The Funny Guy's Frickin' Fiction

All Editions and Teasers

All writing is provided in release order.

TEASER #1

03/25/2021

LOG ENTRY #9245, HOLDING C
BEGIN MESSAGE

VAULT ENTRY
SHELTER C5
COMPANY 027
Elevator max 500kg
Task forces required

(027) COMPANY A: Melody, Sean, Anita, Kate
(027) COMPANY B: Payton, Matt, Erick, Colette
(027) COMPANY C: Kevin, TJ, Rafal, Elijah
Hold position until all companies descend
DUTY: Investigate the facility. Determine the cause of vitiation.

COMMS CHECK:
COMPANY A: Good
COMPANY B: Good

COMPANY C: Adequate

Mission primed
Equipment stabilized
Elevator accessible

All systems qualified. Ready when you are, COMPANY 027C.
END MESSAGE

TEASER #2

03/25/2021

TABLET #32, HOLDING C
DIRECT MESSAGE TO CAPTAIN P. WENTILORE
BEGIN MESSAGE

Hey, Pearce. I've got a company to undertake the job of exploring shelter C5. Poor fuckers, they aren't gonna have a fun time down there. Sonar pulses show that everything down there is completely destroyed. Hopefully we don't lose the entire fucking company, but that's possible, isn't it?

Anyway, I'm gonna need a Vulture to come down to C. We need another company to go interstellar in the new test mission. No telling if they'll even survive, but we need actual humans to test this out. So maybe bring down more than one Vulture. Gotta get off this planet soon. Appreciate your help.

How is the front line doing? I've heard it's gotten really violent around the Northern valleys. Have you had any casualties? You can warp 'em over here if you ever need some extra space, most of our shelters are intact. We also have plenty of artillery, lemme know if you need any of that. Keep your men safe, we need as much manpower as we can get to hold those bitches off.

See you on the other side, Peewee.

