

I See the Stars Are Here With Me

written by

Scott Paladin

Address

Phone

E-mail

Breathing Space includes mature content such as adult language, sexual situations, violence, and substance use.

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

Sound effects: low ambient noise of engines running, continues under dialogue

DELANEY TOWER
(Over the radio)
Lock your mags, NS-84.

HECK
(Also over the radio.)
Sound effects: Two clicks of a toggle switch and a low hiss of air.
Locking mags now, Tower.

DELANEY TOWER
Gotcha. NS-84 *Noodle Shop Around the Corner*, you are officially moored. Welcome to Delaney station.

HECK
Thank you, Tower. *Noodle Shop* out.

Pause. Radio still active.

HECK

Uh, Tower? Your line's still open.

DELANEY TOWER

I, uh, I gotta ask...

HECK

What, the ship name?

DELANEY TOWER

Yeah, it's uh...

HECK

No worries. Get it all the time
but the answer ain't fancy. We're
a flying restaurant. We got-Flash
noodles, ramen, bug's nests, you
name it.

DELANEY TOWER

Huh. Well I guess it'll be nice to
have someplace new to try on
station.

HECK

(short laugh)

Well, come on by. We've got some
puffed spinach linguini that'll
blow your socks off. NS-84 out.

DELANEY TOWER

Tower out.

Sound effects: Radio clicks off and ambient
noise stops. The sound of metal scraping
against metal like a hatch or door opening.

HECK

(Short sigh.) Hey, hon. I'll get
the boilers started up for you.

CAT

Thanks beautiful.

HECK

(Gently) You ready to be back here again?

CAT

I...think so. We've gone a long way before coming back around to here.

HECK

I'll admit I kind of missed the place.

CAT

(Teasing) There always was something wrong with you.

(pause)

I hope the noodles are good enough.

HECK

That's your department. I just do the cleaning.

CAT

And you fly the ship.

HECK

Sure. Yeah.

CAT

And fix things when they break.

HECK

I mean...

CAT

Which they *always* do.

HECK

I-it's an old ship. And you do a lot too.

CAT

Yeah, cooking.

HECK

And the finances, and the astrogation, and the marketing. Although I'm pretty sure you interfere with the 8VAC.

CAT
What? No I-

HECK
I mean, every time you come into
sight you just, uh-

CAT
(Amused) Heck, if you say, "take
your breath away" one more *goddamn*
time, I'm divorcing you. I will
get a Class Six Modular Laser
Splitsaw and we will cut this ship
straight down the middle.

Heck laughs, then Cat laughs.

HECK
You'll do great.

CAT
I wish I had your faith in me.

HECK
Okay, we'll add "optimism" to my
list of responsibilities.

CAT
And "worrying" to mine.

HECK
See? Division of labor. This is
why we work so well.

CAT
Speaking of, someone said they
were going to get my boilers
going.

HECK
Oh, I'll get your boilers going
all right.

Sound effects: Several short kisses that continue under the
next line.

CAT
(giggling)

Hey, hey! Later! Those boilers can wait. We've got an appointment to keep.

HECK
(Teasingly resigned) Yes, ma'am.

Scene transition whoosh.

Sound effects: Four sharp knocks on a metal surface. A small bell jingles shortly.

AVI BLAKE
Um, hello? Mrs. Novak?

CAT
Oh, uh, yes! Hello. Ms. Blake, correct?

AVI BLAKE
Indeed. Although we have actually met before. You were quite young of course, I would not blame you for forgetting me.

CAT
A number Three Sixteen. Right? Pumpkin Ramen. Split spicy and sweet.

AVI BLAKE
(Surprised) Indeed. That...was my order.

CAT
You were always so polite. But you weren't actually our Hephaestan Judge before. We had an older guy.

AVI BLAKE

Ah, predecessor. Retired about six years ago. His duties fall to me. In fact, this restaurant was to be my first assignment, all those years ago. Imagine my shock when I arrive at Delaney Station to find this place... gone.

CAT

(Sheepishly) Long story.

