

JUNO STEEL AND THE PROMISED LAND (PART THREE)

Trigger Warnings

SOUND: RAIN. TRAIN IN MOVEMENT. TRAIN STOPS. TRAIN DOOR OPENING.

CONDUCTOR:

Ah, good evening, Traveler, and welcome to the Penumbra.
Take your seat, please, take your seat.

SOUND: TRAIN DOOR CLOSING.

MUSIC: STARTS.

The junction lies just ahead, Traveler. If you'll allow me
just a moment.

SOUND: TRAIN WHISTLES.

(LAUGHS)

Well, next stop... I suppose that is the question, isn't
it?

SOUND: TRAIN IN MOVEMENT.

Given the choice, dear Traveler, where would you go? Above
stands a metropolis of corruption, below a promise of
paradise. Above lies a place wracked by spasms of change,
and below there is silence and stillness. So if given the
choice, dear Traveler, where would you go? Above into
Hyperion City, or below to the Free Dome?

SOUND: TRAIN STOPS.

Our next stop:

SOUND: TRAIN DOOR OPENING. RAIN.

Juno Steel and the Promised Land.

SOUND: THUNDER, RAIN FADES.

MUSIC: ENDS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Lightheaded and punch-drunk, with a gun in my back and some
bad, ugh, bad, really just terrible awful breath on my

neck...

PIRANHA:

Why don't you step a little faster, PI? Somethin' gives me the impression we're... runnin' out of time, see?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

... it's honestly hard not to wonder how the hell I got here. And I don't even mean in this stupid tunnel leading to the Free Dome, I mean... in general.

It's just a hell of a time to decide you're too pissed to die. Right before you're probably gonna, uh. Die.

And I've got a lot of excuses, sure. My mother, my brother, all that junk that happened in the HCPD with Diamond and Captain Hijikata... but if I'm being honest with myself I've always been this way. From minute one.

My name's Juno Steel. I'm a Private Eye. And, y'know... I got in my first fight when I was three years old?

It was with my brother. Benzaiten Steel. Benten for short. Ben if you're in trouble and you need to get away quick.

I don't remember what it was about, even - which is I guess how things go with old, pointless arguments like this. A toy, or something... it was before Andromeda so it was probably one of the Turbos. Anyway: I socked him right in the eye. He teared up and, and looked at me, at the face so like his and so different, and he... socked me right back in the same eye.

(SNORT)

Ben would never start anything like that. He was too happy. But he'd defend himself if I got out of line. Plus things always had to be fair with him, equal, balanced. An eye for an eye, I guess.

Mom must've pulled us apart soon after. Even in her good days she wouldn't have been close enough to stop it before it started, but... she would've cared.

MUSIC: STARTS.

____ (PAUSE)

I might not remember the fight very well, but... I remember Mom pulling us apart. Taking a few hits herself. I, I remember her shaking us until we stopped fighting and started crying, and I remember her forcing us to look at one another, and I remember her shouting. She sounded scared. I didn't like that.

SARAH STEEL:

Stop it. Damn it, I told you two to stop it! Just... Knock it off. You little morons. You want to get flattened, you go lie down in the road. You don't do it to each other.

Oh, God damn it, don't cry, not now, don't...

(GROANS, DEEP BREATH)

Okay, okay. Benten. Juno. You can't do this. You can't fight. People... they're nasty. They'll chew you up and spit you out, if you aren't-- Don't cry! That's just the truth! Live with it!

(PAUSE)

Listen. If you want to live out there... you need someone to live *for*. You need someone else so that when you're not tough enough, they can be; so that right when you want to give up, you remember you can't, because you've got someone better than you to worry about.

And that's what you are to me. I love you, my little monsters.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Did she see what was on the horizon, even then? See what person she was going to become?

MUSIC: ENDS.

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I hope so. God damn it, I hope so, and I hope she hated every second of it.

But... she might've been right. How would I know? I've been

chewing through people to fight for my whole life... Ma, Ben, Diamond... Nureyev.

You burn through that many people and it gets harder and harder to fight off the idea that maybe they aren't the reason you keep running out of people to fight for. Maybe it's you. Maybe it's me.

Because... it's always been about me, hasn't it? Every case, every good deed... they've just been so I'd feel better. Just fighting for myself.

(PAUSE)
Maybe it's me.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

PILOT:
Hey, Deep Space Cadet. I'm talking to you.

SOUND: BACKGROUND AMBIENCE OF THE DOMER BASE.

JUNO:
Huh?

PILOT:
Isn't anyone paying attention? I'm holding the most important find of the last two hundred years in *my* hands, and she's on her radio, you're in la-la land, and your friend is just... staring at me.

STRONG:
Pretty sure that counts as paying attention.

PILOT:
Well, stop it.

STRONG:
Then what do you—

PILOT:
Not that it matters. With a Dome in my hands, I can't be touched. Not by radiation, by the elements... by anything.
(CHUCKLE)
And I gotta tell you, pals, that's a hell of a feeling.

Just imagine me riding in like this when I win the election! A force of nature! Invincible!
(BIG LAUGH)

MUSIC: ENDS.

JUNO:
You're awful confident, given that we haven't even seen that Dome, uh, do anything yet.

PILOT:
Oh, I'm not worried about *that*, buddy. It's just like Marshal D'Arc said: you've got to have Faith.

STRONG:
"Testing Chamber 2... The Test of Faith."

PILOT:
Just like that.
(CHUCKLE)

JUNO (NARRATOR):
Let me tell you, my faith was tested long before we ever stepped through that stupid door.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
How could it not be? I'd had a gun pointed at me for three days straight, my blood had just been sucked out and shot back in at record speed, and then... there was Pilot.

I hated to admit it but there was something almost divine about them, holding that Dome. The sky projecting from that orb like they were shooting it from their hands; the bubble of plasma surrounding them; the strange light adding an unearthly, shifting sheen to their shiny lips, their contoured cheeks. Whether or not they were invincible, they definitely looked it.

The testing room was... less impressive. It looked like somebody had left a football field and a chessboard alone with a bottle of liquor and waited for some mistakes to happen: a huge grid of tiles, so many it made my head hurt looking at the endless lines of them ahead.

SOUND: INTERCOM SQUAWK AND STATIC.

STRONG:

Oh, goody. There he is again.

MARSHALL D'ARC:

(FROM THIRD SET OF RECORDINGS. EATING.)

Hi, hey. It's, uh, Marshall. D'Arc?

(MUTTERS)

Who else would it be?

Whatever. All right, so, where the hell are you all? What was the last one...?

(PAUSE)

I said I'd give you *what*? The Dome sample? Are you kidding, D'Arc...?

