

INTRO

Breathing Space contains mature content such as substance abuse, sexual situations, and violence. This episode contains dialogue that might be triggering to people who have experienced emotional manipulation, and the depictions of harsh reactions to the trauma responses of others.

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

Intro music plays.

INT. A YUKON WAREHOUSE. LIGHTS AND VENTILATION HUM.

DERVISH sighs.

DERVISH

(conversational)

Y'know, when that Trapper family rep handed me the employment packet for this gig, I knew right away they were going to have trouble finding people.

(chuckles lightly)

Beeping.

DERVISH (cont'd)

(a little louder)

After all, why would anybody want to spend their time cataloging the contents of a YuKon warehouse when the job doesn't even guarantee them right of first salvage?

(snorts)

Not that junker's rights would've been especially appealing in this situation.

Might as well go off and find a warehouse one of these "charitable organizations" hasn't roosted on, am I right?

Beeping.

DERVISH (cont'd)
(still trying)
Hell, if it really is "ethical
redistribution of goods" the
Trappers are after--and I don't know
that I believe that--it'd be faster
just to let folks handle it
themselves.

(scoffing)
Though, I'd bet you most of my
meager paycheck that just about all
of this is bound for a Belter's
backyard anyway. You feel me?

Beeping.

DERVISH (cont'd)
(point-blank)
Hey, uh, is this how it's gonna be
the whole time with you?

The beeping stops.

ORIOLE
(taken aback)
Wh-? Were- were you talking to me?

DERVISH
Uh... yeah.
You do realize we're the only two
people left, right? Who else would I
be talking to?

ORIOLE
I- I don't know. Yourself?

DERVISH
Okay, let's try this again: hey
there, I'm Dervish Donne. Pleasure
to make your acquaintance...?
(expectant)

ORIOLE
Uh, hi. It's nice to meet you,
Dervish.

DERVISH

Nothing? Huh. Not a goddamned thing.

ORIOLE

I... I don't know what you were expecting.

DERVISH

Well, ordinarily people can't keep from telling me my name sounds like it belongs on a p-to-the-g player.

It's always some shit like,
(affecting an
accent)

"Sorry, you said your name was Dervish? Dervish Donne? And you're sure you're not a pigeon? With a name like that?"

ORIOLE

A... a pigeon?

DERVISH

(openly staring)

Yeah. A pidge. Y'know, a pigeon?

(beat)

A derby player? Even if you don't call them that, enough folks do that it shouldn't come as a surprise.

Hell, my name predisposes me to pigeonhood so completely that I genuinely considered it for a while-made top-scoring candidate before I decided it wasn't the life for me.

(a little rushed)

I- I doubt you would've ever heard of me, though, that was years back, and... uh...

(squinting)

Y'know, normally when somebody introduces himself to you, you return the favour.

You- you do know that, right?

ORIOLE

Uh, sure.

DERVISH
(prompting)
And...?

ORIOLE
(hesitates)
Oriole.

DERVISH
Alright.

That part of a matched pair, or are you one of those folks who got tired after one and decided to call it a day?

ORIOLE
(a bit self-conscious)
No, it's... it's, um, Oriole Corta.

DERVISH
(upbeat)
Well, it is very nice to meet you, Oriole Corta. Now, are we gonna spend the rest of this miserable slog of a job just standing here in oppressive silence or are you going to indulge me with a little conversation?

ORIOLE
I... I'm not all that great of a conversationalist.

DERVISH
Mhm, mhm. I am getting that impression, yeah.

ORIOLE
(quiet)
Sorry.

DERVISH
(tutting)
No, no, no, no, that's not something you go and say you're sorry for-

that's something you work on, and
I'm offering to help you work on it.
Call it... a complimentary service.

What do you say?

ORIOLE
(not mean-spirited)
Has... anybody ever told you that
you're kind of... a lot?

DERVISH jokingly staggers.

DERVISH
(dramatic)
Right out the gate with those hard
left hooks, huh?

Sure they have, but you didn't have
to go and say it!

ORIOLE
(bemused laughter)
I'm- I'm sorry?

DERVISH
(light-hearted
offense)
Good god! This time you should be,
yeah!

ORIOLE
(laughing)
Sorry! I'm- I'm sorry!

DERVISH
(openly teasing)
Where are you from, the ass-end of
the Caloris Basin?! Did they let the
llamas bring you up or something?!
Je-sus!

ORIOLE
(sobering up)
Um... Or something, I guess.

An odd, tense moment.

DERVISH

Hey, it's nothing to get worked up over. I'm just giving you shit to give you shit, you know?

(beat)

...Am I bothering you?

ORIOLE

(hesitant)

N-no. No, it's- it's just- I'm just not- not a lot of people want to talk to me, so I'm not... I'm not great at it. Like you said.

DERVISH

(disapproving
scoff)

No, no, no- I believe what I said was that I am more than happy to help you correct that particular deficiency. Didn't I?

ORIOLE doesn't answer.

DERVISH (cont'd)

(prompting)

And, well, look around you. I'm not exactly flush with other options, am I?

No matter what YuKon promised, the YuHome ain't much of a conversationalist.

ORIOLE

(fighting a smile)

...I guess not.

DERVISH

(prompting)

Okay, why don't you tell me something about yourself? We can start with something easy: where are you from, Oriole?

ORIOLE

Um...

(inhales, but says
nothing)

DERVISH

Alright. Let's just say you're from
Caloris. That sound good to you?

ORIOLE

...Uh, sure.

DERVISH

Great! I've never been, but I've
heard it's hotter than hell and half
as forgiving, so... if somebody
asks, you just go ahead and tell
them that, alright?

ORIOLE

(thoroughly perplexed)

O... kay?

DERVISH

So, my most assuredly Mercurian
friend, now that we've established
your point of origin and that you've
left the ranching life well behind
you, I feel I would be remiss in not
asking what you do for a living- uh,
while you're not picking through
YuKon's leavings at the behest of a
small-time crime syndicate, I mean.

I assume that's a new addition to
your routine?

ORIOLE

(a little overwhelmed)

Uh... yeah, I- I was working on a
freighter before this. Doing systems
maintenance, mostly.

DERVISH

(cheery)

Hey hey hey! System maintenance,
huh? How perfectly respectable of
you.

That's a great start. Maybe you're
not half bad at this conversation
thing after all.

ORIOLE
(laughs quietly)

Something dawns on DERVISH.

DERVISH
You... I-
(awkward chuckle)
You wouldn't happen to have come
here on that freighter, would you?

ORIOLE
(quiet)
...Yeah.

A long beat, then DERVISH sighs.

DERVISH
I'm gonna take a wild guess based on
the state of things and say she and
the rest of her crew didn't see fit
to stick around.

ORIOLE
No. No, they didn't.

DERVISH
...Right.
(trying to be light)
You, uh- you choose to stay behind,
then? Something about this place
just really speaks to you?

ORIOLE
(almost interrupting)
Does it matter?

DERVISH
I- I guess not. Comes to the same
thing, in the end.
(tentative)
If it helps, I doubt it had much to
do with your conversational skills.
Or lack thereof.
(awkwardly
comforting)
I've found it's often other things

that do the work of driving people
apart- even being one of the
friendliest faces in the System
can't save you from that.

You can take that from me.

Another long beat.

DERVISH (cont'd)

So, uh, how you planning to get off
this rock?

