

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

This episode contains depictions  
of gun violence and death.

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

Intro plays

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

Intro fades out

INT. THE BLUE LADY, A BELTER SOLO MINING SHIP.

Clicks of switches, engine tries to start; fails

SLICK

I like the quiet, but even I have  
my limits.

Switches flip, comm systems turn on

This is the *Blue Lady*, greencast  
to all local, anybody in the  
neighborhood?

Pause

BRONSSPOUSE

(Over comms)

We hear you, *Blue Lady*. What is  
your status?

SLICK

Breathing fine, but driftin'. I can't get my reactor to bootstrap. Uh, who is this? I don't see your transponder signal.

BRONSSPOUSE

We have located you on our scopes, *Blue Lady*. Do you require assistance?

SLICK

I wouldn't turn some away if it came knocking. Normally I'd limp home on the RCS alone, but I got a BRONCO stuck in the macerator. Can't dislodge it, can't process it without power, and with the extra mass I don't have the delta-v to get back to Walden station without the reactor running.

BRONSSPOUSE

I see the asteroid in your bay. That would definitely pose a problem. Are you blackline capable?

SLICK

Uh, yeah? Not that I use it much. Are y'all military or something?

BRONSSPOUSE

We will continue this over a more secure channel. Switching green to black now.

Comms cut off

SLICK

Shoot, now how do I?

Switches being turned; static noises; comm system turns back on

BRONSSPOUSE

*Blue Lady*, are you there?

SLICK

I'm here. I think I've got the settings right. Can you hear me?

BRONSSPOUSE

Reading you five by five. This is the Peregrination Hearthship *Fly High and Far*.

SLICK

Perries? Shoot, I didn't even know y'all were there.

BRONSSPOUSE

My apologies. As we are reasonably certain you are who you appear to be, we are now maneuvering to intercept you to assist. How many are aboard?

SLICK

Just me. I'm Terrence, by the by, but everybody calls me Slick.

BRONSSPOUSE

A pleasure to meet you, Slick. I am Lieutenant-Commander Bronsspouse. I have one of my engineering team here as well, he would like to ask you some questions while we complete the rendezvous.

SLICK

Fire away.

CAMDENSKIN

This is Commander Camdenskin. I can see by your silhouette that your ship is a Mitchell-Hyundyne Oxcart. Are you still running the original reactor system?

SLICK

Naw, she was stripped twice and sold for scrap 'fore she came to me. Just about nothing's original. I had a Zureck VX-1 put in on Ceres. Cost twice what the hull did, but that's bonded mechs for you.

CAMDENSKIN

Ah, the VX-1's are fairly robust, I'm surprised you're having trouble.

SLICK

Me too. The gauges say she's been doot flooded, but I flushed the system twice, took a manual reading at the manifold, and the mix is fine. Pressure is in the black. Caps are fully charged. I can't tell you why she won't cooperate.

CAMDENSKIN

Some of the second gen Zurecks can have a problem with magnetic resonance. When was the last time you were degaussed?

SLICK

It's been a bit. Shoot, that's probably it. I guess I could run a loop of cable and ...

CAMDENSKIN

The *Fly* has a DMF on board. We should be able to get you running again.

SLICK

You just carry around a degaussing rig?

CAMDENSKIN

We like to be prepared.

(to Bronsspouse)  
I'm going to prep an exo-team.  
Wake the captain if anything  
develops.

BRONSSPOUSE  
(to Camdenskin)  
Sure, be safe out there.

(to Slick)  
When we get you flying, will you  
be all right? How are you for F&F?  
Water? Air?

SLICK  
Heck, it's just me and I was  
planning on being out here for  
another two or three weeks. With  
reserves. So unless you've got a  
stash of orthopedic shoes, I'm  
pretty well set and mighty  
grateful in any case.

BRONSSPOUSE  
Orthopedic shoes?

SLICK  
Had a run in with a bucking BRONCO  
a while back. Left leg's vat  
grown. Off the rack though, not  
custom. Two shades lighter and an  
inch shorter than the other one.  
Not a problem out here in the  
black but put me in spin gravity  
and I'm a bit off kilter.

BRONSSPOUSE  
I'm sorry to hear that.

SLICK  
No worries.

CAMDENSKIN  
What size and lift do you require?

SLICK

Now I'm not gonna set you on goose chase looking for a ...

CAMDENSKIN

We keep an eclectic supply on hand and may have something that will work for you. Please, indulge me.

