enter the Staging area, Coal sets the case on the floor. He then opens it to reveal a small black sphere inside.

JAKE

What exactly is that?

STACY

That is an official Colonial transponder.

ARJUN

A very, very, illegal Colonial transponder.

JAKE

What does it do? Let you cross the border?

ARJUN

There is nothing that can do that.

JAKE

Then what does it do?

ROE

It allows any ship carrying it to ascend to the ice ceiling without setting off alarms.

JAKE

Why would you want to go all the way up to the ice?

ARJUN

Because it's the safest and fastest way to cross the Rift.

Jake backs away from the rest of the crew.

JAKE

I don't understand. Why would anyone want to cross the Rift valley?

ARJUN

Because it's a five day trip to go around it.

JAKE

But if the stories are true...

STACY

The stories are true. At least the ones about the deadly currents when you attempt to cross over it.

ARJUN

Which is why we plan to sail far above it, right up near the ice.

COAL

Okay, enough talking, people. We need to get the transponder plugged in and tested. I want us underway within the hour.

As everyone else follows Coal toward the stairs, Jake grabs Stacy's shoulder.

JAKE

You know this is crazy, right? What could possibly make you want to do this?

Stacy glances at the others walking away and then back at Jake.

STACY

My dad will fill you in when he thinks you're ready.

She heads toward the stairs, leaving Jake alone and confused.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - A FEW HOURS LATER

The viewports are dark and everyone except Jake is there and sitting at their stations.

GEMMA

The transponder seems to be working. So far so good.

ARJUN

Approaching the ice ceiling, Sir.

COAL

Let's see it.

ROE

Acoustic mapping on.

The viewports light up and show a view few have ever seen: a TRANSLUCENT-WHITE CEILING less than a hundred meters above the bridge.

EXT. ICE CEILING - CONTINUOUS

The Messenger is cruising along just below the ice ceiling which is stretching in all directions as far as the eye can see.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Stacy and Roe both stand up to get a better look out of the viewports. Coal glances out, then looks down at Arjun's console.

COAL

Not too close, helm. Keep us a hundred meters below it.

ARJUN

Aye, Sir.

STACY

Jake should be up here watching this. Where is he?

Coal looks at the crew, then at Gemma.

COAL

(to Gemma)

If he's goofing off, or asleep somewhere --

Coal starts to head to the stairwell, but Gemma stops him.

GEMMA

I'm your First Mate. Let me do my job.

INT. MESSENGER - CARGO BAY - MINUTES LATER

Gemma enters the cargo bay from the rear door. She spots Jake sitting on the floor next to the Jumper.

Jake sees her. He starts to stand but she signals him to stay seated, then walks over to sit next to him.

JAKE

Are we over the Rift yet?



GEMMA

We passed the eastern rim a few minutes ago.

Jake places his hand on the floor and listens to the HUM OF THE THRUSTERS.

JAKE

I don't feel a thing. No turbulence at all.

GEMMA

That's why we're up near the ice. No effects from the Rift currents.

JAKE

But we're still taking a risk being so close to the ice, right? We were all taught the Law of Pressure song in school.

GEMMA

(singing)

For every ten meters you clear, the pressure drops one atmosphere. At the ice where your climbing is done, the pressure falls to one.

JAKE

One atmosphere, which means that just beyond the ice, the pressure has to reach zero. As in a vacuum. As in the void.

GEMMA

So what you're saying is that if we fly too low, the Rift sucks us down to crush death, and if we fly too high and crack the ice, we get sucked into nothingness.

JAKE

Exactly. So why risk it?

GEMMA

Are you asking why we want to locate and salvage Pre-fall artifacts?

JAKE

You've got a great ship that's designed for moving cargo and from what I've heard, the outposts are in constant need. I don't understand why that's not enough.

GEMMA

You don't think there's value in Pre-Fall artifacts?

JAKE

What I think is that the more you value the things you find, the more you want to know about where they came from.

GEMMA

You mean, Earth Colony.

JAKE

Our ancestors abandoned Earth for a reason. If it was a great place, they would have stayed. We should just accept that there's no going back.

Gemma regards him for a moment.

GEMMA

Ah. I think I understand now. Your anxiety has nothing to do with crossing this valley. It is because we are currently heading west, which is the route your parents must have taken when they left you.

Jake jumps to his feet.

JAKE

How do you know about that?

GEMMA

Marcus told me they were on the Compass Expedition when you were just a child and their ship never returned.

Jake's eyes glaze over with the memories.

JAKE

None of the ships made it back. The other kids all said they were eaten by the monster out there. The thing they call the Novum.

Gemma stands up and places a gentle hand on his arm.

GEMMA

Children can be cruel, but there are no monsters out there. The Novum

(MORE)

GEMMA (cont'd)  
is a fable, invented to keep people  
from wanting to leave. The word  
itself is just an old term for  
something new or unknown. People tend  
to fear what they don't understand

Jake takes a step back, pulling away from her touch.

JAKE  
I don't.

GEMMA  
You don't what?

JAKE  
I don't fear the unknown. In fact, if  
you gave me a ship and a crew right  
now, I would find a way to cross the  
border and go look for my parents.  
I'm not saying that I'm brave, it's  
just that, until I find out what  
happened to them, I don't have room  
in my life for fear. I'm not even  
afraid of death.

Gemma takes a step forward and holds his arm again.

GEMMA  
I feel sorry for you, Jake.

JAKE  
Why?

GEMMA  
I think your lack of fear means that  
you have nothing to live for.  
Everyone needs something, or someone,  
to live for.

JAKE  
Well I don't?

GEMMA  
What about Stacy?

Jake pulls away from her hand again.

JAKE  
I don't know what -- Stacy and I  
are -- just friends -- just  
crewmates, nothing more.

