

HOUNDS OF THE VOID

EPISODE 1: "ALL'S FAIR GAME IN THE BELT"

Written by

R.C. Cadigan

Los Angeles, CA 90032
(207) 294-1822

EXT. SHIPPING LANE, DEBRIS BELT, DEEP SPACE

A spacecraft rumbles through the void of space. This is THE DAYBRUSH, a civilian transport shuttle. In front of the shuttle, bands of space dust and rock - THE DEBRIS BELT - textures the darkness.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN LUTHOR (45), a poised, polished man, stands at the helm beside his FIRST MATE and new navigator, the very green CADET TEF MALTESE" (26).

Cadet Tef watches the navigation monitor, where the icon of their craft blinks over a boundary line denoting the Debris Belt. She zooms out on the screen with a gesture from her GAUNTLET - a sleek, do-it-all robot-glove ubiquitous to this civilization.

CADET TEF

Debris Belt approaching, Captain.

She lets out a nervous breath. Captain Luthor looks amused.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Have you sailed through the Belt before, Cadet Maltese?

CADET TEF

Never, Captain.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Well, let me remind you the entirety of this lane, from Belgar to Verdis Prime, is policed by security forces.

To prove his point, Captain Luthor flicks his gauntlet and opens a video-call to a nearby patrol ship, B.S.F. GALLANT.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR (CONT'D)

Do you read, Commander?

COMMANDER MOSKVA (48) of the local Belgari Security Force stands at his bridge with three officers.

COMMANDER MOSKVA

We read you, Daybrush. This is the B.S.F. Gallant of the Belgari Security Forces, and you sail under our protection.

Luthor flicks off the video-call and smiles confidently.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Your first name is Tef, Cadet?

(Tef nods)

Thing is, Tef. Even if some fool pirate was crazy enough to tangle with the BSF, this is just a passenger shuttle.

INT. DAYBRUSH, PASSENGER CABIN

A hundred or so passengers sit in seats, not unlike a conventional aircraft. A MOTHER (40) retracts the face-shield of her CHILD's (8) "HELM". Everyone wears some version of a Helm (many are "fashionable") in case they lose atmosphere. Next to the mother and daughter sits DR. EKSES (60), a stiff, anxious man who habitually touches his breast pocket.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

Captain Luthor's tone is paternal.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

It's the cargo haulers they're after.

CADET TEF

Yes, Captain. Thank you, sir.

Cadet Tef smiles warmly and finally seems to relax. Even though she's twenty years his junior, he senses chemistry.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Have you spent much time on Verdis Prime, Tef? I keep an apartment in Panura District. You should see it. Like one giant garden.

CADET TEF

Sounds lovely, sir.

DAYBRUSH MATE #1

Incoming hail, Captain.

A video-call pops up, but shows only static.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Where is this coming from?

DAYBRUSH MATE #1

I'm not sure, sir.

With an eerie tone, the static solidifies into the image of vicious white fangs on a black background. A pirate flag. The tone turns into distorted laughter. A ship's icon appears on the navigation display, practically on top of The Daybrush.

CADET TEF

Captain. They're already here.

EXT. DEBRIS FIELD, ASTEROID'S SHADOW

THE HOUND, a robust, angular battleship shaped not unlike the head of a wolf, with oversized engine rings and a menacing heavy cannon, ripples into existence as it de-cloaks behind an asteroid. It fires its thrusters.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

The Hound slips into their field of view. The crew ducks as a beam of white energy flashes over their bow.

INT. THE HOUND, BRIDGE

Low light illuminates the wolfish smile of DORAN CUHAIL (30), co-captain of The Hound. His brother and co-captain, FINN CUHAIL (28), presses the throttle forward. Both brothers wear DROP-TROOPER SUITS, military-grade mech battle suits.

DORAN

Captain Luthor of The Daybrush, the Hounds of the Void are upon you.

FINN

That was a warning shot. The next one won't be.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

Captain Luthor grits his teeth in anger.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

I will not allow this ship to be taken. Return fire.

EXT. DAYBRUSH

A turret rotates on top of The Daybrush. A blast of white plasma from The Hound's heavy cannon destroys it instantly.

INT. DAYBRUSH, PASSENGER CABIN

The cabin shakes violently, lights strobe, and passengers cry out. They fix their helm visors. Dr. Ekses clutches his heart.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

The Bridge Crew topples against their equipment. Cadet Tef adjusts her gauntlet.

FINN (VIDEO)

Like I said. Maintain your current trajectory and prepare to be boarded. We are only interested in your cargo--

Luthor slams his fist and the video-call ends.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Send a distress call to the BSF.

Mate #1 opens a video-call to the BSF. The window is flickering static.

DAYBRUSH MATE #1

We're being jammed, sir.

The bridge crew watches in horror as The Hound pulls alongside them.

EXT. SPACE BATTLE

The Hound pulls parallel to The Daybrush and fires a series of robotic claws into its broadside, locking them together.

INT. DAYBRUSH, PASSENGER CABIN

The *thunk* of the grappling hooks shakes the cabin. The passengers scream.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

The Bridge shakes from the impact, the crew stumbles.

DAYBRUSH MATE #1

What do we do, Captain?

CAPTAIN LUTHOR
I would rather die than be boarded
by pirates.

CADET TEF
Is that so?

Cadet Tef sounds calm, sharp. She's actually ANDROMEDA CUHAIL "ANDIE" (26), the third and final captain of the Hound. Captain Luthor turns and Andie shoves her Gauntlet - with hidden plasma-cannon - under his chin.

ANDIE
Just say the word.

INT. THE HOUND, BOARDING BAY

In the light of the boarding bay, we finally get a good look at our pirate brothers arming for battle. Finn, serious, disciplined, a touch of kindness. Doran, boisterous, wild, aggressive. Doran touches his helm, a red plasma cannon glows to life on his forehead like a demonic eye. Finn locks PULSE BRACERS, non-lethal weapons, over his forearms.

DORAN
We wearing our capes, Finn?

FINN
You know I don't like hunting in
the Mercy Boy's lane, Doran.

Doran locks a clawed WAR GAUNTLET over his right hand.

DORAN
If I'm being honest - and you know,
brother, it causes me great pain to
be dishonest - I was kinda hoping
the Mercy Boys might join the
party.

Finn scoffs in disgust at his brother's recklessness.

FINN
Our sister is on that boat.

DORAN
So let's go get her.

INT. DAYBRUSH, PASSENGER CABIN

Alarms blare over the pandemonium of the passengers.

COMPUTER VOICE

Please, keep your harness locked
and lower your visors. If you do
not have a visor-

The alarm noises cut out as a monitor at the front of the
cabin flashes with Andie's partially masked face.

ANDIE (O.S.)

Listen up! This vessel is now under
the control of the Hounds of the
Void. You can all take a deep
breath. We don't want you, we don't
want your things. Just stay in your
seats and shut up, and you'll not
be harmed. Anyone who resists goes
for a swim.

Three DAYBRUSH CREWMAN trade glances, pistols drawn.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

Andie disconnects the call. She glances at the bridge crew,
gagged, visored, and mag-cuffed to the wall. Captain Luthor
has a bloody lip.

INT. THE HOUND, BOARDING BAY

Finn huffs in frustration and paces to the boarding door.

FINN

Where did you even get this intel?

Doran chuckles and does mock-spooky hands.

DORAN

I received a message from beyond
the grave.

FINN

[Jesus Christ], that sidurial
didn't do much, did it?

DORAN

Oh, it most certainly did.

FINN

I'm planning the next one.

They each put a metal boot on the door, preparing to fall.

DORAN
Fair enough. Now are we doing this
in style, or what?

Doran waggles the cape under Finn's nose. Grudgingly, a smile overtakes Finn's face.

EXT. THE HOUND

The boarding door opens and the brothers shoot through the void, black capes trailing behind them. Their tinted visors bear their pirate flag (the fangs). They land on the hull of the Daybrush beside the cabin airlock.