AVI BLAKE

It is not every day that the only Hephaestan-rated restaurant in the sphere of influence of a significant celestial body goes walkabout. You understand, of course, why I had to rescind our Furnace award.

CAT

Naturally. Uh, is that why you had us meet back here to be reassessed?

AVI BLAKE

Coincidence, I assure you, in both meanings of the word. The group's orbit made Mars the easiest place to get to. Have you changed your menu as well as your location since I was here last?

CAT

About five years ago now.

AVI BLAKE

How much?

CAT

Complete overhaul. My dad never stopped making new recipes and menu was over five hundred items by the time I took over. Some of those were fantastic, but it's intimidating for a new customer. I've been focusing on refining things.

Sound effect: A piece of paper is placed on a surface.

Here's our current offerings.

AVI BLAKE

I see. Only ten items.

CAT

I mostly strive to execute the basics to a highest order. Best ingredients I can get, refine the preparation. I typically have to customize items from place to place, because of availability of foodstuffs and local tastes. Sometimes even swap a dish in or out.

AVI BLAKE

Very interesting.

CAT

Can I start you with something?

AVI BLAKE

Number one, please. Chef's choice flash noodles.

CAT

Can do.

Sound effects: Clattering of metal pans, then sizzling, chopping, and general bustling sounds begin and continue under dialogue.

AVI BLAKE

You are aware that the Hephaestan Furnace isn't a public rating, correct? It is an internal tool for our executives and salespeople to identify establishments where we can, as you say, "wine and dine" clients.

CAT

If it's private, why does everyone know who's on it?

AVI BLAKE

(beleaguered sigh)

It seems to leak with unfortunate regularity. We do try to prevent that. I just don't want you under the impression that if we were to keep you on the list, and we manage to keep it secret, as is our goal, that you won't see any additional public interest or accolades.

CAT

It's fine, Mx. Blake. Here're your flash noodles.

Sound effects: Liquid pouring. A bowl clanks onto a surface.

AVI BLAKE

(flat)

Lovely presentation.

(pause)

Hm. Yes.

HECK

Hey, Cat. I'm going on station for a poke around. Do you need anything while I'm out?

CAT

Ooh, uh, cricket flour, if it's not too much trouble.

HECK

Can do.

(stage whisper)

Oh! Is that the reviewer lady?

CAT

(rolling her eyes, normal voice)

Heck, this is Avi Blake of the Hephaestan Group. Ms. Blake, this is Heck.

HECK

Howdy. Pleasure to meet you,
ma'am.

AVI BLAKE
(Chair scrapes) Oh yes. Charmed.
Ms. Um... Heck. My you're tall.
And with the, um... A very-
pleasure to meet you.

HECK
Okay, I'm off.
(stage whisper again)
Good luck.

Creaking of a door opening and closing.

AVI BLAKE
(Surprised) That was your wife?

CAT
Can you believe it? I hardly can.

AVI BLAKE
Ah yes. And she is a... cyborg?

CAT
I thought the two extra metal arms
would make that obvious.

AVI BLAKE
Yes, yes.
(pause)
She is also a business partner.

CAT
Partner in all things.

AVI BLAKE
Cybernetics of that nature are
expensive. Did your Heck incur
much debt in her acquisition of
them?

CAT
Why would that matter?

AVI BLAKE
The true nature of my inquiry is
to ascertain the reasons for your

sudden departure from Delaney five years ago. If you were on the run from significant medical debt then that would explain-

CAT

No. No. No debt.

AVI BLAKE

Then why? Surely your operating costs are higher as a ship. And you missed so much income whilst in transit.

CAT

It wasn't a business decision, Ms. Blake. It was personal.

AVI BLAKE

Between you and your wife.

CAT

Wasn't my wife then... not quite yet.

(pause)

I'm gonna have to tell you the story, aren't I?

AVI BLAKE

I would just like to know, Mrs. Novak. Before I can give your restaurant our-not insignificant-business, I would like to understand.

Sound effects: Slow fade down in volume as Cat speaks.

CAT

(Haltingly, with effort.) We ...*(sighs)* had history. Too much history. I was working here for my dad and she... was working in the yard, ship breaking. She was *really* good too. And then...my dad got sick, quickly. *(Slowly, haltingly. Line fades out)* And- then it was just me...