Gemma smiles.

GEMMA

You know, you're more like the captain than you realize.

JAKE

How's that?

GEMMA

You're both good at finding answers to complex problems, but sometimes -- you miss what's right in front of you.

Roe's voice over the intercom interrupts their conversation.

ROE (OVER COMMS)

We're on the other side of the Rift and nearing coordinates. Gemma, please report to the bridge.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

The Messenger approaches a SALVAGE RIG; a rectangular box nearly the length of the Messenger, distinguished by the eight large but deflated balloons attached to the top.

The Messenger descends, then hovers close to the seafloor, fifty meters from the rig, facing it.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - LATER

The entire crew is seated around the galley table. A few have mugs but this is not a casual meeting. There is tension on everyone's face. Jake is the first to break the silence.

JAKE

So, is someone going to tell me why we're out here? I didn't see anything outside other than that big box with balloons on top.

ROE

It's called a Salvage Rig. It's a modified version of a Float Rig we use to haul heavy cargo.

ARJUN

A very expensive modification, I might add.

JAKE

How far away is this salvage you hinted at?

ARJUN

It's right under the Salvage Rig. There's a tunnel -- a shaft going straight down.

JAKE

Down to what?

STACY

Some sort of deep cave.

ARJUN

We sent a probe down to check it out the last time we were here but it --

JAKE

What?

ROE

It never came back. But just before we lost contact, it showed a large open cavern filled with metallic objects.

JAKE

Metallic?

STACY

We think it's a Vault. As in, artificial. As in human-made.

GEMMA

Maybe not human.

Everyone looks at Gemma.

COAL

We plan to take our Jumper down the shaft and attach lift cables to whatever is down there.

ARJUN

The ends of the lift cables are fit with very expensive magnetic grapplers. If anything down there is made of metal, these will attach to them and not let go.

JAKE

And how exactly do you get up and down a vertical shaft? The Jumper doesn't have any way to adjust buoyancy. Its thrusters are only good for short jumps.

STACY

One of the rig's lift cables has been modified into a sort of elevator. You step into a small opening on the side, the cable automatically attaches to the Jumper, and down it goes. When we're ready to come back up, we reverse the procedure.

JAKE

Sounds easy enough.

ROE

It's not.

She looks at Coal before continuing.

COAL

There's some sort of jamming going on down there, so there's a chance you'll lose communications. Once you start down, you might be on your own.

Jake looks at Coal and smiles.

JAKE

This is the real reason I was brought aboard, isn't it? Not to move cargo, but for this.

ROE

The new guy catches on fast.

STACY

You can say no, Jake. I can always --

COAL

No! Jake's right. This is why I wanted him aboard.

There is another long silence, then Jake looks directly at Stacy.

JAKE

So, you all lied to me.

He looks at each of the crew, one by one, and finally at Coal.

JAKE (cont'd)  
I guess it makes sense. I'm not part  
of your crew, so I'm expendable.

GEMMA  
No one is expendable!

Jake keeps his eyes on Coal.

JAKE  
I'll agree to do this for you, as  
long as you agree to something for  
me.

COAL  
I'm listening.

JAKE  
After you're done here, assuming that  
I make it out, you'll pay me for my  
time here and you'll let me off at  
your next stop. I don't care where it  
is.

The galley is silent.

COAL  
You have my word.

Jake nods then looks at Gemma.

JAKE  
Okay. So I go down, attach the lift  
cables to whatever I find, and then  
what?

GEMMA  
You come back up and return to the  
ship. We won't inflate the lift  
balloons until you are safely aboard.

Jake looks around the table at the faces of the crew,  
pausing too long when he gets to Stacy. He quickly looks  
back at Coal.

JAKE  
So, what are we waiting for?

As everyone heads down the stairs to C-deck, Stacy leans in  
close to Jake.

STACY  
(whispering)  
I'm sorry, Jake. We should have told  
you. I should have --

JAKE  
I'll be fine.

Without another word, Jake gets up and follows the others down the stairs. Stacy sits there in silence, watching him go.

INT. MESSENGER - CARGO BAY - AN HOUR LATER

Jake is sitting inside the Jumper, fastening the shoulder belts and flipping switches to power everything up. Stacy is removing the charging cable from the Jumper. Arjun is standing near the bulkhead separating the front and rear halves of the cargo bay.

ARJUN  
Sealing us in.

He presses a switch on the wall and the big door slides down from the ceiling and locks itself into place with a THUD. Jake's voice issues from an overhead speaker.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
See. I told you the door would work.

Stacy knocks on the glass near his foot then signals a thumbs up. Jake nods and gives a thumbs-up back. He then powers up the Jumper and it whirls to life. Stacy jumps back.

JAKE (OVER COMMS) (cont'd)  
Sorry. The controls are touchy. I'm  
not used to anything this new.

Stacy backs away.

STACY  
(yelling over the  
noise)  
Just say the word and I can take  
over.

Jake signals a thumbs down but adds a smile. Stacy smiles back, but then her face grows serious.



STACY (cont'd)  
Remember, if you lose communications  
down there, just try to attach cables  
to whatever you find and come right  
back up.

She glances back at Arjun, then looks back at Jake.

STACY (cont'd)  
Don't be a hero, Jake. Please.

Jake nods, then Stacy follows Arjun to the rear door and  
exits, leaving Jake alone.

A LOUD HISS fills the room as air is pumped in.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake taps on the external pressure readout and sees it  
rising. Then he sees Stacy's face appear on a small screen  
on the dash.

STACY (OVER COMMS)  
The drop bay is now matching outside  
pressure. We're counting on you,  
Jake. Find us something interesting.

JAKE  
See you in a bit.