INT. DAYBRUSH, BRIDGE

Andie mans the controls. She hears Finn's voice in her helm.

FINN (OVER EARPIECE)
Hey, buddy.

ANDIE
Opening airlock.

INT. DAYBRUSH, AIRLOCK

The Brothers drop into the airlock, landing on their feet with practice as The Daybrush's local gravity asserts itself. Their capes whip up as atmosphere re-enters the airlock. Doran raps his metal knuckles on the inner door.

DORAN
Yoo-hoo.

INT. DAYBRUSH, PASSENGER CABIN

The inner airlock door bursts open and Finn and Doran storm in, gun barrels swinging.

DORAN
Nobody move! Nobody fucking move!

FINN
Stay in your seats and remain calm!

The Hounds are fast and decisive. CREWMAN #1 aims his pistol. Finn blasts him backwards with a shock from his Pulse-Bracer. The passengers scream. CREWMAN #2 tosses his pistol away and collapses against a wall. Crewman #1 twitches on the ground.

Doran stalks to the far side of the cabin. CREWMAN #3 pivots from around the corner. Doran catches him easily in the war gauntlet and the pistol fires harmlessly.

DORAN

Bad day to be a hero, mate.

Doran slams him into the wall, and he drops unconscious.

Nearby passengers whimper and cower as Doran lurches past. Finn snaps one of the crewman's pistols in half. Andie emerges from the bridge, marching a handcuffed Captain Luthor into the cabin.

ANDIE

If you two are done screwing around, we need to move.

Doran takes Luthor by the arm and addresses Finn.

DORAN

Make sure they don't do anything stupid.

INT. LOWER DECK STAIRWELL, DAYBRUSH

Andie leads Luthor and Doran to a dimly lit service deck.

ANDIE

Cargo bay is this way.

DORAN

No, no. It wouldn't be in the cargo bay. Not something as precious as this. They'd have some secret compartment. Isn't that right, Captain?

Doran lifts his tinted blast-visor to stare down at Luthor.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Do you know who I work for?

Doran grabs two of Luthor's fingers and easily breaks them backwards. Luthor screams.

DORAN

Where is it?

Luthor spits bloody saliva onto Doran's visor.

LUTHOR

Fuck you.

Andie rolls her eyes and flexes her fingers in front of Luthor's face. Sinister red lines glow inside her palm.

ANDIE

Have you ever heard of a Red-Hand mod? They're quite illegal.

She rips open Luthor's pants like tissue paper and grabs something. Luthor shrieks in horror.

CAPTAIN LUTHOR

Oh! Oh!

ANDIE

You know what happens if I squeeze my hand? Now where is it?

INT. PASSENGER CABIN, DAYBRUSH

Finn stalks row by row, monitoring the passengers. Women and children whimper and cry softly. The Child from earlier drops one of her stuffed animal toys against Finn's boot. The Mother hugs her child close as Finn plucks up and returns the toy. He momentarily lifts his tinted visor so as not to spook the child.

FINN

Is this yours?

The child nods, and Finn hands her the toy.

FINN (CONT'D)

Hold on tight to this one, eh? It's silly, isn't it? Just a big show? We'll be out of here in a jiff.

Before Finn stands, he makes eye contact with Dr. Ekses. Then he drops his tinted visor.

The door at the far side of the cabin bursts open and Doran and Andie stride towards Finn. Doran has a large container slung over his shoulder.

DORAN

Time to move.

INT. AIRLOCK, DAYBRUSH

The Hounds open the airlock door to exit the Daybrush.

A video-call pops up on the AR screen of Doran's clear visor. It's NYKE (16), the sibling's adopted baby sister.

NYKE (VIDEO CALL)

Fam, bullies are headed our way in
a hurry.

INT. AIRLOCK, DAYBRUSH

Doran takes out a sticky-bomb.

DORAN

Insurance policy.

Finn wraps his arms around Andie and they leap out of the airlock for the Hound. Doran plants the pointed base of the bomb in the wall, grabs the container, and leaps after them.

EXT. B.S.F. GALLANT AND THE HOUND, BATTLE

The Gallant races after The Hound. It launches a pair of torpedoes.

The Hound's beam cannon swings over its stern, lancing torpedoes, creating massive explosions.

ANGLE ON - Doran watches the plasma cloud ripple towards him.

INT. THE HOUND, AIRLOCK

Finn catches Doran's free hand and pulls him into the airlock as a wave of white plasma obliterates the grappling hooks behind them. The airlock door shoots closed.

EXT. THE HOUND AND THE GALLANT

The Hound's engines roar and it blasts into the Debris Belt.

The Gallant pursues, firing a beam cannon off the Hound's armored hull, leaving a black scorch mark.

INT. THE HOUND, BRIDGE

The bridge shudders. Nyke groans and hangs on to the controls. Finn enters, bounding into his piloting chair.

FINN

I gotcha, Nyke.

NYKE

Oh thank [god.]

Doran and Andie are right behind him.

FINN

Buckle up!

Finn grits his teeth and presses the throttles as the ship shakes again with another hit.

EXT. SPACE BATTLE IN THE DEBRIS FIELD

The Hound hugs around an asteroid, The Gallant is hot on its heels. A torpedo crashes into the asteroid, putting a crack straight through the huge chunk of rock.

In the distance, a dozen more patrol and battle ships close in at full speed.

INT. THE HOUND, BRIDGE

On the monitor, red BSF icons swarm in from all directions.

NYKE

[Jesus], guys, half the fucking BSF is responding to this call!

FINN

Anytime now, Doran.

Doran drops his blast-shield halfway to cover his eyes and opens a video-call to The Gallant.

DORAN

Listen up, pimple-dicks--

INT. GALLANT, BRIDGE

Commander Moskva glares at the full-screen display of Doran.

DORAN (ONSCREEN)

There's a bomb in the airlock of that ship. See the stream for yourself.

Another video-call opens up, showing the airlock with the blinking bomb.

INT. THE HOUND, BRIDGE

Doran holds up a detonator.

DORAN

Turn your ship around right now,
and tell all your friends to do the
same. You try to track us, or tag
us, and I swear to God, I will send
that entire ship, all those hundred
souls, into the void.

His face quivers in a way that says, "Don't test me."

INT. GALLANT, BRIDGE

Commander Moskva throttles after The Hound. The GALLANT MATE #1 appears beside him, pulling up the police records on The Hounds. We see Doran, then Finn, then Andie.

GALLANT FIRST MATE

The Hounds. Local Pirates, a
Motherless family out of Greenhub.

The next record on screen shows the brothers in military mech-suits, but with ceremonial attire and medals.

GALLANT FIRST MATE (CONT'D)

They were drop-troopers.

(Amazed)

How are they not dead or crazy?

Commander Moskva's thumb hovers over the trigger-button. He glances back at the livestream of the bomb on The Daybrush.

COMMANDER MOSKVA

Stand down.

DORAN (ONSCREEN)

Good boy.

The video-call cuts out.

EXT. DEBRIS BELT

The Belgar Security Forces cut their engines.

The Hound swoops around another asteroid and shimmers out of view as its cloaking system turns back on.

EXT. DEBRIS BELT, HIDEY-HOLE - MINUTES LATER

A large space rock drifts in the void. As it tilts, we see a hole in one side of it. The Hound jets up to the hole, pumps its thrusters, and reverses into the shadow, and re-cloaks.

INT. THE HOUND, BRIDGE

A rousing cheer goes up from the Crew. Doran bangs his heavy gauntlet, Nyke whoops, Andie is laughing as she wipes the nerves off her face. Finn's smile is more reserved.

NYKE

The Hounds did it again!

FINN

Alright, Doran. Let's see if it was all worth it.

CUT TO - Doran drops the stolen container on the floor of the bridge and breaks the lock. Everyone holds their breath.

Doran opens the container to reveal luminescent crystals.