Sound effects: Scraping metal of a door opening. Bell rings shortly.

HECK
Cat? Cat you here?

CAT
(Tired) Hey, Heck.

HECK
You doin' alright?

CAT
Can I get you to fix the damn reactor for me? The whole shop is running on umbilical power and the fees are fucking me over.

HECK
Yeah, o'course.

CAT
Sorry for calling you. I just didn't know who else to-

HECK
Oh I'd be mad if you found somebody else. I mean I've been fixing this thing for my whole life. I'll be darned if I stop now.

CAT
Okay, uh, you know where it is. I can't even begin to guess why it's on the fritz.

HECK
I'm sure it's just the couplers getting carbon caked again. It happens every eighteen months or so, cause of the shop's low power drain compared to running the engines. Normally your dad calls me before... oh. Right. Uh, sorry.

CAT

It's fine. He's just dead, Heck.
I'm not gonna fucking fall apart
at the first mention of him.

HECK

Y-yeah, but...

CAT

Don't have time for that, I've got
a restaurant to run. Will you need
to kill the dock power while you
work?

HECK

No.

CAT

Good. Then I'm gonna open. Let me
know when you're done.

HECK

Okay.

Sound effects: The click of a switch, another click and
rising static as a radio is tuned. A door scrapes open, bell
chimes, a chair creaks. Faint retro radio-style music plays
under dialogue.

LEFTY

(Grunts as he sits) Gimme a two
eighty-eight.

CAT

Shit, Lefty. At least you're still
coming in. Maybe this restaurant
won't follow in No-Shit's
footsteps.

LEFTY

Ah, where else on this godforsaken
graveyard can a fellow get flash
noodles like y'all's? I've been
telling people it's just as good
now as when... uh (clears throat)
uh, before. But nobody listens to
Lefty.

CAT

Let me get your noodles.

Sound effects: Faint shuffling and clinking under the next couple of lines.

CAT

How are things in the yard?

LEFTY

Ah, same as they ever were.
Dangerous but paying well. We got
a couple cruiseliners on the
chopping block that's got the
whole place hopping like a moon
rabbit.

CAT

I know, they cast shadows. Half of
Delaney won't see the sun for
months. Including us.

LEFTY

Well, it's not like you ain't seen
the sun before.

Sound effects: Sizzling and chopping under the next two lines.

CAT

It's nice to know it's still
there, is all.

LEFTY

Hah, with any luck it won't do
anything exciting again till we're
both space dust. Then it won't be
our problem.

Noodles into bowl. Bowl on bar.

CAT

Eat up, old man.

HECK

I've got you up and running for
the moment. It's the couplers,
like I thought. I'll need a few
hours of downtime to give them a

proper clean. Is it... okay if I
come back after hours for that?

CAT

(Under her breath) Shit. (Normal
voice) If that's what's needed,
sure.

HECK

Okay. Hey, Lefty.

LEFTY

Heck! What's your signal?

HECK

Five by five. You?

LEFTY

Can't complain. We could use you
and all four of your hands on
those whales we got going.

HECK

No thanks, Lefty.

LEFTY

Ah, more's the pity. I'll catch ya
later. You can buy an old timer a
drink.

HECK

Well, if you've got whale money
coming, Lefty. You can buy me a
drink. (pause) I'll...see you
tonight, Cat.

Heck leaves.

LEFTY

Good to see y'all are getting
along.

CAT

Don't give me shit, Lefty. I make
your food.

LEFTY laughs.

Scene transition whoosh.

Sound effects: Clanking of light metal on metal, ratcheting sounds, and small grunts of effort. A large clunk, a whoosh of steam, then a rhythmic mechanical sound under the next two lines.

CAT
Making progress?

HECK
When I'm done you'll have couplers
so shiny you can serve ramen in
them, but it'll be a few hours.

CAT
Is there something I should be, I
don't know, fucking doing to
prevent this?

HECK
Well, if you could run the reactor
at more than ten percent power,
it'd self-clean. This thing was
built to push tankers into dock,
not boil noodles.