Pardon me if I sound mean-spirited,
but, uh... somehow, I don't think
the Trappers are as charitable as
they like to pretend they are.

ORIOLE

(cryptic)

I'll find a way.

DERVISH

(teasing)

Yeah? You gonna build yourself a
spaceship outta YuKon novelties and
forklift parts?

Naw.

You wanna find a way with me?

ORIOLE

(taken aback)

Uh, what?

DERVISH

I'm asking if you want a ride.

(conspiratorial)

Look, to tell you the truth, I've been
thinking about cutting loose for a
while now. Many hands make light
work and all that, but you and I got
only four between us and there's a
lot of work to be making light of
around here. Doesn't feel worth it,
not when we're getting paid by the
row.

So what do you say? You wanna come

with me?

ORIOLE
You don't even know where I'm going.

DERVISH
Do you?

ORIOLE
...No.

DERVISH
(laughing a little)
Yeah, that's about what I thought.
You don't have the look of
somebody's who's going anywhere in
particular.
(teasing)
But, y'know, I hear folks from
Caloris are like that.
C'mon. Come with me. Let's get out
of here.

ORIOLE considers it, and then somehow almost audibly
shrugs.

ORIOLE
Okay. Yeah.
(beat)
...Hey, you wanna take something? Before
we go?

DERVISH
(uncomprehending)
Take something?

A moment while DERVISH realizes just what ORIOLE is saying.

DERVISH (cont'd)
(low, quiet)
You're not suggesting what I think
you are?

ORIOLE
Like you said, there's nobody else
here. Not even the floor
supervisors.

They've got some sort of doll set up
in the overseer's office- look.

The light's on, but whoever's in
there hasn't moved since the day
before yesterday.

DERVISH

(squinting)

...Huh, goddamn. You're right.

(beat)

You don't think maybe somebody died
in there?

ORIOLE

What? No!

DERVISH

(still squinting)

You sure? I knew this guy who died
in his exo suit- some sort of heart
failure as he was coming back in
from the black.

Appraisers didn't clock it as
anything other than an un-stowed
suit; put the ship up for auction.
New owners flew in it for three
whole months before they found his
body.

ORIOLE

Huh... I guess that's not
impossible, if the suit was sealed
and the new crew didn't keep to a
standard maintenance schedule...

But, but- no, no, no. If somebody
had died in the overseer's office,
we'd've been able to smell it from
the shipping floor. I can tell you
that from experience.

DERVISH

(blinks)

I'm sorry, what?

ORIOLE

(interrupts)
Anyway, I'm just saying... we could
take a couple pallets.

DERVISH
(side-eying)
Well, that is an interesting
proposition.
(lighter)
You trying to make me your
accomplice?

ORIOLE
Accomplice to what? Is it really
stealing if we're stealing from
YuKon?

DERVISH
(suspicious
chuckle)
Ah, but we wouldn't be stealing from
YuKon, would we? We'd be stealing
from the Trapper family- and small-
time or no, they got appearances to
maintain.

ORIOLE
(dismissive)
They don't even know what's in here.

DERVISH
So says you.
They might know enough to wonder,
should a whole pallet go missing.

Maybe these cameras aren't just for
show. Did you consider that?
(considering)
Besides, what would we even take? Be
one thing if it was a risk on
something useful, but this whole
damn place is full of nothing but
YuKon's special brand of techno-junk-
more work to take apart than the
pieces themselves are worth.

ORIOLE
(protesting)

That's not true.

DERVISH
(snorting laugh)
How do you figure?

ORIOLE
(going into nerd
mode)
Well, the basic mechanical design of
most of this stuff isn't bad.
Generally speaking, YuKon outsourced
its product design to independent
contractors, or stole it outright
from smaller competitors! It's the
software that's the problem. It's
all bad code and anti-theft
bloatware-
(laughs)
It's a real mess.

DERVISH
(a bit skeptical)
...Uh-huh. Yeah, sure. I'll buy
that. Sounds like YuKon.
What I'm having trouble with is,
uh... well, it sounds an awful lot
like you're telling me you can spin
straw into gold, if I'm being honest
with you.

ORIOLE
(confused)
...Spin straw into... sorry, what?

DERVISH
Um... Rumpelstiltskin?

ORIOLE
Is that a... is that something to do
with the Peregrination?
(gasps, then
hushed)
Are- are you a Perry?

DERVISH
(chuckles)
Do you not have old Terran

fairytale in Caloris? C'mon now.

I'm saying it sounds like you're telling me you can turn this junk into something worth selling, and that is something I don't think I can swallow.

ORIOLE

Oh.

(beat)

Yeah, I can. I can do that.

DERVISH

(snorts)

Can you, now?

ORIOLE

(immediately)

Yeah.

Beat.

DERVISH

Wait, are you being serious?

ORIOLE

Yeah. It's not that hard.

DERVISH

(skeptical snort)

If it "wasn't that hard", then everybody'd do it.

ORIOLE

No, it's- people don't realize, so they don't even try. They don't see the use in what's in front of them.

(getting a little invigorated)

Clearing the internal programming of a YuKon product is one thing- how hard that's going to be depends on what you want the device to do. Getting past the anti-tampering software is easier than you'd think.

Once you've figured out one model,

you've figured out them all.
(laughing a little)
It's- it's pretty much standardized.

DERVISH
(almost
interrupting)
Now now, hold on. Hold on...
(gesturing)
Now, follow my finger. Right here.
You see where I'm pointing?

ORIOLE
The YuSHOuTs?

DERVISH
I'm sorry, the what?

ORIOLE
The "YuKon Signal Highlighting
Outbound Transceivers." They're
compact network relays. YuKon used
them to ensure they had-

DERVISH
(defensively
interrupting)
Yeah, I- I know what they are. I
just can't- I just can't keep track
of all of YuKon's stupid goddamn
acronyms!
(moving on)
Anyway, are you telling me you think
you could make those work? Off the
YuKon network, I mean. On proper
blueline.

ORIOLE
(confident)
Oh, yeah. They're whiteline relays.
It's not that complicated to
reprogram them for blueline- the
core mechanical structures are
exactly the same. It might be
simpler just to dump the core
programming and start over from
scratch, but... eh, again, that's
not that complicated.

Once you've done it once, it's just a matter of code replication across devices.

DERVISH
And you could do that?

ORIOLE
Yeah. No problem.

DERVISH
(chuckles)
...I have got a proposal for you, my friend. Why don't you grab one of those pallets and follow me back to the lovely Shenandoah?

INT. INSIDE THE "SHENANDOAH". SMALLISH FREIGHTER VESSEL.

ORIOLE
And- and you think people in the Belt would buy into that?

DERVISH
Yes! I keep telling you, Ori, the deal's as good as already done. I got contacts- people know me. Everybody knows me.

You think folks back home don't love to see the face of Dervish Donne? Besides, I don't think you get how bad the blueline situation is out there. Just about everybody's got redline, but you can't go three rocks over without finding somebody who couldn't get a signal out to save their life- and I mean that literally. It's an open market.

ORIOLE
Hm.... I- I guess I just thought people came out to the Belt because they wanted to be left alone.

DERVISH

Well, first off: not everybody comes to the Belt- some folks are born there, and they don't get a say in how lonely they have to be. And second: yeah, sure, some folks do come to the Belt to get left alone, but... everybody wants to get left alone until getting left alone is about to get them killed, and then suddenly they decide they don't wanna get left alone no more.