The Jumper tilts as the floor suddenly drops down and  
seawater comes flooding into the bay. Jake grabs the two  
control handles and positions his feet in the foot stirrups,  
balancing the Jumper.

He watches the water rise over the glass cockpit as he drops  
into the ocean.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Jumper steps off the lowered panel and onto the  
seafloor, stirring up a small cloud of silt. Jake turns his  
Jumper toward the Salvage Rig in the distance and begins  
walking.

EXT. SALVAGE RIG - MINUTES LATER

Jake's Jumper stops at the side of the Salvage Rig, its  
eight huge but unfilled balloons towering above him, gently  
swaying in the current.

He now sees the opening to the shaft below the Rig, which is nearly as wide as the Rig itself. He spots a walkway that crosses the shaft, leading to a small opening on the side.

Jake carefully maneuvers his jumper across the walkway.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake peers over the side of the walkway and sees only darkness below.

JAKE  
(to himself)  
Maybe I won't look down.

He quickly focuses on getting his Jumper across and is relieved when he reaches the elevator opening.

He looks up and sees a grabber attach to his Jumper with a LOUD CLUNK.

The floor suddenly drops away leaving him hanging. Then he begins dropping quickly down the shaft.

The view from his cockpit fades to black as he descends. Jake presses several tabs on his dashboard, then flips on the comms system.

JAKE (cont'd)  
If anyone can hear me, my acoustic mapping system just stopped working.

He waits a few moments for a reply. Nothing but static.

He flips another switch.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Well, comms are down, which you all said might happen. I turned on my recorder just in case I die down here and you want to know what happened later.

He flips another switch and the exterior lights turn on. Jake can now see the rough rock sides of the shaft moving upward which is the only way to know he is still descending.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Okay, at least my exterior lights are working. Not ideal, but it'll have to do.

His Jumper is spinning slowly and his lights hit a thick cable a few meters away from him. As he spins he sees three more.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Confirming that the lifting cables  
are deployed.

Suddenly the rock shaft disappears.

EXT. SUBSURFACE VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper drops from an opening in the ceiling into a huge cavern. As it descends, the Jumper continues to spin, its lights stabbing at the empty darkness surrounding it.

The Jumper finally approaches the floor of the cave.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

There is a LOUD JOLT as the Jumper touches the bottom.

JAKE  
Ah, that was a little harder than I  
expected.

Jake tilts his Jumper forward and looks at the ground. It's smooth and silt-free.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Definitely not standing on sand or  
silt.

He straightens his Jumper and spins slowly around.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Well, I think you all were right.  
This room isn't natural.

Besides the grappling end of the three lifting cables resting on the floor surrounding him, several odd shapes can be seen in the distance. Then his lights strike a large structure fifty meters ahead.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Found something nearby. Detaching  
elevator cable and heading to it.

## EXT. SUBSURFACE VAULT - CONTINUOUS

The Jumper walks over to a long white cylinder lying on its side. As he reaches it, he sees that even on its side, it towers over him.

The object is obvious to us as a MODERN SPACECRAFT LAUNCH VEHICLE but Jake doesn't know that, having never seen one.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)

This is what we want. It's weird and definitely Pre-Fall.

Jake walks his Jumper to one side of the cylinder.

JAKE (OVER COMMS) (cont'd)

More importantly, it looks like it's just narrow enough to fit through the shaft if we lift from one end.

Jake turns his Jumper and begins walking back to the center of the Vault where he came down.

## INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake sees the hanging lift cables directly ahead.

JAKE

Heading back to get the cables. This is going to be easier than I --

The view out of his cockpit suddenly goes black.

JAKE (cont'd)

Or not!

It is totally black out of his viewports. His dash lights are working, however, and he quickly hits several switches, but the exterior lights stay off.

JAKE (cont'd)

Drown it! I'm in trouble.

He moves his control sticks back and forth and feels the Jumper move.

JAKE (cont'd)

My internal power is still working, so it's just the exterior lights. It's almost like someone doesn't want me to see what's out there.

He checks his dashboard as lines of data scroll down it.

JAKE (cont'd)  
My emergency pinger still has power.  
Hoping that will reach you all  
topside.

He presses a red tab overhead and hears a loud PING.

Out of his viewports, he SEES THE SOUND WAVE LEAVING HIS JUMPER. It travels outward like a scanning beam, lighting up the cave around him in fluorescent blue. He sees at least ten large objects in the room before the wave dissipates.

JAKE (cont'd)  
That was unexpected. Maybe I can  
complete this mission after all.

Jake presses the overhead tab again.

EXT. SUBSURFACE VAULT - CONTINUOUS

As the sound wave briefly lights up the room again, Jake begins walking directly toward the lift cables in the center of the room.

When the room goes black, he presses the tab again, sending out another wave.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
Drown it. Only enough power for one  
or two more pings. Gotta move faster.

As he starts to run, the room begins to darken

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Just before Jake's view goes completely black, SOMETHING LARGE SWIMS BY in front of him.

JAKE  
(yelling)  
I'm not alone.

Jake presses the tab sending out a final ping and starts to sprint.

EXT. SUBSURFACE VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is running as the mysterious object circles closer. The light is already fading as he reaches the elevator cable. Jake quickly attaches the cable and is pulled back up just as the darkness covers him.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake's face is covered with sweat and his heart is beating too fast.

Seconds pass as he continues to climb. He tries to slow his breathing.

Something bangs against the hull, spinning his Jumper and shaking his nerves. Jake holds his breath in the silence, waiting for another strike.

As he nears the top of the shaft, he can see light streaming down from the seafloor surface.

He hears a BEEP and his comms panel shows a message: RECEIVING LASER COMMUNICATIONS. Jake activates that channel, then:

GEMMA

Repeat. Jake, if you can hear me, we have visitors. Do not attempt wireless communications with us. Stay hidden and stand by for further instructions.

