

(LIGHT SOCIAL CHATTER CAN BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE. A PAIR OF FOOTSTEPS ECHO IN THE CORRIDOR.)

HISTORIAN: Hmm, ironic, I suppose.

(SCI-FI ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Good afternoon, where are we headed today?

HISTORIAN: Uh, could you take me up to Deck, uh... 12? Please?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Oh twelve? Yeah. Uh, doing some shopping?

(SCI-FI ELEVATOR DOORS CLOSE)

HISTORIAN: No, no, I'm meeting up with my research team. We're giving a talk on Old Earth media at the Namerin Forum at 6 o'clock.

(THE OPERATOR HANDLES THE CONTROLS. GRINDING BEGINS THEN CHANGING FOR THE WORSE. THE OPERATOR PROMPTLY BANGS ON A PANEL.)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Yah!

(GRINDING RETURNS TO NORMAL)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: It's a tricky one, this elevator in particular. You've gotta give it some good old percussive maintenance now and again!

HISTORIAN: (nervous laughter) You're not going to kill me in this thing, are you?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: No, no no no no no! The HMR Starship Marigold has some of the finest interior civilian transport systems that money can buy, and you are in the best of care with none other than William H. Pendle, veteran elevator operator of 22 years operating this one for you!

HISTORIAN: Well you see, I was just listening to this old audio play in mp3 format, If you can believe it, from the 21st century about a whole bunch of people who die in elevators. I figure the universe would have to have a pretty sick sense of humor to kill me in one right after that.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Yeah, yeah... Oh! the old audio plays, uh, my grandfather was kind of into those old things back in the day. They were the ones that did dramatic retellings of sorta famous criminal cases, right?

HISTORIAN: I think there were one or two like that? This was a fiction anthology series called Someone Dies in This Elevator.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Kind of spoiling the ending there, wouldn't you say?

HISTORIAN: Well they called it a "spoiler-driven anthology series". You knew the end result going into it, but the writers got you there a different way each time. Might be an elevator accident, or a murder that just happens in the elevator.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: And you said this was the 21st century?

HISTORIAN: Early 21st, back when they still called MP3 plays "podcasts". Podcasts? I think it was podcasts. It premiered in 2021, but they still have the old website up somehow.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Well I assure you there will be nobody dying in any elevator on this ship, whether by mechanical means or nefarious crimes. Everyone's got to take the elevator at some point, whether you're a service worker or an intergalactic business executive; Need to have them all safe as can be. Heck, I'll bet even superheroes took the elevator back when that was a fad.

HISTORIAN: I'm sure they did.

(THE ELEVATOR SUDDENLY STOPS AND DROPS TEN FEET.)

HISTORIAN: WOAH!

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Oh no no no no I thought Engineering fixed the gears! Alright, get out of the way, I need to pull the emergency brake!

(EMERGENCY LEVER LOCKS INTO PLACE THE GRINDING IS REPLACED BY GENTLE METAL CREAKING)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: That was a close one! I assure you, you will not be dying in this elevator.

(SCI-FI CALLING INTERFACE)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Engineering this is Elevator Operator Pendle, Unit SQ-915 is currently stuck in the exterior chute next to Deck 8.

(ENGINEERING WARBLES REPLY)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: What do you mean the structural integrity of that chute is compromised?

HISTORIAN: I'm about to die in an elevator, aren't I?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: You are NOT dying in my elevator! Not aboard this ship! Engineering could you please send someone- ...down here...

(THE CREAKING TAKES A TURN FOR THE WORSE AND SUDDENLY STOPS WITH A LARGE LATCH NOISE)

HISTORIAN: That's a good sound, right?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: That sounded like the elevator chute was just decoupled from the ship's exterior.

(MUTED SCI-FI ENGINE NOISES)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: And that sounded like the Marigold picking up speed!

HISTORIAN: Are you telling me we're floating in an untethered elevator car in the middle of space while our ship flies away?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: I believe that's exactly what I'm saying.

HISTORIAN: Great. I don't believe it. We're going to die in this elevator.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: Yeah, seems so.