And after the situation with the solar flare, well... a lot of folks realized that getting left alone wasn't all it was cracked up to be. You feel me?

ORIOLE

(softly)

Y-yeah. I could see that.

DERVISH

Where were you?

ORIOLE

What?

DERVISH

When the flare hit. Where were you?

ORIOLE does not answer.

DERVISH (cont'd)

...Never have I met a more mysterious individual than you.

(beat, upbeat)

Well, me? I was lucky enough to be roping Saturnian ice for a team of real prestigious Martian researchers. Absolutely essential work. And I didn't even know what was happening at first, just thought they'd suddenly stopped answering my calls, and then I-

ORIOLE

(interrupting)
I was... alone.

DERVISH makes a sound not unlike a laugh, and then falls quiet, appearing to finally register what ORIOLE has said.

DERVISH
What?

ORIOLE
I... was alone. When- when the flare hit.

DERVISH
(deeply uncomfortable)
Yeah... alright.
(changing subject)
Like I was saying: there's a market.

ORIOLE
Okay.

Um, we still have a problem.

DERVISH
(not too worried)
And what's that?

ORIOLE
Placement and stability.

DERVISH
...How do you mean?

ORIOLE
The relays need somewhere to go, and they need to be stable. They have to stay within a certain distance of each other to maintain the integrity of the network. That's why a lot of orbital relays are so powerful- they have to make up for the fact that they're connected to moving objects.

But there's nothing strong enough to connect Mars to Venus when the sun is in the way, so the bulk of the

System's blueline network is dependent on hanging relays- and the problem with hanging relays is they're not tied to any sort of gravitational stability.

DERVISH

...So if something hits one, it'll start to drift.

ORIOLE

...Yeah.

DERVISH

Well, that's not good.

But considering that you can get a call out from Mars to Venus, and vice-versa, there must be some way of dealing with that.

ORIOLE

(affirmative noise)

Mjhm. Most hanging relays have on-board thrusters for course correction and are able to re-situate themselves based on the signal strength of their sister relays.

DERVISH

...I'm going to take a wild guess here: ours can't do that?

ORIOLE

No.

DERVISH

You're sure? This ain't something you could solve with your, uh, special programming eyes?

ORIOLE

(soft laugh)

No. It's a hardware issue. Or, uh... actually, a lack of hardware issue, I guess.

DERVISH

Huh.

Alright. Then how'd YuKon stop them from just... drifting off into space every time they got dinged by a bit of loose slag?

ORIOLE

They didn't.

DERVISH

(flustered)

I- I beg your pardon?

ORIOLE

They didn't. It was cheaper to just replace them.

A beat.

DERVISH

There's no way you're not fucking with me.

ORIOLE

I am...

(mirthless laugh)

...not.

Most hanging relays are at least the size of a short-range shuttle.

The only reason YuSHOuTs are so much smaller is because they were made to be replaced. Whenever a gap was detected in the YukNet, a drone would just go out and deploy a new one.

DERVISH

(sighs)

...Every time I think I've reached the bottom of YuKon's deep, deep well of stupidity, somebody has to go and poke their head up through the muck and tell me something I didn't know.

You're really telling me they were in the habit of just letting their whiteline relays get spun off into

the infinite black every time
somebody had a mind to vent their
cath bag nearby?

ORIOLE

Well, yes. And- and no.

They didn't always just "go flying
off into nothing". Sometimes they
ran into things. Ships. Stations.

Each other.

And they can stop themselves from
spinning, they just can't stop
themselves from moving.

DERVISH

Which, if I'm understanding you, is
the much more important issue at
hand here.

ORIOLE

Yeah.

DERVISH

Well, shit. So what are we gonna do
about that?

ORIOLE

I'm not sure yet.

DERVISH

(muttering)

I can't believe we might've stolen
from the Trappers for nothing. Shit.

ORIOLE

(quietly scheming)

I'll figure something out, I just...
I'm just not sure what yet.

DERVISH

(talking to
himself)

Is there really no way to set them
up and not have them go wandering
off...?

...God, but the Belt is full of

crap. Ain't no way you could rely on not having something get flung into one in the first ten minutes...

ORIOLE

(almost
interrupting)

W-wait. The Belt is "full of crap"?
Do you mean there's a lot of debris?

DERVISH

What?

ORIOLE

(clarifying)

There's a lot of debris in the Belt?
Are you- are you talking about rocky
debris, or- do people in the Belt
have access to scrap? Like metal
scrap?

There's a moment of stunned silence, and then DERVISH
bursts into laughter.

DERVISH

N-never has it been made more clear
to me that somebody ain't a Belter.

"Is there scrap in the Belt?"

(cracking up)

Is there dust in the intake?

ORIOLE

So... yes...?

DERVISH

(audibly smiling)

Ori... just about everything in the
System somebody wants getting rid of
ends up in the Belt. Doesn't matter
to them if the rock's inhabited-
honestly, better for them if it is.
Regulations state you can't leave
your trash somewhere it might go a-
wandering, and where's more likely
to have good gravity than a place
you know people live?

Inner System disposal services will dump their loads just about anywhere at any time- especially in a Belter's backyard.

ORIOLE

Are... they allowed to do that?

DERVISH

Maybe? Maybe not. Not sure what the law says, but it doesn't matter. What are folks supposed to do about it?

(a little bitter)

Complain on the blueline that they don't have access to?

ORIOLE

Hmm... okay. Yeah, okay. No no no, This... This is a good thing.

DERVISH

(doubtful)

Is it now? Not sure most Belters would agree with you.

ORIOLE

No, um- as long as they have access to the materials, it shouldn't be that complicated for them to build relay towers.

DERVISH

Relay towers?

ORIOLE

Yeah, yeah- okay-

(clears throat)

You can't turn a hanging relay into an orbital relay, because it's not designed for that- but you can anchor it.

As long as you have the materials, I can't think of a reason why you wouldn't be able to install a hanging relay in a relay tower.

DERVISH

...Which would solve that wandering issue.

(admiringly)

You sure are using that head of yours to think, Oriole Corta.

ORIOLE

(confused but smiling)

That's... usually what I use it for?

DERVISH

(laughs)

No, no- I'm saying this is some real genius-level stuff.

ORIOLE

Is it? I'm... I'm just used to having to make do with what's available to me.

DERVISH

(skeptical huff)

You sure you're from Caloris?

ORIOLE

What?

DERVISH

Starting to wonder if you aren't from the Belt- just been playing stupid to make a fool out of me.

ORIOLE

I'm- I'm not from the Belt.

DERVISH

Uh-huh. Mercury-born and raised, I remember.

(teasing)

I'll have to make the visit sometime!

Seems to me there must be more to it than cricket farms and llama ranchers for somebody with a mind like yours to come out of it.

Wouldn't you say so?

ORIOLE

Yeah.

(a little subdued)

Yeah. For sure.

EXT. THE SURFACE OF A LARGE INHABITED ASTEROID (LUTETIA) IN THE BELT.

Loud crickets are audible in the background. A distant ventilation system hums.

MITCHELL

(deeply skeptical)

Look, I'll be upfront with you,

Dervish Donne.

I think you're trying to sell me a sailboat on the South Pole-Aitken Garbage Sea.