As the cable pulling him up reaches the top, Jake quickly powers down his Jumper.

Out his forward viewport, he can see the Messenger hovering a short distance away. When he squints his eyes, he can just make out bodies moving on the bridge.

JAKE

(to himself)  
What the bilge is going on?

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the Salvage Rig TWO LARGE SUBMARINES are moving into position, directly facing the Messenger.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A RAPID PINGING SOUND fills the bridge.

ROE

Active acoustics. They're targeting us.

Coal slams his fist down on his console.

ARJUN

Pirates!

A SOFTER BEEPING SOUND comes from Gemma's station. She sits down and studies her console.

GEMMA

I'm receiving a hail. It's the Butcher.

ROE

They rewired the transponder he sold us. Put in a tracker or something. I should have checked.

ARJUN

We all should have checked.

COAL

Put him on the chart table.

The upper torso of Nick the Butcher materializes on the chart table in the middle of the bridge. The rendering is perfect and it looks as if the gross old man is sticking his shiny head right out of the table.

NICK THE BUTCHER

Marcus Coal. I didn't realize Auntie was working for you now.

COAL

What can I do for you, Nick?

NICK THE BUTCHER

This Salvage Rig of yours is rather large, which tells me you have located quite a prize out here. I think perhaps you will need our help recovering it.

Coal gives a look at Gemma who immediately cuts the feed. The Butcher's face freezes.

GEMMA

He doesn't know what's below the Rig.

Coal makes another signal and Nick's face comes to life.

NICK THE BUTCHER

I said, I think you will need help salvaging whatever you have found out here.

COAL

We parked a Rig here just in case we locate something. A lot of unexplored territory on this side of the Rift, as I'm sure you know.

NICK THE BUTCHER

You paid me a handsome price for that transponder so that you could avoid the days it would normally take to get here. You have already found something and I am willing to bet it is nearby.

COAL

Well, that's a bet you would lose. As I said --

NICK THE BUTCHER

You severed your contract with the Shippers Guild two months ago and there are no Colonial Vessels on this side of the Rift. I think we both understand that your options are quite limited.

A moment passes as Coal and the Butcher face each other.

COAL

So, a fifty-fifty split, is that what you're suggesting?

NICK THE BUTCHER

(smiling)

I'm not a greedy man, Captain, but I am a businessman. My standard rate for assisting in a salvage is twenty five percent. I'll ask no more from you.

COAL

I'll have to discuss it with my crew.

NICK THE BUTCHER

Well, it so happens that I'm about to have lunch, so I will give you a full hour, Captain. But let me remind you that both of my vessels are armed and yours is not. Do not make the mistake of testing me.

Gemma turns off the chart table and Nick's head melts back into the table. Coal stares at the now empty table for several long seconds before finally speaking.



COAL

I guess it's time for a meeting.  
 (to Stacy)  
 Might as well get Jake on the direct  
 feed. He's a part of this mess now.

INT. MESSENGER - GALLEY - MINUTES LATER

Gemma brings a large pot of tea to the table and Arjun hands out cups to everyone. The rest of the crew is seated at the table, while the cockpit feed of Jake is being projected on the wall.

JAKE

I wish I was in there with you all.

STACY

How are you doing, Jake?  
 (glancing at the  
 others)  
 I mean what's your Jumper's status?

JAKE

The Jumper and I are both fine. Arjun filled me in, so I think I understand the situation. What are your options at this point?

Roe leans forward in her chair.

ROE

Do we actually have any options to discuss, or are we all in denial of the hopelessness of the situation?

Gemma begins pouring tea.

GEMMA

I think it is important to remember that sometimes obstacles can become challenges with the right mental attitude.

ARJUN

So how do we get the right mental attitude for something as absolutely hopeless as this?

COAL

My father-in-law, who was my first captain, would say that it takes an "adaptive unconscious." Do any of you know what that is?

When no one answers, Gemma speaks up.

GEMMA

It's a method to quickly find solutions to problems without consciously trying to. It means allowing your mind to work in the background.

JAKE

I do that all of the time. I actually can't stop it.

COAL

So, tell us how you would go about solving this dilemma.

Everyone stares at Jake on the screen like they are expecting him to suddenly come up with a brilliant plan.

JAKE

I'm sorry. I don't have a clue how to solve this.

COAL

But how would you go about solving it if you were all alone out here. Tell us your process.

Jake thinks for a moment.

JAKE

Well first, we should list our assets, no matter how small.

ROE

We don't have any weapons, we don't have any allies to come to our rescue, we don't have --

JAKE

You're listing what we don't have. What do we have?

ARJUN

We have food, water, and air to last several weeks.

JAKE

Okay, what else? What can we do outside the ship?

STACY

Our shuttle is long range. Maybe we could sneak away and get help.

ROE

They would see the shuttle on their sonar and destroy it before it got very far.

ARJUN

Plus it would never make it across the Rift.

JAKE

What else?

STACY

We have the Salvage Rig but it's useless for anything besides lifting heavy objects.

GEMMA

What about the Jumper? It's small and moves on the seafloor.

(glancing at Roe)

It wouldn't be easily detected by their sonar, would it?

ROE

That's true, but it's slow and it wouldn't get very far.

STACY

We could boost its battery, but where would it go for help? There's no one else on this side of the Rift.

There is a long pause where no one speaks. Everyone seems out of ideas.

ROE

So, that's it? We don't have a single thing that can help us?

Stacy notices Jake staring blankly at the table. She waves her hand in front of the screen.

STACY

Did the screen freeze or did you just have a stroke?

Jake keeps staring at the table as he answers.