STRONG:

Does this feel... really weird to anybody else?

JUNO:

Yeah, but they all have.

PILOT:

It's a distraction. Part of the test. Obviously.

MARSHALL D'ARC:

Whatever. Whatever! You've got it now, I guess. So, uh... Test of Faith. Something to do with the Dome sample, let's see, let's see, let's see... Recording's ticking down, audio files you can't write over... Jesus, Ma, what a joke...

All right, fine. Test of Faith. You've got to do whatever I say exactly, right? That's how you prove you can be faithful. That you're gonna listen when I tell you to do something. That you're not just gonna run out. *Malvin*.

So here's what I want you to do: walk straight.

That's it! Easy, right? Just hold the Dome and walk straight. No matter what. You hear me? No matter what.

And if you know what's good for you, you'll listen.

(PAUSE)

Uh, Marshall out.

SOUND: STATIC AND INTERCOM SQUAWK.

PILOT:

(CHUCKLE)

Genius. It's completely genius.

JUNO:

It is?

PILOT:

In order to demand Faith, you have to create a lack of it. So far D'Arc has been correct at every turn; if he just gave us direct orders we'd have no reason to distrust him. So he makes himself sound unreliable. Genius.

STRONG:

That... seems like kind of a leap, Mx. Pereyra. That's really enough to get you to walk across there?

PILOT:

If you want to be successful only two things matter in this galaxy: luck, and who you know. I've got some of the former. And as for the latter... I have you. You're coming with me.

JUNO:

Oh, hell no. If you want one of us, Pilot, you take me. You might need her later.

STRONG:

Juno...

PILOT:

Need her for what? This is the last test. You've had your insides handled just as roughly as I have, PI. You can barely stand up. I wouldn't take you down the street.

JUNO:

But--!

STRONG:

Stop it. I'm going.

JUNO:

Alessandra—

STRONG:

I'm the survival specialist. That's why I'm here, isn't it? Rely on me. Stop trying to do it all alone, and stick to where your edge is.

My edge is out there. You do see yours. Don't you?

PIRANHA:

She means your eye.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I turned around and saw the Piranha staring at me, running the tip of her tongue on her thin, scarred lips. I hadn't even thought she could hear us.

The thought of using the Theia... scared me, to be honest. With every update the Theia Spectrum could do more and more, make me see better and shoot faster and detect harder. Barely twenty minutes ago it had solved the Test of Charity for me, saved my life, probably. But it did that by walking up to my body's steering-wheel and shoving me out of the way.

I didn't want to do that again. Not if I could help it.

STRONG:

She's right, Juno.

JUNO:

But—

PILOT:

Then there you go. Plan settled. He takes a comms, she takes a comms, and he gives her directions as we walk.

Now let's move.

STRONG:

Juno...

JUNO:

Yeah, yeah, I'm on it.

PIRANHA:

That's a good PI. Just call em up and let em know if there's anything they oughta look out for, and I'll let you know if you've stepped out of line, see?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Pilot squeezed on the orb in their hand and the Dome disappeared for a moment. Alessandra stepped close to them, they squeezed again... and both of them were swallowed by that glowing bubble of light.

SOUND: HEAVY SOUND OF DOME AROUND THEM, THEN AMBIENT DOME WHIRRING.

PILOT:

Remember. Perfectly straight.

STRONG:

You said it two seconds ago. I've got it, thanks.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

They took a few tentative steps out. Then the tiles next to them flipped over... and we got a good look at what lay underneath the floor.

I could've seen it before they stepped on it. But, uh...
I... didn't?

SOUND: ELECTRONIC BUZZ.

THEIA:

Error: cannot access scanning protocol without user permissions.

SOUND: FAST MECHANICAL MOTORS. COMMS BEEP.

JUNO:

(INTO THE COMMS)
Strong, look out!

STRONG:
 (OVER COMMS)
 Whoa!

PILOT:
 (OVER COMMS)
 Stay still!

JUNO:
 Alessandra!

SOUND: AN EXPLOSION. RUBBLE FALLING.

Alessandra! No, damn it, damn it...

STRONG:
 (PAUSE. THEN, OVER COMMS)
 Holy... what...?

PIRANHA:
 Not bad.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
 The dust settled... and they were still there.

The floor was torn open and there were scorch marks as high up as the ceiling, but the Dome was still standing - with Pilot and Strong inside it. Untouched.

PILOT:
 (THROUGH COMMS)
 See? You've just got to have a little faith.
 (CHUCKLE)
 Now keep walking.

SOUND: A SERIES OF DANGEROUS SOUNDS COMING FROM THE TRAPS:
EXPLOSIONS, MACHINE GUNS, ROCKETS, BEEPING, DARTS, MORE
EXPLOSIONS.

STRONG:
 (SHOUTING OVER THE NOISE)
 Steel? Do you see anything?

JUNO:

(SHOUTING OVER THE NOISE)

Uh, you mean besides the ten tons of munitions firing off every second? Nope, but pretty much looks like your Dome's got that handled!

PIRANHA:

They might be good now, PI, but ain't you risking a lot, not even bothering with a scan?

JUNO:

Okay, knock it off.

PIRANHA:

(CHUCKLE)

JUNO:

How'd you know that? Why do you keep bugging me about my eye?

SOUND: DANGEROUS NOISES CONTINUE, INCLUDING LOTS OF SHOOTING AND EXPLOSIONS.

PIRANHA:

Wowie, you're paranoid, ain'tcha? That underground radiation seeping through your skull already? Makin' you go a little bonkers, huh? Be careful, or you might start seein' things - like dragons that ain't real. Fire that ain't there.

JUNO:

The hell did you just--!

SOUND: FIZZLING NOISE FROM THE DOME. GUNSHOTS AND ROCKETS FROM TRAPS.

Hang on.

SOUND: COMMS BEEP.

Alessandra! Did you just see that flickering?

STRONG:

(THROUGH COMMS)

The what?

SOUND: ROCKET, LOUD EXPLOSION.

PILOT:

(THROUGH COMMS)

Keep moving forward. No matter what.

JUNO:

There's no way that's good.

PIRANHA:

No, PI. No, I don't think it is.

SOUND: LOUDER PLASMA FLICKERING FROM DOME.

STRONG:

Mx. Pereyra... it looks like there's something wrong with the-

SOUND: LASER GUN SHOT.

STRONG:

Whoa!

PIRANHA:

Ooh boy, and that one almost takes her head! So close!

STRONG:

Mx. Pereyra...

PILOT:

An illusion. Keep walking. Have fai-

SOUND: LASER GUN SHOT.

(HISS OF PAIN)

PIRANHA:

Right in the thigh! Smell that sizzle!

