

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

This episode contains: divorce, cult behavior, deception, kidnapping, and mentions of gore.

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. SETTLE MEDICAL BAY

Atmospheric noise of the Settle's 8VAC. Brisk footsteps

COMMANDER BRANNIS SETTLESSON
Captain.

CAPTAIN ELLIEMAY SETTLESDOTTIR
Commander Brannis. What's the lay
of it in there?

COMMANDER BRANNIS SETTLESSON
There's a fair bit of blood, but
Aidan says it's not his. Maron's
on the way; they're off-shift,
coming from crew quarters. Second
med tech got a coagulant into the
ulko, at some... personal risk, so

they ought to be able to at least
answer a few questions.

ELLIEMAY

Good enough. Wait for me here, if
you don't mind.

Door swish. Low humming and beeping of medical equipment

ELLIEMAY

Ensign Aidan. I hear we've got a
bleeding, belligerent ulko on the
ship. Care to tell me why that
might be?

AIDAN MORGANSSON

Permission to speak freely,
Captain Elliemay.

ELLIEMAY

All right, go on then.

AIDAN

I saved their life, sir.

JET PROPULSOR

(spits blood) You got in the way,
is what. Fuckin' perry. I had it
under control.

AIDAN

They're grateful, they just
haven't admitted it yet.

ELLIEMAY

I take it that's why you've got
that chair five feet away from the
exam table.

AIDAN

Oh, they just need their space-

JET

Told him to stay the fuck away
from me. Don't need his help.
Don't need any of you people's
help. Your brat here ain't got his
listening ears on.

AIDAN

Jet just likes talking with their
boot soles, doncha, bud?

ELLIEMAY

Where's Lorelei?

AIDAN

Jet chased her off after she gave
them the coagulant -

JET

Ain't consented to no needlework.

ELLIEMAY

Commander Brannis says you're not
the one injured, Aidan, yet I see
a good amount of blood on you. Why
don't you go ahead and explain
that to me.

AIDAN

Okay, so, I'm out groundside with
Dess and Timber and we walk right
into a scuffle in the alley behind
the bar with, like, what do you
think, Jet, like - at least six
guys? Off-duty Bulls, Jet said.

JET

Said I had it handled, big eyes.

AIDAN

Seems like they've taken issue
with Jet hanging around the back
of the bar, and when I step in to
try and smooth things over, they
take issue with me too.

JET

Folk trust gridders and NoGos
about the same out here. Beats me
as to why.

AIDAN

So Dess and Timber run ahead and
tell Birdie to hold the shuttle
while I stay behind to help. We
almost get out clean, but Jet here

decides to catch a bullet rather
than run from a fight, so I-

JET
Coulda been you catchin' that
bullet just as easy, runnin' your
mouth like that.

AIDAN
Anyhow, I thought I'd better bring
them back with us for medical
attention.

JET
Against my will. In case that part
weren't clear.

AIDAN
Hey, what was I supposed to do,
let you bleed out? And you're no
half bushel basket, either. Kind
of had to carry them onto the
shuttle. Eh, hence the blood.
Europa dockside security was
getting twitchy, so I told them
Jet was one of ours.

JET snorts

ELLIEMAY
What's your name, ulko?

JET
What. Me?

ELLIEMAY
Yes, you.

JET
Jet Propulsor.

ELLIEMAY
Charmed. Well, it seems you've met
Aidan Morgansson. I'm Captain
Elliemay Settlesdottir of The
Settle For No-

JET
Didn't ask.

ELLIEMAY

And what do you know about this vessel, Jet Propulsor?

JET

You're a grinner ship. Traffickers and cultists. You grab folk and make off with 'em, and then those folk ain't ever seen again. 'S all I need to know.

AIDAN

Nah, that's just stories. We don't really-

ELLIEMAY

The Settle is a Peregrination hearthship hybrid, doing trade in bio-printed fertilizers and dirt-grown produce. We're in port two more days here on Europa, after which we'll be taking off for Rogers. You're welcome to stay with us while you recover-

JET

I'm good, thanks.

ELLIEMAY sighs

ELLIEMAY

You got any money, Jet?

JET

None to speak of.

ELLIEMAY

Alright, so, say you refuse our hospitality and accompanying free medical care. You go to a station doctor, they try to charge your insurance through your ID, except that you're a NoGo, judging from that machine strapped to your back, do I have that right? So, no insurance. Now there's a medical debt flagging on your ID every

time you come through a port. See where I'm going with this?

So that's one option. Or. You let our medic get you some healing for free. Ship out with us for a spell, then if you demonstrate some useful skill, and you take an interest in signing on with the Settle as crew. That can be up for discussion as well.

JET

Knew it.

AIDAN

Knew what?

JET

This is a fuckin' press gangin', ain't it. 'S why you brought me aboard!