JAKE  
Roe is right. There isn't a single  
thing that can help us.

ROE  
That's what I said.

Jake looks wide-eyed at Roe and then at Coal.

JAKE  
No. I mean the answer isn't a single  
thing. It's everything!

Jake looks around his cockpit, then back at the crew.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Sorry. I really need to show you  
something on the bridge chart table?  
How can I do that?

ARJUN  
I have an idea.

INT. MESSENGER - REC ROOM - MINUTES LATER

In the Rec Room, a digital recreation of Jake is sitting in his cockpit chair next to a copy of the bridge chart table as the rest of the crew enter. Stacy walks over and touches his shoulder.

STACY  
This is really weird. I've never seen  
anyone I know copied live before.

Jake looks at Stacy and then back at the chart table.

JAKE  
I know we're short on time. Can I  
operate this table from here?

ARJUN  
I set up the program to allow that.

JAKE  
Great.  
(speaking to table)  
Please show me a top view of the  
immediate surroundings outside the  
ship, centered on the Salvage Rig.

The chart table comes to life and quickly builds a model of the surrounding seafloor.

In the center is the Salvage Rig, with the Messenger on one side and the two pirate ships on the other.

COAL

You're going to explain yourself now, correct?

JAKE

Like I said, the answer isn't just one thing. It's everything you all mentioned.

Jake reaches out and touches the solid model, dragging his finger across the seafloor creating a curved line from the Messenger around one side of the Salvage Rig and toward the two pirate ships.

JAKE (cont'd)

This is you in the shuttle, Captain.

COAL

Please tell me your plan doesn't include me ramming them with our shuttle.

Everyone else chuckles but Jake remains serious, lost in his thoughts.

JAKE

No. You're going to tell the Butcher that you want to come over to meet him in person to discuss the deal.

GEMMA

That would be foolish. He would simply become a hostage.

Jake looks at her and nods.

JAKE

He'll never get there. It's just a diversion.

ARJUN

A diversion for what?

JAKE

For what I'll be doing in the Jumper.

ROE

Which is what?

JAKE

I'm going to quietly step out of this Salvage Rig and grab two of its spooled cables.

STACY

Those are attached to the balloons. They're for lifting salvage.

JAKE

Exactly. While Coal approaches the ships, when all eyes, and sonar pings, are on him, I'll drag two of the cables over to the rear of the ships and --

COAL

Drown it. You're talking about floating them!

STACY

Do what?

Jake finally cracks a smile.

JAKE

I'm going to attach the cables to the rear end of the ships. Arjun said the grapplers will attach to anything metal. Then we activate the balloons' inflators.

ROE

Both ships get pulled up by their asses. That's brilliant.

JAKE

All ships have one weakness.

STACY

The beating heart!

JAKE

(to Stacy)

Exactly. Their ships need to be horizontal to operate, just like ours. In a vertical position, they won't be able to move, launch torpedoes, or even open a hatch to escape.

Arjun clears his throat.

ARJUN

I hate to be the realist here, but what you're proposing sounds impossible. I think we should consider what they offered us.

There is silence for a moment.

GEMMA

You're actually suggesting that we make a deal with the Butcher?

COAL

That's not going to happen.

ARJUN

With all due respect, Sir, I think we should consider every option before rushing into an action that could get us killed.

COAL

I said, that's not going to happen.

Arjun takes a step back from the table. There's a seriousness on his face that few have seen before.

ARJUN

You make jokes about me being a gambler, but you pay me to evaluate risks. There's an old saying, "what winners don't know, gamblers understand." As I see it, the odds are heavily stacked against us, and if we pursue Jake's plan, at least one of us will most likely die.

GEMMA

Arjun's right.

Coal looks at her in shock.

COAL

Gemma, you of all people know that we can not agree to this.

GEMMA

No, we can't. But Arjun's point is still valid. Jake's plan is extremely dangerous.

Gemma looks at Coal, her face uncharacteristically tense.

GEMMA (cont'd)  
We could lose everything. Everyone.

COAL  
So, you're saying we shouldn't try?

GEMMA  
No. I'm saying that while it is dangerous, I actually believe it will work.

STACY  
Why?

Gemma looks at Jake.

GEMMA  
Because it's Jake's idea and he's had some pretty good ideas so far. I think we should trust him. I know I do.

Jake and Gemma exchange knowing glances.

JAKE  
Thank you.

Coal turns to face Arjun.

COAL  
You know I value your input, but we are going ahead with this plan. If you need to step aside, I suppose we can do it without you.

Arjun sighs.

ARJUN  
Actually, Sir, you can't. To pull off Jake's plan, we'll need someone at the Salvage Rig to disconnect the balloons from their moorings. That someone will be me.

ROE  
That's a two-person job. You'll need my help out there.

Coal nods and pats Arjun on the shoulder, then turns to the group.



COAL

We have to assume the Butcher's people will be listening on all channels, so we'll have to do this with no communications. It's going to take precision timing from every last one of us.

Coal waits for any additional feedback. Nothing comes.

COAL (cont'd)

We have less than an hour, people. Let's get busy.

INT. JUMPER - LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER

Jake is sitting in his cockpit, patiently waiting for the call to start.

COAL (OVER COMMS)

I'm in the shuttle and ready to launch. Remember, no communications until we are all safely back on the ship.

STACY (OVER COMMS)

Arjun and Roe have just left the ship. Gemma and I will be standing by on the bridge.

JAKE

Disconnecting laser comms now.

COAL (OVER COMMS)

Good luck, Jake.

JAKE

You too, Sir.

EXT. SALVAGE RIG - MOMENTS LATER

Jake's Jumper steps out of the elevator opening. Arjun and Roe, looking identical in their bulky hardsuits, walk up to the Jumper and each gives a thumbs up.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake can see Arjun and Roe standing right in front of him. He signals back with a thumbs up.