You tell me I gotta have a little more faith in you. That we might not see results right away because ours would be the first community making use of your shiny new Belter blueline network.

Then you tell me we may or may not pick up some signals from the Inner System here and there, but we're unlikely to hear from other Belters until they join up too.

(unkind laugh)

C'mon now. Why don't you tell me more about how pretty the waves are on Luna this time of year?

DERVISH

(wheedling)

Now, Mitchell- Mitchy? Can I call you Mitchy?

MITCHELL

No, you may not.

DERVISH

I'm gonna call you Mitch. I understand how it sounds-

MITCHELL
(interrupting)
And yet you still want me to pay for
it. Funny, that.

DERVISH takes a steadying breath.

DERVISH
(faux-sincere)
Somebody's always got to be the
first to take the plunge, Mitchy.
It's a necessary part of the
process. There's a risk there, yeah,
but there's also great reward.
The first to embrace the future is
always remembered as an essential
part of the story-

MITCHELL
(interrupting)
Listen, you know what?
If somebody came here tomorrow and
told me they meant to bring Lutetia
into the future, I would welcome it
with open arms.
(catty)
Unfortunately, I find I've yet to
meet such a... visionary.

Or was I meant to buy that tall tale
of yours about working with the
scientists on the solar orbital
prior to the flare as a fact?

DERVISH laughs performatively.

DERVISH
You been out here a while, Mitchell?
When'd you come back?

You, uh, did come back at some
point, didn't you? Tried to leave,
but it didn't stick?
Yeah, you can always tell when
that's the case.

MITCHELL chuckles. It is exactly the kind of mirthless,
tight-lipped laugh that would make anybody with common

sense realize they need to back off.

MITCHELL

Funny thing to hear from somebody
who stayed gone.

DERVISH

(snorts)

Well, at least I managed it.

MITCHELL

Managed to forget your roots, too,
looks like it. And your manners.

DERVISH

Well, can't speak to the state of my
manners or how good they might've
been before I left, but I can tell
you that I ain't been gone long
enough to have forgotten just how
bad it feels to realize you've
gotten so used to the noise that you
barely hear it anymore.

They're coming more and more often
these days, aren't they? The
junkers.

MITCHELL

(scoffs)

That? Everybody gets used to that.
My baby girl is used to that. Not
even eighteen months old yet and it
don't wake her anymore.

(cold beat)

You think just because you're from
here, we oughta trust you?

(sneers)

Wouldn't be the first time a Belter
stepped on their neighbor's back
trying to get in good with the
Inners.

DERVISH

Yeah, I suppose you'd know something
about that, wouldn't you?

MITCHELL

You trying to imply something, kid?

DERVISH
(laughing
nervousness)
N-no, sir, I am not.

MITCHELL
Then I will ask you to clarify what
you meant by that statement.
(coldly)
Y'know, to avoid any unfortunate
misunderstandings that might occur
as a result.

DERVISH
(laughing
nervousness)
I- I was just saying that a man who
leaves the Belt and comes back again
is, uh, likely to have seen all
sorts of things!

Approaching footsteps are just barely audible.

MITCHELL
All sorts of things, huh?

DERVISH
Y-yes, sir.

MITCHELL
(not a question)
You're saying that's how you meant
it.

DERVISH
Yes, sir.

MITCHELL
And I should take your word for
that, should I?

DERVISH
(a little sweaty)
I'd be much obliged if you did.

MITCHELL

(quiet)
Well, I'd be much obliged if you
didn't try to take me for a fool-

ORIOLE
(very sudden)
What about a trade?

MITCHELL
Jesus!
(clutching his
chest)
Where in the hell did you come from?

DERVISH
(to ORIOLE)
Ori, I told you I had this handled-

ORIOLE
(to MITCHELL)
Being the first relay in a network
means putting faith in there being a
network. You're not wrong about
that. That's just true!
I don't think it's strange for you
to be reluctant about paying for
that. So... what if we did a trade,
instead?

DERVISH
(hushed)
Hey. What are you trying to pull
right now?
(to MITCHELL)
Please pardon my friend here, he
hails from the wildest parts of
Mercury and hasn't quite got a
handle on-

MITCHELL
(talking over
DERVISH)
Naw, naw, naw, naw naw- I think
you've said more than enough, kid.
(to ORIOLE)
...You. I didn't catch your name.

ORIOLE

Oriole.

(beat)

Uh, Corta.

MITCHELL

Alright, Oriole.

I'm not opposed to what you've suggested, so I'm willing to hear you out.

(a bit pointed)

Consider it a second chance for the success of your operation. Hell, if you're a bit more personable than your partner over there, maybe I even might find it in me to forget I've ever spoke to him. Lord knows I'd like to.

ORIOLE

(sweating)

Uh, well... uh... um...

DERVISH

(interrupting)

Now, I understand that you're upset, Mitchy, but Ori here ain't the one who does the talking-

MITCHELL

(grumbling)

Call me Mitch one more time, boy...

(clears throat)

Y'know what? It's a damn shame he doesn't, because he ain't said anything that's made me want to see the back end of him yet- which is more than I can say for you.

(to ORIOLE)

What are you asking for, Inner? What do you want?

ORIOLE

(all in a rush)

I... want open access to the scrap.

MITCHELL

(incredulous snort)

The scrap? You're looking for

junker's rights? What do you want something like that for?

DERVISH

(through a tense grin)

Yeah, I think I'd like to know the same thing-

MITCHELL

(to DERVISH)

Boy, I said shut up. Grown folks is talking.

DERVISH

(cowed)

Sorry.

MITCHELL

(to ORIOLE)

Listen, Oriole- I'm not one to bargain my way out of a good deal, but I don't think my wife would let me sleep at night knowing I let you think there was anything worth having out there. Simple fact is, if it's got a use, we've already made use of it-

ORIOLE

(immediate)

That's not true.

MITCHELL

(sighing)

C'mon now. I must've picked through those heaps a thousand times- I know what's in them, and I know what it's worth.

ORIOLE

It- I- I don't think that's true, either. Uh, sir.

MITCHELL raises his eyebrows.

MITCHELL

(chuckles)

Wow.

You two really are a matched set
when it comes to running your mouths
off, aren't you?

Alright. I'll give you a chance. Go
ahead: why don't you tell me how I
don't know the value of what's in my
scrapyard? Go ahead. I'm listening.

ORIOLE

(a little
aggravated)

I'm not saying you don't know how
much things would be worth as is-

MITCHELL

(talking over)

Really? Because from where I'm
standing, it sure does sound like
it.

ORIOLE

With all due respect, I'm just
saying there are things here you
might not have the skills to make
use of-

MITCHELL

(mirthless laugh)

Oh, so now it's a matter of my
skills, is it? Well, that's so much
better-

DERVISH

(inarticulate
noise)

Ori, let's just go- there's nothing
for us here-

MITCHELL

Well now, look at that! Round of
applause- for once, you're the one
talking sense-

ORIOLE

(clear and firm)

Have you ever hybridized a secondary

8VAC unit with a metalloid
composition tester to stabilize a
hydroponics bed, sir?

DERVISH
(bewildered)
Sorry, what?

MITCHELL
...Ah, Jesus. If I'd realized you
were one of those, I would've kept
my mouth shut.
(chuckles)
I've gone and made an ass of myself,
haven't I?
(sighs)
Yeah, alright.

