

Breathing Space, Fading Frontier
contains adult language and
situations, including alcohol use,
and romantic relationships.

Additional sensory contact
warnings can be found in the show
notes.

Intro plays

I ain't got no home to go to
I ain't got nothing to sell
But my stars will never leave me
Even when I'm sold to hell
I was born under a blue sky
And I'll die out in the black
When I'm gone don't no one mourn
me
'cause my debts will drag me back

Intro fades out

8Vac hums and computer beeps

TRAVIS

Gracie, I am... I'm so far out.
The sun doesn't... I can't even
pick it out anymore. So many stars
are brighter now.
I've been using the Brahms a lot,
cause what else am I going to do?
There's no greenline; hasn't been
for, I don't know, a couple
trillion kilometers now. I read
the books I brought with me.
Listened to the music. The point
of this is to kill time so...
hibernating is as good a way to do
it as any.
You dream, sometimes. I used to
know some NoGos pretty well, they
use Brahms all the time, call it a
lullaby, and they never mentioned

that. Vivid dreams. Like I was
there.
Last time, I dreamed of you,
Gracie.

Travis continues to sit in their ship. We hear them
breathing or moving around. The ship's 8Vac hums.

TRAVIS
Just a few more months

Travis is cut off by their comm system
beeping an alert noise.

TRAVIS
What the fuck?

HOOCH
(fading in from the
static)
Who in the black void of space is
that? You there, in the runabout.
What's your signal?

TRAVIS
Uh... I... I'm taking a little
trip.

HOOCH
You're so deep in the Kuiper I
hope at least you're pulling it's
hair.

TRAVIS
What?

HOOCH
Sheeeit, let me get you patched
into the river. You gotta
blackline right?

TRAVIS
Yeah.

HOOCH

Good. Point it nine point
nine-nine by seven. That's the
closest river-substation.
Frequency is sub-6. Should get you
on the party line.

Travis flips a couple of switches, rotates a dial. Static
fades into voices.

SISSY

Blackest of brass I've ever heard,
Hooch. There's no way you found
somebody.

HOOCH

Brass as a whore on Sunday, Sissy.
I got'em on my scopes.

VIRGIL

I know we have all to find ways to
pass the time somehow, you old
void dweller. But it is
impossible-

TRAVIS

Hello?

SISSY

What the fuck?

VIRGIL

Shit.

HOOCH

Haha, told y'all.

SISSY

What the fuck are you doing out
here, hon?

TRAVIS

I... uh...

VIRGIL

(laughing)

Really, what the fuck are any of us
doing out here?

HOOCH

Ain't nobody out here lest they
deserve it.

SISSY

Speak for yourself, Hooch.

HOOCH

I don't think this newbie was
sent, unless the rules have
changed a lot. They're in a tiny
little skip, not built for
wrangling.

VIRGIL?

Maybe they're destined to take
over one of our vessels.

SISSY

And what, whoever just gets sent
back?

HOOCH

Fuck no. We don't go back. That's
the deal.

VIRGIL

That is the deal.

SISSY

Well, speak up, stranger. What's
your story?

TRAVIS

I'm just... killing time.

SISSY

Easier ways to kill time than
leaving the whole damn system.

HOOCH

We ain't out of the system.

SISSY

Close enough.

VIRGIL?

What even is outside of the
system? Terminal? Orcus? Sedna?

The Heliopause? It's all a matter of definitions really. Arbitrary.

SISSY

We're farther out than any living soul, Virgil. I say that's "outside".

VIRGIL?

If the definition is "the system is as far as humans have ventured" then we are, by definition, inside it.

TRAVIS

Actually I think that would make you the edge itself. Neither inside or out.

VIRGIL

Uh, Oh, Oooh, I like that. It's got implications.

TRAVIS

I just... What are you all doing out here?

VIRGIL

Never-ending thankless work. That nonetheless must be done.

TRAVIS

What?

HOOCH

We're wrangling comets.

TRAVIS

But, this far out

VIRGIL

That's the beauty of it. Out here is the devil's own herd. Rocks and chunks of ice that might, someday, fall inward. Now most of the time that's merely a pleasant light in

the sky, with a burning tail as long as the space between planets. But the same body, two degrees in the wrong direction, might just find itself on an intercept course with somewhere important.