SLICK

Standard size 8 wide. Two point two centimeter lift. With a G-type or bayonet suit lock. If you've got one.

CAMDENSKIN

I will see what we have.

SLICK

Thank you.

BRONSSPOUSE

It looks like we have an ETA of about 45, then the commander can start the degaussing.

SLICK

Jeez, y'all really are close by. Guess the black's not so empty these days.

BRONSSPOUSE

While we wait, would you tell me about this bucking BRONCO? If the memory is not too painful, of course.

SLICK

Oh, no this is a good one.

BRONSSPOUSE

Is it?

SLICK

You bet. So it's about two years back, and I'm wrangling this

centaur. Beautiful beast. You could see the platinum veins running through it with your bare eyes.

Only, it turns out, it had been fractured by tidal forces. I saw the cracks o' course, but figured they didn't run all the way through. What I didn't see were the old tethers still barely holding this thing together at the seams.

I think that somebody else must have been out at this same rock and must have quit the job when they realized it was split clean down the middle.

BRONSSPOUSE

And you didn't realize?

SLICK

Not a wit. So I sling my own tethers, but only on one side, see? And like an idiot I am way too close when I start reeling it in. The two halves pull apart, them old tethers act like springs and snap the thing back together like this.

Slick claps his hands

Little rocks go flying every which way. I go ass over tea kettle, grab the first thing that comes to hand and plant my feet on the rock to brace myself. But the reel is still pulling, and as luck would have it, I plant one foot right in a crack just as it opens up and then ...

Slick claps his hands again

It snaps down on my leg like a  
40-ton stone alligator. I will  
spare your delicate ears from me  
describing the sound it made, but  
I will never forget it.

BRONSSPOUSE

Aye-ya, must have hurt.

SLICK

Naw. I pull my leg out of the jaws  
of that rock and you wanna know  
what my first thought was?

BRONSSPOUSE

What?

SLICK

I think "whelp, now I've got to  
wrangle this BRONCO or else I'm up  
a certain creek with no paddle to  
pay to fix this mess."

Heh, I mean, I was right, but  
that's still of a hell of a  
thought to have when part of you  
has just been squished.

BRONSSPOUSE

It shows that you're a very  
practical man. Did you manage to  
wrangle it, as you say?

SLICK

Darn tootin', with the auto-doc in  
my suit flashing warning lights at  
me the whole time. I slapped every  
tether I had between those chunks  
and fed that BRONCO into the *Blue  
Lady* like a string of spaghetti,  
and she chewed it right up.



Slick makes slurping and crunching noises

Hauled the ore back to Walden with every coagulant pack I had slapped on my leg. Used the payout to buy a replacement. And now when I'm in port I tell all the newbies to check their rocks thoroughly, or else they'll end up all lopsided like ol' Slick.

BRONSSPOUSE

I don't know if you are brave or foolish to be out here on your own like this. If anything had gone worse ...

SLICK

Oh, I work better alone. People and I ... we don't get on so well after a little while. I mean, it's nice to talk, but things don't work out long term.

BRONSSPOUSE

Sounds lonely.

SLICK

I like it this way. How 'bout y'all? Big crew over there?

BRONSSPOUSE

Eh, not too big, couple of hundred.

SLICK

Couple of hundred? Yeesh. Terran Naval ships don't have crews that big.

BRONSSPOUSE

Others have the luxury of living on moons and stations. We do not.

SLICK

Oh yeah, sorry.

BRONSSPOUSE

It is quite all right. You mentioned this Walden station several times. I've never been. What's it like?

SLICK

Oh, it's a nice enough place. Good spot to unload your gear and kick your feet up for a few days. Can't say it's too special, but the folks are all right ...

Scene Break

INT. BRIDGE OF THE PEREGRINATION HEARTHSHIP FLY HIGH AND FAR

SLICK

(Over comms)

The *Lady* is purring like a mother cat now. Tell your Camdenskin that he knows his reactors.

BRONSSPOUSE

He needs no reminding, I assure you.

SLICK

I know the type. I should start a burn for Walden station, sell my load and let the mechs give the old girl a once over 'for I keep her in the black too much longer. Are y'all sure I can't offer you something for the help and the gear? I can't believe you had a compatible boot for me. What're the odds?

BRONSSPOUSE

We require no payment, Slick. If you feel you owe us anything, then if ever you do business with us or another ship of ours then ... I

believe the term is "the friends and family rate." Don't feel like you have to of course.