- Lieutenant Amelia Leinburg

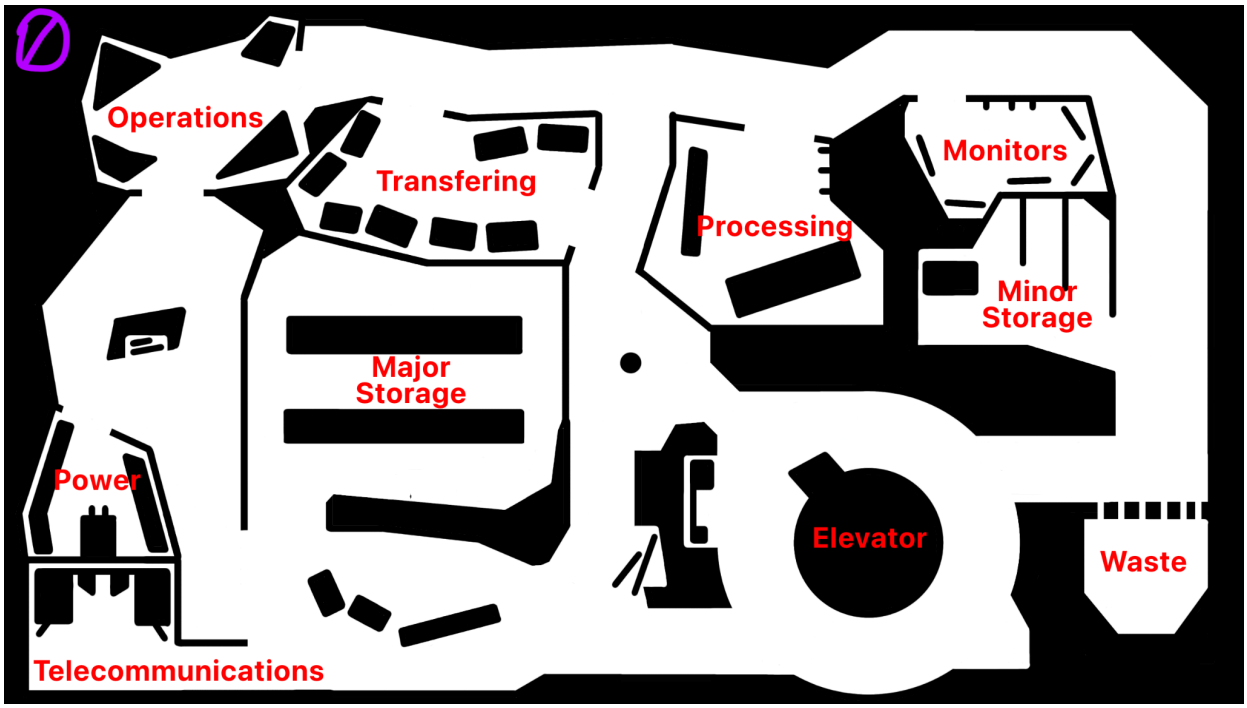
END MESSAGE

TEASER #3

03/25/2021

MONITOR #04, HOLDING B, SECTOR 5
DIRECT MESSAGE, COMPANY C
BEGIN MESSAGE

Here is a map of Facility C5. Yeah, I know, you guys already use this facility daily. But use this map to record your findings as you investigate. Good luck down there.



- Colonel Joey Caprio

END MESSAGE

The Vitiated Vault

Edition One
03/25/2021
Reading time: ~10 minutes

Interval One

Melody: Some of the elevator keys are mashed in and blood-stained.

Sean: The light sources in the facility are dim and leaking electricity.

Anita: Nearly all tools in Telecommunications are completely destroyed, prohibiting communication outside the facility.

Kate: Major storage is completely ransacked. Unsure if anything was stolen, but the whole place is a complete mess.

Payton: The doors to Minor Storage have been forced shut with no way in as of now.

Matt: Almost every single monitor in Monitors is still running, implying that the users did not have time to turn them off.

Erick: The door to Processing was previously forced shut but has been busted open. There are three corpses in Processing.

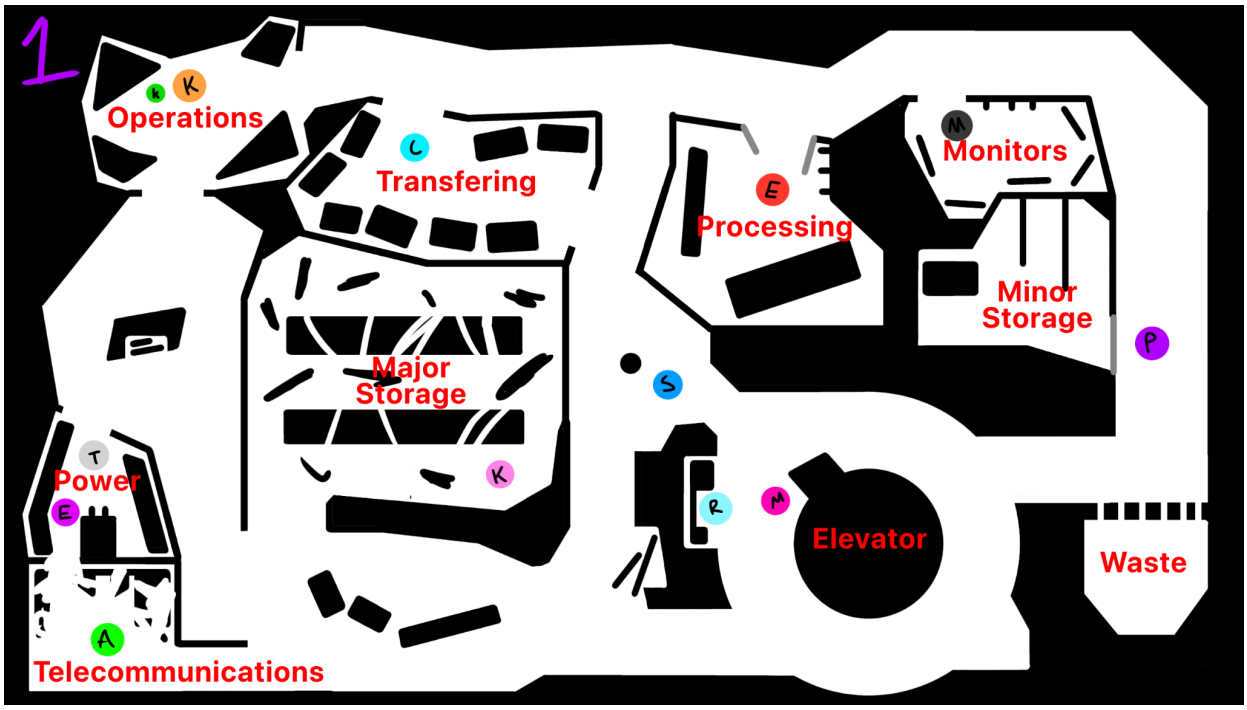
Colette: Transferring has been left completely untouched by the catastrophe.