SISSY

A comet falling in the wrong place, that's expensive. It's moving fast by then, gotta burn a lot of delta-v to push it off its course.

HOOCH

But up here? Well, they're flaccid as-

VIRGIL

I think you mean "placid", Hooch.

HOOCH

I mean what I mean. They ain't got the juice in 'em yet. Don't need more than one of us to blow over their earlobes to change their course for all of time.

VIRGIL

Well yes, if by "blowing over their earlobe" you mean "firing a laser from so far off one can only see one's target through a telescope", then I suppose that's true.

TRAVIS

Huh. I didn't know anyone was out here to do that.

HOOCH

We're the system's best kept secret.

SISSY

Only because no one cares to know.

VIRGIL

Uh...How fragile life is, that the perturbations of ice and rock a trillion miles away might spell one's inevitable doom in some distant time.

HOOCH

Oh it's an evitable doom, Virg. We're evitting every day.

VIRGIL

You knew what I meant, Hooch.

HOOCH

I don't think I ever know what you mean. But that don't mean I don't appreciate your company.

VIRGIL?

Ah...Would that the feeling were mutual?

SISSY

What's your name, stranger?

TRAVIS

Travis. Travis Sojourn.

SISSY

Well, I'm Sissy. These fellas are Hooch, who used to be an outlaw, and Virgil, the vulture.

HOOCH

Sissy says she's innocent, but she's also out here...

SISSY

I am innocent.

HOOCH

I know, you always say that.

SISSY

Because it's true.

HOOCH

Sissy, let me ask you a question.
Does it matter?

SISSY

What?

HOOCH

If you're a saint or a sinner. A
filthy criminal or a poor innocent
bystander. Does it matter one way
or the other?

SISSY

Of course it does.

HOOCH

Out here, when we're the in the
ass end of nowhere? More miles
between us and any living soul
than the number angels can stand
on a bellend?

VIRGIL

I think what Hooch means is that
we are all so far from anything,
from anyone, even from one
another. That it hardly seems
relevant what we did or did not do
in our former lives.

SISSY

What we have out here ain't much
like life.

VIRGIL

On that we can agree.

TRAVIS

So you all are criminals? uh...
with some possible exceptions.

VIRGIL

This... this job isn't an easy
sell. It takes a certain leverage
to get one to agree to it.

HOOCH

Leverage like having your nuts in
a vice.

VIRGIL
Or your neck in a noose.

SISSY
Or worse.

TRAVIS
This... y'all took a one way trip.

HOOCH
Circularizing an orbit out here
takes a fortune fit for Croesus.
Why spend an equal amount to bring
a wayward soul home? Easier to
send somebody nobody will miss.

VIRGIL
Air can be recirculated, water can
be filtered, shelf stable food is
cheap, if a bit tiresome over the
years.

HOOCH
"Tiresome" ain't halfway there. I
ain't eaten anything that weren't
freeze dried since... fuck, I
don't know. Forever.

SISSY
At least yours is solid. They sent
me up with almost nothing but
powdered soups.

HOOCH
What I wouldn't give for some of
that.

TRAVIS
You can't trade?

Hooch makes a dismissive laugh.

SISSY

We're farther apart from one
another than Earth and Jupiter,
dear.

VIRGIL

Only the river network even allows
us contact.

TRAVIS

How do they keep you working?

HOOCH

Sending capital criminals to guard
the solar system does seem like a
recipe for a disgruntled asshole
to just kick off and do nothing,
don't it?

TRAVIS

Well, or worse.

HOOCH

Ooh, you're quick, my friend.
Yeah. We could do that. Nudge a
comet the wrong way, send it
down... say... right at Earth. Not
like they would come all this way
just to arrest us.

SISSY

We're paid to behave. To do our
jobs.

TRAVIS

What good does that do all the way
out here?

VIRGIL

There is an account back home.

SISSY

Someone... people who need the
money.

HOOCH

Leashes on us.

VIRGIL

Or Tethers.

SISSY
Connections.

VIRGIL
But it is a, shall we say, low
stress position. We're given the
parameters from Terra. Pick our
targets and shoot it with a laser.
The light heats the surface of our
quarry, melts it just a little.
The ejecting vapors and dust act
like an engine. A very very low
power engine.