STRONG:

Pilot, the Dome's not looking so hot!

SOUND: JACKHAMMER.

PILOT:

Because I looked away to talk to you.

STRONG:

These are a lot of becauses stretched about as far as they'll go, and it's getting harder and harder to buy them.

PILOT:

(PAINED)

That's why it's a test.

SOUND: THE NOISES IN THE ROOM WIND DOWN.

See? And just like that. Rewarded for our efforts.

STRONG:

I'm... not sure about that. The intercom... there's no recording from D'Arc yet.

SOUND: MUFFLED BANG.

STRONG AND PILOT:

(SURPRISED YELPS)

PIRANHA:

Oooh!!!

JUNO:

The hell is that? It's coming up from the floor...?

SOUND: RUMBLING.

STRONG:

(THROUGH COMMS)

You don't know? Aren't you supposed to be scanning for it?

JUNO:

Uh... yeah. I mean, the hell is that! That's what it is. A hell. By which I mean, uh...

SOUND: CLUNK.

Oh, it's just a chain link fence. That's not so bad.

SOUND: PLASMA BLADE NOISES.

... until it turns its lasers on. Then it's... wow, yeah, that-- yeah, wow, REALLY that's, ah--

SOUND: DOME PLASMA SOUND.

Also now your Dome is gone!

STRONG:

Really? What setting do you have that eye on, Steel?
"Obvious threats?"

THEIA:

Would you like me to engage sensors for. "Obvious threats?"

SOUND: WHEELS TURNING, PLASMA BLADES HUMMING.

A free trial sample: the laser-wall. Is now moving. Towards the two targets.

JUNO:

Alessandra! The laser-wall is moving towards--

STRONG:

I swear to god, Steel, if you finish that sentence I'm gonna beat you over the head with that stupid eye!

JUNO:

What else do you want me to do?

STRONG:

How about you stop throwing me scraps and tell me what the hell I'm supposed to do, here!

PILOT:

Keep walking, PI. You gotta visualize. You gotta believe.

STRONG:

Steel!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I didn't know what to do. I could still remember the feeling of the Theia grabbing hold of my muscles and not letting go.

THEIA:

Would you like to perform. An electronic scan. For incendiaries, explosives, biochemicals. And other traps?

JUNO:
Shut up.

THEIA:
Command not recognized.

JUNO:
I said shut up!

PIRANHA:
How come you don't shut up? Some of us are trying to enjoy the show.

SOUND: COMMS BEEP.

STRONG:
Steel! A little help out here! The lasers are getting closer!

THEIA:
My assistance cannot be activated without user permissions.

JUNO:
Good. That's definitely how it should be.

THEIA:
Assessment: the room is heavily booby-trapped. Projection: if you do not perform a scan. They will die.

JUNO:
I didn't ask.

THEIA:
They will die. And it will be. Your fault. And we will never. Let you. Forget it.

JUNO:
Wh... what the hell?

SOUND: COMMS BEEP.

STRONG:

Juno!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I looked up. The laser wall was accelerating. It would be on top of them in seconds.

Even when Juno Steel gets his mess together he still leaves a trail of bodies behind him, I thought. Even with two lives on the line he's still just fighting for himself.

I said it without thinking.

JUNO:

Theia, activate scan.

SOUND: THEIA TECHY NOISES.

THEIA:

Scan complete.

JUNO:

Alessandra! There's an open tile two to your left! Go!

STRONG:

Got it!

PILOT:

H-hey, let go of me, you...

STRONG:

Come on, Pilot!

PILOT:

No!

SOUND: LASER WALL PASSES, FOLLOWED BY SOUND OF FLAMES.

PIRANHA:

(CACKLING)

Y'know, this might've been worth the three days sealed up with you idiots!

JUNO:

You're not going to be safe there for long. Go two tiles forward, one tile left.

STRONG:

There are laser turrets—

JUNO:

Just trust me, okay? Quickly!

PILOT:

You're going to get us killed! We just had to keep walking!
We just had to have--

SOUND: LASER TURRETS CHARGING UP, PILOT YELLING.

STRONG:

And... one to the left. Juno, those turrets still look—

JUNO:

Swinging crusher plate on your six! Duck!

STRONG:

Whoa!

PILOT:

(YELP)

SOUND: EXPLOSION, SMASHING.

STRONG:

... destroyed! Okay, those turrets look completely
demolished. So that's good.

JUNO:

Don't get too comfortable.

THEIA:

Caution: high-impact plasma cannons detected. Active in
fifteen seconds.

JUNO:

You've got just over ten seconds to jump the three tiles in
front of you, make a break for the other side of the room,
and duck on the last tile! It's a straight shot!

PILOT:

Jump? I can't jump wearing these. Do you know how expensive

these shoes are?

STRONG:

How the hell did you survive politics, Pilot? Hell, how did you survive *middle school*?

THEIA:

Cannons preparing to fire.

JUNO:

Now, Alessandra!

STRONG:

Just jump it, already!
(GRUNTS)

PILOT:

(CRIES OUT)

JUNO (NARRATOR):

It was a big push, and a big jump. Almost enough to make it the three feet Pilot needed to.

Almost.

SOUND: LASER SHOOTING, EXPLOSIONS. STRONG AND PILOT HITTING THE GROUND.

PILOT:

(PANTING)

SOUND: DRILL. PILOT SHOUTING IN PAIN.

My heel!

STRONG:

Are you really still whining about your stupid shoes?

PIRANHA:

They don't mean that heel, see? They mean somethin'... a little closer to home.

PILOT:

Oh, it hurts, it hurts, it hurts!

STRONG:

Oh... Oh, wow, yeah, that's... pretty bad.

JUNO:

There's no time, Alessandra! The cannons! Run!

PILOT:

Run?! How am I supposed to—

STRONG:

It's either run or die, Mayor Pereyra, and I'm only letting you do one of those. Now lean on my shoulder and let's move!

PILOT:

Owww!!

SOUND: SHOOTING NOISES. STRONG AND PILOT PANTING AS THEY RUN, PILOT MAKING PAINED SOUNDS.

PIRANHA:

So close! Just a little slower and maybe we'll get to see a real show!

(CACKLE)

STRONG:

We're almost there! Duck the last tile, right?

JUNO:

You got it.

STRONG:

Under what?

JUNO:

Honestly, it's probably better if you don't know.

STRONG:

Steel--!

JUNO:

Now!

STRONG AND PILOT:

(GRUNT)

SOUND: HORRIBLE, NIGHTMARISH, ROARING MECHANICAL SOUND.
WHOOSHES, THEN FADES.