ORIOLE blinks, confused by the sudden shift in attitude.

ORIOLE
Uh... wha?
(looks to DERVISH)
The fuck?

DERVISH
Uh... yeah, pardon my interruption
here, but what the fuck are we
talking about right now?

MITCHELL
(to DERVISH)
Word of advice: next time,
consider leading with the fact
that you got this sort of person in
your corner.

ORIOLE
(to DERVISH)
Uh... "this sort of person"? What
does that mean, Dervish?

DERVISH
(muttered)
A real pain in the ass, I think.

MITCHELL
(ignoring this)

I tell you what- you give us that relay, I'll give you access to the scrap.

I just got one condition: the two of you? Y'all gotta stick around to see us through the installation. How's that sound?

ORIOLE

(a little taken
aback)

Uh... uh, o-okay. Yeah! That sounds fine to me. Uh, Dervish?

DERVISH

(through clenched
teeth)

Yep. Sounds terrific.

MITCHELL

(ignoring DERVISH)

Oriole, my man. Glad we could come to a mutual agreement.

DERVISH

(quietly seething)

...Yep, been real great doing business with you, Mitchy.

Hey, Ori? Mind meeting me back on the ship? I'd like to have a word with you.

INT. INSIDE THE "SHENANDOAH". SMALLISH FREIGHTER VESSEL.

The airlock finishes cycling. DERVISH whirls on ORIOLE.

DERVISH

(quietly seething)

You'll have to pardon my ignorance, Oriole Corta: I hadn't realized the part of Caloris you came from happened to be such a vibrant post-scarcity society, or I would've moved there years ago!

ORIOLE

Uh- w-what? No, I was-

DERVISH

(talking over)

There's this thing you might not be familiar with: it's called money-

ORIOLE

(inaudible)

I know what money is-

DERVISH

-and out here in the underdeveloped backwater that is the rest of the System, it is generally agreed upon that it is something a person needs to live!

ORIOLE

(trying to get a word in)

No- no, no, Dervish- Dervish, listen, I have a plan, all I need to do-

DERVISH

You have a plan? And here I thought we had a plan.

ORIOLE

(inaudible)

No, that's not what I meant-

DERVISH

If I'd known you meant to run your mouth and ruin it, maybe I wouldn't have bothered!

ORIOLE

(getting frustrated)

No, it's not that- I just- I need you to listen to me! Listen to-

DERVISH

(interrupts)

Then give me something worth listening to! Maybe a goddamn

explanation, to start?
What the hell was that, Ori?
 (quieter, more
 hurt)
What the hell was that?

ORIOLE hesitates for a moment.

ORIOLE
It was... it was a deal. I was just
making a deal.

DERVISH
 (laughing
 exasperation)
No- no, no, no. I was making a deal.
You let him rip us off.

ORIOLE
 (awkwardly gentle)
Your deal wasn't working.

DERVISH
So what if it wasn't? You think I
don't know how bad I was fucking up?

It was still my deal to make, wasn't
it?
You gotta trust me not to fuck it up
until I've gone and really fucked it
up, Ori. You gotta give me that, at
least.

I thought we were supposed to be
doing this together.

A strange moment of emotionally raw silence.

ORIOLE
...I'm- I'm sorry.

DERVISH
 (almost laughing)
I don't know what I expected.

Hell, I don't know why I'm upset!

It's not like you're the first

person to decide I've got my head
too far up my own ass to find my way
out of anything.

ORIOLE

I don't- I don't think that about
you- it's not like that-

DERVISH

(not really
listening)

Maybe- maybe I should just be glad
you didn't do us any better-

ORIOLE

Dervish...

DERVISH

That would've just proved it,
wouldn't it? That I'm not really
needed here.

ORIOLE

No-

DERVISH

(laughing)

Yeah, yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah...
maybe- maybe I should just be- maybe
I should be grateful your deal
netted us worse than nothing.

ORIOLE

(a little
defensive)

...What do you mean, worse?

DERVISH

We-

(mirthless
laughter)

We have a very limited stock of
relays, Ori, and you just agreed to
give one away for nothing but the
right to go wading through some
rusty ship parts.

I guess maybe you thought you were

onto something there? But... but the fact of the matter is that we're down a product, and we've got nothing to show for it.

ORIOLE
Dervish, that's- that's not true.

DERVISH
Ain't it?

ORIOLE
No.

DERVISH
Then tell me what we got out of this. Where's the silver lining here?

ORIOLE hesitates.

ORIOLE
...I- I'm sorry.

DERVISH
(almost talking over)
Don't- don't- don't tell me you're sorry. Tell me what you found.

You're no fool, Ori. I know you found something. What was it?

ORIOLE
(mumbling)
...Some stupid relays.

DERVISH
What?

ORIOLE takes a deep breath and clears his throat.

ORIOLE
There are at least three broken relays here in the scrapyard, and... there might be more.

A long pause.

DERVISH
(sighs)
You're fucking with me.

ORIOLE
I'm not.

DERVISH starts chuckling.

DERVISH
Why?

ORIOLE
Why what? It's like I said- every
time YuKon replaced a relay, the
original had to end up somewhere.
At least some of them would've ended
up being collected for disposal.

DERVISH
And when things get collected for
disposal, they end up in the Belt.
(long exhale)
Well, now we're really fucked,
aren't we?

ORIOLE
(taken aback)
What? Why?

DERVISH
We're-
(chuckles bleakly)
We're selling air on Terra, Ori.
If Mitchell didn't think we were
hucksters and cheats before, the
second he see you pulling one of
those relays out of his scrapyard?
It's all over for us.
End of the line.

ORIOLE sighs.

ORIOLE
Hey, listen, I- I didn't mean to...

I'm sorry I didn't let- I'm sorry I

didn't let you finish making your deal-

DERVISH

(talking over)

Naw. Nope, nope, naw, naw, naw, it's fine, it's fine- Ori, it's fine. Like you said... we were just going in circles.

A pause.

DERVISH (cont'd)

(sighs in defeat)

Maybe we should just beat feet before he catches wise.

(grunts)

I hate getting nothing out of it, though. Especially now that you gone and got the locals on board. You, uh, you think we can sneak 'em onto the ship without anybody noticing?

ORIOLE

W- why would that- what?

DERVISH

Your relays- uh, the ones in the scrapyard.

ORIOLE

That's-

(sighs)

That's not going to be a problem.

DERVISH

No?

(laughs)

Because it sure seems like a problem from where I'm standing.

(sighs)

...Shit.

ORIOLE

(insistent)

Dervish, they're broken.

The relays in the scrapyard aren't

inactive, they are broken.

They're scrap. That's why the residents haven't done anything with them. They're just, as I said, scrap that happens to have some usable relay components.

That does no good to anybody here-but... I might be able to get something out of them if I put them together. And- and if I can do that, we might have another relay to sell, right?

Uh, and then we're not down a product.

DERVISH

(energy rising)

And- and we might have some extra parts, just in case we come across others.

ORIOLE

Uh... y-yeah. Uh, sure? I guess.

DERVISH

How- how likely do you think that is?

ORIOLE

What? Us finding another broken relay?

DERVISH

Yeah. On other asteroids. In other settlements.

ORIOLE

I... I don't think it's unlikely. YuKon racked up a lot of fines for things like "improper disposal of critical infrastructure", so clearly people were finding these things around.