SISSY?
It takes months to nudge an orbit
that way. Someone is needed to be
on site, to make small
adjustments, maintain the systems,
keep an eye on things.

VIRGIL
One could automate the process,
but I suspect that we are a
cheaper solution.

HOOCH
And sending us out here is a two
birds one stone sorta solution.

TRAVIS
There's just the three of you?

SISSY
On this leg of the river. I think
there are maybe thirty total, but
most of them are farther from us
than the rest of humanity.

VIRGIL
Well, there is Fran.

HOOCH
She ain't on the line anymore,
Virg.

VIRGIL
Her transmitter is active.

HOOCH

And yet she ain't said nothing
since before Sissy arrived. She
was older'n dirt when I got out
here. Let her rest.

TRAVIS

She's dead?

HOOCH

As Pluto's backside. Guess she
must have conked off in the night
with her radio still running and
it's still going.

VIRGIL

We each have enough fusionable
material to ensure we would never
run out in our lifetimes.

TRAVIS

And if it costs so much to get
someone out here, I guess it
doesn't make sense to do anything
about a body.

VIRGIL

Every night we go to bed in our
graves. Wake up beneath our
headstones.

HOOCH

You got a headstone over there?

VIRGIL

I'm being metaphorical for the
sake of the poetry of it and you
know it.

HOOCH

Oh that's surprising, you never do
that.

TRAVIS

Hooch, you were an outlaw?

HOOCH

Hell yeah I was. One of the best.

TRAVIS

Would I know you?

HOOCH

I wasn't called Hooch then. I ran with the Patel Crew for a while. Did some gunfighting in the rust bowl. Robbed a casino in New New Vegas. Not many have that notch in their bedpost.

TRAVIS

Kid Tripper.

HOOCH

(laughing proudly)

Haven't heard that name since my hair had color.

TRAVIS

My dad used to tell me stories about famous outlaws. Including you. That casino job was something.

HOOCH

He tell you about how I got away?

TRAVIS

Yeah. Tossed two armloads of credit chits in the air and disappeared into the crowd that came to grab them.

Hooch laughs.

HOOCH

Like a fart in the wind I was. Good times. I rolled into Tethys with a lockbox full of booty and was broke inside of a week. Every night a different House of Truth. Everybody knew that Kid Tripper has pulled off the biggest score and they all wanted to party with me. I think at one point I bought the entire station a round of drinks. Fool thing to do but what

I can remember of that week is worth it.

TRAVIS
I thought you died.

HOOCH
(frustrated noise)
I always expected a blaze of glory. A shootout with the Rangers that would go down in history.
(pause)
They caught me in my fucking sleep. Got sold out by an unscrupulous bedfellow who preferred my bounty over my bounty.

TRAVIS
And they sent you here.

HOOCH
Well, I did kill a lot of people. I mean, a lot of those were in shootouts, which is fair as fair can be s'far as I reckon. Barring the occasional wayward hullsafe hitting a civilian now and again. But yeah, when my ledger came due, it was here or...

Hooch makes a hccckkk sound. You know the one.

TRAVIS
That was a long time ago.

HOOCH
(shrugging)
Eh, what is time anyway. A long time ago is a long time more than I'd have got otherwise, even if it's out here in the elephant graveyard.

TRAVIS
If you could go back, make a different choice, would you?

HOOCH
(dismissive raspberry)
A fool question.

VIRGIL
A valid one, I think.

HOOCH
Can't change the past any more'n
you can hold back le belle mort.

VIRGIL
I think you mean "le petite mort".
We are old men, Hooch. And the
only benefit of being old is
perspective. We may sit atop the
hill of our collected years, and
look down upon the idiots we used
to be.

HOOCH
That's the thing. We were young.
And dumb. And full of all sorts of
things. And you can't expect good
choices out of people who don't
know their joystick from their
slipstick.
Hooch can't blame Kid Tripper for
well... being Kid Tripper. Might
as well blame Uranus for being
blue.

Hooch says Uranus like "your anus" because of course he
does.

VIRGIL
Your philosophy is forever
intractable.

HOOCH
Maybe you just ain't tracting good
enough.

TRAVIS
So, you would have wished you did
differently, Virgil?

VIRGIL

Of course. Of course. The path I walked led here. And here is a kind of suffering. Now, suffering I fear less than death, but certainly no pleasure cruise. I wish that I had done so much differently.