PILOT:

(PAINED NOISES)

STRONG:

(PANTING)

Yeah, you know what? That's... the one time I'm gonna agree with you that it's better I didn't know.

JUNO:

See? I know what I'm talking about. Sometimes.

STRONG:

(INTERRUPTED)

Thanks—

JUNO:

Not often, so I want to take credit when I do. Obviously.

STRONG:

Thanks, Steel.

PIRANHA:

You two wanna stop kissing over the damn comms and deactivate this deathtrap? If I'm not gonna get any fun out of this I'd at least like to keep moving, see?

PILOT:

Agreed. Deactivate this and then deal with my foot. Now.

STRONG:

Fine.

SOUND: STRONG'S FOOTSTEPS.

PIRANHA:

Let's get moving while the intercom blabs. Nice job, PI.

JUNO:

(GRUNT)

SOUND: INTERCOM SQUAWK AND STATIC.

MARSHALL:

(THIRD RECORDING. EATING.)

Hey, you listened.

SOUND: DEATHTRAP SHUTDOWN NOISES.

Nice work. If you're alive. Which you probably aren't.
Because you probably didn't listen. Nobody does. Why would
you? Why would anybody?

(LAUGH)

Talking to a bunch of dead bodies. This is a new low,
Marsh. A new low.

Unless... I mean, hey, it's possible. You could be there.
And if you are...

(LITTLE LAUGH)

It worked. I got the best.

(LAUGH GETS LOUDER)

Erin, you old idiot. I knew it would work. I knew it! It's
gonna be amazing, and we're gonna keep it that way because
we only let in the ones who deserve it! You can't make
everyone happy, Ma! That's why you could never make anyone
anything!

(KEEPS LAUGHING)

All right, winner's circle. Come on through. We'll make
this last test an easy one, then... home.

Welcome to the Free Dome. Marshall... out!

SOUND: STATIC AND INTERCOM.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

And somehow, I knew then that was the last time we were
going to hear from Marshall D'Arc.

(PAUSE)

I was less sure than ever of what we'd find, where the Free
Dome was supposed to be. I was less sure than ever that I
cared. I was just tired. Tired of the victims. Tired of
people getting duped, then dead.

I just wanted it to be over. I just wanted it to be over.

SOUND: JUNO'S FOOTSTEPS.

STRONG:

Thanks. Hold their leg up. They're bleeding too much for me to clean out the wound.

JUNO:

Egh. Got it.

PILOT:

(PANTING, PAINED)

This... this is all your fault.

JUNO:

How the hell do you figure? She's the only reason you aren't dead, you—

STRONG:

Just let them babble, Juno. Missing that much blood I'd be surprised if they can even hear you.

SOUND: SHE STARTS BANDAGING THEM.

PILOT:

The Dome would've protected us... D'Arc said the Dome would protect us...

JUNO:

Your stupid Dome didn't work, Pilot. It fell apart on you. It's broken.

PILOT:

Didn't work? You mean this?

SOUND: DOME TURNS BACK ON.

JUNO:

The hell?

STRONG:

It's on again...? But, then... why did it shut down on

us...?

PILOT:

Because we were supposed to just *listen*. And you had to ask questions.

SOUND: DOME TURNS OFF.

And I should shoot you for that right here and now.

SOUND: GUN CLICK.

JUNO:

Damn it, you're kidding me. You didn't take their gun?

STRONG:

I saw them drop it... Damn it, that's my gun. They took my gun three days ago.

PILOT:

Damn right I did. Now keep bandaging.

SOUND: SHE CONTINUES BANDAGING.

Too dizzy to hear you, heh. Counting Pilot Pereyra out for the count. You and everyone else. Always. But you know what? I got faith.

STRONG:

Hey, uh, you want to help us handle your boss over here?

PIRANHA:

Sorry, Big Eyes, but I'm a little busy—

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

Whoa!

PILOT:

Shut up. I'm trying to talk.

She doesn't work for me. Maybe she did, but after this? No. Hell no.

PIRANHA:

You tryin' to skip out on the bill, Pereyra?

PILOT:

Oh, the *bill*. I'll pay your stupid bill just to get you away from me. You've got nothing but what you've got right now, this second, and that's barely anything, pal. I got the whole future!

(LAUGH)

That was always the secret to my success, y'know. Numbskulls like O'Flaherty promise they'll bring the future to you, but me... I always knew I'd only ever be able to get it for myself. Just watch me! One month and I'll be out of that public dump of a city and I'll have the whole future! Whatever future I want!

JUNO:

Wait, hang on—

PIRANHA:

Shut them up.

JUNO:

Not in Hyperion City? But if you're just gonna leave—

PIRANHA:

Shut up.

STRONG:

... why would you be starting a whole real-estate operation now?

PILOT:

I run way too many deals to know what the hell you're talking—

PIRANHA:

I said shut up!

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

I've had a long couple of days. Hell, I've had a long couple of months. I'm ready to get paid and go home, and we gotta get back and move on with our lives before the vice-Mayor declares you dead. So let's. Go.

PILOT:

Good idea.

(BEAT)

I'm not done using you two yet. But as soon as we get to the Free Dome...

(GUNSHOT NOISE. THEN A LAUGH)

JUNO (NARRATOR):

And so we kept walking.

The final room was big enough for another Test... but there wasn't anything there. Not even a real message from Marshall. Just this:

SOUND: INTERCOM. STATIC.

MARSHALL D'ARC:

Placeholder audio... test, test... testing rewriteable audio- Oh god dammit, not again-

SOUND: INTERCOM AND STATIC OFF.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

And that was the last we heard from him.

Then we made it outside to the underground again - the dirt and stone, the irradiated, half-melted light fixtures. The tunnel sloped upwards, and in the distance, if I squinted, I thought I could see...

PILOT:

A door. We're here. Go, go, quickly. Now.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

So we kept walking.

SOUND: FUZZY INTERCOM.

PILOT:

You see? This is our grand welcome.

DOMER 3:

Please... please, go away. Go home! This is your last chance!

STRONG:

It's that voice again. From the very beginning.

DOMER 3:

I'm sorry, I've been trying to get in the audio but Grandma's system was too complex, and Dad... it doesn't matter. There's nothing here. Please. I've been trying to tell you, there's nothing here!

This is the only message she left rewriteable... probably so the Domers could keep subbing out the welcome message, over and over again, forever. You've got to know that, about Erin Marshall D'Arc: she wasn't a bad person. She wanted this to last forever.

Dad was a good guy, too. I mean... well, no he wasn't. But if you heard this every day and you saw what he saw...

SOUND: DOMER JINGLE.

Just, please, don't listen to her! Go back!

ERIN D'ARC:

My new neighbors. Congratulations. After such a long, long journey, you've finally made it home.