Brief scuffle. JET grunting and swearing, effort sounds from AIDAN

AIDAN

Hey, hey now, cool off, Jet. Look, your shoulder's open again, you're bleeding all over the place. Nobody's press-ganging you. It's an open offer! Who knows, maybe after a week or two you decide you like it here - Whoa, hey, take it easy.

JET

Fuckin' kidnappers, that's what you people are.

Comm blip

BRANNIS

Captain, Maron's outside. Should I, uh-

ELLIEMAY

Go ahead and send them in, Brannis. Thanks.

Door swish

DOCTOR MARON SETTLESCHILD
Captain Elliemay. Aidan, you all
right?

AIDAN
Yeah, yep! My friend Jet here
could use some help, though.

JET
Dare you to try it, grinner doc.

MARON
Ooookay, uh tranqs it is, then.
Hold them still for me, would you,
Aidan?

JET
Hey - hey, don't you fuckin' - Ow!

Syringe sound

JET
Don't fuckin'... touch me, you...
urgh...

Thud as JET falls unconscious

MARON
Feisty one you've got there,
Aidan. Surprised to see them
taking swings like that with such
a sizeable hole in 'em. (Hiss
between teeth. Faint squishing
sound.) Clean through the
shoulder, it looks like.

AIDAN
You should have seen them fight.
Like an angry goose.

MARON
Well uh, if Lorelei cleared you,
then you'd better run along. I'll
alert you if anything changes
here.

AIDAN

It's okay, I'm happy to stay with them until they-

ELLIEMAY

Let's give the good doctor some elbow room, son, come on. Thanks, Maron.

INT. SETTLE SHUTTLE HANGAR

Bustle, clatter, and sounds of shuttles being maintained. JET shouting, distant at first, drawing nearer

JET

No, that's what I'm fuckin' telling you, I ain't crew, now get the hell outta my way before I cave your face in.

LT. AMES

Just - listen, friend, no one is allowed to disembark without a-

JET

Them rules don't apply to me, that's what I'm saying! I ain't part of this crew! Look, your captain said I - Hey - Hey, big eyes-

AMES

Now, hold on, he's not-

JET

Oh you come with me.

AMES

Listen, Morgan's kid is just a farm tech-

JET

Hey, big eyes!

AMES

He doesn't have the authority to -

AIDAN

Oh, hey, Jet. Good to see you walking and talking and, you know, dragging Lieutenant Ames around by the arm.

JET

Explain to this thickskull that I ain't being detained.

AIDAN

Oh, sure! Listen, Ames, I told Jet they could leave as soon as they-

ELLIEMAY

Sorry, Jet, but the lieutenant is in the right here - dismissed, Ames. We got a six month rule on the Settle.

AIDAN

We do?

MARON

Captain, you got Jet Propulsor there with you? Would love it if you'd send them on back to the infirmary so I can... finish checking them out of it.

JET

Thought you said I was cleared for action, grinner doc.

MARON

Said you would be cleared. Now, if you'll kindly come on back and let me finish-

JET

Aidan, look, we ain't left Europa yet. Tell 'em to let me on a shuttle.

AIDAN

I would, but-

ELLIEMAY

Six month rule says once you step foot on the Settle, you stay, at

least six months. Work with the crew, engage with the community. See if you still feel like leaving after.

In an hour, we set course for Rogers Station. Looking at a low burn, five to six week journey, after which we'll be riding the starlight for a spell - half a quint if we can swing it, dependent on the next tomato harvest and how many ablebodies we bring aboard at Rogers. Now, we ain't planning on making harbor anyplace between here and there, so unless you feel like firing a shuttle off into the Black, I'd make an effort to get comfortable.

JET

You fuckin' knew, big eyes.

AIDAN

I didn't! Seriously! I've never brought someone aboard before. But people like it here. Almost everyone chooses to stay.

ELLIEMAY

It's a good place to live, the Settle. Good folk, working together. Caring for one another.

AIDAN

You never know, Jet, you might find it suits you.

JET

Kidnappers.

ELLIEMAY

Why don't you go and see the medic, Jet. Aidan, go on down with them, see to it they get squared away with some quarters after.

AIDAN

Aye, sir. So, I'm pretty sure Deck 7's got open crew quarters, that's perfect, you can be hallmates with me and Dess and Neanna - oh you're going to love Dess, by the way, she's got an incredible sense of humor - oh, can you do stairs? No mobility issues, right? Okay, cool, yeah, it's just that the lift doors get stuck on Deck 7 for some reason so half the time I just take it up to 8 and walk down...

MARON

We looking at trouble, sir?

ELLIEMAY

Maybe. Hope not. But maybe.

INT. SETTLE MESS HALL

Clatter of utensils, background bustle and chatter

AIDAN

Jet! Hey! Come sit.

JET snorts and walks over

JET

Tail-wagging little shit like you, thought you'd have plenty of friends at your lunch table.