SLICK

Naw. Heck. Least I can do. Put down in your ledger books that ol' Slick owes you one and we'll square up one day. Thanks again. *Blue Lady* out.

BRONSSPOUSE

*Fly High and Far* out.

Air lock cycles; door opens

CAMDENSKIN

I can't believe you stayed on the comms with him the entire time, Lya.

BRONSSPOUSE

I could tell that he was the type comforted by the sound of his own voice. We are required to give aid to those in trouble. And lending an ear to a scared man is certainly that.

CAMDENSKIN

Your ears are stronger than mine. I only lasted an hour before turning off the comms in my suit.

BRONSSPOUSE

And yet you somehow "found" exactly the very specific item he needed.

CAMDENSKIN

The fabber did all the work. It costs us very little and will make his life easier.

BRONSSPOUSE

I'm just saying: do not act so cynical with me, Commander.

CAMDENSKIN

Point taken. At any rate, we should be moving again. Set a walking course away from the vector of our friend.

BRONSSPOUSE

Aye-aye.

CAMDENSKIN

1st shift will be starting soon. They can handle today's quota, I think.

Pause

How many ships do you think we've helped like that one?

BRONSSPOUSE

Since I joined the *Fly*? A dozen. Maybe two.

CAMDENSKIN

That sounds about right. And we have, how many hearthships all told? And the Free Trader's do even more than we do. For decades now. We hide, and we avoid, and we help. Thousands of little times like today.

BRONSSPOUSE

Getting a little philosophical all of sudden, eh?

CAMDENSKIN

Do you think if we help enough, we could stop hiding?

BRONSSPOUSE

Maybe, but that's not why we should keep doing it.

CAMDENSKIN

Yes. Of course.

BRONSSPOUSE

But, maybe.

CAMDENSKIN

Shift ends in five. Officially I'm in charge for that, but in reality, I'm going to be taking a shower.

BRONSSPOUSE

Aye aye.

Scene fades out

INT. THE OPEN SKY.

CAL

AYNI approach, this is RM63F *Open Sky*, checking in at vector 4Alpha-mark-6. Request approach confirmation.

CONTROL

(Over comms)

Scanner contact. RM63F *Open Sky* you are cleared for approach at vector 4Alpha-mark-6 to Bay 774. Confirm.

CAL

Confirmed.

CONTROL

How was the run, Cal? Anything interesting out there?

CAL

Nah. Just a bunch of broken down ships flown by hard-headed freehaulers with more ego than sense.

CONTROL  
So, standard circuit of Belt  
Shipping Route Rho.

CAL  
Yep.

Docking sequence initiated.  
Confirm.

CONTROL  
Confirmed.

CAL  
How about here? Amala have her  
baby yet?

CONTROL  
Last week! Boy. Bit over 3 ½ kilos  
and a head full of hair. Declan  
swears the two of them haven't  
slept since.

CAL  
How's it feel to have  
grand-progeny?

CONTROL  
Couldn't love the little bastard  
more if I tried. Mol and I are  
thinking--

Beeps

Docking complete. *Open Sky* you are  
down.

CAL  
Landing clamps engaged.

I'll try to run by and see 'em.  
Before I ship out again.

CONTROL  
Do that. I think Amala's feeling  
lonely. It'll do her good.

CAL

Right.

Landing confirmed. *Open Sky* out.

Scene Break

INT. THE EVEN SKY TAVERN, EUNOMIA.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Aelia came and got her before she got herself in too much trouble. Still. I can't just keep ignoring it. That was the fourth time this month. I'm worried about her, Cal.

But you know Anna-Karen. She's just going to say she's fine and stay the fuck out of her business. I don't think she's gone back to the doctor since she got diagnosed. Aelia won't say anything, but I can tell she's going crazy.

CAL

You're sure it's MLM?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

(takes a drink)

Yeah. Told me herself, last time she got shitfaced. Manus Casia Myelitis. Even if she didn't. You can see it, Cal. She's gotta get help. I heard there are drugs now that can stop you from getting worse if--

MORIARTY

Chaos?

CAL

(to John)

Ok. I'll swing by while I'm dirtside. No promises, though. I

don't know if I can get her to  
listen either.

MORIARTY

Chaos.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

(to Cal)

She'll listen. Maybe 'cause she  
knows she'd wear herself out  
runnin' at you, before you gave  
way. Bull-headed, the both of you!

MORIARTY

Chaos Andreyev!