PILOT:

We're almost there. Keep going!

ERIN D'ARC:

In the Free Dome, we believe in one thing above all else: that if you're going to believe in anything, you have to believe in people.

They've made mistakes in the past. They set up planets and cities and a galaxy that can't be fixed, and that is a shame. But people, young and old, all have one thing in common: the present.

And you have to believe that, given a chance? People will use today to make a better tomorrow. If you give them a fair chance, an honest chance... people will make a home worth living in.

You have to believe that. I believe that.

So open the door, neighbors. And welcome home.

SOUND: GUN CLICK.

PILOT:

You heard Ms. D'Arc. Open it. And the second you get a look at paradise... you die.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I felt Pilot's pistol press against the back of my head. I felt Alessandra hold her breath beside me.

PILOT:

Open it.

JUNO:

Hey, uh, come on, now, don't we get any last words or anything?

STRONG:

I've got some.

PILOT:

Make them quick, then.

STRONG:

Juno, when I saw you before we went down into the stupid subway, I thought you were exactly the same mess of a PI I met months ago. And I was wrong. You were a bigger mess.

JUNO:

Cool, cool, good to know I get to end this whole life thing on an up note.

STRONG:

And you know what? That felt like a real shame. Because when we first met, you really swept me off my feet.

(PAUSE)

Do you get what I mean?

JUNO:

Yeah, I'm a real heartthrob or whatever. This is seriously how you want to go out?

STRONG:
Steel...

PILOT:
That's enough. Open the door.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
And I could only hope I understood what Strong was saying.
So I reached forward, pressed a button... and opened the door.

SOUND: BEEPING, DOOR OPENS.

PILOT:
Keep those eyes wide open, now. I want to hear what you think of it.

ERIN D'ARC:
You'll see the road, first. Concrete, like old roads on Earth. Trees in the parks, trees out in the desert, can you believe it! And you'll hear music, bells from the schools, and you'll smell the fresh-baked breads, because here we have time for things other than weapons, here we have time for music, for baking, for art, for life.

JUNO (NARRATOR):
Finally, the doors were open enough to see a sliver of light.

And then, when Pilot was distracted by whatever was on the other side of that door? That's when I swept them off their feet.

SOUND: JUNO KICKS OUT PILOT'S FEET, PILOT GRUNTS.

JUNO:
Got them down. Alessandra!

STRONG:
Got their gun!
And if you move I shoot, got it?

PIRANHA:
Uh, yeah, whatever. Just try to keep it down, see?

ERIN D'ARC:

And protecting you from above-

PILOT:

No...

ERIN D'ARC:

-my creation, the invention that makes our liberty possible... the Dome! The Free Dome!

PILOT:

No... no, no, no, no, no...

JUNO:

That's right, Pilot. The game's up.

PILOT:

No, no... Where is it? Where is it?!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I followed Pilot's gaze, but I knew what I was going to see before I ever saw it.

ERIN D'ARC:

This is the Free Dome, neighbors. Now let us give you a great big "Welcome Home!" Three... two... one...!

SOUND: SILENCE. WIND WHISTLING. DUST BLOWING.

STRONG:

Come on, ma'am. Put the gun down. I don't want to hurt you or your boss, here.

PIRANHA:

Gimme a second.

JUNO:

She said put the gun down, you-

PIRANHA:

Yeah, hey, and you know what? I might. Just do me a favor and stay quiet a little longer, see? I'm tryin' to catch the end of the big game.

JUNO (NARRATOR) :

You don't take a shot in a standoff unless you have to... so we didn't. I kept my gun aimed at the Piranha, and she kept hers at Strong.

A sandstorm was growing in the distance, red and writhing. And as the wind began to howl, the intercom coughed to life one last time.

SOUND: INTERCOM.

DOMER 3:

God, I'm sorry, I'm so, so...

I promise, if there was ever a way to get this recording in earlier, I would've done it. I tried so hard to warn you, or to deactivate the pod or the tests, but... I just had to leave. You don't know what it was like, you don't know what it was like...

I don't know how it happened. The underground radiation, maybe, making them see things, or... maybe they just wanted to see it. I never met her, but Dad... Dad wasn't good before the radiation either.

You don't care. Why would you care? It doesn't matter. Not anymore.

I wish they'd made it. I wish it was possible.

MUSIC: STARTS.

DOMER 3:

Erin, I think she really thought, that even if she couldn't do it... maybe Dad could. She believed in him so much. And when he realized he couldn't make it work, he just...

(PAUSE)

It was bad. He was... bad.

This is the only spot where I could find a foothold in Erin's security protocols. The only spot she wanted rewriteable, so we could keep welcoming people forever... So I'm gonna rewrite it.

To make sure this never happens to anyone else I've added a protocol here to shut everything down. The tests, the messages, the Dome sample, everything. This big door is going to close automatically in two minutes and this whole place is gonna shut down, and go away, and it and its stupid promise can never hurt anyone again.

I hope nobody ever hears this. If I could have anything... it'd be that.

But if you are... please go home. Please. Because home's not here. And it never was.

MUSIC: ENDS.

SOUND: WIND.

PILOT:

No... that can't be real, it can't be...

That's it. It can't be real. A test. Marshall said there would be three tests, and this, this is just the third test, isn't it? The Dome is still out there. It has to be out there!

STRONG:

Mx. Pereyra...

JUNO:

Egh. Look, Piranha-face, are you gonna give up or what?

PIRANHA:

Shh!!

Hold on, hold on... Aaaaand... that's the score.

All right, yep, I give in. Let's go back now.

PILOT:

You *what*?

PIRANHA:

You want them to shoot you? Yeah, wowee, gosh darn, we sure did lose this one really bad, see? Sounds like it's time to go home.

PILOT:

A test... it's just a...

Fine. I'll come... quietly.

JUNO:

You sure?

PILOT:

Absolutely. Just let me up. I can barely breathe.

STRONG:

I'll make sure she doesn't do anything tricky. Go for it, Steel.

SOUND: JUNO AND PILOT GET UP.

JUNO:

All right, Pilot, lift up your arms so I can check your pock-

SOUND: PILOT PUNCHES JUNO IN THE GUT AND STARTS HOBBLE-RUNNING, MAKING PAINED NOISES.

STRONG:

Steel!

PIRANHA:

You idiot, you're letting them get away! Didn't you hear? That door's gonna close in two minutes!

JUNO:

(WINDED)

I didn't know they had that in them... they looked like they could barely stand up... Pilot, get back here!

SOUND: JUNO RUNS.

PILOT:

I'm so close! I know it!