AIDAN

I do have friends, Jet. We just beat them here. See, there's a few of them in line. Tall girl with the curly hair, that's Dess Phyrasdottir, she's a real riot. Eh blonde one at her elbow, that's Neanna Fayesdottir. Behind them in the big jacket, that's Timber Desskin - Dess brought him aboard - and behind him are Dess and Timber's mothers, Phyrre Settlesdottir and Hazel Settlesdottir.

JET
Any relation?

JET
To Captain Settlesdottir.

AIDAN
Oh! No, a lot of the adults on the Settle are named after the ship. Changed 'em when this vessel was founded.

JET
Now, I may not know shit about gridders, but that ain't how it usually works, is it?

AIDAN
Yeah, I don't think so. Not that I've been on other Family ships to confirm, but I think that's just an us thing.

JET
You ain't been on other - alright, hold on, back up a minute. You said, when this vessel was founded, but the captain ain't older than sixty, and those two in line, younger. This was recent?

AIDAN
Yeah, after Captain Elliemay's divorce. She brought about half the crew of the old ship with her - that's the Carry A Light That Casts No Shadows. My father came here, and my other parent stayed on the Carry. I was a little kid at the time. Don't remember them, or really much of anything.

JET
Whoa. He ever talk about it? Your daddy.

AIDAN

Nah. Nobody talks about the old crew. I think Dess and Timber's parents got together on the Settle, after leaving their partners behind. That's why they're both Settlesdottir.

Hey, Jet. You ever had a fresh strawberry?

JET

Not fresh, no.

AIDAN

Okay, then I'm splitting these with you. Here, try 'em.

Chewing sounds

JET

Holy shit.

AIDAN

I know, right? Oh - you can eat the leafy part too, if you want. Doesn't taste as good, but it won't hurt you.

More chewing, then JET swallows

JET

I've harvested strawberries, just wasn't stupid enough to nick any. Ain't no berry in the system worth chewing on a stun baton for, I always said.

AIDAN chuckles

Kinda changing my mind on that though.

JET

So hold up. Y'all ain't in contact with the old crew. But don't a bunch of y'all dock up somewhere every so often? Heard Arcturus was crawling with gridders after that

solar storm. Even got a grinner
dry dock set up out there, I
heard.

AIDAN

Wow, really? I thought Arcturus
wasn't all that Family friendly.

JET

Y'all ain't heard about the
Arcturus grinner port? 'S been
there for over a year now, the way
I understand it.

AIDAN

Like I said, I've never been on
another Family ship.

JET

Never? Thought y'all were the
touchy-feely, kumbaya types.

AIDAN

Okay, first of all -

JET

Agh - hey, don't poke me-

AIDAN

- there's nothing wrong with
touching or feeling. But really,
no, never.

The divorce was kind of messy. Now
that it's all said and done, we're
not exactly welcome with the rest
of the Family anymore.

JET

Well... what were y'all sayin' and
doin' that was so objectionable?

AIDAN

I mean, all I was saying and doing
at the time was 'goo goo gaga' and
shitting myself. But mostly I
think it was some big ideological
disagreement, big enough to pull
families apart. My dad was leaving

his partner behind. A lot of people were. There were some hard feelings. That's part of why we don't go to All-Things and all that.

JET

What's the other part?

AIDAN

We just don't need to. We're already pretty self-sufficient, plus we're willing to trade with ulko, so the Family ships don't have anything we can't make ourselves or get elsewhere.

JET

Mm hm. S'pose you know that for a fact. Like you knew about the Arcturus grinner port.

Laughter and chatter as DESS approaches

TIMBER

... which didn't even matter in the end, because she still had my wrench kit -

NEANNA

It's not even your wrench kit, it's your sister's wrench kit -

DESS

Hey, Aidan! Who's your friend?

AIDAN

Oh - hey, Dess, hey, guys. This is Jet Aidanskin, they came aboard at Europa-

JET

Whoa, now, hold the fuck up! That ain't my name.

AIDAN

Well, sure it is. I brought you aboard, didn't I?

JET mutters angrily, gets up and leaves

AIDAN

Hey, Jet, wait, wait a second-

DESS

Oo, spicy one.

AIDAN

Yeah, uh. Maybe I should go after them.

TIMBER

Eh, I'd give 'em a minute. I remember being like that when Dess brought me aboard.

DESS

Yeah, you were a real bear. Thought you were gonna get sent on.

TIMBER

There's still time! Nah, I settled in alright, once I quit trying to get messages out to my old salvage crew. And your friend will too, Aidan.

AIDAN

Yeah, I know. Hey, did you guys know there's a Family dry dock at Arcturus Station now?

NEANNA

Uh, why do we care? It's not like we're gonna use it.

DESS

If we ever do need a dry dock, it sure as hell ain't gonna be that one.

Laughter from all but AIDEN

AIDAN

Oh yeah, haha... guess not.