CAL

(to Moriarty)

That's not my name.

MORIARTY

I knew it was you! What's it been?  
10 years?

CAL

You're mixing me up with someone  
else.

MORIARTY

Suuuure I am.

Ohhh. Uh. Yeah. What's your name,  
friend?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

This guy bothering you, Cal? Want  
me to 86 him?

CAL

It's fine. I got it. I'll talk to  
Anna-Karen. And I got my drink.  
You got other customers to take  
care of.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

You sure?



CAL

Yep.

Footsteps; John leaves

MORIARTY

Sure is a surprise, running into you! It's been what, ten years since we been breathing the same air?

CAL

8 years.

MORIARTY

Yeah, 8. Sounds about right. So how ya doin' Chaos?

CAL

I told, that isn't my name.

MORIARTY

Right, right. What you goin' by this time?

CAL

I think you should keep moving, Moriarty. There's nothing for you here.

MORIARTY

Come on! You're not still mad about the thing on Raven Station, are you? That was *ages* ago.

CAL

8 years.

MORIARTY

You can't blame me for that! It's your own fault you got caught. Wasn't going to do any good for me to get pinched too. Couldn't'a been too bad, you look like you're all in one piece now.

CAL

Yeah. Not too bad.

MORIARTY

Pullin' a long con here? Who's the mark? Far as I can tell, this rock don't produce nothing but gallium, glycine, and gulls. An' none of 'em look like they're hording a fortune.

CAL

Don't do that kind of work anymore, Moriarty. Five years on Diotoma has a way of changing a person's outlook.

MORIARTY

Diatoma? The prison? *That's* where you ended up? Tough break, tough break...Still, coulda been worse! Five years just *flies* by. Did for me!

But come on now. You gonna tell me the great Chaos Andreyev, confidence trickster of the stars, just ... left the game?

CAL

That's about the size of it.

MORIARTY

Mmmhm. Suuure. You settled down, got yourself a house, a yard. Maybe even a spouse? Sounds real cozy.

But come on. What angle are you *really* working?

CAL

I was telling you the truth.

MORIARTY

Right. Got it. If ya ain't workin' an angle, what are you doin' here? Don't tell me you bought in to a sugar farm.

CAL

Got a ship. Doing a circuit run through the local shipping lanes. Rescue ships. Fix things up around here when they break.

Things always break.

MORIARTY

(laughs)

A hero. Never thought I'd see the day when you did an honest day's labor. When'd you turn mechanic?

CAL

Diotoma's a real good teacher. If the inmates don't fix it, it doesn't get fixed. No one's going to send a tech down there. So I learned. Was that or smother. Or starve.

MORIARTY

That sounds real terrible.

Welp. Then guess I'm settling in for a decent stay. How many of these rubes you think I can hit 'fore they get wise? Or maybe I can get out clean. You up to play shill? Looks like they know you 'round here. We could clean up, an' they'd be none the wiser. Travel the system in style.

CAL

They aren't *marks*, Moriarty.

MORIARTY

Sure they are. 'less they got a lot more under the surface than they do on top.  
God damn. You've gone and got all pulpy on 'em. I don't believe it. Chaos Andreyev turned mush over a buncha NEM-eating, methane-snorting, slack-jawed roiders.

CAL

Shut your god-damned mouth.

MORIARTY

Aw, didn't mean anything by it. Just that the Chaos I knew woulda died rather than pitch their lot in with these dust mites.

CAL

You left that person behind on Raven Station, in a holding cell.

MORIARTY

I thought we agreed what's past is past.

Now. Like I was saying, nice as this reunion is, I'm here to work. How many you think I can--

CAL

No.

MORIARTY

What?

CAL

No. You're not going to work here.

MORIARTY

Why the hell not?

CAL

Because this is my home. And these are my people.

MORIARTY

Ohhh. Sure, sure, I see how it is.

Just ... How d'you think your  
people would take t' finding out  
they got a livin' breathin'  
convict in their midst?

CAL

You threatening me?

MORIARTY

Nah, nah, don't take it the wrong  
way. Just talkin'

CAL

Stop talking, get moving.

MORIARTY

Don't think I will. I'm startin'  
to get comfortable.

CAL

Moriarty, I'm warning you ...

MORIARTY

What you going to do, Chaos? Oh,  
I'm sorry, Cal. Sit your ass back  
down. You can't do nothing to me,  
unless you want that past of yours  
to be public knowledge. An' it  
seems like you really don't want  
that.