PIRANHA:

You get back here, you idiot! Didn't you hear D'Arc? If this thing seals with you outside it, you're stuck in the desert! And with that sandstorm brewing, nobody's gonna be

able to find you until you're half past *dead*!

STRONG:

Stop trying to stall. Drop your gun, gangster.

JUNO:

Pilot! Stop!

PIRANHA:

Oh, for God's sake, that's enough!

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

STRONG:

(CRY OF PAIN)

JUNO:

Alessandra...?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I was almost there. They were already injured. I would've grabbed their shoulder in two seconds.

Then... the laser shot.

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

PILOT:

(CRY OF PAIN)

SOUND: PILOT HITS THE SAND.

It came up behind me, winged past my ear... and hit Pilot right in the back.

They hit the sand like a sack of bones and rolled, slowly, to a stop.

PILOT:

(PAINED MOANS)

STRONG:

(CRIES OF PAIN)

Agh, my hand, my hand!

PIRANHA:

What are you crying about? That was just a stun blast, shouldn't've done any more than tickled your fingers, see...

Wuh-oh. Looks like I forgot to... put it on stun.

(SIGH)

You ever have one of those days where it just seems like you can't catch a break, Big-Eyes?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I couldn't understand anything I was seeing. Pilot, sobbing as they bled. The sandstorm growing in the distance.

Behind me the Piranha's gun was still smoking. Strong's gun was across the room. It and her hand were sizzling.

STRONG:

How are you complaining about this? You shot off two of my fingers!

PIRANHA:

Oh, whatever. I'll buy you new ones.

STRONG:

What?

PIRANHA:

Just stay put for two seconds, all right?

And that goes double for you, PI! I better not see you move unless it's towards me!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

She stomped in my direction. Her gun wasn't even raised.

When Pilot grabbed the end of my pant leg I almost jumped out of my skin. They were sand-caked, already looked sunburned, eyes wild.

PILOT:

Where is it, PI? I know it's out here. Just tell me and I'll give you anything you want, buddy, anything-

JUNO:

Pilot...

PILOT:

Don't lie to me! I know it's out here! I've been looking for this too long, I know it, I believed...!

SOUND: GUNSHOT, CRY, CRUNCH. PILOT HITS THE SAND. WIND WHISTLING.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Pilot Pereyra was still, their red blood pouring out onto the red sands of paradise.

They'd always had a fire in them, Pilot. They threw everything they could into it, time and money and people, all in the hopes that it would bring them here, to the Free Dome. And so maybe it was fitting that when they found out there was nothing here they threw in the last thing they had: themselves.

PIRANHA:

Holy hell, what a day. Look, if anybody asks what happened to them, we leave this little stun-blaster mixup out of it, okay? One of the traps did it, or whatever.

JUNO:

You... you killed them.

PIRANHA:

Yeah, sure, this one's on me. Fine.

JUNO:

But... why...?

(PAUSE)

Who are you?

PIRANHA:

Eh, nobody special. I like it better that way.

SOUND: BEEPING, DOOR STARTS TO CLOSE.

Damn it, the door! Hey, I'd really love to have a good long pow-wow about this underneath the blistering, radioactive sun, but we're kinda out of time, so what d'you say you and

me talk about this back in the tunnel?

JUNO (NARRATOR):

She reached out to grab me, but those hands...

I thought I had it all figured out. Pilot, sabotaging Ramses, kicking people out of their homes... it felt like if I had one more piece, the whole puzzle would make sense. And out here, in the Free Dome, this was supposed to be where I found it.

I thought it would all be worth it. The Proctor, Swift, Pollock, even that stupid cat, I thought they'd all be worth it so long as I took down Pilot Pereyra.

Now I had. And I still didn't know a goddamn thing.

The Piranha's claw came closer... but I couldn't let her touch me.

SOUND: THEIA BEEP.

THEIA:

Command received. Amplifying reaction
time-time-time-time-time-time-time-

JUNO:

What the-

SOUND: THEIA ERROR NOISE.

THEIA:

ERROR ERROR ERROR ERROR

JUNO:

(SCREAM OF PAIN)

SOUND: THEIA ERROR MESSAGE REPEATING IN BACKGROUND, BAD ELECTRONIC BUZZING.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

That pain again. It came from my eye but that wasn't where I felt it: it grabbed me everywhere, spreading from my spine like a crack in ice, growing, growing, ready to shatter. I couldn't move. I couldn't think.

PIRANHA:

Now that's more like it. Didn't even have to pull the trigger.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

She grabbed my elbow. And even if I couldn't think, I still wouldn't let her touch me.

So I did what I've done in place of thinking since I was three years old.

SOUND: JUNO PUNCHES.

PIRANHA:

Oof-! My gun!

SOUND: JUNO TACKLES THE PIRANHA, THEY WRESTLE, GRUNTING IN THE SAND.

PIRANHA:

Get offa me! We're gonna roast out here, you moron!

JUNO:

Tell me how you keep doing this.

PIRANHA:

Doing what?

JUNO:

My eye! Every time I try to get you, my eye-

SOUND: ERROR NOISE, JUNO SCREAMS IN PAIN.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

Another bolt through the spine. The Piranha pushed me off her and gave me a kick in the ribs for good measure.

PIRANHA:

Fine. Die with Pereyra if you want. I'm not letting some one-eyed idiot kill me!

SOUND: SHE STARTS RUNNING. HAPPY BEEP.

THEIA:

The Theia Spectrum is now online.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I sat up. The door was almost closed. The Piranha was almost there. But she wasn't going to make it.

Through the crack still open, I saw Alessandra Strong. "Cockroach Strong," they called her, because she couldn't be killed - and she wasn't about to be now.

It was the right choice. I wish I had the guts to make it.

STRONG:

Juno, you moron! Dying's easy! You have to-

SOUND: THE DOOR SEALS SHUT.

PIRANHA:

No! No, no, god damn it, no!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

The Piranha's gun was in the sand just a few feet away. I started crawling.

SOUND: JUNO CRAWLING THROUGH SAND.

PIRANHA:

You're meat, PI! I'm gonna rip you to pieces, see?

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I shouldn't have risked using the Theia again, but... the first time we tangled, the Piranha had gotten away from me because I missed the shot. I wasn't going to miss this time. I wasn't.

I braced myself for the pain. The Good Guys always win, I thought. The Good Guys always win.

THEIA:

Command received. Activating aim assissssssszzzzzztttttt

SOUND: ERROR NOISE, BAD BUZZING.

THEIA:
ERROR ERROR ERROR

JUNO:
(SCREAM OF PAIN)

SARAH STEEL:
Little MONSTERS

PIRANHA:
You messed with the wrong hitman, PI! Without that eye
you're nothing, see? Nothing!