Kevin: One panicked individual was found hiding in Operations. Medical scans indicate they are healthy and unharmed, but in shock. Their name tag reads Kyle. They will be kept safe in the facility under watch of Kevin.

TJ: The electricity systems in Power have been manually shut off, but not all the way. The lights were dimmed intentionally, instead of there being a full blackout. All communications were disabled and the elevator was manually deactivated.

Rafal: Life scans indicate there are 18 organisms currently in this facility. That means there are two extra organisms not accounted for, dead or alive.

Elijah: The wall between Power and Telecommunications is destroyed.



Interval Two

Melody: Elevator use records indicate that seven individuals entered the facility before the catastrophe occurred. The elevator was sent up once more after the catastrophe took place, but the number of users that were inside it is unsure.

Sean: A saw is outside Processing. It is dull and bathed in blood.

Anita: A distress call was attempted in Telecommunications, but was manually deactivated. There is a trail of blood from Telecommunications all the way to Minor Storage.

Kate: The doors from Major Storage were force shut from the outside and were destroyed from the inside.

Payton: A radio can be heard from inside of Minor Storage. It is completely static with no connection being made.

Matt: Every single weapon rack from Monitors is empty.

Erick: The corpses from Processing are completely mutilated. Blood is all over the walls, floor, and ceiling.

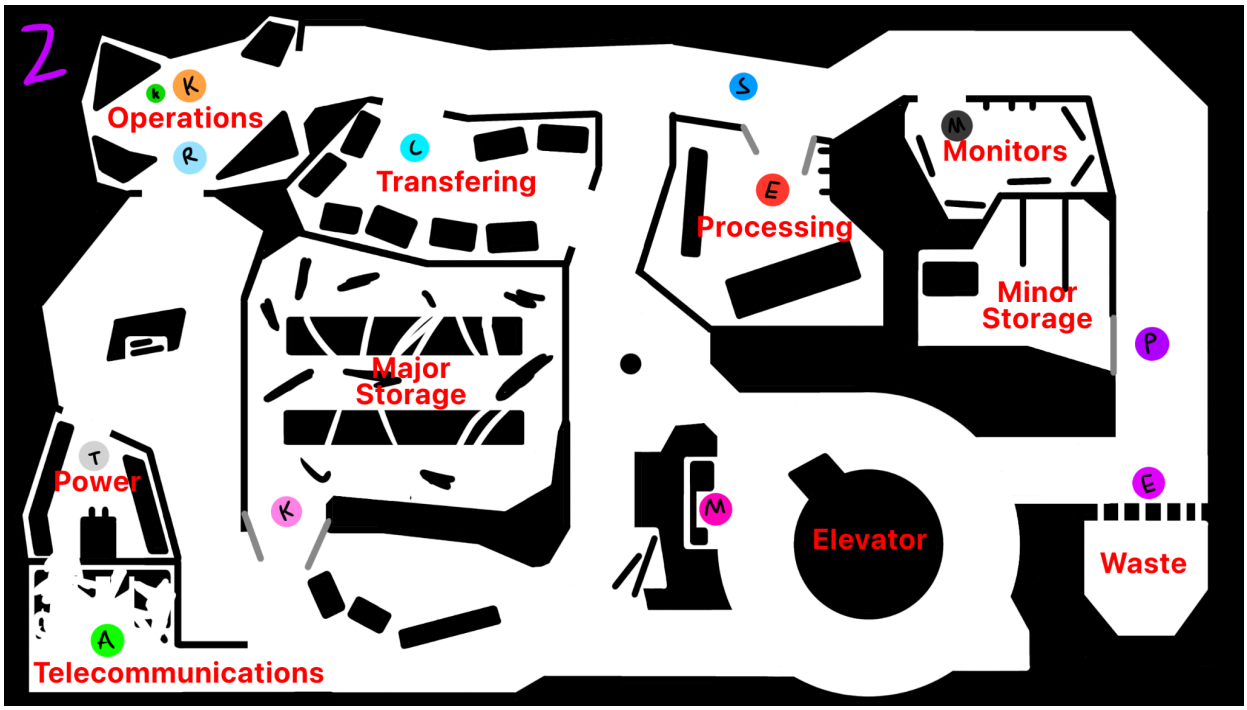
Colette: A note was left on one of the monitors in Transferring. It reads as follows: “Emergency present. Elevator not an option. Barricading in Processing, awaiting reinforcement.” This note was attempted to be sent above-ground, but failed because of the power outage.