CAL

You wouldn't.

You owe me Moriarty.

MORIARTY

How do you figure?

CAL

I took the fall for you. Did five  
years on a hell-hole of an  
asteroid in a barely-functional

dome. And I never flipped. You think it wouldn't've helped? Turning you in? Think it wouldn't have gotten me somewhere? But I didn't do it.

MORIARTY

Guess you were always pulpy then.

CAL

You were my *friend*.

MORIARTY

Sure. I was your friend all the way till trouble caught up. Then, the only friend I need is me. An' that's how it's always gonna be.

That's how it is everywhere, *Cal*. People'r out for themselves. An' they'll do whatever they got to to come out on top.

CAL

No. They care about each other. They take care of each other.

MORIARTY

Really? How much you wanna bet?

CAL

Community takes care of community.

MORIARTY

An' you think you're "community"?

CAL

I ... yes. I've helped them. Made myself useful here.

MORIARTY

Sure. And you're one of 'em until you're not useful anymore.

These people here? *Your* people? You think they'd have your back,

if trouble came knocking? You think they'd give a salvager's damn about you then?

CAL

I ...

MORIARTY

Take it from me, Chaos. Ain't no such thing as family in the Belt. Just people lookin' out for themselves, and to hell with the rest.

Pause

ADDIE

(In the background)

Hey John Mark. How's business?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Same old, Addie. The usual? How long you touched down?

ADDIE

Yeah, thanks. Couple days. Range wanted to see the husband. You know how it is.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Yeah, yeah. How's Rhonda? And the girls? They're what now?

ADDIE

7 and 8. Driving their mom and me crazy.

MORIARTY

(to Cal)

So you gonna help me fleece this rock, or not?

CAL

No.

MORIARTY

What?

CAL

No. I'm not going to help you take advantage of these people.

MORIARTY

Guess I'm gonna have to break the news about their useful little mechanic's history then.

CAL

Do it.

MORIARTY

... what?

CAL

Tell them. Maybe they chase me off. Maybe who I was is too much. Maybe they won't be able to trust me, and I'll have to ship off. Start over somewhere else. But I've done it before. I can do it again.

But maybe not. Maybe this place is a community.

Either way, I'll know where I stand.

MORIARTY

Can't believe you, Chaos. Gonna throw your life away because you can't look out for number one. Again.

Well, your funeral.

Pause; Moriarty pushes his chair back and stands

Good afternoon, everyone. May I have your attention please. Over here, please.

Bar sounds cease



My name is Aloysius Moriarty. I am but a simple traveler of these stars, who has found himself temporarily at rest on your beautiful home.

It grieves me deeply that I must be the bearer of ill news.

This individual, this person here, has been deceiving you. Lying to you. Abusing the good nature of this community.

ADDIE

Cal, what's this about? Who is this guy?

MORIARTY

The person you know as "Cal" is, in fact, none other than Chaos Andreyev. Confidence trickster, swindler, and former inhabitant of the Diatoma prison asteroid.

Pause

Bar sounds resume

...did you hear me? They are a criminal! A thief! They have made off with people's livelihoods!

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

That true, Cal?

CAL

Yeah.

MORIARTY

See? I discovered this information and just had to warn--

ADDIE

You been here three years. Don't think you've ever so much as short changed someone on a repair much less rip 'em. You planning on changing that any time soon?

CAL

No.

ADDIE

Well, dood. Then far as I'm concerned, that's settled.

MORIARTY

... what?

ADDIE

I said "that's settled."

MORIARTY

But they ... they've been gaining your trust! Infiltrating your community for their nefarious and avaricious purposes.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Are you, Cal?

CAL

No.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Good. 'cause you haven't talked to Anna-Karen yet, an' the ice maker in the back just went on the fritz. So if you could hold off pulling your big heist till after you got that taken care of, I'd appreciate it.

CAL

Sure. I can get to that later. After I check on Anna.

MORIARTY

I ... don't ... didn't you all hear me?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Sure. But see, I don't know you from Adam.

ADDIE

Yeah. An' Cal? They've saved my neck more times 'n I can count.

CAL

Wouldn't have to if you'd stop buying "salvage."

ADDIE

(to Cal)

Shove it.

(to Moriarty)

So where I'm standing? Looks like you're just looking to cause trouble. What do you think, John Mark?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

I think they've been sittin' over there for half an hour now, Cal looking like they're ready to spit nails. So yeah. Causin' trouble.