ANDIE

Keff?

FINN

You dragged us into The Mercy Boy's lane for a street drug?

Doran digs into the Keff crystals and produces a much smaller metal box. They hold their breath.

Andromeda opens the box in Doran's massive claw. It's full of tiny, dark seeds. She gasps.

NYKE

What is that?

DORAN

That, my dear baby sister, is ten thousand fruit seeds. Not some bullshit, reconstructed half-plant. Heirloom DNA from Mother Earth herself. The last of its kind.

(Beat)

It's called tomato.

ANDIE

That's worth more than this ship.

Ever so carefully, Doran pinches some seeds out of the box and sniffs. Finn is torn between amazement and concern.

DORAN

Smells like home.

FINN

There's only one crew on Belgar
that could be smuggling a prize
like this.

Doran carefully closes the box.

DORAN

All's fair game in the Belt,
brother.

INT. DAYBRUSH, AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

A BOMB-DEFUSER in a heavy mech-suit cuts into the base of the bomb Doran planted in the airlock. The bluish light on the bomb starts flashing red. The bomb-defuser throws himself against the far wall of the airlock.

BOMB-DEFUSER

Shit shit shit!

INT. GALLANT, BRIDGE

Commander Moskva watches on a monitor as the top of the "bomb" clicks open and ejects a puff of confetti. The rattled bomb-defuser lets his arms fall. Confetti hangs in zero-G. Moskva tightens his hand into a fist.

MOSKVA

I will watch those boys hang.

EXT. GREENHUB, BELGAR - NIGHT, HOURS LATER

Metal spires and watery lights pierce the ever-flowing fog of industrial gasses, which spills over the rocky surface of a lifeless world like pus from a wound. This is Greenhub, The Hounds' port of call, one of several major human settlements on the moon of BELGAR. Despite its apparent desolation, spacecraft swarm above the fog.

TITLES: GREENHUB - BELGAR

The Hound, still actively cloaking, dips down towards the settlement. A deep geological gorge extends across the moon's surface past the haze of the fog. Beyond the rim of the moon, a gas giant envelopes the sky.

EXT. THE BRIG, STAMEN STREET, GREENHUB

Inside Greenhub, we find a slum-city bustling with energy. Pedestrian and wheeled travelers crowd the walkways on either side of the street. Bridges intersect these walkways, leaving the center lane open for flying vehicles - drones and aerial transports - to move between the levels. Rotors chug, whistles and horns blare, voices chatter, metal rings out. The walls are painted in fanciful designs of leaves and trees with peeling green paint.

And on the corner of this busy intersection stands THE BRIG, a many-story cylindrical metal tower. At one time the local prison, The Brig has been since repurposed by the locals, as evidenced by the glowing glass sign, which proclaims its own name cheerfully.

TITLES: THE BRIG - STAMEN STREET

INT. THE BRIG, PENTHOUSE LOUNGE

A raucous party greets us in the Penthouse Lounge of The Brig, ornately glamorous in contrast to its severe exterior. Bartenders sling glasses of liquor down the polished bar and fashionable patrons whirl between the furniture to a swing-time beat. At the center of it all are The Hounds.

Doran saunters through the middle of the floor, shaking hands. He's donned his formal civilian suit, and still looms over the crowd.

DORAN

Hey there, welcome.

Doran swings by a corner table, where Nyke is sitting on the back of a couch, holding court with a group of teens. She takes a glass of liquor off a server's tray, which Doran catches out of her hand, and swaps for a glass of beer.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Nothing hard for this one, hear?

He playfully pretends to smack Nyke upside the head.

He slides to URSO (35), a classic tough-guy, one of the Hound's main enforcers, and claps his hand.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Any trouble today, Urso?

URSO

Slick as oil, with you lot hogging all the attention.

ANGLE ON - Andie stands off to the side, surrounded by young, eager men. Beneath her smile, there's a sense of distraction.

ANGLE ON - Finn sips a glass of water at the bar. A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN (28) attempts to get his attention. He's watching a pair of Gladiator Matches on the monitors behind the bar. Doran swaggers up.

DORAN

If he's ignoring you, that means he likes you.

FINN

Will you excuse us?

Doran watches the beautiful woman leave.

DORAN

It's been a year, brother. You might consider having a little fun.

FINN

What is it with you, lately? Always a riskier gambit. Bigger catch. More heat.

DORAN

Did you want to open a hair salon?

FINN

A legitimate business, yes, some day. I don't want to live my whole life looking down a barrel.

DORAN

With all due respect, brother, we're pirates. When we put our guns down, that's when they come for us.

Andie appears at the bar beside them.

ANDIE

You having fun, whispering your secrets? You know it is customary for the captains to give a speech after a catch.

DORAN

That was always Finn's specialty.

FINN

I'm not really in the mood.

ANDIE

Finn, just do it, so Doran doesn't say something crazy.

The brothers shrug and agree to this. Finn takes Nyke's drink and hops up on the counter.

DORAN

Captain Finn has something to say!

FINN

I'm not that old, but even I remember when The Brig wasn't covered in gold. We've seen hard times in this family. We've seen war. And worse.

(Beat)

But we're Hounds. We scavenge, we scrap, we bite. We're Motherless. They took away our home planet, old Mother Earth, and still we never give up. And look how we hunt now.

The crowd cheers.

FINN (CONT'D)

Look how our pack grows. And--

The elevator door opens, and ORVALLE GUM (30), a Hound foot soldier, steps into the threshold. He's visibly pale. Finn spots him out of the corner of his eye and pauses.

FINN (CONT'D)

Speak of the [Devil], here's one more. What's the good word Orvalle?

The crowd laughs and everyone looks at Orvalle.

ANGLE ON - Doran narrows his gaze and adjusts his gauntlet.

ANGLE ON - Orvalle wrings his hands.

ORVALLE

I bring a message ... from the Mercy Boys.

All merriment ceases. Orvalle stumbles over his words.

ORVALLE (CONT'D)

They say we have 24 hours to return the stolen property. Or it's war.

(Whisper)

Sorry, Captain.

A device under Orvalle's shirt starts to flash and beep. Doran fires a non-lethal shock at him from his gauntlet-blaster. The force throws Orvalle back into the elevator. The door dings and starts to close. Orvalle groans in pain.

Then Orvalle *explodes*.

Doran covers Andie. Finn hits the deck. The blast shoots through the narrow gap in the door. Glass bulbs shatter and patrons tumble, but it's mostly contained by the elevator.

A second later, dust, smoke, and flickering lights are all that remain of the explosion. Doran releases Andie, glances around. The patrons seem okay.

MINUTES LATER - Doran stands in the exact same spot, staring at something. Lights flicker over his face.

The Penthouse has been emptied of all but essential personnel. The BARTENDER sweeps up broken glass. The MECHANIC fixes a chandelier. Andie and Finn coordinate a response with Urso and the other LIEUTENANTS.

ANDIE

They can have the seeds, but they'll have to pay. We'll set up a parlay on neutral ground, somewhere the Mercy Boys have no choice but to respect.

FINN

Only one man on Belgar with that kind of sway.

ANDIE

Don't say--

FINN

Polly Dektes.

ANDIE

Ugh, that creeper. I guess he'll do. Nyke, open our encrypted channel to the Gilded Lily.

Nyke types furiously in their air with two gauntlets, while code scrawls across her visor.

Doran stares at the blood-splattered elevator.

Finn addresses Urso and the other LIEUTENANTS.

FINN

For now, the rest of our soldiers
need our soldiers to lie low. Stay
vigilant.

DORAN

No.

Doran's voice reverberates through the dark, cavernous room.

DORAN (CONT'D)

I'm done living in their shadow. If
the Mercy Boys want a war, they can
have a war.

ANDIE

We have a couple ships, Doran. They
have a fleet. If we go head to
head, they'll kill us all.

DORAN

And if we tip-toe around them,
they'll kill us one by one. We need
to hit back. Hard.