Kevin: Kyle has partially recovered from shock. He claims, “Everything shut off. My laptop, the lights, all of it. Then an emergency was called. At first, I was just confused. Then there was so much screaming. I hid in here and haven’t moved since.”

TJ: A keycard is in Power. It can open any door on demand. Will rendezvous with Payton to open Minor Storage.

Rafal: Operations is untouched by the catastrophe.

Elijah: Droppings in Waste have recently been emptied.



Interval Three

Melody: The elevator door is mangled open by use of a saw.

Sean: The power storage in the facility is limited, an entire blackout may begin soon.

Anita: An emergency was initiated in Telecommunications during the catastrophe. This was called before the attempted contact to Headquarters.

Kate: All tool racks in Major Storage still have their tools besides one rack, it is likely that the missing tool is a saw.

Payton: With help of TJ, the doors to Minor Storage have been opened. Inside, there are two corpses that have multiple gunshots each. Multiple weapons are inside. One corpse had his jaw broken and mashed open with the radio.

Matt: Every monitor has normal crew work, there was no sign of anything going amiss in Monitors.

Erick: Multiple attempts were made by the people here to contact Headquarters, none of the attempts went through.

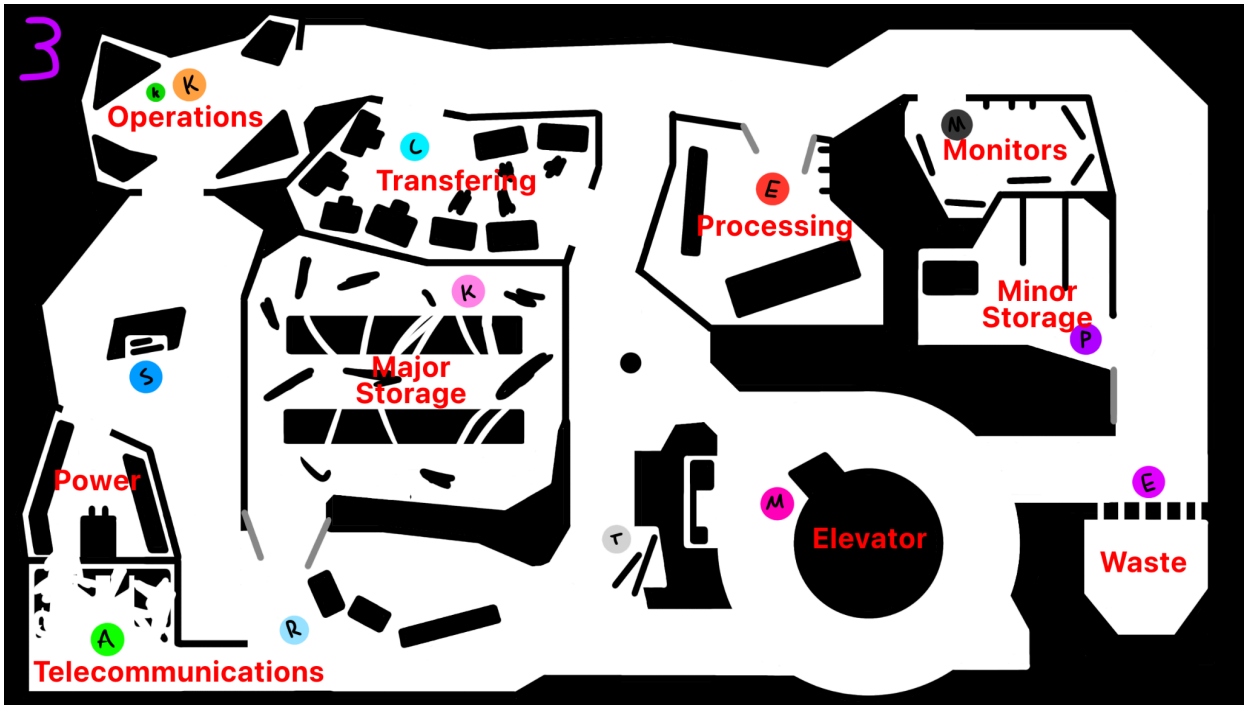
Colette: Four chairs are knocked over in Transferring, implying that the users left very fast. Every other chair is untouched.