CAT
The shop hasn't flown in, void,
fifty years. We're basically a
part of the station now. It's not
like I'm gonna go take her for a
spin.

HECK
(Sincerely) Then I guess you're
stuck with me showing up every so
often. Sorry about that.

CAT
Oh, one of the damn boilers is
sputtering again.

HECK
I can look at that when I'm done
here.

CAT
Anything you *can't* fix?

HECK
Lots of stuff.

CAT
(Pause) Sorry.

HECK
It's okay. I'm sorry too.

Pause.

HECK
If you want to talk-

CAT
(Snappishly) I'm fucking fine.

HECK
I know you are but if you want to
talk anyway.

CAT
About what?

HECK
Cat, your father died two months
ago.

CAT
Shit, I know! I was there.

HECK
You reopened the shop that
afternoon. Don't you need time
to... grieve?

CAT
Where was this concern when I got
back from Ganymede?

HECK
That was different.

CAT
If you couldn't be my friend *then*,
I don't see why you can start
again *now*.

Sound effects: A few more ratcheting sounds as they pause.
Stops before the next line.

HECK
I can tell you're worried.

CAT
Oh yeah?

HECK
I just...

Pause.

CAT
Do you want something to drink?
You must be thirsty.

HECK
Sure, yeah.

CAT
Come on.

HECK
Where're we going?

CAT
Come on.

Tapping and seven high-pitched electronic beeps. A whoosh of
air and a door opening.

HECK
Oh, stars. I knew your dad had a
stash but I haven't ever seen it
before.

CAT
What do you want to try? We've got
everything from Fool's Gambetta to
beer from the Trappists on Titan.

HECK
I don't know. What's good?

CAT
No idea. No-Shit spent thirty
years building this collection. So

everything in here is either very good or terrible, but in really interesting ways. It's like Russian roulette but with booze.

HECK

(Chuckles) I guess then we let chance decide.

CAT

Good as plan as any. Let me grab my-

Sound effects: A deep electronic error buzz, hissing of air, and movement of metal as a door closes.

CAT

What the fuck?

Sound effects: Five high-pitched electronic beeps and taps, then another error buzz. Two different mid-tone chimes sound under Cat's next line.

CAT

It's locked. The old code isn't working.

Cat bangs on the metal door with her fist, then hisses in pain.

HECK

Cat...

CAT

Let me just try... (Five more high-pitched beeps and another low error buzz) dammit. Why in in the void would this close *right now*-

HECK

Cat.

CAT

What?

HECK

I just got a voice message.

CAT

Yeah?

HECK
It's from your dad.

CAT
(Pause) Okay. Yeah.

Sound effects: A single high-pitched electronic chime.

CAT
Me too. Automated. Triggered by
the door code, probably. Fucking
hell, old man. You can't even
fucking well leave me in peace
when you're dead?

Sound effects: The thunk of a body leaning against a wall
then sliding down to sit.

HECK
We should probably listen to it.

CAT
I don't want to give him the last
word. Can you hotwire the door?

HECK
Uh, if I had my tools, sure. But
they're back at the reactor.

CAT
(frustrated growl)
Uhhh! Fine. Play the stupid
fucking message!

Sound effects: Electronic boop. Twangy guitar then piano
music and light static play under the dialogue. The dialogue
is slightly rough around the edges like a low quality
recording. The voice takes short, harsh, ragged breaths
after most lines.

NO-SHIT NOVAK
(recorded)
Okay kiddos. It's pro'ly a long
shot that you two will go into the
liquor safe together but it's the
only room I can program to lock so
it's my best bet.

I've spent the last few years
watching you two walk on eggshells
around each other and I'm fucking
sick of it.

I mean, I'm also sick with this
Myelitus shit but mostly I'm sick
of you two refusing to give each
other closure. This is my moonshot
from beyond the grave.

It's been six years since you fell
out so now you got six hours
starting from when the door locked
to hash your shit.

Kiss and make up. Kill each other.
Fucking, write an opera together.
I don't care, but when that door
unlocks you two better have
figured it out.