MORIARTY

But ... I have information! I can prove--

ADDIE

Mmmhm. Now why don't you go on and get.

MORIARTY

Who are you to tell me where I can and cannot be!

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

The place's owner. You heard the lady. Get. You're not getting served here.

ADDIE

Nor anywhere else on Eunomia, once  
I get the word 'round.

MORIARTY

You don't know who you're  
insulting! I have connections!  
Ties!

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Sure you do. Now get out.

Moriarty leaves, shoving things over on the way

CAL

What he said, about who I used to  
be ... It's true. All of it.

ADDIE

Figured.

CAL

I'll get packed. I can be  
spaceside by noon--

ADDIE

Why the hell would you do that?

CAL

I'm ... I've done some really  
terrible things. I should ...

ADDIE

Shove it, Cal.

JOHN MARK CASUPANG

Anyway, like I said, I need you to  
fix the ice maker. And god knows  
you're the only one that Anna will  
listen to. So sit your ass down,  
have a drink, and then get back to  
work. We need you here.

ADDIE

Besides, place like this? Just  
stuck on the side of this rock,  
with imported air? We gotta work  
together if we want to make it.

Gotta be more than a community,  
right John Mark?

JOHN MARK CASUPANG  
Gotta be a family.

Scene fades out

INT. THE BAR

KELL  
(Narrating)  
I never wanted to come back to  
Pallas, but I had a job that  
needed doing. And when you're at  
Raven Station there's only one  
place to get a drink.

If I had any luck, maybe she  
wouldn't be there.

Sound of a quiet but busy bar; a voice is singing a morose  
song accompanied by a piano

Shit. There she is. The love of my  
life. Maybe if I leave now she  
won't have noticed me.

The singer's song stops mid measure, she says "oh shit" and  
stumbles the lyrics before recovering

OK, no chance of that. Might as  
well get that drink then.

Footsteps

LANCE  
Well well well. If a cold wind  
ain't blowing into my bar. Didn't  
think we'd see your sorry ass  
again, Kell.

KELL  
(to Lance)  
Didn't think I'd be back on this  
sorry rock either, Lance. Gimme a  
Two-Step and hurry. I'd like a

head start before Maeve's done on stage.

Sounds of glass clinking; pouring

LANCE

Good luck.

Sound of heels clicking on a hard floor; they are moving fast and getting louder

MAEVE

Kell, you miserable bitch.

KELL

Now, Maeve ...

MAEVE

Lance, give me something to throw in her face.

KELL

I can see you're mad, so let me start by apologizing ...

MAEVE

Mad? This isn't 'mad' I moved past being 'mad' two years ago. What you see before you is fury.

KELL

Look, you knew the deal from the start. I didn't have a choice.

Drink slammed on bar

LANCE

Here ya go.

Watery sound as Maeve throws the drink at Kell, who sputters

KELL

Now see here!

MAEVE

You didn't have a choice?! What are you, some sort of robot?

You say "it's just a job." They're all just jobs, Kell. Unless that's what we were too. Just a job.

Heels clicked indignantly as Maeve storms off

KELL

You were very helpful there, Lance.

LANCE

(laughing)

You two always made for a good show.

KELL

Did you have to give her a glass of whacker? Stings my eyes.

LANCE

Like I'd let her waste the good stuff on you.

KELL

At least that bandaid is ripped off now. I can get back to the job.

LANCE

Still walking dogs?

KELL

Scooping shit all over the solar system.

LANCE

What kind of dog brings you to a place like Pallas?

KELL

The usual. A client lost something. Wants it found.

LANCE

Well, Raven's a small station, not many places to look.

KELL

If I want to give Maeve some breathing room, where should I avoid?

LANCE

Hm, her room is still down on C, C41. If she's not there, she's here. Singing or working the tables.

KELL

Thanks. And thanks for the one drink. Not the other.

(Narrating)

I tipped Lance well. I always tip well, it pays back in a lot of little ways. He was right about Raven Station, just a way point, a stop along a lot of journeys.

Nobody stays here. A big enough ship docks and it just about doubles the population. If my quarry was still here, it shouldn't take that long to find. And if it had already gone?

Well, it was nice to see Maeve again at least.

I found a quiet corner and logged my terminal into the local network. Read my messages and looked over the info my client had sent me. Two weeks ago, the ship that held my quarry had moored at Raven 3F. It left twelve hours later. The courier pilot said it was just a stop for F&F. But the package wasn't on board when the ship arrived at Luna. So, Pallas was the only option.