TRAVIS

Like what?

VIRGIL

I used to laugh at how easy it was. To hear a distress signal and know that in just a little while, I'd be free to waltz to whatever poor ship was in trouble, and take whatever I wanted. And now I sit in the ship which in all likelihood will be my tomb for eternity. I know I cannot call for help. No rescue would come. I experience, of course, a meager shadow of the pain I caused in my former life, but it was kernel enough on which to build a new outlook. One I am grateful to have, but which I will admit is far less... Relaxing. But worth it.

TRAVIS

How so?

VIRGIL?

I've learned one is capable of more. Young Virgil would have thought realizing that he was not the end and the beginning of the universe, the solipsistic center of creation was quite the downgrade. But if one is all that is real. Then one is alone. And there is no greater pain than being truly alone.

TRAVIS

I hear that.

VIRGIL

You have lost someone.

TRAVIS

Maybe.

VIRGIL

Believe it or not that is good,
Travis. To have lost, is to have
had. You are capable of
connection. It can come again.

HOOCH

Unless you're here.

VIRGIL

Perhaps. Perhaps this is our
penance. We certainly deserve
some.

TRAVIS

Is that possible?

VIRGIL

Penance?

TRAVIS

Yeah.

VIRGIL

I hope so. To think that the stain
of our sins is indelible. That
would be very dark indeed.

HOOCH

But you can't. The past stays
stuck. What you do now don't
change what you did. We hurt
people. Us being out here don't
heal that hurt. You and me, dying
alone in the void won't bring back
the people we killed.

SISSY

But we do help out here.

HOOCH

Look who's still on the line.

SISSY

Hooch, right now. What are you doing?

HOOCH?

Jawin' with Virgil, like usual.

SISSY

Other than that.

HOOCH

Floating here.

SISSY

Other than that.

HOOCH

I got my laser firing at a rock, have been for a couple days now.

SISSY

I know it. Saw the order transmit down the river to you. If you weren't adjusting its trajectory, where would it go?

HOOCH

Hundred years time, it might skim past Mars.

SISSY

Maybe hit it?

HOOCH

Maybe.

SISSY

It might've, but not now.

VIRGIL

With the gentle nudges you are giving it right now, it will fall more gently sunward. Now instead of a risk of a catastrophe, it can be captured. Harvested. It's mostly water ice. A hundred years

from now, people who might
otherwise die of thirst, could
have that thirst slaked. Because
of what you do today, Hooch.

HOOCH

Could. Might. Perhaps. The future
is all a wash.

SISSY

If the past is fixed and the
future is a wash, then what's the
point of anything, Hooch? Why make
any choice over another?

HOOCH

Pssh, I'll be tied to a bedpost
and paddled if I know.
We just do what we do, right? Make
the best choice we got in front of
us at any time. Fretting ourselves
grey about the past and the future
don't help none. Cause we can't
change one and the other we have
no choice but to change, but we'll
never know how that'll actually
shake out.

I'm poking this icecube up its
backside, right? Moving it away
from Mars. At least I think I am,
but I don't know. Maybe it never
would have hit anything to begin
with. Maybe it'll hit a station
that ain't been built yet. Maybe
it ought to hit Mars because at
that moment a forty foot
four-titted reptilian alien will
be on a rampage by then and this
here comet will cool her exhaust.
Make her friendly, and let us
build an amusement park between
her thighs.

Time moves forward, but we can
only see backward. So we're as
likely to back our way into organ
harvester as an harem orgy.
Every day is a hand of Drift and
you play the hand you got.

If future Hooch, an unlikely prospect considering how wrinkly my buttcheeks are these days, looks back at me now the way I look at Kid Tripper, he'll see all the ways I'm fucking up now. But he ain't here, so he can shove his opinions deep into Uranus' cold hydrogen core.

SISSY

So then why keep "poking that ice cube up its backside".

HOOCH

Cause every time I do, I know another handful of credits goes back home. The boy I left behind is probably dead by now, but his kid likely ain't. Good kid. I like knowing I help 'em.

TRAVIS?

You said you all have people like that right? Who get the money for you being out here?