HECK

Six hours is a bit long to-

NO-SHIT NOVAK

(recorded)

Oh, if you need to piss there's a
slop sink in the corner. G'bye
and g'luck.

Sound effects: A crackle and the recording background stops.

HECK

(Eagerly) I guess we should talk
then.

CAT

Fuck that.

HECK

It's what he wanted.

CAT

Yeah, well, fuck him too.

HECK

Cat...

CAT
I'm not giving him the
satisfaction.

HECK
I don't think he can-

CAT
You know what I mean!

HECK
(Pause) Do you really hate him
that much?

CAT
No.
(pause)
It's just complicated, you know.

HECK
I really don't.

CAT
Sorry.

HECK
Me t- you know. Can we not be
sorry anymore?

CAT
What do you mean?

HECK
Lately, every other word you and I
say to each other is "sorry." I
think it's implied by now.

CAT
(small mirthless laugh)
I guess you're not wrong about
that. Okay, deal. It is officially
established that we are both
sorry.

HECK
Okay.

CAT

If No-Shit has us trapped in here,
I'm at least drinking his liquor.

HECK

Fair enough.

CAT

Let's see, this says it's a
Trappist Ale. Strong and Dark.
Drink warm. Good enough. You want
one?

HECK

Sure.

Sound effects: sloshing of liquid in bottles, then gulping.

HECK

At that rate all these bottles
won't last the night.

CAT

(Exhaling after drinking) Ahhh. I
invite you to go at your own damn
pace.

Sound effects: A bottle cap is flicked off, sloshing liquid.

CAT

I think we're going to lose the
Furnace.

HECK

Why?

CAT

Why do you think? As far as anyone
cares, No-Shit was the noodle
shop. He founded it, made up every
recipe. The kitchen is... the
bones of this place were molded
around him like a fucking tailored
suit. With him gone, the magic's
probably gone. I can't even keep
the regulars coming. Why should
the only Heaphaestan Furnace-rated
restaurant near Mars be any good
when it's just No-Shit Novak's

worthless kid slinging the
noodles?!

HECK

Oh, Cat.

CAT

No! Don't say "oh Cat" like that.
No pity. No sympathy. I'm not
asking for that.

HECK

Well, I ain't gonna tell you
you're right. Specially about you
being worthless.

CAT

I know what's what. I got eyes.

HECK

Phht, you were always four times
smarter'n me.

CAT

You just don't school well.

HECK

Whose idea was it to steal that
tug?

CAT

It wasn't your fault we got
caught. Neither of us could have
expected that Ranger ship was
coming in to dock just as we were
leaving.

HECK

That was just about the most stern
talking-to we ever got.

CAT

(laughing a little, does
an old person voice)

"You two are damned fortunate no
serious damage was done, otherwise
I would be forced to throw your
degenerate butts in the hoosegow."
God, I remember there was a spit

fleck in that man's mustache
through the whole lecture. I
couldn't stop staring. I was
terrified it was going to fly off
at any moment and hit me in the
face.

HECK

(laughs) I remember that. It was
flappin' with every word, but dang
if it didn't hold fast all the way
through.

CAT

(sighs)

I thought No-Shit was going to
turn me inside out when I went
home. But after the Rangers
dropped me off he just...shook his
head and told me not to get caught
like that again.

HECK

I mean, that's not terrible
advice...

CAT

It's okay. I learned to stop
expecting him to be better than he
was.

Sound effects: Liquid sloshing in a half-empty bottle. CAT
exhales after drinking again.

CAT

You...asked me if I wanted to talk
about it... about him.
Do you?

HECK

What do you mean?

CAT

Heck, don't be obtuse.

HECK

I'm not tryin' to, I'm just like
this.

CAT

No-Shit had his flaws but if any kids came round, rare as that was, he always made sure they ate. And you basically lived at the shop for a few years there.

HECK

I know. And I'm grateful.

CAT

And you stuck around, keeping everything fixed and running since. Even after...No-Shit was at least your friend if not family. Do you miss him?

HECK

(considers)

Yeah, I do. He didn't... I-I didn't even know he was sick.

CAT

He didn't want me to tell people.