DERVISH

(almost
interrupting)

I'm- I'm sorry- "critical
infrastructure"?

ORIOLE

(a bit surprised)

Y-yeah. Y'know, these relays were
the foundation of the YukNet.

DERVISH considers this.

DERVISH

And they just let bits of that go
flying off every which way, huh?
Fucking hell, money truly is a hell
of a thing.

(beat)

You really think you could whip us
up a new relay out of the stuff in
the yard?

ORIOLE

Maybe? I can give it a shot. Can't
promise anything.

DERVISH

Well, if you can, then we're coming
out of this at least no worse than
when we went into it.

I'll take that.

There's a beat.

ORIOLE

Dervish? I- I'm sorry.

DERVISH

Wh... what are you saying sorry for
now?

ORIOLE

It- I... It- it's just... I got in the
way, and you were trying to do what
we'd decided on, and I then I went
[unintelligible]-

DERVISH

(interrupting)

Hey. Hey, hey, hey, hey-

ORIOLE

Yes.

DERVISH

Hey.

ORIOLE

Yes?

DERVISH

Shut up.

ORIOLE

Okay.

DERVISH

You want to make it up to me? Go get
us those goddamn relays.

Let's get this network built.

INT. INSIDE THE HOLD OF THE "SHENANDOAH". SMALLISH
FREIGHTER VESSEL.

ORIOLE is working quietly. Gentle sounds of tinkering. A
door whirs opens, and DERVISH peers in.

DERVISH

(chuckles)

You still working? C'mon...

ORIOLE doesn't answer. DERVISH approaches.

DERVISH (cont'd)

So what's the verdict, Ori?

(faux-grieving)

Can we operate, or is she terminal?

ORIOLE

(distracted)

Not terminal, no.

I- I think I can get this one
working, if I can just... figure out
what's wrong with this connection...

It should be functioning- there's no

fault in the component, but for some reason, it just won't... connect...

DERVISH

Mhm.

ORIOLE

(mumbling)

Maybe I'm using the wrong, like, end bit? Or the metal is corroded? Or it's rusted or gone, and...

DERVISH has been nodding and murmuring agreements for several seconds.

ORIOLE (cont'd)

Y-yeah, sorry?

DERVISH

Well, disregarding all that, uh: activation went great.

ORIOLE

(distracted)

Uh-huh?

DERVISH

Always the same! That first call goes out, and everything gets so quiet you can just about hear people thinking- thinking to themselves, "Did I just get ripped off or am I really this unlucky?"

And then one of Joanie or Padvah or Mitchell's folks will come back on the other end, and the whole room just loses its damn mind.

(chucking, then
beat)

You should join in sometime. Couldn't do this without you, buddy- you should be there when it happens.

ORIOLE makes a dismissive noise.

DERVISH (cont'd)

Aww, c'mon. You're never gonna

become the sparkling
conversationalist I know you can be
if you don't talk to people, Ori.

ORIOLE
(a little subdued)
I talk to people. I talk to you.

DERVISH
That's not the same and you know it.

DERVISH sits down heavily on the floor beside him.

DERVISH (cont'd)
Why are you so against being
sociable?

ORIOLE
I'm not.

DERVISH
(chuckles)
It sure seems like you are.

ORIOLE
Well, I'm not.

DERVISH
Then prove it. I'm not gonna believe
you until you start making an effort
to be around.

ORIOLE
(snaps)
If people wanted me around, then
they would have made an effort!

DERVISH
Woah, hey! What did I do to deserve
being talked to like that?
Besides, people can't know they want
you around if they never get the
chance to know you in the first
place!

ORIOLE
You didn't know me and we did just
fine!

DERVISH

Yeah, well, maybe I'm a just loud-mouthed know-nothing busybody who can't mind theirs! That certainly seems to be the common opinion! Have you considered that maybe I'm not better than you, Ori? Maybe I've just got a different problem?

The fact of the matter is, if you want other people to make an effort, you gotta make an effort. You can't just expect folks to decide you're worth their time when you aren't willing to do anything that might make them think that's the case.

(sighing)

What... what happened to you?

ORIOLE

(sullen)

I- I don't know what you mean.

DERVISH

Ori, people don't get to being this way for no reason.

Hell, I didn't get to being this way for no reason.

What happened to you?

ORIOLE is drawing further and further into himself. The pause stretches on and on until finally ORIOLE speaks.

ORIOLE

(distant)

Have you ever... been alone?

DERVISH

I mean, sure. It'd be a pretty strange life if I hadn't, wouldn't it?

ORIOLE

(sighs, then with strange emphasis)

I mean... have you ever been alone?

DERVISH

Um. I, uh... I don't think I understand.

ORIOLE

Then you haven't.

There's a long, strange pause.

DERVISH

(hesitant)

So maybe I haven't. But I'd like to know what you mean. Help me out here, Ori.

ORIOLE

(checked out)

Quarterly shifts. Three months on, nine months off.

(almost laughing,
but not in a good
way)

And it wasn't always the same people coming back, you know? Sometimes new people coming along, and [unintelligible]-

DERVISH

...Ori?

ORIOLE

I can't even blame them for it. It's- it's not their fault.

(manic
dissociation)

I mean, why- why would they come back? What... what, just for- just for me?

(beat)

Stupid. Fucking stupid.

DERVISH

(increasing
concern)

...Ori? Are- are you okay?

ORIOLE
(dissociative)

Huh?

DERVISH
Ori, we... we don't have to talk
about it. If you don't want to.

ORIOLE
I- I thought you wanted to
understand.

DERVISH
Oh, buddy... I do, but... I don't
gotta understand.

ORIOLE
I... don't get it.

DERVISH
(chuckles)
What's there to get?

ORIOLE
You...
(almost laughing,
but in a bad way)
You said you wanted to know! People
are- people don't like not knowing
things! It makes them uncomfortable,
and then they, like, start
questioning things-

DERVISH
(trying to
interject)
Hey, hey- hey, hey, hey, hey, Ori,
Ori, Ori-

ORIOLE stops.

DERVISH (cont'd)
I know everything I need to, don't
I?

I mean, c'mon... what's there to
know about some... maladjusted llama
farmer from the Caloris Basin?

Just another Mercurian hick,
learning the hard way that people
are harder to get along with than
livestock.

ORIOLE
(almost laughs)
Yeah... yeah, just a... just a
Mercurian hick. I'm just a Mercurian
hick.

DERVISH
(encouraging)
Yeah. You're just some hick from
Caloris.

ORIOLE
Um... h-hotter than hell and, uh,
half as forgiving!
That must be why I left.

DERVISH
(gently)
Yeah. Must be.

INT. THE COCKPIT OF THE "SHENANDOAH".

A very low rumble of the engine. A comms terminal rings.
DERVISH picks up.

DERVISH
(in good humour)
Hello, hello, hello, this is Dervish
Donne of the Shenandoah- what can I
do for you, Lutetia? I'd ask if your
relay was holding up alright, but if
it wasn't, I don't think I'd be
hearing from you, so...

MITCHELL
Dervish.

DERVISH
(muttered)
Oh, fuck me.
(forced
friendliness)

Mitchell, buddy! What can I do you for?

MITCHELL
Remind me: where'd you say that friend of yours was from?

DERVISH
(scoffs)
I- I didn't.

MITCHELL
Then enlighten me.

DERVISH
Caloris Basin. Mercury.