SOUND: LASER GUN SHOT.

Oh, give it up! Every goddamn shot you take is a bone I'm
gonna break, I swear!

JUNO (NARRATOR):
She was close, now. She looked about a half a second away
from ripping me in two, and I still couldn't hit her. The
pulses from my eye were grabbing my arm and pulling it
here, pushing it there, and it was going to kill me.

This was it. My eye working together with my killer. And
I'd never know why.

I thought. Then I felt something, rolling up my spine, into
my skull, and then...

SOUND: POWERING UP NOISE, HAPPY THEIA BEEP.

THEIA:
The Theia Spectrum is now online. Receiving logged request.
Overriding user muscular control. Firing in 3... 2... 1.

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

PIRANHA:
(HOWL OF PAIN)

SOUND: SHE HITS THE SAND HARD.

Oh, god damn it, oww, god damn it...! How did you...
(HEAVY BREATHING)

Your eye's back on.

JUNO:

Yeah, about that. I think you and I need to have a talk.

PIRANHA:

But if your eye's working, that means... He turned on me. He really did it. I get him this far, and then he... double-crosses me.

JUNO:

Let's start there, for example. Who the hell is "he?"

PIRANHA:

(CHUCKLE)

Fine. He wants to stick it to me? Why the hell not. I'll stick it to him. Might as well get some fun out of this stupid job.

JUNO:

I already asked you. Who is "he?"

PIRANHA:

It was that mess with Babbling Brook that got you on his radar, you know. You got in his way. He needed a stooge. It was a match made in Hell. And your job at the Fortezza, that was just the interview.

(CHUCKLE)

That was a fun one. I've never had anybody pay me to hire another hitman... or to call in a target like that.

JUNO:

Just say his name.

PIRANHA:

Polaris Park was next. He just wanted a little sabotage we could eventually tie back to Pilot, but when he heard how I did it he wasn't too happy. Hypocrite. Cuz then you stomp in there and murder Swift yourself and he's all "let me give you a hug" and "my poor, poor little lady."

JUNO:

No, no, god damn it, stop lying!

PIRANHA:

After that he got squeamish, changed tacks, wanted to find some other way to make Pereyra look bad? So he thought: what's the only thing so important to Pereyra that they'd leave their city on election day for it?

All this.

JUNO:

You knew...?

PIRANHA:

Our guy... he's got corporate connections, see? Galactic. Easy for a guy like that to get a dumb treasure map. So he parked you on some roof for a month, then told me to keep Pilot busy until election day... playing treasure-hunter.

And you got to pretend to be a big hero for three days, even though I was always there to protect you. Was it fun? Wanna get on the ride again, sweetheart?

JUNO:

Say his name.

PIRANHA:

We know who we're talking about.

JUNO:

Say it.

PIRANHA:

How come you want it so bad, PI? Huh? Why don't you say it and I'll tell you if you're right?

(PAUSE)

You can't do it. Can you? Because you're still hoping it's not really him. You know it is. But you're still hoping. Because you "believe" in him.

That's how he got you, you know. That's how he gets everyone.

JUNO:

(IN TEARS)

Say his god damn name or I'll shoot!

PIRANHA:

So you know what my secret to success is, PI?

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

PIRANHA:

(PAINED NOISE)

Oh, come on! Shoot me like you mean it!

(GROWL)

You can't beat me like I beat you because I don't believe in anybody but myself, see? I take the Free Dome away from Pilot and it kills them. I take the old man away from you and you're broken. But me? I only believe in me. And you can never, ever take that from me.

JUNO:

Say his name or I'll kill you.

PIRANHA:

You say it.

It's too late. You've got nothing, now. And I've still got the only one anybody can ever rely on, see? And I'd just like to see you take that away from me, PI.

(LAUGHS)

I'd like to see you try!

(KEEPS LAUGHING, CUT OFF BY GUNSHOT)

SOUND: GUNSHOT.

MUSIC: ENDS.

SOUND: DESERT WINDS.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

That earpiece - the one she'd been listening to "the Big Game" on - fell out of her ear. I put it in mine.

NEWS ANNOUNCER:

... it's a landslide victory! One more time, folks, if you're just tuning in with us now, Ramses O'Flaherty has taken the election in a complete upset! We're tuning in now to O'Flaherty's victory address, live from Hyperion Town Hall:

SOUND: CROWD CHEERING OVER FEED.

RAMSES:

Now, I know that saying "thank you" is the cliché at this

particular moment, but... Thank you.

SOUND: THE AUDIENCE LAUGHS.

But, really. They say that helping yourself is sometimes the most difficult thing of all. Sometimes, when we seek to make the world a better place, we so fear being selfish that we refuse to act in our own self-interest; we bow and scrape to those who wish us ill and call it tolerance, respect, humility. But you, my fellow citizens, you chose to help yourselves. You chose a better future - and by God, you're going to get it.

(LAUGHS)

And to think. It was only a few days ago, as I spoke to a friend of mine, that he told me he felt that hope was pointless. Just a lot of flailing for nothing. And on that day I could not blame him.

Because on that day our Mayor was a psychotic. They acted only in the interest of what benefited them, and worse, they couldn't even seem to decide what that was!

Incontrovertible evidence has shown that they have attempted to take my life, that they have successfully taken the lives of others to win this election... and yet, come election day, where are they? They care enough to murder, but not enough to show up?

They cannot be trusted. The corrupt HCPD, who refused to protect me from the Proctor and who assisted Pilot Pereyra in their escape from the Museum of Colonized History, cannot be trusted. My young friend was right to doubt. But you, the great people of Hyperion City... you have chosen to doubt no longer.

SOUND: AUDIENCE CHEERS AND APPLAUDS.

MUSIC: STARTS.

JUNO (NARRATOR) :

I was numb, top to bottom. I could hear his voice, could see the hope in his sky-blue eyes. And even now, even now that I knew the truth, I believed in him. God damn it, I believed in him!

Ramses O'Flaherty. The person I'd been chasing all this

time, the connection between every eviction and theft and murder... was the man I was working for. And I'd helped him do it.

RAMSES:

That young friend I spoke of? He is chasing after Pilot Pereyra now. It's true. The killer who took your families, the monster who took your homes... in just a few days the bravest young person in Hyperion City will return with them in tow. And though his acts will be heroic we cannot let him stand alone.

JUNO (NARRATOR):

I looked at the huge gate of the Free Dome, at the big, broken promise of it. I looked at the slumped body of Pilot Pereyra. I looked at the Piranha, who I killed.

And then I looked at the desert. The growing storm. The lonely wastes. It was quiet out there. No politicians. No people. No promises.

I took the Piranha's radio out of my ear and dropped it.