HECK

I might've said something to him, if I'd known.

CAT

That's probably why he told me not to tell. He wasn't very good with that sort of stuff.

(pause. Liquid sloshes in bottle)

I'm not really good at it either.

HECK

Me neither.

(pause)

I guess that should be okay then.

CAT

What do you mean?

HECK

Well, neither of us knows what's correct, so that means we ought to

be understanding with each other,
right?

CAT
History indicates that's not how
it works, Heck.

HECK
Yeah, well. Just cause that's how
we've been doesn't mean that's how
we gotta be going forward. We're
grown up now, like it or not.
Might as well act like it.

CAT
You want to just reset? After
twenty years of knowing each
other?

HECK
Sure thing. Put'er there, people
call me Heck.

CAT
(rolling her eyes)
I'm not reintroducing myself to
you. I can't pretend like it all
didn't happen.

HECK
Okay. Then...how you been?

Sound effects: Shuffling and movement of a
person getting up.

CAT
I think I need another drink.

HECK
Okay.

CAT
This is... uh... well the label's
gone. And it's...green. Want to roll
the dice?

HECK
Sure.

Sound effects: A cork being popped out of a bottle, liquid shifting.

CAT

Ugh! Tastes like licorice.
(Pouring sound) Here.

Sound effects: A gulp.

HECK

Hm. Not bad.

CAT

Help yourself then, I'm rerolling.

HECK

That one there is Martian ice
wine. Is supposed to be very
sweet.

CAT

It's got no place on Delaney,
then. I'd better drink it and put
it out of its misery.

CAT

Mmhm. OK, that's my style. Jeez, I
wish I'd brought some food.

HECK

It'd be a real proper date then.

CAT

Is that... would you want that?

HECK

Cat, I've had a crush on you since
I was fourteen.

CAT

Well, that was before. With how
you acted when I got back from
Ganymede, I figured that had
changed.

HECK

I acted like that because it's
never changed.

CAT

But then why...

HECK

It's hard feeling like that and being close to somebody who don't feel it back.

Our whole childhoods, it was just us and a station full of rough old yardies. No school, no work. We ran around like we owned the place. You readin' to me all the time. Talkin' about everything. You always talked about leavin' Delaney, going to school, getting a great big job out there, doing amazin' things. But you never talked about...me being with you. I wanted so badly to just keep being with you forever. It started to hurt.

And you left without sayin' so much as goodbye. That made it sort of easy. It hurt but it was done. Final.

And then you were back. And I could tell you were in a bad way but I just... couldn't. I needed it to be over. Otherwise I knew I'd just go back to hurtin'.

(pause)

How was Ganymede?

CAT

(Sighs) Good. Terrible. Amazing. Worst time of my life, I think.

HECK

Really?

CAT

Yeah.

HECK

I mean, you got your scholarship.
You got out of here. Isn't that
what you wanted?

CAT

I did. And then I failed.

HECK

I don't believe that.

CAT

If I hadn't I wouldn't be back
here, slinging noodles in my dad's
shop.

(pause)

It was just all so different. God
the library alone. They have real
fucking books there. You can hold
them in your hands and turn the
pages. Smell them And the
teachers. I learned so much even
though I... But my own stupid
brain fucked it up.

Everyone there was prepared and
used to school. And there I was,
homeschooled kid from Delaney,
first ever day in a classroom was
college. I felt like an imposter.
I kept meeting people who had been
valedictorians or had interned
with Taurus or Vista. Star Scouts
or they'd won awards. They had
credentials already.

I didn't feel good enough.

And I didn't know how to deal with
that. So I hid. And panicked. And
stopped meeting people. I tried to
keep my head down and just go to
class but then the panic started
to follow me to class. And then I
spiraled.

I stopped going to labs, then
lectures. Stopped leaving my room.
I just froze.

I don't even remember coming back.
I was just here, all of a sudden,
back at the restaurant. And you
wouldn't talk to me, and I-and I
get that now, I think. But I could
have used a friend then.

HECK

Cat, I'm so...

Come here.

Sound effect: Shuffling sounds, an emotional exhale.