INT. SETTLE AGRO-DOME

Low ship hum. AIDAN hums too, picking tomatoes. Dirt crunches and foliage rustles as JET approaches

JET

You got dirt on your forehead.

AIDAN

Hi to you too. Here to help me with the tomatoes? There's about a billion of them.

JET

'S where the captain assigned me, so, guess I am. Doc took the stitches outta my shoulder. Cleared for 'light labor', they said, half-shifts only. Longest goddamn week of my life.

AIDAN

Oh! Great! Have you done tomatoes before?

JET

Yeah, temping on Europa some five or six years ago. Hydro-farm was lousy with 'em. Handle enough rotting tomatoes, you never wanna lay eyes on them fuckers again.

AIDAN

Ooh. Yeah, that's no good. Gotta catch the rot early, before it can spread. Here - basket. We don't get too much rot here. I think the dirt keeps them from getting soggy. Vander says that's why hydro tomatoes rot so easy.

JET:

And.. Vander is..

AIDAN

Oh! Vander Settleson, he's our head agriculturist. My boss, I guess you could say. Dirt whisperer, we call him.

JET

Uh-huh. This place is bigger 'n
most hydro farms I been on.
Where's all that dirt come from?

AIDAN

We print it! Well, most of it. Um,
some components we trade for, but
mostly we make it from
bio-reclaim. We recycle pretty
much everything here. Oh eh, when
your basket is full, you can um -
see that stack I started at the
end of the row down there? Yeah,
it can go with the - yeah, yeah,
that's perfect. Whoo, you're fast!

JET

Like I said, done it plenty. Ain't
that different than hydro, 'cept I
ain't soaking wet by the end.

AIDAN

Still sweaty work, though, isn't
it? The growlights get pretty hot
after a couple hours. You can roll
up your sleeves if you want, you
know. I may be able to count my
shore leaves on two hands, but I
have seen a bare arm before, I
promise.

JET

Yeah, all right, fine.

Fabric rustles as JET pushes their sleeves up

AIDAN

What's that scar from?

JET

What?

AIDAN

That round mark, inside your
wrist, right there.

JET

Oh. 'S from Miss Ellis Ivy, my best girl. Uh, that's LSIV, the life support line for my Lullabye - y'know, the machine that lets me hitch rides. Most NoGos got a scar like that, the ones who ain't had a port installed for it.

Ain't really supposed to stick 'em in the same place every time, but when you're in a full-body vac suit or what have you, not a lotta options.

Speakin' of Lullabies, I ain't seen mine since the day I came aboard. You know where it mighta got off to?

AIDAN

No, I don't. We can ask Maron.

JET makes an impatient noise

JET

What, big eyes? Lookin' at me like you're tryna see my organs or something.

AIDAN

Where'd you grow up, Jet?

JET

Mars. Rust belt cricket farm.

AIDAN

Wow, you're a long way from home.

Tomato picking exerts

AIDAN

You ever get tired of it? Traveling that way. I mean, by-by Lullabye. Between here and Mars... you must have seen most of the worlds in the system, but you're always asleep for the journey.

JET

See all the parts that count,
don't I? Ain't much to look at in
the Black.

AIDAN
Hey, Jet, c'mere.

JET
Uh, why?

AIDAN
Just - put that basket down and
c'mere a sec. I want-I want you to
see something.

Foliage rustling. JET sets down the basket

JET
The hell you on about?

AIDAN
Here -
(fabric against leaves,
and AIDAN grunts as he
lowers himself onto the
ground)
- lie down with me.

JET
What for?

AIDAN
Come on, just do it.

JET
All right, all right, god damn.
(rustling) Okay, what?

AIDAN
Look up.

JET
It's a big window.

AIDAN
Just big, huh.

JET

It's... pretty big, yeah. Huge, you might even say. Round, too.

AIDAN

It's the agro-dome. See, the story goes, before Captain Elliemay got ahold of it, this ship was an early prototype for a proposed farming fleet that would have orbited Sol, dorsal side in. Would have been crewed by ag workers, using the sun's light to grow crops, out from under the smog and pollution on Terra. Honest-to-god daylight, pouring down through that dome, can you imagine?

JET

Not really.

AIDAN

I like to come out here during the night cycle, when the growlight panels power down. Lie back in the fields and just... watch the stars go by.

JET

Uh-huh.

AIDAN

Don't just uh-huh me, come on, look. Even with the lights all the way up, you can kind of see the shape of the Milky Way. See that?

JET

Uh-huh.

(yelps, AIDAN giggles)

Ow, knock it off, I see 'em, I see 'em.

JET

So.. how'd y'all end up with a flyin' farm?

AIDAN

Well, that fleet never got built. Expanded past the Belt and put the hydro-farms on the outer worlds instead. So this prototype kicks around a scrapyard for a century or so, waiting its turn for the reclaim crews, and then along comes a freshly divorced woman and six hundred of her closest friends, give or take a few. And they all need a place to live. So they fix her up together, get her spaceworthy. Give her a name: the Settle For No Bitter Compromise. And she's been our home the twenty years since.