FINN

Who died and made you king?

DORAN

Our fucking father, that's who. In
case you forgot, it was the Mercy
Boys that killed him, too. As long
as they run Belgar, there's a beam
waiting for everyone in this room.
Worse for Andie.

FINN

You know what I think, Doran? I
think it was you that got that bomb
planted on Orvalle's chest. Your
plan, your catch, your reckless
leadership.

DORAN

Sounds like you want to be the only
captain, Finnie.

Doran and Finn square off.

ANDIE

Both of you, shut up. You sound
like bickering children. Hounds
stick together. That's what dad
always said.

(MORE)

ANDIE (CONT'D)

(Beat)

I vote for the parlay.

FINN

I second.

Doran labors over his answer. His gaze finds its way to the bloody elevator.

DORAN

I won't give them the seeds. I won't give them a parley. I won't give them anything. From here on out, I only take.

Doran turns to exit.

FINN

If you want to go to war, then you'll do it alone.

DORAN

So be it.

INT. DAYBRUSH PLATFORM, SPACEPORT

Dr. Ekses walks down a short stairway from the Daybrush onto a platform, following a line of disembarking passengers. BSF AGENT #1 attempts to assist him with the step.

BSF AGENT

This way, this way.

DR. EKSES

I'm quite alright, thank you.

Dr. Ekses steps out of line from the shuffling passengers and takes stock of his surroundings. He's in a high-ceilinged transportation hub, much like a train station, with passenger shuttles parked between boarding platforms.

The Daybrush's platform has been blocked off by BSF AGENTS, with police barricades and agents standing watch. The passengers are being corralled towards a medical tent, where EMS WORKERS are handing them blankets and hot drinks.

Dr. Ekses sidles towards the barricade. BSF AGENT #2 spots him.

BSF AGENT #2

Sir, if you'll proceed this way to the medical tent.

DR. EKSES

Yes, of course. I just need a quick
breath, you understand? Could you
please grab my wife for me, sir?

Dr. Ekses points to the Mother and Daughter who had been riding beside him, and are just receiving their blankets. BSF Agent #2 nods and walks over to them. Dr. Ekses slides under a barricade and hurries into the crowded station.

INT. MAIN CONCOURSE, SPACEPORT

Dr. Ekses weaves his way through the crowd. He pauses before an ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES BOARD. One of the routes is flashing red with the word "BOARDING". The destination: GREENHUB.

EXT. BTGS KINSHIP, OUTSIDE VERDIS PRIME

An impressive military battleship, the BTGS KINSHIP ("By The Grace's Ship"), cruises beyond a blue and green planet.

TITLE: BTGS KINSHIP - VERDIS PRIME

INT. KINSHIP, CAPTAIN'S CABIN

SPECIAL MASTER AZRA WIGHT (mid 40's), a viper of a man in a simple military uniform, studies a monitor. It displays grainy security cam footage of Dr. Ekses waiting in a queue to board the Daybrush. It cuts to Ekses inside the passenger cabin.

Azra's ranking INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (late 30's) stands at attention across the desk. Azra mutters to himself.

AZRA

Doctor Ekses, at long last.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

He's bioscaped his appearance significantly, Special Master, but we're quite sure it's him.

AZRA

Our rogue scientist was on his way to Verdis before he turned around.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

I've alerted the local security forces in Castrian, Special Master. We'll get him.

AZRA
Chart a course for Belgar, Major.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
At once, Special Master.

Officer Kilmede bows and turns to leave.

AZRA
And Major? By the time we arrive, I
want to know what those pirates'
had for breakfast.

OFFICER KILMEDE
Yes, sir.

Officer Kilmede leaves. Azra pulls up the security footage of Finn hunching over beside Ekses.

INT. HOUNDS HANGAR

The Hounds' low-orbit utility shuttle, THE REVERIE, a boxy, unassuming craft, sits on a docking pedestal in the middle of a cavernous underground hangar. The Hound looms on a service pedestal behind it. Sparks shower off its hull as the Hound Mechanic fixes the damage.

Dressed in black, Doran strides up the Reverie's towards its bright interior.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN, REVERIE

Doran crouches at a storage locker in the middle of the wall and runs his gauntlet over the lock. It toggles it from red to green and slides open. There is it: the Seed Box.

INT. ACCESS TUNNEL

Doran races down a service tunnel on a black ninja bike.

EXT. STREETS AND ALLEYS, GREENHUB

Doran swerves through the crowded lanes of Belgar. He cuts down a dark alley.

In the blackest part of the alley, Doran cuts his motor. A hidden door opens.

INT. CREMATION ROOM, WHITE ROAD CULT SANCTUM

In a dimly lit chamber, Doran stands before an empty, casket-like box. The white-robed FATHER PRIMM (50) approaches him.

ANGLE ON - A few meters away, a pair of white-robed ACOLYTES (20s) mutter incantations and burn incense over an indistinct, cloth-wrapped bundle.

DORAN
For safekeeping.

He produces a small vinyl pouch. Father Primm looks inside. The seeds.

FATHER PRIMM
Of course.

Father Primm tucks the seeds into his sleeve.

FATHER PRIMM (CONT'D)
They will smell like incense after this. I hope that's okay.

DORAN
Your intel was good.

FATHER PRIMM
It always is.

DORAN
I'm putting an awful lot of trust in you.

FATHER PRIMM
We could say the same to you. You are the only man alive who has been in this room and is not one of us.

DORAN
I'm pretty one of a kind.

FATHER PRIMM
So I hear.

The young acolytes move the bundle over to the open box. It is clearly a body, wrapped in funerary shrouds. They step back, and jets of flame consume the body. Doran and Primm watch, entranced.

DORAN
What do the dead say, Primm? Will it be today?

FATHER PRIMM
No, Master Doran.

DORAN
Good. Because I have a lot on my
plate.

Doran turns to leave. Primm mutters to himself.

FATHER PRIMM
You will not die today.

EXT. STAMEN STREET, GREENHUB - NOON

An AUTOCYCLE - a two-wheeled autonomous vehicle - pulls up outside a dilapidated Greenhub storefront. Dr. Ekses and a HOUND LOYALIST (mid 30s) exit the narrow cabin. The Loyalist leads them inside through an automated airlock door.

INT. NOODLE HOUSE

The Noodle House is a hole-in-the-wall with chipped tabletops, tacky decor, and ugly fluorescent lights.

In the back corner, Urso and a HOUND ENFORCER (35) are finishing their lunches and watching holos on their gauntlets. They look up as the Loyalist swaggers over.

LOYALIST
Gents, this man here was looking
for someone.

Dr. Ekses shows them a holo of Finn's face - from a picture Ekses' himself took with his visor cam while on the Daybrush.

URSO
Never seen him.

Urso nods to the Loyalist, who bows and dips out, leaving Ekses perilously alone. The *whoosh* of the automated door. Urso taps out a message on his gauntlet.

URSO (CONT'D)
What do you want with him, anyway?

DR. EKSES
I have a question for him. An offer, really. I'm looking for passage to Verdis. Discrete passage. I thought this man might be able to provide that given the nature of his, ehm. Tradecraft.
(MORE)

DR. EKSES (CONT'D)

(Beat)

I can pay good token, you have my word.

Urso sizes up Ekses. He's far too bumbling to be a creature of the underworld, nor an undercover agent. The airlock doors whoosh open as more people enter.

URSO

Wish I could help you.

DR. EKSES

I understand.

Dr. Ekses turns and finds two more HOUND ENFORCERS blocking his path.

EXT. BELGAR, SURFACE - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Reverie jets over the cratered gray surface of Belgar. The lights of Castrian twinkle in the distance. The gas giant looms beyond the planet's rim.

INT. THE REVERIE

Finn, Addie, and a HOUND SOLDIER (30) ride in the Reverie's cockpit. Finn drives.