MITCHELL
Yeah... I don't think that's true.

DERVISH
Well, I do, and I think I'd know.

MITCHELL chuckles. A pregnant pause.

MITCHELL
You know, this network of yours really is something.

DERVISH
(not a question)
Is it?

MITCHELL
Mhm.

Every time you add a new location, our connection to the Inners get a little clearer.

More points of connectivity, I guess.

DERVISH
An unintended side-effect, but not an unwelcome one, I hope.

MITCHELL

Hm? No. Not at all. It's been
interesting, hearing from closer to
the sun.

DERVISH
Was there a point to this call,
Mitchell? Or were you just feeling
lonely?

MITCHELL
(chuckles)
I've been hearing some real
interesting stories, Dervish.

DERVISH
Yeah?

MITCHELL
Yeah.

DERVISH
(snorts)
Like what?

MITCHELL
Well, for one, I heard that you were
posted up in a YuKon warehouse
before you came out here.

You stiff a charity to get those
relays, Dervish?

DERVISH
(a little unnerved)
It ain't a charity. The Trappers
aren't good people, Mitch.

MITCHELL
Yeah, I figured that one out all on
my own, thanks.

Good people or no, they seem to be
under the impression you stole
something from them.

DERVISH
(very quietly)
Oh, goddamn it.

(to MITCHELL)
I think we can chalk that up to a
difference of opinion.

MITCHELL
(unconvinced)
Mhm.

DERVISH
So uh, why are you bringing this up?
Just calling to gloat before the
goon squad gets me?

MITCHELL
Naw... how could they? As far as
we're concerned, nobody on Lutetia
ever saw you.

We must've dug this relay out of the
junk and fixed it up ourselves.

DERVISH
Oh.
(unexpectedly
genuine)
Uh, I... I appreciate that,
Mitchell. I really do.

MITCHELL
Good. I'll keep that in mind.

DERVISH
(sighs)
Uh-oh.

MITCHELL
(light-hearted)
Naw, don't be like that. I just got
some questions about that friend of
yours.

DERVISH
What kind of questions?

MITCHELL
(thoughtful noise)
Like, where'd you pick him up?

DERVISH

(snorts)

Why you asking me that? If you know about the warehouse, you know we left together.

MITCHELL

I didn't know that, actually.

DERVISH

What?

MITCHELL

I know you left that warehouse with somebody, but the funny thing is that the person you left with was never hired on by the folks in charge.

He just sorta... showed up one day and started working, apparently.

DERVISH

(defensive scoff)

Alright. So somebody didn't file their paperwork. What of it?

MITCHELL

Well, it's just the sort of thing that makes you curious, is all. Makes you want to start asking questions.

DERVISH

(a little
impatient)

Then ask some questions.

Right now, it seems like you're mostly just telling, not asking.

MITCHELL

(laughs)

Oh, I didn't mean I started out asking questions of you, Dervish.

Naw, we've been hearing some real interesting stories from the Inners, lately.

You ever hear of the, uh, E. Pauline Johnson?

DERVISH

Nah, can't say I have. That a ship?

MITCHELL

Station, actually. Didn't think you would've.

It's one of those big modular joints they put way out in the black-- basically just a stopover point for long-haulers bringing in things from the outer System.

But this one-- this one was YuKon-specific. Didn't accept regular traffic.

DERVISH

(squinting)

Alright. Why are you telling me this?

MITCHELL

(ignoring)

Y'see, I've been hearing some interesting stories from the EPJ from ex-YuKon types who worked it while it was still in operation.

Apparently, it wasn't like other outer System stopovers. YuKon decided it was too expensive to have folk living there full-time, so instead, they had their long-haulers drop off certain non-essential crew members on their way out, then pick 'em on up again on they back in. And those were the folks who had to keep the lights on. A constant rotating crew, always in and out, only ever there a few months at a time.

No permanent residents. Except for one.

DERVISH is silent.

MITCHELL (cont'd)

Somebody left a kid there, years and years ago, and nobody could figure out what to do with it.

YuKon was real strict about freight loads and crew size- picking up a passenger was a real good way to get yourself fined into oblivion, or so I'm told.

DERVISH

(very quiet)

Why are you telling me this?

MITCHELL

This kid, he got good at making YuKon tech do what he wanted it to. And I mean scary good. Good the way you only ever get when that's all you can get your hands on and you don't think settling for less is an option.

You see Belter kids around like that sometimes. Something happens and they get left alone, and the next thing you know, they've built themselves the wildest things your eyes have ever beheld, just so they can get a chance of hearing another human voice again.

DERVISH

(audibly stressed)

Why are you telling me this, Mitchell?

MITCHELL

Because that kid disappeared, Dervish.

After YuKon went bust, nobody had the means or the mind to go out and check on the EPJ for a good long

while- and when they did, it was empty. Dead empty.

DERVISH

Sounds like somebody took a walk out of the airlock. Sad, but it happens.

MITCHELL

Naw, naw, naw.

When I say empty, I mean empty. With bits missing, like somebody went exo and started taking it apart, a module at a time, and then putting it back together as something completely different. Something they could get away in, maybe.

All the Inners seem to think this kid got taken away by the station at the end of the universe- that it went and stripped the soul from the EPJ to keep itself afloat- but you and I, we know that's not what happened, don't we?

Naw, the station didn't do this.

Somebody who might've had occasion to do something like... say, wire a bunch of different systems into a hydroponics bed to stabilize it for travel it was never meant to for... that person did this.

Remind me once again where that friend of yours is from?

DERVISH

(tense)

Caloris.

MITCHELL

(sighs)

And here I thought being grateful might make you honest.

DERVISH

Me? Oh, I'm an honest soul. Never told a single lie in all my life. Scout's honor.

MITCHELL

(snorts)

Right.

DERVISH

So, we done here?

MITCHELL

You can try your luck with those tall tales of yours, kid, but people are talking. People are curious. We're hearing all sorts of stories out here. A salvage crew who say they watched their next payload zip off in the night even though it didn't look half-able to fly. A freighter captain who says her ship systems started getting all screwy only after she picked up a new technician- almost like they were being worked on by somebody who'd only ever learned how to use the back door and didn't know how to walk through the front.

Now, cut the bullshit, Dervish. You got a wildcard in your deck and I don't think you know how to make good use of it.

DERVISH

(disgusted noise)

Jesus christ.

Y'know, even if that were true, that's a hell of a way to be talking about another person, Mitchell.

In any case, it seems like you're confused. I understand- that can happen at your age.

MITCHELL

And there it is. You really do have

a way with words, kid.

DERVISH

Maybe I do. And maybe my partner has
a way with machines.
But the fact of the matter is that
my partner is from the Caloris Basin
on Mercury, and that's that.

Been real good talking to you,
Mitchell.

MITCHELL

Wait, now-

DERVISH

You have a good one.

MITCHELL

No-

DERVISH

(cheerful)

Bye bye!

MITCHELL

Now, you hold on, Dervish Donne-

Comms disconnect.

A pause. DERVISH lets out a long exhale.

DERVISH

Well, shit.

INT. INSIDE THE HOLD OF THE "SHENANDOAH". SMALLISH FREIGHTER
VESSEL.

DERVISH and ORIOLE are hanging out. Down time.

ORIOLE

Hoo boy-

(grunts with
exertion)

I'm glad it activated alright.