JET:

And that's how you got six hundred people all named Settlewhatever, huh?

AIDAN

Pretty much, yeah. A lot of them have been given different names since then, but plenty still use the ship's name.

JET

Given names? By who?

AIDAN

The captain. Once in a while she'll take a name away too-

JET

What!

AIDAN

You know, if you do something bad enough.

JET

Uhuh. And I suppose she decides what counts as bad enough.

AIDAN

The captain's fair. She's honest, she's compassionate. She just wants the Settle to be a good home for us. She's not perfect, maybe - she's been through some things that changed her - but she's human as anyone, and she cares for us. That's a full time.

JET

So... when you called me, what - Aidanskin... that was her idea?

AIDAN

Oh, that was in your adoption papers.

JET

Whoa, now, my-my what?

AIDAN

Your adoption papers. Captain Elliemay would have filed them as soon as you came aboard. It's like that for everybody.

JET

Wh - that don't make no sense! I barely fuckin' know you. We ain't kin!

AIDAN

Not yet, maybe, but we could be. Timber wasn't kin with Dess when he first joined us.

JET

But he 'came around.'

AIDAN

Once in awhile somebody doesn't come around, and we send them on. But it's pretty rare - I can only think of a handful of times where a newcomer didn't stick. The Settle's a nice place to live, if you're good honest folk who don't mind a little work. And most of

those who come aboard tend to find that they are.

JET

Due to a certain dearth of options, I'm guessing.

So. Lemme guess. Y'all bring folk aboard to keep your future children from having three eyes and four arms, that right?

AIDAN

We bring aboard folk who need a home. But yeah, that's part of it. And it's worked so far. We keep good records, too. You know, double check them before we take too much of a fancy.

JET

Bet that gets awkward.

AIDAN

Sometimes, but you get over it. Not a lot of good in holding grudges when you're gonna spend your whole life with the same few hundred people, right? And we're not really far enough along to run into problems yet.

JET

That the plan? Get far enough along to run into breedin' problems?

AIDAN

I think so, yeah. I mean, we're - we're going for total self-sufficiency, not breeding problems. Some kinks to work out still, but Captain Elliemay says one day we'll be a perfect closed system. And then we can go anywhere we want. This ship - the community - it's her baby, you know? Her project.

JET

Huh.

All these years, and the captain
never took a fancy?

AIDAN

She loved her husband, you know?
They loved each other, and they
hurt each other. Bad enough to
tear a ship in half over it.

JET

So she decided once was enough.

AIDAN

I'd do the same, I suspect.
Wouldn't you?

JET

Wouldn't do a dumb thing like fall
in love in the first place.

AIDAN

Ah, right. Course not. I mean,
don't NoGos ever...

JET

If they do, generally speaking,
they settle down someplace. And
then they ain't NoGos no more.

AIDAN

You say that like a judgment.

JET

Well, it is one.

AIDAN

Not everyone's like us, Jet.
Traveling is what we're made for,
you know? But some people try out
this life and find out they don't-

JET

We ain't an 'us,' big eyes.

AIDAN

Sure we are. Think about it. Far as I understand it, the only difference between the Family and the NoGos is that we travel together, and you travel alone. It's not like either way is the wrong way, it's just preference. Me, I like having my family around, my shipmates, you know? And you're a ball of prickles who wants everyone to think you hate them.

JET

'Cause I do hate 'em.

AIDAN

Give it a little time. You'll find your fit. And I'll help you. Here, gimme your hand.

Hoists JET up, both exert

AIDAN

I'd really like it if this ship became a home to you, Jet. You know, if you wanted that.

JET clears their throat

AIDAN

Now, we better get back to the tomatoes, before Lieutenant Vander comes through and assigns us extra shifts for slacking. Hand me that basket, would you?

Foliage noises

JET

I ain't hanging around here til Rogers.

AIDAN

But there's nothing between here and Rogers.

JET

That what the captain told you?

JET

A week out from Rogers, on our current trajectory, we're set out to come within shouting distance of a centaur by the name of 8477 Korso. Real small, no colony or nothin'-

AIDAN

Centaur?

JET

Yeah, centaur, an outer system small solar body that ain't neither comet nor asteroid? In an unstable orbit past Neptune? They really ain't taught you shit around here, huh?

AIDAN

I've done all my required schooling, just never could get my head around much besides plants. Placed as a farm tech for a reason. But go on - centaur.

JET

Anyhow, it's just a refueling station. Ain't on the main charts cause it moves around so much. That's where I'll be jumping ship.

You could come.

AIDAN

Jet, I live here. I've only ever lived here, my - my family lives here.

JET

Not your whole family.