EXT. CASTRIAN, BELGAR

The Reverie swoops down towards the massive, light-filled domes of Castrian. Though an industrial fog skirts the domes, this is obviously a wealthier city than Greenhub, much of it built above ground in semi-translucent domes. Orderly lines of spacecraft come and leave the city.

TITLE: CASTRIAN - BELGAR

The Reverie aims towards a palatial complex, THE GILDED LILY, Castrian's notorious temple of vice.

TITLE: THE GILDED LILY - CASTRIAN

INT. PASSENGER CABIN, REVERIE

Andie unlocks the storage locker and removes the Seed Box, sliding it into a briefcase. Finn checks his pistol. A beeping intercom catches their attention. The Hound Soldier pulls up a visual on the monitor: Two LILY BODYGUARDS (40s) in ironically outlandish uniforms stand outside the Reverie.

BODYGUARD #1 talks into the intercom.

BODYGUARD #1

Due to the sensitive nature of your business, Master Dektes thought an escort would be appropriate.

Finn opens the Reverie door. BODYGUARD #2 offers him a package.

BODYGUARD #1 (CONT'D)

He also politely reminds you of our very strict dress code.

Finn takes the package grudgingly.

INT. ENTRANCEWAY, GILDED LILY LOUNGE

Dressed in the silk togas and gold jewelry of Hellenic space deities, Finn and Andie march down a large corridor behind their escort. The queue of plastic-beautiful partygoers, dressed much the same, parts before them.

They pause at a security gate, where more LILY GUARDS remove Finn's his pistol and gauntlet attachment. They scan the briefcase. Unbeknownst to the Hounds, the scan reveals the Seed Box to be empty.

A throbbing dance floor, sweeping lasers, fog, and sweaty bodies await the Hounds at the end of the corridor.

INT. VIP LOUNGE, GILDED LILY LOUNGE

The music plays in the distance, now. Finn and Andie stand at a chic, mostly-empty bar of black slate, pouring their own drinks from a whiskey bottle.

POLLY DEKTES (50), the owner of the Gilded Lily, approaches them, flanked by another pair of BODYGUARDS. Polly has a breezy, airbrushed, verging-on-sleazy demeanor.

POLLY

Ahh, my favorite crew on Belgar.
Fearless Finn the war hero and the
pirate princess herself, Miss
Andromeda Cuhail. You both look
smashing.

Polly takes Andie's hand and kisses it. He leads them to a low table surrounded by cushioned chairs typically used for administering FREQUENCIE, the system's drug du jour.

A scantily-clad server deposits a tray of shots. They drink.

ANDIE

We appreciate the hospitality,
Polly, but was this really
necessary?

Andie taps one of the gold earrings dripping down her neck.

POLLY

Rules are rules. That's what makes
the Gilded Lily truce-ground for
every clan and crew. Integrity.

Polly gestures to the briefcase.

POLLY (CONT'D)

That's it right there, isn't it.
Might I have a look-see? I am
burning with curiosity.

Reluctantly, Andie removes the Seed Box from her briefcase
but does not open it.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Oh, come on, now. If I was going to
rob you, I would have done so by
now.

(Beat)

I'll admit, it was a tempting
proposition. Integrity
notwithstanding. But then the Mercy
Boys would be trying to kill me,
not you. And that doesn't sound
like fun at all.

Polly chuckles like it's all a big joke.

FINN

We'd be trying to kill you, too.

POLLY

Just a peek, eh? Before the boys
show up.

Polly stares at the Seed Box with a carnal hunger. Finn nods.
Andie unlocks the box and cracks the lid.

RUSTY (O.C.)

The Hounds of the Void, all grown
up and robbing my ships.

Andie closes the box before anyone else can see. It's RUSTY MERCY (60), flanked by his four sons, all of them wearing standard spacesuits.

FINN

You didn't make them change?

Polly shrugs cheekily.

POLLY

Codes only extend so far, I'm afraid.

INT. PENTHOUSE LOUNGE, THE BRIG

Doran sits with a drink at the VIP table in the back of the bar, next to windows overlooking Stamen Street. BIG JAMES (42), the hulking captain of a local mining outfit, enters the bar. The bouncer inspects his gauntlet. Doran waves him over. The Brig is still a mess.

Doran and Big James toast glasses of whiskey.

DORAN

To Greenhub.

They drink. Big James surveys the damage.

BIG JAMES

Redecorating?

DORAN

Captain James. Big James. Half the day he spends mining the belt, the other half robbing your fellow miners. Isn't that right?

BIG JAMES

If I wanted to be insulted over drinks, I'd have lunch with my wife.

Doran laughs enthusiastically.

DORAN

It was meant as a compliment, Captain. I have a need for a man with your particular skill-set and discretion.

Doran pulls out an explosive charge roughly the size of a dinner plate. Big James recoils.

BIG JAMES
What the fuck. Put that thing away.

DORAN
Relax, it's not armed.

Doran presses a button, the blue light turns red.

DORAN (CONT'D)
Now it's armed.

BIG JAMES
By the donkey-fucking Grace.

Doran cackles and disarms the charge.

DORAN
We need a crew who can help us lay
about forty of these at very
specific locations throughout the
belt.

BIG JAMES
You want to bombard the Mercy Boys
as they chase you to Verdis?
(Beat)
They were right, you are crazy.

Doran pours Big James another drink, and he drinks eagerly.

BIG JAMES (CONT'D)
What's the purse?

DORAN
Up front, fifty thousand token.

BIG JAMES
You're not putting that high a
price on discretion.

DORAN
And ten-fold on the back end.

Big James's eyes widen.

BIG JAMES
I stand corrected. You have
yourself a deal.

DORAN
I knew I liked you, Big James.
Motherless or not, we're all sons
of Greenhub, eh.

Doran and Big James take off their gauntlets and shake hands. Doran signals to the servers.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Something to celebrate!

(Beat)

There's just a few ground rules we need to cover. Carry-overs from my Drop Trooper days. Were you a Drop Trooper?

BIG JAMES

Artillery.

DORAN

Makes sense. Big man on the big guns. Not like us lowly Droppers. But I was the lowest of the low, mate. Because I made the mistake of being captured.

Doran's demeanor is light and easy, like he's reminiscing on the good times.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Poor fool, didn't have the good sense to just kill myself. Instead, I end up strapped down in a Baloron cell, full syringe of sidurial plugged straight into my temple. Have you ever sampled that medicine, mate?

BIG JAMES

Can't say I have.

Doran laughs like it's the best joke he's heard all week. As he speaks, he slowly activates the mine again.

DORAN

I wouldn't recommend it. Three times the pain of it stopped my heart. That's what it does, eh. Anything the brain recognizes as falsehood causes the nervous system pain. And of course, they're asking questions about my company. A thousand men, including my brother. Five days they had me in that cell.

(Sighs)

Eventually, I learned. You just have to be honest.

Doran smiles at the window. Big James is sweating profusely. The red light starts blinking.

BIG JAMES

I've never been a man to break my word. Nor can I abide a man who would question it.

DORAN

Wonderful.

Doran deactivates the mine. The server brings them champagne. Doran lifts a toast.

DORAN (CONT'D)

To discretion.

INT. VIP BAR, GILDED LILY LOUNGE

The metal feet of a barstool screech across the tile. Zane drags it towards the meeting. Rusty sits.

RUSTY

Where is that feral dog of yours? I was hoping to see him here.

ANDIE

Doran is attending to other matters.

RUSTY

No doubt. I'm not big for bluffing or grandstanding. So let's get down to it, eh? You have something that belongs to me, I have the biggest fleet on Belgar. So.

Andie calmly checks the box again. It is indeed empty.

ANDIE

Finn, a moment.

ANGLE ON - Andie and Finn conference across the room from the Mercy Boys.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Listen to me very calmly and don't react.

(Beat)

We don't have them. Doran took them. Calm, calm.

Finn does his best to show no emotion.

FINN

You gotta be kidding me. I'm gonna kill him, Andie.