SOUND: RAMSES SOUNDS TINNY AND DISTANT BECAUSE JUNO TOOK THE HEADPIECE OUT.

RAMSES:

We need people like him. We need people who will not tolerate evil, will not tolerate corruption, will risk their own lives to stomp it out. We need people to build a new city, a better city, a City of the Future!

JUNO (NARRATOR):

For a second I could still see the radio, an ash-colored dot in the red, red sand. A desert wind blew by and a light dust began to cover it and I knew soon it would be buried, with Pilot, with the Piranha, gone. Forever.

Didn't sound so bad, I thought.

So I turned to the wide open Martian desert, those endless, swirling sands, and I started walking.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS, WIND BLOWING.

RAMSES:

It's the sunrise of a new day, my friends, so grab your tools and join me! Together we build our new home! Together we will make the City of the Future!

MUSIC: ENDS.

SOUND: MUSIC, TROLLEY NOISES FADE IN.

CONDUCTOR:

If you've enjoyed this tale, please consider donating to The Penumbra on Patreon. Our artists work tirelessly to bring you these stories, and if you have the means, we hope you will support our efforts. Every dollar helps. You can find that page at patreon.com/thepenumbrapodcast.

If you support us on Patreon at the \$10 level or higher, you will receive access to commentary tracks like this one, from actors Joshua Ilon, Kat Buckingham, and Simon Moody, and co-creator Sophie Kaner.

SOUND: TROLLEY DOOR OPENS.

JOSHUA:

--gonna be all right, I expected it to happen eventually.

SOPHIE:

Eventually! Not any time soon.

SIMON:

Well when we first read through the episode, like, I got fully--fully like, hoodwinked, to use a turn of phrase, um, by that twist at the end. Like oh shoot, like here he is, Mr. Big Dreams and here to do good and like no don't you do me like that you're gonna do-- oh, there he is.

SOPHIE:

He did.

SIMON:

Yup, yup. He done did it.

SOPHIE:

He did you like that.
(LAUGHS)

SIMON:

He did!

SOUND: TROLLEY DOOR CLOSES.

CONDUCTOR:

You can also support The Penumbra by liking us on Facebook, following us on Twitter @thepenumbrapod, following us on Tumblr @thepenumbrapodcast, telling your friends about us, telling your friends to tell their friends about us, and especially by rating and reviewing our podcast on iTunes. Every rating, comment, and kind word spreads our stories further and inspires us to keep creating more and better tales to come.

We would like to give special thanks to all who support us on Patreon, but especially to Vron, Charlie Spiegel, Minchowski, Jamie Gunter, and The Princess and the Scrivener for their incredibly generous contributions per episode. Thank you.

This tale - "Juno Steel and the Promised Land" - was told by the following people:

Joshua Ilon as Juno Steel;
Kat Buckingham as Alessandra Strong;
Simon Moody as Mayor Pilot Pereyra;
Sophie Kaner as the Piranha;
Kiki Samko as Sarah Steel;
and Matthew Zahnzinger as Ramses O'Flaherty.

This tale also featured:

Lauren Shippen of "The Bright Sessions" as Erin Marshall D'Arc;
Zach Valenti of "Wolf 359" as Marshall Erin D'Arc;
and Rich Wentworth of "Hadron Gospel Hour" as the last of the D'Arcs.

On staff at the Penumbra:

Kevin Vibert is our lead writer and recording engineer.
Sophie Kaner is our director and sound designer.
Grahame Turner is our script editor.
Noah Simes is our production manager.

Alice Chuang is our designer and financial manager.
 Kat Buckingham is our publicity director.
 Original music by Ryan Vibert.
 Promotional art by Mikaela Buckley.

The Penumbra is created and produced by Sophie Kaner and Kevin Vibert.

I'm afraid this is the end of the line for today, dear Traveler. We hope you will ride with the Penumbra again soon.

SOUND: FADE.

(Transcript by Avi Meehan)

Trigger Warnings:

- Sudden loud noises
- Child abuse
- Deception and gaslighting
- Gunfire and explosions
- Reference to alcohol use
- Violence and threats of violence
- Military threats and discussion of military violence
- Death
- Claustrophobic spaces
- Blood and gore

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"Kind of Girl" by Jeris, featuring spinningmerkaba:

http://ccmixter.org/files/VJ_Memes/35657

"Sci-Fi Force Field Impact 15.wav" by StormwaveAudio

<http://freesound.org/people/StormwaveAudio/sounds/330629/>

"Sci-Fi Weapons Deploy" by Hybrid_V

http://freesound.org/people/Hybrid_V/sounds/321215/

"Sci-Fi Large Machine Power-Up" by Hybrid_V

http://freesound.org/people/Hybrid_V/sounds/321217/

"Laser shooting several rockets" by beman87

<http://freesound.org/people/beman87/sounds/169680/>

"Terminator slam" by jobro <http://freesound.org/people/jobro/sounds/157969/>

"Wheel Lathe.wav" by Benboncan

<http://freesound.org/people/Benboncan/sounds/137950/>

"Flame ignition.wav" by hykenfreak

<http://freesound.org/people/hykenfreak/sounds/331621/>

"Large crash" by CGEffex <http://freesound.org/people/CGEffex/sounds/99960/>

"canon.aif" by man <http://freesound.org/people/man/sounds/14615/>

"ELEC_DRILL_BURST_001.wav" by JoelAudio
<http://freesound.org/people/JoelAudio/sounds/135849/v>
"RMX_UpDownBit6(Loop).wav" by nicStage
<http://freesound.org/people/nicStage/sounds/1519/>
"Dark Energy build up.wav" by kantouth
<http://freesound.org/people/kantouth/sounds/104396/>
"Sciency Death Weapon of Science" by RICHERlandTV
<http://freesound.org/people/RICHERlandTV/sounds/249499/>
"synth_jet.wav" by vartioh <http://freesound.org/people/vartioh/sounds/115555/>
"concrete blocks moving.wav" by FreqMan
<http://freesound.org/people/FreqMan/sounds/25846/>
"Stone grind" by Thalamus_Lab
http://freesound.org/people/Thalamus_Lab/sounds/232102/
"hugeSlidingDoorSlamECM800.wav" by UATAudio
<http://freesound.org/people/UATAudio/sounds/31154/>
"Cartoon_Punch_02.wav" by Rsilveira_88
http://freesound.org/people/RSilveira_88/sounds/216198/
"body-fall-3.wav" by CosmicEmbers
<http://freesound.org/people/CosmicEmbers/sounds/160739/>
"Sci-Fi Explosion 1" by Tazy <http://freesound.org/people/Tazy/sounds/369935/>