Pause

VIRGIL

My sister gets mine. I should have spent my time looking after her when we were young. There was no one else. So, yes. If these flaps of these butterfly wings do not prevent hurricanes, then at least tonight she eats.

HOOCH

Like I said, the hand you're dealt.

SISSY

See! We're helping now. We are doing good things. If the past is fixed, if nothing can undo the things you've done. If with every

sin your soul just gets stained
and never gets better.
Then we at least stop making it
worse.
Penance or not. Punishment or not.
Souls or not. Does that change
your obligation to do the right
thing now?

VIRGIL

Tabula rosa. Imagine a blank
slate.

SISSY

Exactly. Hooch, if I woke up here
today, in this rancid rusty ship,
with no past. No reason to be
here. Nothing to atone. No justice
to fulfill. The only thing I can
do is just... my best.
I mean, this stupid cabin's going
to smell like rotten eggs either
way, but at least I make things a
little better. Down there.

HOOCH

But, Miss Innocent, you don't have
anything to [make up for]

SISSY

Oh, don't throw that in my face.
I've been saying it for... fucking
years. And you've never believed
me.

HOOCH

No. I don't. But it don't matter.
You're here, just like me and
Virgil.

SISSY

I am.

HOOCH

So you don't get to pretend you're
better'n us.

SISSY
I never said I was.

Pause.

TRAVIS
So, how then?

SISSY
What?

TRAVIS
How did you get here?

SISSY
I could tell you a story. A fool
hearted girl, who made bad
choices, for sure. Ain't no one
innocent of that. But who never
did anything worth killing over.
A girl who fell in love with the
wrong person. Fell for the wrong
cause, or the right cause at the
wrong time.
I could tell you the story of a
whole heap of trouble that had to
land somewhere, and a girl who was
shoved underneath it at the last
possible moment. And then a deal.
And a descent. And decades in the
dark.
But Hooch is right, despite
himself. It don't matter.
Not here.

TRAVIS
But-

SISSY
What's your story, Travis?

TRAVIS
Huh?

SISSY
You've heard from us. But all
you've said is you're out here to
kill time? Why? What are you
running from?

TRAVIS

Nothing.

HOOCH

Now that's brass so black it
smells like old bedsheets.

VIRGIL

What does that even mean?

SISSY

You're so far out that Terminal
can see the back of your head.
That's no joy ride.

TRAVIS

I don't...

SISSY

Something pushed you out this far.
Something big. Something bad.

TRAVIS

(stammering)

I just... There's...

SISSY

What did you do?

HOOCH

Kill your goddamn jets a minute,
Sissy. Weren't you just the one
talking about how what happened
back in the world doesn't matter
one dickshake here?

SISSY

If he's a criminal on the run then
we should do something.

HOOCH

What? Arrest him? I'm closest and
I'm still half a billion clicks
outward. Ain't got the fuel even
if I had the inclination. Should
we call somebody? We ain't even
got the bandwidth. If we did they
couldn't be here for more'n a
year.

We're nowhere.
Let him be nobody if he wants.

Pause.

TRAVIS

It's ok.

(pause)

I took my dad's brass about outlaws to heart. Me and my sister, we started to rustle the YuKon cows that were always in the hills outside our town. Easy enough, all you gotta do is confuse their 2-bit brains. A line of white chalk in the dust is enough to do it. Then you just climb up and rummage around for anything good. Easy, but low stakes.

We got a tiny bit bigger in our britches and graduated to the flying ones. Had to figure out how to use a jamming suite to bring them down in a secluded place. They carry the same sort of stuff as the cows, but more. So each one's got a better chance of carrying something worth having. Did that for two years, never saw so much as a whisper from the mounties.

Every credit we made went into buying the *Silver Cash* here. Good little ship, but she was an investment.

Lots of little depot stations out there. YuKon, Taurus, Hephaestus, they all got'em. Never a lot of human security, cause why pay salaries when you can get cameras and sensors and robots. But after all that practice, I'm damned good with my little jammer.

We had a system.

I handle the electronics, and Gracie does the heavy work. Take the staff with their pants down.

If there's private security on sight, knock'em down, tie'em up. She watches the people while I grab the manifests. Find the cargo that sounds the most valuable, load it, go. Simple and effective. Worked every time.

Hooch starts laughing.

TRAVIS

What?

HOOCH

You did the same fool thing every time?