CAT

It's been a while since you put
and arm around me.

HECK

Well, I got plenty to spare.

CAT

That...happened while I was away. I
never heard the story. You weren't
hurt, were you?

HECK

No, no. The circus came to the
yard. You remember them, same one
was here when we were kids.

CAT

Yeah, with the cow!

HECK

Yep. And I went see them, they had
this... I'm not sure how to
describe it and don't ask me to
pronounce it. They had this doctor
who could change people. They were
amazing.

And I always thought it would be
cool to have extra arms. So I went
and asked how I could get them.
And the doctor looks at me, and
gets all excited and just starts
taking measurements and talking a

mile a minute. Said they'd do it.
I ask the cost and they look
offended. Said it was too
interesting an idea to bother with
money. Two weeks later, I had
these. Took nearly six months to
learn to control them, but I can't
imagine myself without them now.
It's good to have 'em.

It's like when I started to work
out and see results. I'd see
myself in the mirror, and like, my
old clothes didn't fit anymore and
I'd just be like... Yes! That buff
cyborg chick is me. And I'd wanna,
like, punch the air in excitement.

CAT

That's really cool.

HECK

And they're very practical, once I
got good with them. I think I'm
the fastest shipbreaker in the
yard now.

CAT

You already were, Heck.

HECK

You think?

CAT

People were already talking about
you when you started. The old
yardies would sit at the counter
and tell me (in a gruff voice)
"you should see your friend work,
she's amazing!"

HECK

They never told me that.

CAT

Well, you know how yardies are.
But even No-Shit talked about you.
Said you had a bright future.

(pause. Haltingly)
Told me I shouldn't screw that up
when I left.

HECK
What?

CAT
(Softly) I...wanted to ask you to
come with me.

HECK
(Quietly) I'd have gone.

CAT
I know.

Sound effects: Some shuffling through a long pause.

CAT
Can you feel through your extra
hands? Like, here, if I do this,
what do you feel?

HECK
It's different. I don't get the
surface information. Like where
exactly your fingertip is on my
palm. Or if your hand is cold or
hot. Just a little general
pressure and vibration. But there
is feedback, like if I squeeze
your hand, like that. I can tell
it's relaxed. The vibrations as
the skin rubs here tells me some
of the skin is rough. You have
calluses on your fingers.

CAT
They're really strong, right?

HECK
Yeah, but I know how to be gentle.

Pause.

CAT

It...hasn't changed?

HECK

What?

CAT

How you feel about me. You said it hasn't changed.

HECK

I did. And it's true.

CAT

It's not too late. For us.

HECK

Don't play with a poor girl's heart, Cat. It's unkind.

CAT

I could say the same for you.

HECK

When have I ever-

CAT

I'm not saying you have. I'm saying I'm serious, and I want you to be too. I'm just a person, Heck, with flaws and baggage and some scars. Some of which are from you just as some of yours are from me. But there's never been anybody else for me but you. And if we're getting that reset between us, then I gotta at least try to-

Sound effects: A kiss, then a happy hum, some shuffling and pleased exhales. CAT laughs, exhales shakily.

HECK

(Breathless) O-kay. Been wanting to do that since I was fourteen.

CAT

Wish I'd known you were such a good kisser back then.

HECK

Is this for real?

CAT

I'm in if you're in. That sound good?

HECK

Hell yes.

CAT laughs.

HECK

What?

CAT

Oh, now you start swearing?

HECK

I can swear!

CAT

I've known you since you were a greasy little yardrat and I have never heard you say worse than "darn"!

HECK

Okay, then how about this: *fuck*!

CAT

(giggling)

Oh my stars, you're adorable.

HECK

(also giggling)

Don't laugh at me!

CAT

Then stop being so cute.

HECK

(Cat interjects with mm-hmms after each accomplishment) I am nearly two meters of muscle and metal. I can bench press four hundred kilos, whole-buffalo a fifteen ton cargo carrier in a single shift, and fix anything that's broke.

CAT
And you're adorable. Deal with
that.

HECK
You're one to talk.

Pause.

CAT
You said that if I'd asked before,
that you'd have left Delaney.