Kevin: Kyle is still recovering from shock. He explains his survival. “When the emergency was called, I didn’t know what to do. I’m new to this facility, so I just stayed put. I heard the people from Transferring run out in less than a few seconds, but i don’t know where they went. Then there was so much screaming. I hid here and waited for reinforcements as I had no idea how to react.”

TJ: Logs reveal that someone entered Major Storage AFTER the door was broken from the inside. Somebody came back in and ran out.

Rafal: The containers outside Major Storage indicate that the crewmates were trying to barricade something inside Major Storage... that barricade didn’t last long.

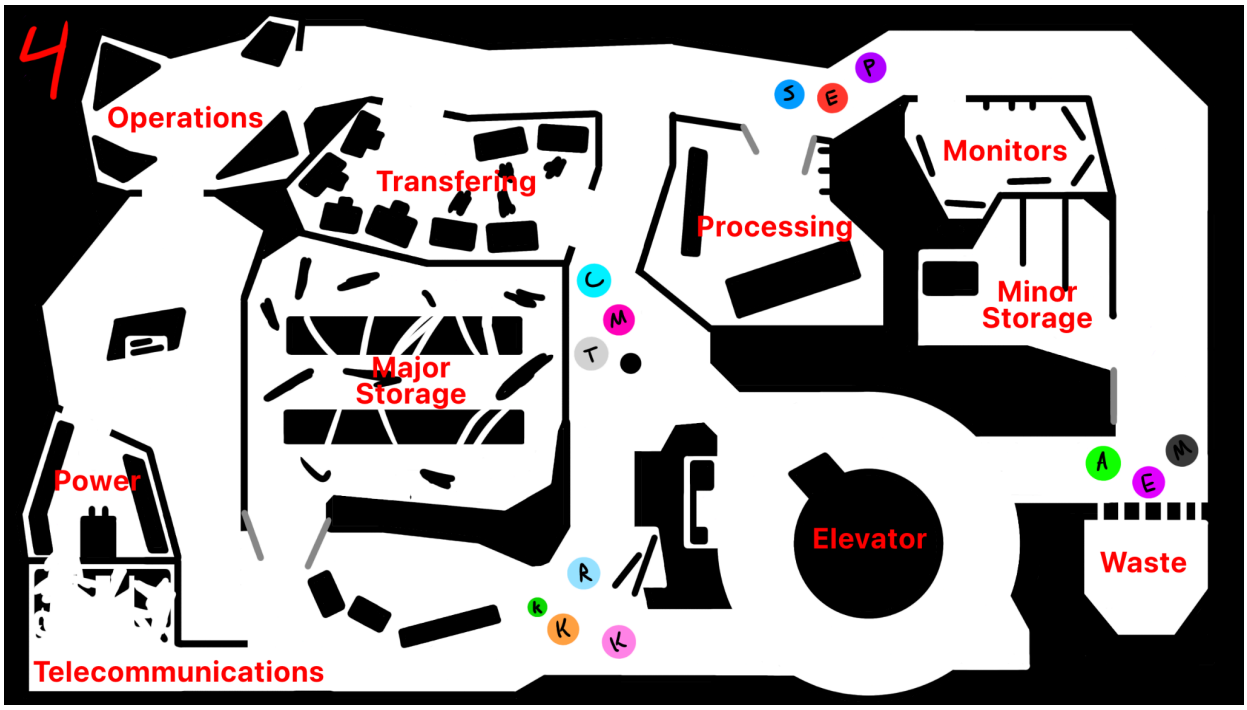
Elijah: There are bloody footprints heading from Processing to Waste.



Interval Four

The elevator was used once during the catastrophe. One person mangled the door open, overrode the deactivation, and escaped the facility by sending the elevator up.

From the evidence gathered, a certain beast caused the catastrophe in the facility. The beast never left, they remain in the facility as we speak.



Sequence

Full sequence of events:

Seven people enter the facility. Three people in Major Storage, four in transferring.

Kyle went crazy in Major Storage, got locked in by two others who headed to Telecommunications. They then called an emergency in the facility and attempted to make a distress call.

As a result of the emergency, three people headed to bunker down in Processing, one towards the elevator.