TRAVIS

It worked.

HOOCH

Only cause they weren't ready for you.

TRAVIS

Yeah, well, from my hilltop of perspective I can look back at what an idiot I was.

SISSY

They got wise?

TRAVIS

We earned a reputation, I guess.

HOOCH

And one day, when you busted into some place, there were bruisers waiting. Swinging their guns and ready to play?

TRAVIS

Yeah. Gracie was going first, like always. She had just enough time to turn and yell. Told me to run. And then they... They didn't even try to arrest us or anything.

SISSY

The corps own those guys; they
don't have to play by the rules.

TRAVIS

I left her there.

VIRGIL

Was she...

Pause

TRAVIS

They got her bad. I don't think...
I don't think me staying would
have helped. I ran back to the
ship and took off. I've got a head
for gees so I just punched it as
hard as I could going out. Don't
even remember the number. Flew to
Tethys, always heard that was a
good port for outlaws. Asked
around a bit and found someone
with a contact at the Rangers.
There was a system wide bounty on
me. Saying I killed two YuKon
employees and Grace in the
firefight, but I never fired a
shot.
So I bought a pile of eff-en-eff
and a Brahms, picked a direction
and burned.

VIRGIL

A long eccentric orbit and a small
ship like yours. That would be
very hard to track. And a cruise
through the elephant's graveyard
is so low profile that it's
veritably subterranean.

TRAVIS

It was the only thing I could
think to do. It's been over a year
now, a lot of that was in the
Brahms though.

HOOCH

Well, I guess that explains why
you've been more'n casually
curious about us out here.

TRAVIS

Sorry for prying, but y'all did
seem eager to talk.

HOOCH

Hah! Why wouldn't we be? A chance
to hear a voice that ain't
Virgil's pontifications or Sissy's
righteous bile is a chance I will
not pass by.

VIRGIL

I too relish the opportunity to
hear someone who does not
routinely use the phrase "back
blown out" in new and creative
ways every fortnight.

SISSY

Were we helpful, Travis? You asked
several times if we would do
things differently if we had the
chance? I figure you're wondering
what to do when you get back into
the system.

TRAVIS?

(considering)

I still don't rightly know.
Thieving is the only thing I've
ever done. I'm not sure I even
could change, even if I should. I
may already be too far gone.

SISSY

Wouldn't it be better to try?

TRAVIS

Yeah, probably.

(pause)

Scary though.

SISSY

Everything worth doing is.

TRAVIS

I'll try. I don't know what I can do... what I can be. But I can aim a bit higher than where I am.

SISSY

Okay then.

(pause, deciding)

When you get back, does your orbit take you by Charon?

TRAVIS

Other side of the system.

SISSY

Shame. There's a witch there. You know what a witch is, right?

TRAVIS

Someone who does documents right? What's the word, forger.

SISSY

That's part of it, yeah. Anti-tracking specialists. This gal's name is Prudence, works with the IWM a lot.

TRAVIS

Okay...

SISSY

If a young man was to look her up on Charon and say that Priscilla Ambrose sent him, ol' Prudence might see clear to help him out. Magic up him a new name and enough paper to make that name real. Well, real enough.

TRAVIS

Thank you.

SISSY

She's also likely to try to get you to try out a new FR disrupting face paint pattern, but don't feel

obligated to play test subject.
She just always wants more data.

TRAVIS
I'll remember that.

VIRGIL
Similarly, if one was to pass by
Pallas one could find one's way to
mooring 1A, which should be fairly
lifeless, as it is no longer in
use. If one was to step out of the
airlock there, suitably besuited
of course, and walk one hundred
and twenty paces due local north,
one might find a stone.

TRAVIS
A stone?

VIRGIL
Martian sandstone, about thirty
centimeters in diameter. Once one
knows to look for it, it should
appear very out of place. As if it
had been carried there by human
hand.

TRAVIS
Right.

VIRGIL
One would be advised to bring a
shovel.
(pause)
Take from that stash what you need
to get back on your feet.

TRAVIS
Would you like me to bring the
rest to your sister?

VIRGIL
That... that would be very kind of
you. I'll forward her comdress.

HOOCH

Virg, you just met this kid. Sure he's got a touching story but you don't really know him from a black hole.