ANDIE

And I will support you in that effort. In the future. But right now ... If Rusty senses weakness, we'll never make it back to Greenhub.

Stone-faced, Andie and Finn return to the negotiating table. Rusty picks his teeth with a toothpick.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Five-hundred thousand token.

RUSTY

I was gonna charge you two-hundred thousand for my trouble, but now that you mention it, five sounds better.

ANDIE

Five-hundred thousand for the seeds we rightly claimed. And for the insult of rattling your saber.

RUSTY

(To Finn)

You know, someone's gonna get seriously hurt if you let her do all the talking.

FINN

I think five hundred is pretty generous, considering all the rest that you owe us.

RUSTY

Careful, boy. Your organization is hurtling towards extermination.

ANDIE

Next time you come to a negotiation with the Hounds, Rusty, remember that we're the ones holding the cards, eh?

(Beat)

We'll set up a new parlay for tomorrow. And this time be ready to pay.

RUSTY

We'll meet tomorrow. Bright and early. And children? You better learn to put some respect on my name. Or I'll be seeing dear old dad sooner than you expected.

INT. ENTRANCEWAY, GILDED LILY LOUNGE

Finn storms down the corridor, flinging off pieces of gold jewelry. Andie hurries after him.

FINN

This is the last time.

ANDIE

He did warn us.

FINN

Don't apologize for him, Andie. He could have got us killed. Our brother has to finally face some consequences. He's a tyrant.

Andie grabs his arm and drags him to a halt.

ANDIE

Who was it watching out for us when we were little? Dad dead, mom living in some permanent nightmare. Huh? You know who it was.

FINN

That was a long time ago. It's time we all grew up.

Finn shakes her loose and continues his grave march.

INT. GARAGE, THE BRIG

Doran inspects a crate of explosive charges (mines), the same variety he had been toying with in The Brig earlier. Satisfied, he shakes hands with a MINING CONTRACTOR.

Doran hauls drag the crate of mines into the trunk of an four-turbine AERIAL-TRANSPORT.

INT. AERIAL-TRANSPORT, GREENHUB STREETS

Doran sits in the "driver's" seat while the aerial-transport flies hands-free through the Greenhubs drone-lanes.

INT. THE RANGER'S HANGAR BAY - TWILIGHT

Doran hauls a dolly laden with the explosives container towards a massive MINING SHIP. Doran surveys the open-roofed hangar as he enters, suspecting something. Otherwise, his behavior is nonchalant, almost cheerful.

Big James strides out to meet him.

DORAN

Lovely day for a conspiracy, don't you think?

BIG JAMES

You read my mind.

INT. THE RANGER, CARGO HOLD

Big James, Doran, and the dolly of explosives ride an elevator platform into the belly of The Ranger.

They enter a narrow, darkened corridor in the bowels of his ship. A storage vault hisses open. Together, both men slide the explosives container into the vault. The door shuts decisively.

Big James gestures for them to leave. Doran walks a few steps. A pair of MERCY HENCHMEN step into his path.

Behind him, Big James has drawn his pistol.

BIG JAMES

Where are the seeds?

Doran seems extremely nonplussed at the blaster in his face.

DORAN

Already, mate? I expected at least a little more foreplay before we got to the action.

BIG JAMES

Don't get cute with me. You're a deadman one way or another. We can make it quick, or slow.

DORAN

Alright, alright. I'll get it for you.

With a flick of his wrist, Doran produces a pair of grenades between his fingers. Red lights flicker ominously.

He tosses them in opposite directions--one down the corridor towards the explosives vault, the other towards the henchmen.

BIG JAMES

Shit.

Big James dives after the grenade to turn it off.

MERCY HENCHMAN #1 does the same.

In the moment of confusion, Doran wheels on the Mercy Henchman. Black bladed claws lock over his fingers.

MERCY HENCHMAN #2 fires and the beam clips Doran's shoulder. Not enough. Doran drives his claws into Henchman #2's throat.

ANGLE ON - The first grenade rolls to a stop at the vault door. Big James fumbles with it.

BIG JAMES (CONT'D)

You're a psycho, you know that!

ANGLE ON - Henchman #2 clicks off the grenade. Red to blue. A pistol presses into the back of his neck.

Doran looms above Henchman #2, shoulder-wound smoldering. He pulls the trigger.

ANGLE ON - Big James turns off his grenade. His momentary relief is cut short by Doran's icy glare.

DORAN

You thought a couple of cooks could take me down? Do you know who I am?

BIG JAMES

Shit.

Doran walks deliberately towards Big James, who takes off in a dead sprint.

INT. THE RANGER, INTERIOR

Big James barrels through the gray metal corners of his ship. MERCY HENCHMAN #3 snaps to attention.

BIG JAMES

He's coming! Get your shit together!

Doran's beam catches Henchman #3 in the face, cracking his visor and knocking him flat.

ANGLE ON - Big James opens the cabin door and leaps to the ground several meters below.

ANGLE ON - As Henchman #3 struggles back to his feet. Doran blasts him again, casually, point-blank, turning his face into a smoking crater. He pauses in the doorway.

EXT. THE RANGER'S HANGAR BAY

Big James scurries for cover on the far side of the hangar. A beam flashes across the hangar.

INT. THE RANGER, INTERIOR

The beam catches Doran in the side and flings him back, away from the doorway. He growls in pain, but drags himself to his feet and peers out the porthole.

EXT. THE RANGER'S HANGAR BAY

Mercy Henchmen sprint around the hangar, converging on Doran's position.

INT. THE RANGER, INTERIOR

Doran studies the Henchmen's movements.

DORAN
More of you than I expected.

A grin creeps over his face.

DORAN (CONT'D)
Glorious.

He readies his blaster.

EXT. THE REVERIE, CASTRIAN OUTSKIRTS - TWILIGHT

The Reverie cruises away from the glittering domes of Castrian.

INT. THE REVERIE, MAIN CABIN

Andie and Finn ride in the pilots seats. Andie toggles her navigation screen.

ANDIE

Still no sign of any Mercy vessels.

All at once, Finn and Andie's gauntlets buzz red with a warning, as does one of the main monitors, displaying Doran's face, vital signs, and location.

ANDIE (CONT'D)

Doran, you bloody idiot.

FINN

Let him suffer.

ANDIE

Twenty-five systolic and a hundred and twenty beats per minute. That's stage four shock, Finn. Are you really going to let our brother die?

Finn growls, averts their course, and throttles the accelerator.

FINN

Not until I get there.

EXT. THE RANGER'S HANGAR BAY - MINUTES LATER

Doran slumps against the flaming wreck of his aerial transport, breathing raggedly. His visor is cracked. His gauntlet projects only static. He's done for.

Mercy Henchmen step in front of his line of sight. A trio surrounds him. Each of them bears some mark of their engagement--a smoking burn at the mid-section, a cracked helm. They point their blasters at him.

DORAN

You know if you kill me, you'll never get your boss his precious seeds.

HENCHMAN #4 kicks him in the ribs, where his armor has been scorched through. Doran groans in agony and topples over. His vision wobbles between light and dark.

Henchman #4 hauls Doran up by his collar.

HENCHMAN #4

But once he has those seeds, you belong to me.

(Through Comms)

We're ready for the extraction.

Henchman #4 throws Doran to the ground. Across the hangar floor, he spots the corpse of a Mercy Henchman.

DORAN

I thought you said not today?

Wub-wub. A shuttle approaches. Doran's eyelids flutter closed. *Wub-wub,* louder. The Reverie swings into view over the hangar.

HENCHMAN #4

What the--?

With a final effort, Doran cranes his gaze to the sky.

ANGLE ON - In full mech-suit, Finn braces himself in the open cabin door of the Reverie, a heavy cannon slung at his hip. Andie wheels the craft in a graceful arc, while Finn cuts a beam straight through the group of the Henchman.