AIDAN

A... a parent I don't remember, who probably doesn't remember me.

JET

Or maybe they think about you every day. You ain't got no way of knowing.

Listen here, big eyes. Somethin' don't smell right on this ship. I been mapping out the place, last couple of days waitin' for the stitches to come out, and you know what I found? Locked ventral hold, way astern. Ain't run into any other locked areas, aside from the reactor. Someone'll kick me out, sure, if I ain't supposed to be someplace. But there's only one locked hold, and I think it's-

AIDAN

Oh, yeah, the bio-reclaim unit's down there. It's locked as a safety precaution. Dangerous piece of machinery - you need special clearance to get at it. Pretty sure most Family ships have one. Organic waste gets funneled into it. And bodies, when folks pass on.

JET

And then you eat 'em?!

AIDAN

It's a waste if we don't. Those nutrients and proteins can make a hell of a lot of fertilizer and foodstuffs, and for a ship that makes port so seldom, we can't afford not to use them. We have passing-on ceremonies, you know, we don't just chuck them in there.

Anyway, the machine will chew through pretty much anything. That's what the kids get told: you play around with the bio-reclaim unit, you fall in there, you get reprocessed.

One time Dess dared me to steal
Vander's key card and-

JET

Alright, now-now you're just -
this ain't - quit changing the
subject. You don't wanna jump ship
at Korso, fine, I ain't gonna
press you. You trust your Captain
Elliemay and her six hundred
closest friends? That's your
business. But it ain't mine, and I
ain't stayin'.

JET begins walking, rustling through foliage

AIDAN:

Why'd you become a NoGo?

JET's footsteps stop

JET

Got tired of feelin' trapped, I
guess. Never much liked to be
stuck in one place.

Footsteps and rustling resume

INT. AIDAN'S QUARTERS

JET knocks

AIDAN

Come on in.

Door swish

AIDAN

Oh, hey, Jet. What's that face
for? Hey, hold on, don't -
where're you going?

JET

You ain't got no shirt on.

AIDAN

Oh! Well, yeah, I'm off duty in my
own bunk. I'll put one on if

that'll make you more comfortable.
Here, one second. Don't leave.
Wouldn't have taken you for the
tit-shy type.

Rustling

AIDAN

Better?

JET

It - wasn't bad, I just - Listen,
big eyes, I gotta - can I come in
for a minute? I got something to
show you.

AIDAN

Sure!

Door swishes shut

AIDAN

Okay, what's going on?

Rummaging and effort sounds from JET

AIDAN

And... why are you standing on my
bed and opening all my cabinets?

JET

Bug check. You got a terminal in
here?

AIDAN

Yeah, was just using it.

Thud as they jump down from the bed

JET

Okay, looks like we're clean.

Take this data stick and load the
first file.

AIDAN

What is it?

JET

Just - just play it.

Thumb drive insert foley, terminal beeps, AIDAN presses play. Static for a moment

ELLIEMAY

When you graft a plant, you get the sharpest pair of clippers you can find, and you make a clean cut. One clean cut. You don't leave any hanging strings or ragged edges. That's how infection sets in. You cut it clean, and you walk away.

Today, Carina would have turned twenty.

ELLIEMAY sighs, shaky

ELLIEMAY

I have to believe it was worth it. What we're building here. But sometimes - Sometimes I just want to see my baby girl again.

AIDAN stops the recording

JET

She had a daughter.

AIDAN

This recording is timestamped fifteen years ago -

JET

I listened to a bunch of these. The captain had a teenage daughter at the time of the split, who chose to stay behind. Didn't like the way her mama was talking. But get this: the captain says the Settle was presented in good will as a gift, from the ex-husband. He was the one who sourced the hull, cut the deal with the scrapyard. Even helped her with the

refurbishing. But then Elliemay finds out her daughter is stayin' behind, and she officially withdraws her entire crew from the Family. Now, the ex-husband rescinds his gift, since the recipient ain't Family no more, and there's a flag out on greenline, tagging it as stolen property. So according to Elliemay, that's part of why you all don't dock up with other grinner ships - far as all of them are concerned, you're all just flyin' a stolen vessel.

She says it was 'only fair', like a trade. The ship, for the daughter.

AIDAN

Wow.

JET

Wow is right. And there's more. Elliemay keeps talkin' bout these experiments she's doing with the bioreprocessor, runnin' tests or some shit, with 'live material.' Way she tells it, she had the idea before the split, but the ex-husband forbade her pursuing it. She was of the mind that his proposed applications for the thing were short-sighted. Well, I keep listening, and what do I find but-

AIDAN

Jet, where did you get these recordings?

JET

That's what you're hung up on?! Ain't you been listening? I'm talkin' 'bout that bioreprocessor. Nothing else is locked up. Not even the captain's cabin. Walked

right in. Files weren't even encrypted. No passcode, no nothing.