VIRGIL

True. But if one is going to improve, one must be given opportunities to do so. If my trust is betrayed, I will still be glad to have taken the chance.

HOOCH

Hrm.

(pause)

Well, if we've decided to all play nice. What's your orbit, Trav?

TRAVIS

Um, here.

Travis types a command on his computer. Beeps.

HOOCH

Got it. Can do. Intercept will take a couple of months and the pod don't have enough delta to match v. You got an exosuit? You'll probably have to jump out and grab it by hand.

VIRGIL

Hooch, what did you launch?

HOOCH

When I got here, I started thinking about how I might get back. I'm good with my hands and my wrangler's systems are redundant so I scavenged a bit. Made a thing.

SISSY

You had a way to leave?

HOOCH

Maybe.

SISSY

How long?

HOOCH

Since before both of you got out here.

VIRGIL

What! Why didn't you go?

HOOCH

I don't know. The pod will get where it's going but I ain't exactly sure it'd keep a person alive on the way. Being out here ain't exactly like living but it ain't exactly like dying either.

(pause)

And then y'all came along.

Pause

VIRGIL

Wait a moment. Hooch, are you trying to say you stayed because you liked us.

HOOCH

No. But it wasn't so lonely anymore. That's all.

VIRGIL

I see. Well, the feeling is mutual.

SISSY

(joking)

Speak for yourself, Virg. I'd be happy to see Hooch's back as he left.

HOOCH

Oh that can be arranged. There's a camera on my terminal let me send you a snap.

SISSY

I have lasers on this ship. I will use them.

They all laugh a little. The computer starts beeping.

TRAVIS

My comm system is alerting. I think I'm passing out of range of the beacon.

HOOCH

Yeah, there are only a couple constants in this system: death, taxes, and the inverse square law.

TRAVIS

Thank you. All of you.

SISSY

It was good to talk to someone new, Travis. Remember, Charon. Look for Prudence.

TRAVIS

I will.

VIRGIL

Please do not take this as an insult but you have a philosopher's mind, my boy. I'm sure you will find a way to make use of it.

TRAVIS

I will. I'll try. And I'll tell you sister what you said about her. I'd like to hear that, if I were her.

VIRGIL

Thank you.

TRAVIS

And, Hooch-

With a squawk of static, the river connection dies.

TRAVIS

Lost'em. Shit.

Travis takes a deep breath and sighs.

TRAVIS

(narrating/recording)

I never thought I'd find anyone this far out, Gracie. It felt like... well like a dream. I could have convinced myself I had just been in the Brahms the whole time, hallucinating. It didn't seem real.

But I caught something coming toward me on the scopes. Took weeks to get close enough. Even though I adjusted course to get a bit closer, I still had to use every last centimeter of tether when I went out to get it. The pod was barely bigger than a coffin, obviously hand built from bits and scraps and improvisations. You would have had to be desperate to have tried riding it. Or worse than desperate.

I hauled it back to the Cash and opened it up, worried at what would be inside. Not Hooch, thank the void. Just a note and a hat. A good hat, I think it's real felt. High crown, wide brim, platinum band. Looks just like the one Kid Tripper wore in the old photos our dad used to show us. Cept it's white.

Note just said "here take this, keep the sun off your ass". But there was also an address on Ganymede and a name, Roman Diaz. I think I'm supposed to look them up.

(heavy sigh)

I'm worried, Gracie. I can't change what happened and I don't know what's coming. But it's worth trying something new.

I think... I think that the only way to do this is to remember that

the race is only with yourself. As long as the you of today is better than the you of yesterday. Or... well... not just yesterday cause sometimes you're gonna fuck up and backslide. Call it a general upward trend to aim for. I think I can do that.

Scene Fades Out

Thank you for joining us for this episode of Breathing Space

This Episode, As They Ride On Hear Their Cry was Written, Directed, Edited by Scott Paladin
Travis Sojourn is voiced by Ben Awtry
Hooch is voiced by Dane Smitley
Virgil is voiced by Vic Collins
Sissy is voiced by Lindsay Zana

Our theme, Blues for the Black, was composed by Michael Freitag with vocals by Jeremiah and lyrics by Scott Paladin.

You can find links to learn more about our cast and crew in the show notes and more information about our show at our website, breathingspace.lawofnames.com.

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