I checked in next at the local Ranger Station. Rangers don't usually mind me, let me keep my piece on me with the right mix of bribes and flirting. This time it was mostly bribe.

The Ranger spotted me as a dog walker right away, asked me some pointed questions about my client and business. Took a monkey's fist of credits to put a stop to that and then another to get me a look at the station's records.

No cameras, sadly, but the courier had come aboard with a package and didn't have it when they left. They dropped it with somebody, or somebody took it.

I had myself a little sniff around the station. I do a lot of finding things in this line of work, sometimes that's valuables like today. Sometimes that's people. Sometimes it's info. Either way, there's always some sort of trail.

This one I picked up at the local government offices. Local gov types make it their business to stick their noses into all sorts of things and they gab like washerwomen if you get'em going. Throw a small-time mayor a few compliments and choice jokes, but not too good, and they'll unhinge the tops of their heads and tell you everything you want to know about their little patch of the world.

A high-g courier comin' through,

that was big news. Talk of the station. And the pilot had come aboard too. Even spent the night. That was enough to send the rumor mill churning.

And then my heart sank, cause the room that the courier pilot had been seen coming out of a few hours later was C41.

Well, that about made all the sense in the world. It is a small station, after all.

I took a walk out to the ship moorings and thought. If Maeve had the package, well ... things were going to get complicated quick. Maybe I should just get back in my ship and head out. I could tell the client there was no trail. I'd lose the money, for sure, but there are other jobs out there.

But then, well, something about that didn't seem right. Why should I let my own baggage stop me cold like that? Think, Kell. There's more than one way to strip a BRONCO.

Comm system ringing

LANCE

Lance here.

KELL

(to Lance)

I was thinking of swinging by for another drink on my way out but, you know. Is she there?

LANCE

Came back a few minutes ago. Still fuming. I'd steer clear if I were you.

KELL

Gotcha. Thanks, buddy. See ya round then.

Comm system hangs up

KELL

(Narrating)

OK, coast should be clear then.

I made my way over to the residential section and found the right room. C41. Here's a secret. Most locks are only there to dissuade the casual. If somebody wants in, they get in.

Sound of lock clicking and door opening

Maeve's room was just like I remember. A single spartan room with absolutely nothing that wasn't either necessary for life - bed, dresser, terminal, sink with toiletries - or too precious to do without - a picture of her parents when she was little, a vintage stereo, and a small collection of music.

My heart damn near stopped when I saw the dress. The memory of her in that dress was, well, if I go to my grave with a single image burned into my head, I hope it's that one.

Truth be told, there weren't that many places to hide something as big as my quarry. Under the bed was too obvious. Same with the

dresser. Taking the back panel off the terminal was easy and ... there it was. A thirty by thirty square. I flipped the latch, just to be sure, and slipped a glimpse of gold.

Pause

There was someone standing behind me. Guess I got a little distracted. That's a rookie mistake.

Instinct said to go for my piece at the small of my back, but I know better than to listen to instinct. Bracing myself, I put on my winningest smile and turned to Maeve.

Her eyes burned into me from the doorway, a pair of stiletto heels dangling from one hand.

MAEVE

This was pretty inevitable, wasn't it?

KELL

(sigh, then to Maeve)

In hindsight, yes. Blindingly obvious.

MAEVE

I knew what you were after the moment I saw your face here. Overheard you talking to Lance, knew you'd be here.

KELL

And I should have known the moment I heard the word 'Pallas' that it'd be you. The only notable thing about this rock is you.

MAEVE

It's a bit late for flattery.

KELL

A bit late for a lot of things.

MAEVE

Not too late to turn things  
around.

KELL

It's just a job.

MAEVE

For you, maybe. For me it's a  
goddamn ticket out of this place.

KELL

You stole this!

MAEVE

And the person before stole it  
from the person before who stole  
it from the person before. It's  
thieves all the way down,  
beautiful.

KELL

But now I have to ...

MAEVE

Have to what? Turn me in? Pull  
your damn gun on me? And if I  
resist, you're going to shoot me?

KELL

Maeve.

MAEVE

Just leave it. Tell whoever is  
pulling your leash that it's gone.

KELL

This is what I do. People have a  
problem, they come to me, and I  
fix it. It's what I always do.

MAEVE

Why? Why do these jobs always come first? Why can't you just live your own life for once? Solve your own problems.