AIDAN

Well, yeah, we value privacy on the Settle, but we value respect and trust and consideration too. My quarters aren't locked either. You didn't have to wait for my permission to open the door, but you did, because you respect my privacy, right? That's what a community is.

JET

This ain't a community, Aidan! That's what I'm tryna tell you! It may look like a community and talk like a community and sound and smell like one, but it's a prison. This whole ship's a prison. You know what else I heard in them journal logs? The captain sayin' how she always comforts her young shipmates who come crying to her after they get hassled by the folk who don't want 'em in their ports. 'It's working,' she said. It's part of the plan. To keep y'all feeling hurt and rejected by the other gridders and by the, the, whatsitcalled, the yoolko alike. So you come back to the Settle and you feel safe. You feel wanted. You see, she's playing you.

AIDAN takes an unsteady breath

JET

The folk who don't find their fit. Who get 'sent on.' What happens to them? D'you know? Does anyone know?

AIDAN

Wh- I - Jet, I don't understand what you're talking about-

JET

Play the second file.

Button click and static

ELLIEMAY

Dammit. I hate doing this, but that ulko Peter brought aboard a couple months ago never settled in. Had to send him on this morning, when we pulled into Terminal. He was asking questions, trying to turn Peter against us.

I'll hold a private remembrance ceremony for him tonight.

Pretty unbelievable, the difference between a dead fella and a live one. Hundreds of active proteins and bacteria. Printed enough fertilizer alone to keep us flying for maybe six months, longer if we stretch it.

Never would have considered such a thing, on the Carry. Ivanhoe would have lost his mind.

Recording clicks off

AIDAN

So that's what 'sending on' means.

JET

Really woulda expected a little more alarm at that revelation.

AIDAN

I mean, it's horrible, but I can see the reasoning. You get bad apples.

Like, look, when I find a tomato that's rotting on the vine, I can't just leave it there. I gotta get rid of it, right? Or the ones around it go bad.

JET

Starting to think every apple in
this barrel is bad. Maybe the
barrel too.

Aidan, if you think it's fine and
dandy that your captain is
flinging live human people into
the machine that chews 'em up and
spits 'em out and turns 'em into
plant food, well, there ain't a
lot I can say to change your mind-

AIDAN

No - no. I do think it's wrong.
But Captain Elliemay isn't
unreasonable! And she said it
herself, she hates doing it! I'll
just - go to her and try to change
her mind-

JET

You ain't thinking with your
brain, big eyes, what did I say?
Whole fucking barrel is rotted!

If Elliemay believed in this
little - isolationist fantasy
enough to rip her old ship in
half... what in the god damn fuck
makes you think she'll just stop
if you ask politely?

AIDAN

Maybe I won't convince her, but
that means I got six hundred other
chances.

JET snorts

AIDAN

I have to stay, Jet. Turning your
face aside so the problem's out of
sight isn't the same as solving
the problem. Besides, this means
no one has ever left the ship,
right? They've just been killed.
So how are we supposed to - and,

where would we even - they'll-
come after us, won't they-

JET

No, they won't, look. I-I know
somebody. A witch. Y'know, one of
those forgers who can get you fake
docs and change how you flag in
ports. Make you disappear. The
Settle won't be able to find you.

AIDAN

But I've got a responsibility to
my people here, don't I? This is
my family, Jet, my - I grew up
with them, I know them. The
captain grafted us good.

JET

You ain't a plant, Aidan. And you
ain't the only one with family on
the other side. Cutting away
clean, losing them connections -
maybe it seemed like the right
call, when the hurt was fresh. But
it don't have to be like that
forever. Those people are still
out there, caring about you. Ain't
too late to find 'em. Fix what she
broke.

Door swishes open

JET

I'm getting outta here. Tomorrow
night. I got one shot at that
centaur.

I don't wanna leave you behind,
Aidan. But I can't make you change
your mind.

Door swishes shut

INT. SETTLE CORRIDOR

Running footsteps. AIDAN breathing fast

AIDAN

Captain!

ELLIEMAY

Hey, Aidan, whoa - where you off to in such a hurry?

AIDAN

I - I was coming to find you, I - Jet never reported for their shift this morning. What did you do with them?

ELLIEMAY

Hey, now, take a breath, son.

You know your friend wasn't finding their fit, don't you. Well, sad to say it, but I noticed someone's been digging around in my personal files, and Timber Desskin let me know he saw Jet go into my study yesterday. So I've got 'em in temporary custody in the ventral hold, and when we make port at Rogers, we'll go ahead and send 'em on.

AIDAN

No, Captain, please, you gotta listen to me-

ELLIEMAY

Look, Aidan, I don't like it any better than you do, but they ain't respecting our rules.

Always a dice roll, bringing on NoGos. Sticky fingers, most of 'em. People like that... ain't ever gonna belong here. We've grown this community into something truly beautiful, because we put into it what we wanna get back: trust and respect. But it only takes one person undermining that trust to poison the groundwater.