JAKE  
(to himself)  
I hope you're wrong about this being  
a bad idea.

Jake looks off to his side. The lights of the Coal's shuttle leaving the Messenger are visible in the distance. He refocuses on the task ahead.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Time to do some damage.

Jake grips both control sticks, takes a deep breath and pushes them forward.

EXT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle is moving in a slow, wide arc toward the two pirate vessels, being careful to stay clear of the Salvage Rig. Its external lights are illuminating the water ahead.

INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Captain Coal is seated alone in the cozy wraparound cockpit, looking through small forward viewports. Ahead of him he sees the two pirate ships' external lights suddenly come on, nearly blinding him.

COAL  
(to himself)  
That's right. Everyone look at me.  
Nothing else to see out here.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake slowly walks to the far side of the Salvage Rig and locates two of the large lift cables.

Arjun and Roe can be seen at the Rig's control station on top. A moment later, the two cables detach from the rig with a small puff of bubbles.

Using the Jumper's clawed hands, Jake grabs them both and begins walking toward the pirate vessels, dragging the cables behind him.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Gemma is sitting at Roe's acoustics station and Stacy is crouching next to her. Gemma's hands are sliding back and forth over the dashboard.

STACY

Tell me this is going to work.

GEMMA

(focusing on her  
hands)

I'm broadcasting an undulating low  
frequency carrier wave like Roe  
showed me. That should confuse  
their --

STACY

I said, tell me it's going to work.

Gemma reaches up and grabs hold of her hand.

GEMMA

(whispering)

It's going to work.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is now right behind one of the pirate ships. He cautiously moves the grappler into position and places it against the hull of the ship. A small green light begins flashing on the grappler. Jake lets go of it and it stays in place.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

JAKE

That was easy.

He moves the controls to turn his Jumper toward the other ship.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Like before, Jake attaches the grappler to the hull of the second ship. When the green light begins flashing, the Jumper begins to back away.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake smiles.

JAKE  
Gotcha!

Out one of his side viewports he suddenly sees two bright lights growing rapidly larger.

JAKE (cont'd)  
What the bilge?

AN ALARM GOES OFF.

JAKE (cont'd)  
Drown it!

Jake pulls back on one control stick while shoving the other one forward.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper rotates in place and then begins running across the seafloor at full speed. Right behind him, the two lights are revealed to be a small shuttle speeding toward him. As the shuttle closes in on Jake, it LAUNCHES A SMALL TORPEDO.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

AN ALARM BLARES IN JAKE'S HEADSET.

JAKE  
(yelling)  
Emergency jump!

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper drops into a low crouch, then leaps off the seafloor as the back thrusters engage. The torpedo passes right between the Jumper legs, barely missing Jake, and disappears in the darkness ahead.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Gemma's dashboard shows chaos erupting outside.

GEMMA  
There's a shuttle in the water. It's  
going after Jake!

An explosion erupts outside the viewport, the shock wave  
hits the bridge a split second later.

STACY  
Jake!

Gemma jumps up and runs to her navigation station. Stacy  
replaces her in the acoustics chair.

GEMMA  
Abort, Captain. It's a trap!

Coal's voice blasts from the overhead speaker.

COAL (OVER COMMS)  
Inflate the balloons, Gemma.

GEMMA  
We don't know if Jake completed --

A second explosion erupts outside the viewport.

COAL  
Do it now!

As the second shock wave batters the bridge, Gemma nods to  
Stacy, who slams her hand down on her dashboard.

EXT. FLOAT RIG - CONTINUOUS

Two floats on the Salvage Rig rapidly expand as they are  
inflated. They begin to climb quickly and the cables  
attached to them grow taut.

The two pirate ships are just starting to maneuver toward  
the Messenger, when they are pulled off the seafloor.

Hanging nose down they slowly drift away, unable to pursue  
the Messenger.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is zigzagging across the seafloor with the  
pirate shuttle right behind him.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake sees the two big ships floating away and a smile appears on his face. He mistakenly relaxes for a moment.

STACY (OVER COMMS)  
Jake, hard to port!

Without hesitation, Jake yanks his control sticks to the left and sees a torpedo zip by him on the right, barely missing him.

JAKE  
(to himself)  
Gotta lose this guy.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper lunges forward, digging its mechanical hands into the seafloor, and begins running on all four limbs (like a dog.) As he does this, he is able to throw up a thick cloud of sand and silt behind him.

The shuttle dives into the cloud. A moment later it emerges from the other side and glides to a stop. There is no sign of the Jumper.

The shuttle begins to rotate in place, its flood lights scanning the surrounding darkness like the beacon on top of Capital City. As it completes a circle and the cloud dissipates, we see the Jumper lying flat on its back directly beneath the shuttle.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake is lying flat on his back in darkness. Out of his forward viewport, he is looking straight up at the underside of the shuttle as it spins above him.

JAKE  
There it is!

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Jumper reaches up with one of its mechanical hands and grabs hold of the shuttle torpedo launcher, pinching it closed.

The shuttle's thrusters suddenly power up and the shuttle speeds away from Jake.

The Jumper pushes itself back to a standing position and faces the shuttle which is now stationary a dozen meters away with its lights aimed directly at Jake.

Jake lifts one of the Jumper arms and flips it off.

The shuttle tries to launch a torpedo, but then in a burst of light and bubbles, the torpedo detonates and the shuttle SUDDENLY IMPLODES violently.

The shock wave blasts out from the wreckage and knocks Jake's Jumper backward.

He quickly stands the Jumper back up, but the seafloor suddenly begins to shift beneath him. The entire region is now sinking and we see the Salvage Rig sinking behind him.