KELL

Cause it's the only thing I'm good at.

You sing because you can and the universe is all the better because you do. I do this, cause I'm no good at anything else.

MAEVE

I can think of another thing you're pretty good at.

KELL

Takes two to do that.

(Narrating)

When did she get so close? I really ought to back off. This isn't smart. I shouldn't let myself get distracted like this. Shouldn't let my guard down.

Oh, shit.

I forgot how good she smells. And feels.

Yeah, OK. This is a mistake I'm willing to make.

Footsteps, rustling

LANCE

You two always made for a good show.

Gun cocks

Hands up, dog walker. I know  
you're holding. Make a move and I  
shoot you both.

KELL

Lance, don't try this.

LANCE

What? You two are so eager over  
whatever it is Maeve stole off  
that courier. So eager that  
overhearing one call from you  
lights her engine so hot she  
leaves behind a Maeve-shaped cloud  
of dust.

So whatever it is, it's got to be  
worth a bundle. Now it's gonna be  
mine.

MAEVE

You're not getting away with this.

LANCE

I don't see why not. It's a clear  
path from here to the moorings.  
I'll just help myself to Ms. Dog  
Walker's ship and be on my way.  
Now, hand over the goods.

KELL

(Narrating)

I lifted the package in one hand  
and held Maeve tight with the  
other. Maybe if I was quick, I  
could get her behind me before he  
could get both of us. I tried to  
work the odds, but then I felt  
Maeve's hand moving.

Oh. Small of my back. Good girl.

(to Lance)

You want it? Here you go.

Kell throws the package at Lance; he grunts and his gun goes off. Kell yelps in pain. Maeve fires Kell's gun and Lance falls to the floor

MAEVE  
Oh shit. Oh shit.

KELL  
(pained)  
Right. That'll do.

Maeve, grab the goods. We gotta move.

MAEVE  
Kell, I ...

KELL  
You don't have time to grab much and we're not coming back.

MAEVE  
We?

KELL  
You don't need a ticket off this station. I have a ship.

If you'll come?

MAEVE  
Yeah, of course. Why didn't you ask last time?

KELL  
Stupid mistake not to.

MAEVE  
Kell, your arm.

KELL  
It's fine. Let's just go.

MAEVE  
OK, OK. Here, hold this and I'll take the package.



KELL

The dress? Good choice.

MAEVE

Oh, now you have time to talk?

KELL

(Narrating)

I jammed the door shut and we made a beeline for the moorings. Traffic control didn't much like me taking off in a hurry, but nothing a little bribery and flirting couldn't fix. We needed to be a distant memory when the rangers on Raven Station found Lance's body.

(to Maeve)

Should be clear by now. Thanks again.

MAEVE

Wasn't the first time I saved your ass. What's the plan now?

KELL

Oh, I'm the one making the plan?

MAEVE

You got all 'take charge' back there. Good look on you.

KELL

You're the one who rightfully stole it. Your call.

MAEVE

Hmm, I'm not even sure it's real.

KELL

Maybe. Easier to make something like that then fly all the way out and get it.

MAEVE

I guess it doesn't matter as long  
as people want it.

Ugh. I should have grabbed the  
stereo.

KELL

Why?

MAEVE

This thing's a recording. We could  
have played it, at least.

KELL

Bunch of image data and whale  
song. You know what I'd rather  
hear?

MAEVE

Oh, all right ...

Maeve starts singing; scene fades out

Thank you for joining us for this  
episode of Breathing Space, Fading  
Frontier.

The first segment of this episode,  
Bootstrap, was written, directed,  
and edited by Scott Paladin

Slick was voiced by Scott Paladin  
Bronsspouse was voiced by Cam  
Clarke  
Camdenskin was voiced by Quill  
Turner  
With additional voicework by Sean  
Gettys and Jeremiah

The second segment of this  
episode, Badger Game, was written  
and directed by Lee Seguinte and  
edited by Erik Seguinte

Cal was voiced by Vanessa Haas  
John Mark Casupang was voiced by

James  
Aloysius Moriarty was voiced by  
Sean Gettys  
Addie was voiced by Paige Alena

The final segment of this episode,  
Hello Again from Raven Station,  
was written, directed, and edited  
by Scott Paladin

Kell was voiced by Erika Kaiser  
Lance was voiced by Scott Paladin  
Maeve was voiced by M. German

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](http://breathingspace.lawofnames.com).

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