HECK
In a heartbeat.

CAT
Do you want to go now?

HECK
Well, we're still sort of locked
in this liquor safe for a few more
hours.

CAT
After that though.

HECK
Sure! Where to?

CAT
I don't know... just- let's go.

HECK
Okay. I've got some money, we can
figure it out. You okay leaving
the shop?

CAT
Why leave it?

HECK
I mean, it's here and you want to
go so I thought-

CAT
You said you can fix *anything*.

HECK

Oh. Ohh! There's a plan.

CAT

That's not too crazy is it?

HECK

I mean, the noodle shop hasn't flown in a few decades, but most of the important bits are still here. It'll be good for the reactor to run harder. Yeah. We can make it work. You're gonna help, right?

CAT

Of course. Whatever you need.

HECK

Okay, this is exciting. I know there are some spare parts in the ancillary hold. I bet this won't even that all that much to-

CAT

Hold your horses, cowgirl. The door's not open yet.

HECK

Oh, right.

CAT

Go see if you can find something to drink that's sparkling. Then we'll figure out some way to pass the time. I've got ideas.

HECK

Oh. Ohhhh. (Chuckles)

CAT

I hope you don't mind if I don't describe what happened exactly next.

AVI BLAKE

(laughing)

Yes, naturally.

CAT

But when the door unlocked,
eventually, we started working on
the ship. Got her working, got her
rechristened, got a quickie
wedding from a travelling Caller,
and set out. Luna, Terra, Venus,
Mercury, the belt, even Terminal
for a minute. Right now we're
coming from the Perrie dock at
Arcturus. We haven't seen the
whole system yet, but we're
trying.

AVI BLAKE

I see.

(pause)

I understand.

CAT

Hear what you wanted to hear.

AVI BLAKE

I... I am embarrassed to admit
that my personal feelings may have
been clouding my judgment. Before.

CAT

Oh?

AVI BLAKE

When I was training for this
position, this was my *favorite*
assignment. I liked your food. I
liked your father. I even quite
liked you. I was very much looking
forward to reaffirming the Noodle
Shop's Furnace for myself. As my
first rating. And when I arrived,
the shop was gone! I was offended.
I did not realize quite how badly
until I was here again.

CAT

Ms. Blake, I'm sorry.

AVI BLAKE

No. I see that was never about me.
Nor should it be. I am the one to

apologize. Your food is excellent
and you would be a worthy addition
to the Furnace registry.

CAT

Thank you.

AVI BLAKE

(Clears throat) I fear that I have
already tested your patience too
far, but before I take my leave I
must ask... Would it at all be
possible for- I know it's no
longer on your menu, perhaps you
no longer keep the ingredients in
stock, but-

CAT

Three Sixteen. Pumpkin Ramen.
Split spicy and sweet. Coming
right up, Mx. Blake.

AVI BLAKE

Oh yes, oh my god, yes! *Please*.

CAT

Who am I to deny an old regular?
Now, tell me, how have you been?
What's it like being a Hephaestan
judge?

Sound effects: chopping sound. AVI BLAKE begins to answer
but we rapidly fade out in volume in her line.

AVI BLAKE

Oh, you know, it just never stops...

Scene transition whoosh.

Sound effects: Shop door bell rings. A heavy sack thuds to
the floor. A faint bubbling sound is heard under the
dialogue.

CAT

Hey beautiful.

HECK
50 kilos of cricket flour, as
requested.

CAT
What would I ever do without you?

HECK
Hmm. A lot more dishes, probably.

CAT
Can you do one more favor?

HECK
Anything.

CAT
Can you get the boilers going,
like you said you would?

HECK
They're, uh... I mean they're
right there, and already at a full
boil.

CAT
Other boilers, dear. Like you
said.

HECK
Oh. Ohhh. Yes ma'am.

Sound effects: Several smacking kisses. End
credit music rises.

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

This episode, I See the Stars
Are Here With Me, was
written/directed/ by Scott
Paladin.

[VA credits]

Delta Vee Dining Episode

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

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

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Breathing Space, Fading Frontier is a Law of Names Production