COAL (OVER COMMS)

Jake! The Vault is collapsing. Get out of there!

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake looks out his viewports and sees the sand shaking all around his viewports. He starts to rotate his control sticks to turn his Jumper around, then stops.

JAKE

Arjun! Roe!

EXT. SALVAGE RIG - CONTINUOUS

As the entire Salvage Rig is being pulled down into the sand, Arjun and Roe can be seen working the controls.

ROE (OVER COMMS)

We have to get out of here!

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)

Look at the seafloor. The Vault is collapsing.

ROE (OVER COMMS)

Then let's make a run for it.

Arjun stays at the controls.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)

We can't make it. I'm trying something else.

Above them, the huge lifting balloons suddenly begin to inflate. Roe grabs onto a guard rail as the Salvage Rig bucks and tilts. As the sand below continues to sink, the Rig fights back.

ROE (OVER COMMS)  
It's working.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
Not enough. We're still being pulled down.

ROE (OVER COMMS)  
Then what do we do?

At that moment, Jake's Jumper runs up to the Salvage Rig.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
Both of you, get on my back!

Jake slams the Jumper against the side of the rig. The Rig buckles as it continues to sink.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
Get out of here, Jake. Save yourself.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
Too late for that. Jump!

Arjun leaps onto the back of the Jumper. Roe is still trapped on top.

ROE (OVER COMMS)  
Leave me. You two get out of here.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
We're not leaving without you, so jump!

Roe takes a step back and then lunges forward.

She falls short, but Jake pivots his Jumper and throws one arm underneath her, catching her. He then tosses her onto his back next to Arjun.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
She's on. Go Jake!

Jake turns and begins to run, but the seafloor is turning to liquid and pulling him down. He digs the Jumper arm into the silt, clawing his way forward, but he is losing this race.



INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Stacy and Gemma are standing together in shock watching what is happening out the viewports. Then the bridge lurches as the collapsing seafloor pulls the ship forward.

GEMMA

The collapse is creating a vortex.  
It's pulling us down.

Stacy jumps into the helm console and throws the ship's thrusters in reverse.

The deck tilts hard as THRUSTER SOUNDS FILL THE BRIDGE.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is struggling hard against the sinking ground, but every step forward is a half step back.

ROE (OVER COMMS)

We're not getting out of this.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake's dashboard is screaming at him as he pushes his Jumper motors to maximum. Nothing is working.

JAKE

Emergency Jump!

Nothing happens.

JAKE (cont'd)

Drown it! We're too heavy.

ROE

Don't be a hero. Save yourself!

In desperation, Jake tries pivoting his Jumper, trying to get a better foothold.

With sweat pouring off his forehead, he spots the Salvage Rig now off to his left. Its balloons are fully inflated now, but it is still half submerged and going down.

JAKE

Hold on!

Jake yanks his control sticks hard to his left.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jake's Jumper is now running right back toward the sinking Salvage Rig.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
What are you doing?

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
Improvising. Hold on!

Just as the Salvage Rig sinks below the sand, Jake grabs hold of one of its balloons and literally rips it off of its mount.

Immediately, the Jumper is yanked off the seafloor as the balloon pulls them upward.

ROE (OVER COMMS)  
You are crazy!

As the Salvage Rig is swallowed up beneath them, the Jumper and all aboard are climbing quickly.

INT. JUMPER - CONTINUOUS

Jake is looking at his dashboard gauges, seeing the pressure falling off as they climb.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
You did it Jake. I can't believe it  
but --

JAKE  
We're not safe yet. We still have to  
find a way back to the Messenger. I  
have no buoyancy. If I let go, we'll  
drop like a--

COAL (OVER COMMS)  
You folks need a lift?

EXT. DEEP OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle has appeared out of the blue and is pulling up right beside the rising Jumper.

COAL (OVER COMMS)  
If you can grab my lower docking  
sled, I should be able to maneuver us  
all back to the ship.

JAKE (OVER COMMS)  
I'll give it a shot.

Jake then reaches out with his one free hand and grabs the bottom of the shuttle. As he does so, he releases the balloon which rockets upward.

The shuttle dips from the extra weight and Arjun loses his grip. He starts to fall.

Roe lunges for him, almost falling herself, but manages to grip his hand just in time.

She pulls him back onto the Jumper's back. Arjun hugs her.

ARJUN (OVER COMMS)  
Thank you! I owe you!

Roe smiles at him through her helmet.

ROE (OVER COMMS)  
I think we're even now. Just hold on tighter, okay?

Arjun nods, then grips the Jumper's back with both hands as the shuttle manages to steady itself. It then heads toward the Messenger in the distance.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Stacy and Gemma are standing together in shock having just watched what happened out of their viewports.

GEMMA  
Did you see that?

STACY  
I knew Jake belonged on this ship.

Gemma looks at her and smiles.

GEMMA  
I know that look. Your father used to look at your mother that way.

Stacy looks at Gemma.

STACY  
I don't -- I don't know what -- Jake is a -- fellow crewmate, that's all.

Gemma turns back to the scene outside, a subtle smile on her wise face.

INT. MESSENGER - CARGO BAY - LATER

The floor hatch is lifting Jake's Jumper into the cargo bay. Arjun and Roe are standing beside him in their hardsuits. Seawater pouring off everyone.

When the floor hatch seals, there is a LOUD HISS OF AIR bleeding out of the room.

Moments later, Arjun removes his helmet, then helps Roe remove hers. Jake can be seen inside the glass cockpit shutting down the Jumper.

Jake opens the Jumper's lower access door and slides out. He stands next to Roe and Arjun.

ARJUN

That was quite a gamble you took coming back for us. What made you think it would work?

