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 whilemade 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

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)

0... 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-junkmore 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

fairytales 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,

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 acronysms!

(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 awandering, 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? 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)

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 postscarcity 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

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. 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 rusted 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 herebut... 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'sit'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, 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 YuKonspecific. 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 themself 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, Dervishas 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 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)

(horrified 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 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.