I'm not going to lie to you, Dervish-
as confident as I am in my skills, I

was a bit nervous about finally
having to use one of the refurbished
relays.

Heh, not because I don't know how to
put these together, mind you- I
mean, I know these systems inside
and out!

DERVISH

Mhm.

ORIOLE

Both code and hardware. It's just...
sometimes it goes deeper than the
structure and the programming-

DERVISH

Right.

ORIOLE

-and into whether or not the machine
wants to work, you know?

(self-conscious
chuckle)

Does that make any sense?

DERVISH

Pretty cool.

ORIOLE

What?

DERVISH

(clearly
distracted)

Huh, wha? What? Uh- uh, yeah. Yeah,
mhm.

ORIOLE

(faltering)

Um... you don't seem very excited.

DERVISH

(stumbles)

No, no- I'm just... I'm just a bit
tired. That's all.

ORIOLE

(a little subdued)
Oh... is it because I came along
this time?

DERVISH
What?

ORIOLE
I ruined it, didn't I? By being
there. I knew it. I wanted to- I
wanted to try and make an effort,
but I would just keep making people
feel uncomfortable, and I-

DERVISH
(talking over)
Nah, nope, no, uh-huh, no-
(aggressive
shushing)

There's a strong implication DERVISH has put his hand over
ORIOLE's mouth.

ORIOLE
(muffled)
Mmrp?

DERVISH
It's not that. You did great. I'm
real proud of you- you were amazing.

ORIOLE
(sniffs)
Uh, thank you?
...Um, you sure?

You'd tell me, right? If I
fucked up. You wouldn't lie to me?

DERVISH
(assuring)
Ori, I would never lie to you.

DERVISH falters.

DERVISH (cont'd)
Um...

A beat.

DERVISH (cont'd)
Ori, have you, uh...
Have you ever heard of, um...

DERVISH stops and sighs.

DERVISH (cont'd)
(mumbled)
Okay.
(normal)
You ever heard of the station at the
end of the universe?
Does that... mean anything to you?

ORIOLE
The station at the end of the
universe?
(laughs)
Yeah. Yeah, I've heard of it.
Funny thing, I- when I was a kid, I
always kind of hoped it might come
and take me away.
(self-conscious
laugh)
Is that stupid?

There's a strange pause.

ORIOLE (cont'd)
(subdued)
Y-yeah. Yeah, I've heard of it.

DERVISH
(sighs heavily)
Okay...
(inhales)
I think you know what I'm getting at
here... asking you that.

ORIOLE hesitates.

ORIOLE
...Yeah. Yeah, I do.

DERVISH
If... if I were to ask you about it,

would you want to tell me?

ORIOLE

(very subdued)

If... you asked me... I- I'd tell
you.

DERVISH

(disgruntled noise)

Ori, that wasn't my question.

Would you want to?

ORIOLE

(quiet)

...No.

DERVISH

(gentle)

Alright.

Folks are talking, Ori.

ORIOLE

A-about me?

DERVISH

(soft snort)

Yeah.

ORIOLE

...Who is 'folks'?

DERVISH

Ah, y'know... Inners. Locals.

ORIOLE

(quizzical)

Why are they talking about me?

DERVISH

Folks who ain't got anything better
to do love to talk.
It says more about them than it does
about you. You know that, right?

ORIOLE

...Uh-huh, sure.

DERVISH

(talking over)

Yeah, right- but, but, but I- as
your friend- feel it is important
that you know what you've come up
against.

From what I've gathered- now, come
in close- people seem to have gotten
it into their heads that you're...

(wheezy laughter)

ORIOLE

This is too close.

DERVISH

Sorry, sorry- some sort of technical
magician from the farthest reaches
of the Kuiper belt!

(laughs)

ORIOLE

(laughs along)

DERVISH

And- and I'll be real straight with
you: if it were me, and I thought
this sort of press could do me good?
I think I might feel inclined to
oblige it.

But you're the honest type, aren't
you, Ori?

ORIOLE

Um... y-yeah, I... I guess?

DERVISH

And the truth is, you are from the
Caloris Basin on Mercury. And in the
interest of respecting your honest
nature, that's all anybody's ever
gonna get out of me.

A pregnant pause.

ORIOLE

...Uh, I don't... D-Dervish, I don't-

DERVISH

Wait, oh- and- and- and! And come to think of it, I think my memory has been failing me- you and I, we didn't meet at a YuKon warehouse, did we?

A beat.

ORIOLE

Dude, what?

DERVISH

I may or may not have picked up somebody on my way out of the warehouse...

(contemplative
groan)

But, where was it? I think- yeah, I think I distinctly remember losing him along the way.

ORIOLE

(mumbling)

Does... alcohol expire...?

(to DERVISH)

Uh, what?

DERVISH

I mean, nobody could disprove that as being true-

ORIOLE

What the fuck?

DERVISH

So it's as good as true-

ORIOLE

(interrupting)

Uh, Dervish, what's happening?
What's going on here?

DERVISH

(talking over)

Oh, oh, oh- right! Right, right,

right, right, right, right- tell me
this is wrong- I think you and I
maybe met someplace between here and
there, don't you?

ORIOLE
(muttered)
What's "here and there"?

DERVISH
No, let's see... no, was it the
refueling depot?

ORIOLE
(muttered)
What refueling depot?

DERVISH
No, no, that wasn't it- or the
Waystation Market?

ORIOLE
Definitely not the Waystation
Market.

DERVISH
Right? Right? No...

ORIOLE
Have you been confusing vodka with
water again?

DERVISH
...Caloris?
We're nowhere near Caloris.
(skeptical grunt)
Eh, who can even say- must've been
one of them, anyway.

ORIOLE
(interrupting)
Der-Dervish, what's going on?

There's a pregnant pause.

DERVISH
Okay, okay, look: I was right.
Y'know, like I always am.

ORIOLE
(long-suffering)
Of course. About what?

DERVISH
(scoffs)
About what? The cameras, Ori!

ORIOLE
(patient)
What cameras?

DERVISH
(grumbling)
Hah, what cameras...
(to ORIOLE)
The warehouse cameras.
(leans in)
Okay, okay, c'mere, c'mere-
So it turns out that the Trappers
might be after me.
Eh, y'know. For stealing from them.

ORIOLE
(very quiet)
Oh fuck.

A beat.

ORIOLE (cont'd)
(horrificed whisper)
Oh no. I'm so... I'm so sorry-

DERVISH
(talking over)
Nooo, Ori, Ori, don't-

ORIOLE
(talking over)
I'm so, so, so, so sorry- oh fuck-

DERVISH
(talking over)
Don't be sorry! Ori, Ori, don't be
sorry-

ORIOLE

(talking over)
No, no, no this- this- this is my
fault- I'm so sorry, if I didn't
steal the pallet-

DERVISH
(laughing mad)
Oh, oh, Ori, Ori- it is absolutely
your fault, I'm not denying that-
what I'm saying is: don't be sorry,
fix this!

Hard cut into outro music.

OUTRO
This episode, "And Nothing Left to
Me", was written, directed, and
edited by Kale Brown.

MIKE
Dervish Donne is voiced by Mike
Ihrke.

MIHAI
Oriole Corta is voiced by Mihai
Matei.

GERALD
Mitchell is voiced by Gerald Hill.

OUTRO
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.

Breathing Space is a Law of Names
production.