JAKE

I told you I don't believe in unsolvable problems and I really don't like losing.

ARJUN

Well, I guess sometimes winners know things gamblers don't.

Roe pushes Arjun aside and gives Jake a strong hug, nearly squeezing the air out of his lungs. She then takes a step back.

ROE

What I should do is punch you in the gut for risking your life for us.

ARJUN

Hey, speak for yourself. I for one am quite happy he risked his life for us.

JAKE

I'm just glad it all worked out.

Just then, the rear door opens and Stacy comes bolting in. She runs up to Jake and wraps her arms around him.

STACY

Glad you remembered which side is port.

JAKE  
Yeah, thanks for that.

Stacy looks over and sees Roe standing there awkwardly. She reaches out an arm.

STACY  
Get in here.

Roe leans in and hugs them both. She then reaches out to Arjun and pulls him in as well.

Gemma and Coal enter through the rear door. They stop and stare at the crew embracing.

GEMMA  
Look dear. The kids are hugging.

Coal just shakes his head. They continue toward the group and when Jake sees them coming, he pushes Stacy gently back.

Coal stares at Jake in silence for an awkward moment, but then reaches out his hand.

COAL  
Your plan actually worked.

Jake shakes his hand.

JAKE  
It took all of us to pull it off. Oh, and thanks for the lift, Captain.

ROE  
Did we -- did we lose everything out there?

COAL  
Let's get your hardsuits off and we'll all go find out together.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

On the bridge, the crew is standing together, looking out at the featureless seafloor. There is no sign of the Salvage Rig or the hole in the ground.

STACY  
What did you see down there, Jake? We never heard from you once you went down the hole. Did you find anything at all?

Jake's eyes glaze over as he remembers.

JAKE

It was dark, but there were objects down there -- huge objects. And I think there was something guarding them. Something alive.

Everyone stares at him.

ROE

Pull up the Jumper's video records. We can see for ourselves.

Arjun works the controls on the chart table, then looks at Coal.

ARJUN

There's nothing on the Jumper's recorders but static.

GEMMA

Just like the probe we sent down before.

STACY

I think someone --  
(looking at Gemma)  
--or something, didn't want us down there.

There is a long silence as those words sink in.

ROE

We can always come back someday and try again. Bring something that can maybe dig down to it.

COAL

Not for a while. I spent every credit I have to acquire that Salvage Rig.

Coal looks out the viewport at the barren seafloor. Stacy reaches out and holds her father's hand.

STACY

We all survived and the ship is intact. I think we should call that a win.

Coal nods.

COAL

You're right -- as usual. I guess it's time for us to move on.

ARJUN

Make ready to head back, Sir?

COAL

One official duty to perform before we go.

Coal looks at Stacy.

COAL (cont'd)

I'm officially moving you back to Navigation. Gemma is First Mate and she's been filling in for you long enough.

STACY

What about Engineering? You know, good engineers are hard to find these days.

ARJUN

Especially now that we are broke again.

STACY

Looks like we'll have to make do with what we have aboard.

Stacy rolls her eyes toward Jake. Coal cracks a slight smile and turns to Jake.

COAL

My navigator thinks I should offer you a position on my bridge. That is, unless you still want be to drop you off at our next stop.

INT. CAPITAL CITY - LOWER LEVEL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

Jake imagines his 10-year-old self running down that hallway. He suddenly slides to a stop.

He sets his jaw firmly as he faces something in front of him. It's his MOTHER and FATHER standing in the hallway. They motion him forward.

YOUNG JAKE HAS TRANSFORMED INTO GROWN JAKE. He shakes his head.

JAKE  
It's time to stop running.

INT. MESSENGER - BRIDGE - RETURN TO SCENE

Jake suddenly realizes everyone is staring at him.

JAKE  
I mean, yes, Sir. I accept. And thank  
you.

The crew all step forward and pat him hard on the back,  
offering congratulations.

COAL  
Okay. Since I don't trust using the  
transponder a second time, we have a  
very long trip back home. Everyone to  
your stations. Let's get this ship  
moving.

As the crew return to their assigned seats, Jake sits down  
in the Engineering station. He glances up and sees Stacy  
smiling at him. He smiles back.

At the forward command station, Gemma leans in close to  
Coal.

GEMMA  
(whispering)  
Sure about this?

Coal looks at Jake.

COAL  
You're the one who said you trusted  
him.

GEMMA  
I know I did, but that was for one  
specific mission. He was reckless  
today.

COAL  
He risked his life to save Arjun and  
Roe. His reckless actions probably  
saved all of our lives.

GEMMA  
But people died out there. The crew  
of that shuttle -- they were Nick's.  
He won't forget.



COAL

I know.

There was a long pause, then she leaned in closer to Coal, their shoulders touching.

GEMMA

What did you say they called him? A rogue wave? Are you sure that's something you want on your ship?

Coal sees his daughter and Jake exchanging glances. An unforced smile appears on his face.

COAL

Maybe that's something we need.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

As the Messenger cruises off into the dark ocean, it appears that this is the end of the story.

But then, unseen by any of the crew, a HUGE SHAPE EMERGES FROM THE DARKNESS behind them, moving swiftly to the location where the Salvage Rig was swallowed into the seafloor.

There it stops, hovering. Is it a living creature or a machine? Perhaps both, but it's easily five times larger than the Messenger.

Long spiked arms shoot out from the underside of the creature, stabbing down into the seafloor, barely stirring the silt.

A moment later, it pulls up the entire Salvage Rig, balloons and all, cradling it against its underside.

The creature then turns and disappears back into the darkness, just as another one takes its place. This one pulls up the artifact Jake found and then leaves.

And behind that, another is waiting.

And another.

And another.

FADE OUT