Two of the three Henchman are ripped in half by the plasma, their flesh vaporized.

Only Henchman #4 survives, diving out of the way behind the burning transport. The beam flickers out.

Finn jumps from the shuttle.

Henchman #4 glares at Doran, realizing he's doomed. He levels his blaster at Doran, who smiles back.

HENCHMAN #4 (CONT'D)

Fuck your shit-eating grin, you--

The earth cracks under Finn's mech-boots as he lands in front of Henchman #4. He brings the stock of his rifle down in the same motion, knocking the Henchman back like a doll.

Finn advances, blaster lowered, as Henchman #4 struggles up.

FINN

Nobody kills my brother but me.

Finn executes the final Henchman.

ANGLE ON - Finn looms over Doran. Doran is still grinning.

DORAN

You ... fool.

Doran fades into darkness.

EXT. CASTRIAN, MILITARY DOCKING PAD - LATE AFTERNOON

The BTGS Kinship touches down on a docking pad.

TITLE: CASTRIAN - BELGAR

Special Master Azra and Major Kilmede depart the ship.

EXT. SPACEPORT TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Azra and Kilmede walk through a crowded spaceport out onto the docks. The crowd thins before a police line, segregating off the Daybrush. Azra flashes his badge, and the police fence parts for him to enter.

Commander Moskva meets Azra with a sharp salute.

COMMANDER MOSKVA

Special Master. Commander Moskva,
at your service.

AZRA

You have our man?

Commander Moskva pauses, nods, and leads them away.

INT. SPACEPORT SECURITY OFFICE

Commander Moskva plays a video on a wall of monitors of Dr. Ekses dashing through the spaceport and boarding a shuttle.

COMMANDER MOSKVA

He arrived in Greenhub about five
hours ago. I've alerted the local
BSF Branch but, ehm. If we want
something done in Greenhub, we have
to do it ourselves.

Azra toggles between different videos of Dr. Ekses, studying them intently.

AZRA

Greenhub is the port-of-call for
your pirates, is it not?

COMMANDER MOSKVA

Yes, sir.

AZRA

You're familiar with them?

COMMANDER MOSKVA

Abundantly, sir. Hounds of the Void they call themselves, a Motherless outfit. A needle in my ribs, sir. If I could speak bluntly, Special Master, this is why I believe the Motherless have no place in The Grace.

AZRA

Noted.

COMMANDER MOSKVA

Did these pirates take something in particular, sir?

(Beat)

We could have them in custody today, with the right authority. From there, we own them. We could pump them full of Sidurial and have them singing.

AZRA

To answer your earlier question, Commander, I would expect that you know exactly what they stole. Seeing as how that shipping lane was the province of The Mercy Boys crew, and you are on their take.

(Beat)

We'll take it from here, Commander. Dismissed.

Commander Moskva opens his mouth, thinks the better of it, and leaves with a curt bow.

INT. EQUIPMENT BAY, THE HOUND

A medical monitor beeps next to Doran's unconscious body. He's lying on a makeshift ICU bed in the center of the Hound's equipment bay, oxygen mask strapped over his face, TISSUE REGENERATOR pads strapped across his brutal burns.

Finn sits in the chair next to him, which has Doran's tattered cape hanging over the back. Andie tracks his vitals on the monitor. It beeps excitedly as Doran blinks awake.

He winces as a wave of pain hits his nervous system.

ANDIE

Hatching a scheme with the most crooked miner on Belgar? Are you trying to get yourself killed?

DORAN

Something like that. Gahhh. Sister dear, can you relieve me of these bloody regens? They itch like the devil.

ANDIE

Sure thing. In about eight hours.

DORAN

Remind me, did The Grace have you posted as a nurse or a torturer?

Finn is in no mood for jokes.

FINN

Doran. Don't you have something to say? To Andie and me.

DORAN

You should probably double-check your inventory before lift off?

FINN

Goddamnit, Doran, we could have died. Your little sister could have died.

DORAN

Rusty wouldn't kill you for not having the seeds. He's no fool. Which is the only reason I haven't cooked him yet.

Finn's pent up frustration blows up.

FINN

Will you give it up!

He shudders and drops to a seat. A fragile silence hangs over the cabin. Finn measures his words out carefully.

FINN (CONT'D)

Brother, we are hanging by a thread here. We are out of moves. You have to decide between your revenge and this family.

ANDIE

Time for a new chapter, Doran.

DORAN

So it's kill Rusty Mercy--the man
who murdered our father--or what?
Give this up?

Doran reaches out and pinches the fabric of his own tattered
cape hanging beside the bed. Hard looks all around.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Well, that's an easy choice.

(Beat)

I'd look terrible in any other
color.

Finn and Andie give sighs of relief.

FINN

Thank you.

DORAN

Hounds stick together.

(Beat)

But hear me. If Rusty Mercy breaks
his word again, not even Death will
be able to stop me from calling in
that debt.

FINN

I'll be right there with you.

EXT. GREENHUB, BELGAR - DAWN

The Kinship descends into Greenhub's smog as the sun rises.

EXT. STAMEN STREET - MORNING

S.M. Azra Wight, dressed in slightly too-crisp civilian
clothes, strolls down the streets of Greenhub past signs of
depravity and poverty. Children chase each other barefoot. A
group of rugged men trade in the shadows of a doorway,
throwing him suspicious stares. A whore draws her blinds.

EXT. THE BRIG, STAMEN STREET

Azra pauses in front of The Brig. An OLD MUNICIPAL WORKER
(75) is plumbing a sewage line out front. Doran limps up from
the other direction, testing out his still healing shoulder.
He nods to the Muni Worker and lights up a smoke.

DORAN

You lost?

AZRA

No. Not particularly. You work here, at The Brig?

DORAN

Myself? No. But I can tell you a funny story about it.

A DEATH-HEAD (60) shuffles at them with a BEGGAR BOWL used for collecting alms. Azra curls his lip.

AZRA

On your way.

The Death-Head shuffles on.

DORAN

One moment. Eh, lad. C'mere.

The Death-Head shuffles sheepishly back. Doran deposits some token with a wave of his gauntlet. The Death-Head bows and continues on.

AZRA

You shouldn't encourage them.

DORAN

They serve their own kind of purpose.

Out of Azra's view, Doran slides a pouch with the seeds into his pocket.

DORAN (CONT'D)

So, it was about six years ago. I wasn't here, mind you, I was dropping boots on some godforsaken rock somewhere. But the story goes, a Baloroni spy found his way here. Snuck into system on a 'stroid miner, meant for Verdis.

(Beat)

A few years later, The Grace and Baloron resolve their differences. One day an Intelligence Officer shows up, nosing around about this Baloroni spy, showing holos. And some lads in there said, Ah, yeah, we remember this bloke. We killed him about six years ago. The Officer says, well done, lads. Commendations all around. But how did you know he was a spy? And they said, we didn't.

(MORE)

DORAN (CONT'D)

(Beat)

We just knew he was an outsider.

The Muni Worker wheezes a chuckle. Doran stomps out his smoke and trades a cold smile with Azra.

DORAN (CONT'D)

Welcome to Greenhub.

INT. REVERIE - LATE MORNING

The Reverie soars low over Belgar's rocky crags. Finn and Andie sit in the pilot chairs, Doran behind them, holding the seed box. He's making some modifications. All three of the siblings are wearing mech-suits.

Ahead, a dead settlement texture the walls of a gorge.

TITLE: FOUNTAINHEAD RUINS - BELGAR

FINN

We're here. A regular stroll down memory lane.

ANDIE

Rusty always did have a flair for the dramatic.

DORAN

Prick.

EXT. FOUNTAINHEAD, CANYON SHADOWS

Finn drops the shuttle down in the shadows of the canyon wall and ruins, not far from a large, sunny open space.

INT. THE REVERIE

Doran claps the lid of the Seed Box closed as the shuttle touches down.

DORAN

Alright. Ready, Finn? Andie, you stay here.