AIDAN

I know, but-

ELLIEMAY

The thing your friend took... Those recordings were made from a place of pain, for no one's ears but my own. You see why we can't keep a thief around, don't you?

AIDAN

But Captain Elliemay-

ELLIEMAY

You've put your heart into this ship all your life, Aidan, I've seen it. You've grown into a fine man; one that anyone would be proud to call family. So don't-

Don't touch that rot, son. Please.

AIDAN's breathing hitches

ELLIEMAY, CONT.

You know, I caught my former husband looking through my journals once. I trusted him, and he used that information against me in the divorce.

I just hate to see you make my mistakes.

AIDAN

I get it. But if you send them on, you'll have to send me on too.

ELLIEMAY

Aidan, I can see that Jet has become important to you, but really think. You gonna let them lead you astray? They more important than your family?

AIDAN

You filed the papers, Captain. They're Jet Aidanskin now. That's family.

ELLIEMAY

I'm so sorry, son, but if they've
heard those recordings, then I
can't let 'em stay on-

AIDAN

We both heard them!

Shocked silence from ELLIEMAY

AIDAN

I know what they know. About what
we really mean by 'sending people
on.'

So you - you really can't afford
to keep me around.

ELLIEMAY

Oh, Aidan.

AIDAN

Can I just... I don't suppose I
could get permission to say
goodbye to my father, sir.

ELLIEMAY

Afraid not, son.

AIDAN

I understand.

Beep as ELLIEMAY activates her comm

ELLIEMAY

Commander Brannis, can I get you
to Corridor 113D, please.

BRANNIS

On my way, sir.

ELLIEMAY

He'll escort you to the ventral
hold. I'll let your father know
you left us by choice.

AIDAN

Thank you, sir.

INT. SETTLE'S VENTRAL HOLD

Door swish. Harsh background machine noises

BRANNIS

Sorry about this, Aidan.

AIDAN

No hard feelings, Commander
Brannis. Just doing your job,
right?

JET

Wh- Aidan? What're you doing in
here-

AIDAN

It's just so sad, Brannis, you
know what I mean? My father will
never know what really happened to
me, and I understand why, I really
do, but imagine-

BRANNIS

Aidan, listen now-

AIDAN

Imagine if Neanna had to be sent
on, and nobody would tell you why,
even though that's your sister's
daughter and you watched her grow
up all these years... you'd just
have to live with not knowing, and
you'd always be wondering what she
did to deserve it...

JET

(over AIDAN, quiet, to
themselves)

God dammit, big eyes, what am I
supposed to - do you want me to -
wh-

AIDAN continues

AIDAN

... and maybe it was nothing, maybe
she just ended up in the wrong
place at the wrong time, talking

to the wrong people. It happens!
It happened to me! But my father
won't know that, and I just don't
think that's fair, do you? And
what about my friends?

JET

Ohh.

AIDAN

Neanna and Dess and Timber? What
are you gonna tell them? Can't be
the truth, can it, because-

Footsteps

BRANNIS

Hey, wait a -

JET punch exert once, twice. BRANNIS grunts with each hit.
Thud.

JET

That the clearest you could think
to communicate that information?

AIDAN

I thought you'd figure out I was
stalling! Now help me find his key
card.

Clothing rustles

JET

Thought you were stayin' behind.

AIDAN

Wow, he's out cold. You've got a
heck of a right hook on you,
buddy. Aha - got it. Okay, shuttle
bay's on this same level, o-or we
could og for comms if we really
book it we can still-

JET

Hey, big eyes! Just, stop and look at me, alright? The fuck are you doing!

AIDAN
I'm rescuing you.

JET
'Kay, uh - why?

AIDAN
Because I talked to the captain, and she wasn't gonna budge. Plus, she was gonna have me sent on, since I know everything now. Which kind of worked out perfect I didn't even have to figure out how to unlock the door.

JET
Like to see her try throwin' you in the mulcher.

AIDAN
She was... disappointed.

Which I'm pretty sure felt worse than getting mulched.

JET
Aw, hell. You're havin' second thoughts.

AIDAN
Jet Propulsor Aidanskin, you put your listening ears on. You're worth it, okay? And besides, I'm gonna need your help getting those recordings to the nearest Peregrination ship, and you better not think about ditching me after that either because I'm - I've been off this ship a whole seven times in my life, and - well, you know, I'm kind of scared out of my mind, and I-I-

Rustle, firm thump of two bodies colliding, and AIDAN makes a sound of surprise

AIDAN

Whoa - uh, what are you doing?

JET

Huggin' you, genius, what's it look like.

You ain't such a bad apple after all.

BRANNIS groans

JET

Oh boy, he's wakin' up, we gotta leg it. Gimme your hand, big eyes, and don't you let go, alright?

AIDAN

I won't.