Doran and Finn trade a subtle glance. Doran's eyes twinkle.

ANDIE

Excuse me?

FINN
No, he's right, Andie. You can't
come.

ANDIE
Why the fuck not?

Finn and Doran hold their collective breath.

FINN
Because you smell.

Andie rolls her eyes as the brothers chuckle like idiots.

ANDIE
Fuck off.

DORAN
The Mercy Boys will never parlay
with us if they catch a whiff of
your terrible stench.

Andie opens the cockpit door.

ANDIE
It's not even a funny joke. There's
no bloody atmosphere.

DORAN
Wait, Andie.

Andie pauses on the ramp. Doran places a cape over her
shoulders.

EXT. FOUNTAINHEAD, CENTRAL PLAZA

The Hounds stride across the sandy ground. Doran carries the
Seed Box.

In the center of the clearing, in the harsh unfiltered sun,
stand the Rusty Mercy and Mercy Boys. The huge Mercy
flagship, FIANNA, looms behind them.

RUSTY
Is that really Doran Cuhail? Last
time I saw you, you were just a
sniveling little brat, hardly up to
my shoulder. Now look at you. In
fact, I think the last time I saw
you was right over there.

Rusty points to the ruins in the wall of the canyon.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

You remember that night?

(Hopefully it's clear that this is the night Rusty murdered the Hounds' father.)

DORAN

You know, memory's a bit fuzzy today. Musta bumped my head while I was slogging through the cannon-fodder you call soldiers. I honestly don't even remember how many I cooked. Six? Seven?

RUSTY

Still a cocky punk. Good to see that much hasn't changed.

(Points to the seed box)

Let's see them.

Andie walks the container across the divide and opens it. A second glass lid protects the seeds. Rusty reaches for the box. Andie snaps it closed and steps back.

ANDIE

Now let's talk about our payment. Five-hundred thousand was what we discussed.

Rusty draws his pistol and points it at Doran's head.

RUSTY

I thought I made it clear, my finger laying off this trigger is your payment.

FINN

No weapons at a parlay, Rusty. You know the rules.

MERCY BOY #1

Just beam them already, dad.

Rusty holds the pistol level at Doran's head for another beat. The Hounds don't flinch. He lowers it with a smile.

RUSTY

The balls on you Hounds. Even little Andie. Bigger pair than any of my sons. I should have snipped you all years ago. I guess it's too late now.

FINN

So we have a deal?

RUSTY

Aye. Token for seeds. C'mere, one of you come claim it.

Doran steps forward. He squares off with Rusty and holds out his gauntlet in the receiving gesture to accept Rusty's token. Rusty is slow to offer it.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Five-hundred thousand token. For my own seeds.

DORAN

Just be glad we're not calling in the rest of your debts.

They trade the stares of killers. Rusty breaks first, clearing his throat, waving his gauntlet over Doran's, and unceremoniously depositing the token.

Andie hands over the Seed Box.

RUSTY

Well, that's it then, isn't it. Wish I could say it was a pleasure doing business.

Rusty seems to turn to leave but pauses, wagging a finger as if he's just remembered something.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Oh, there's just one more thing. One more thing, stuck in my craw. It seems that you have yet to learn respect me and my boys. Of all the bloody pirates on Belgar, it's just this one meddling piece-of-shit crew, the Hounds. I figure now is as good a time as any to complete your education.

The Hounds tense. The Mercy Boys seem ready to spring.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

It's come to my attention that one of you had a half-baked plan to lead my ships to slaughter. Not to mention the small matter of killing, what was it, six? No, seven of my men.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

So what I will need, in order to
make this an even exchange, is *him*.

Rusty points at Doran. Finn scoffs.

FINN

The deal's done and dusted, Rust.
You want my brother? Come to
Greenhub and get him.

RUSTY

Afraid I'm not that patient.

Rusty raises his hand. The Fianna lifts into the air and
rotates its huge cannons towards the Hounds. Two more Mercy
gunships lift out of side-canyons.

ANDIE

This'll put a black mark on you
with every crew on Belgar.

RUSTY

Every crew on Belgar is already
scared shitless of us, bitch. Every
crew but one.

FINN

Bastard.

Finn fires his wrist-mounted blaster at Rusty. Doran
redirects his arm, and the beam flies wide of them.

The Mercy Boys brandish their weapons.

RUSTY

Stop!

DORAN

I do this, and you swear to forever
leave my brother and sister alone?

RUSTY

I swear it.

Finn looks up at his brother, a mixture of grief, rage, and
guilt on his face.

FINN

He's a liar, Doran.

Doran pats his back.

DORAN
We'll get 'em next time.

ANDIE
No. No, Doran. This isn't right.

DORAN
It's okay.

There's no room for hugs or kisses on this barren rock. Doran walks towards his death.

The Fianna sweeps lower and extends a gangplank. The Mercy Boys march Doran towards it.

Finn shakes his stupor and charges after them.

FINN
No!

Doran spins and shoots at his feet.

DORAN
Stay back!

Finn stumbles a few steps backwards.

Doran drops his Hounds' flag visor over his face and rejoins the Mercy Boys.

Finn snaps into action, grabbing Andie and sprinting for the Reverie. He toggles a com-link in his headset.

FINN
Come on!

Finn and Andie charge across the canyon towards the Reverie.

INT. MAIN CABIN, FIANNA

Rusty and his sons lead Doran into a large central cabin where the Mercy Boys henchmen eagerly await his execution. Rusty addresses one of his underlings.

RUSTY
Take us up. I want to put him out to swim. Piece by piece.

EXT. FOUNTAINHEAD, FIANNA

Fianna blasts off for the exosphere. The other two Mercy gunships trail behind.

EXT. THE REVERIE

Finn and Andie pilot the much smaller craft after Fianna. Ahead of them, the Mercy Boys' fleet streaks through the sky.

Finn angles after them. He and Andie groan under the G-Force.

A sensor beeps on their dashboard. It's the Sylvan, just visible through their windshield.

A video-call with Urso pops up on the monitor.

URSO (VIDEO)

Captain.

FINN

Doran's on that ship. Stay on them.

URSO

What's the plan?

FINN

I don't know, just stay on them!

INT. MAIN CABIN, FIANNA

Three of the Mercy Brothers and a few henchmen point their rifles at Doran. A henchman comes up behind him and hits him with the butt of a rifle, dropping him to his knees. Doran grunts, his head hangs. His breath is shallow and nervous.

ANGLE ON - MERCY BROTHER #1 inspects the seeds. Rusty checks them out for himself.

RUSSEL MERCY

Lock this up.

Mercy Brother #1 takes the seeds into the next cabin.

A henchman gives Rusty a huge energy-blade for the execution.

ANGLE ON - Inside of Doran's helm, he swallows and calms his breathing. A timer starts counting down inside his helm.

ANGLE ON - Rusty steps in front of Doran. He turns on his blade, blue-white energy vibrates through it.

RUSSEL MERCY (CONT'D)

Time to say hi to daddy.

Doran laughs.

RUSSEL MERCY (CONT'D)
Something funny?

DORAN
I was just thinking how

RUSSEL MERCY
That's gonna be hard to do when
you're dead.

DORAN
Never stopped me before.

RUSSEL MERCY
Look at me. Show me your face, boy.

Doran lifts his head. He retracts his tinted visor. On his clear inner visor, the countdown timer is ticking to seconds.

INT. STORAGE HOLD, FIANNA

Mercy Brother #1 inspects the seed box, which is beeping rapidly. He opens a bottom compartment. An explosive mine flashes red.

INT. MAIN CABIN, FIANNA

Rusty draws back his energy-blade for a killing strike. Doran smiles up at him.

INT. COCKPIT, REVERIE

Finn stares up at Fianna, which hangs against the darkness of the void. An explosion rips out of its side, followed by another and another as engines rupture. Finn gasps in horror as the Fianna rips apart.

THE END