Kyle broke through the Major Storage doors, went to Power and deactivated certain systems, mainly forcing the elevator lock shut.

Kyle destroyed Telecommunications and dragged victims to Minor Storage, where he used the weapons from Monitors and murdered the two of them. He forced the door shut from the outside.

The person who went to the elevator watched this all happen while remaining hidden, went to Major Storage, grabbed a saw, cut off the elevator lock, and headed to the elevator. They escaped.

Kyle went to the elevator, grabbed the saw left there, and headed to Processing. He murdered the people in Processing, then left the saw there.

Kyle put his bloody clothing into Waste, emptied it, and changed into clean clothing found in Major Storage. He hid in Operations and made up a fake story.

Company 027C is sent in to investigate. Rest is history.

TEASER #4

03/26/2021

LOG ENTRY #9252, HOLDING C
BEGIN MESSAGE

CAUSE OF VITIATION DETERMINED
SHELTER C5 UNDER REPARATIONS
DATA PROCESSING
TRANSITION PERIOD BEGIN

PREP FOR NEXT MISSION

[Company 027C is going on one hell of a ride. They've proved they can handle these tough circumstances, they somehow managed to take down one of those beasts without any weaponry. Let's hope we can get some more value out of these guys, we need all the help we can get.]
HOLDING C SECTOR 5 _DELIVERY INBOUND
ITEMS: KX32 VULTURE x1
DESCRIPTION: Interstellar based flying transportation ship. Can transition between atmosphere and space with ease. Carrying capacity 16 individuals.
MESSAGE: {Here's your fuckin' ship, Am. Don't break it.} - CAP P WEN.

END MESSAGE

TEASER #5

05/15/2021

EMERGENCY MESSAGE DETECTED
FROM: FRONTLINE, SECTOR F8
TO: ANY AND ALL AVAILABLE UNITS (ALLIES)
RETRIEVED: HOLDING C

Message encrypted. Beginning text decryption...
Decryption failed. Retrying...
Decryption failed. Attempting to decrypt audio logs...
Decryption successful.

BEGIN MESSAGE

LOTS OF (unintelligible)... RETREATING ASAP..... (unintelligible) UNRESPONSIVE, (unintelligible) DEAD. ALL DEAD. (unintelligible)... [STATIC]

END MESSAGE

TEASER #6

05/16/2021

UBNF Star Systems Status Check

Luhman 16: Well
Wolf 359: Cleared
Sirius: Lost
Alpha Centauri: Balanced
Luyten 726-8: Critical
WISE 0855−0714: Well
Epsilon Eridani: Lost
EZ Aquarii: Cleared
Solar System: Critical
61 Cygni: Balanced

Immediate: Luyten 726-8
Notes: *Fight is difficult on both ends. Reinforcements could push it in our favor.*

Retreat: Solar System
Notes: *Lost cause. Soldiers there cannot be saved. Salvage any remaining components from ACE1.*

Focus: Luhman 16, Alpha Centauri
Notes: *L16 almost cleared. AC salvaging components from SS, require aid.*

Status Conducted:
DATE May 16th, 2547, 17:33
LOCATION Wolf 359 (UBNF Home System)
PERSONNEL Unknown

TEASER #7

07/03/2021

INCOMING TRANSMISSION
[Encrypted. Decrypting...]
[Decryption successful.]
ORIGIN: HOLDING C
BEGIN MESSAGE

-.-- --- ..- / .- .-. . / -. . . -.. . -.. .-.-.- / -.-. --- -- .--. .- -. -.-- / ----- ..--- --... -.-. .-.-.- / .-. . - ..- .-. -. / .- ... .- .--. .-.-.-

END MESSAGE

[Translating...]
[Translation successful.]
[“YOU ARE NEEDED. COMPANY 027C. RETURN ASAP.”]

"Oh? Finally get to work with these guys. Wonder what names they'll call me.. hah. I make myself laugh. On my way, Cap. I know you know I'm the best."

TEASER #8

07/03/2021

Stats

Hightail
Mobility: 9/10
Damage: 5/10
Defense: 2/10

Shatter
Mobility: 4/10
Damage: 7/10
Defense: 5/10

Imperium
Mobility: 2/10
Damage: 8/10
Defense: 6/10

Rampart
Mobility: 3/10
Damage: 3/10
Defense: 10/10

[H: KM
S: KKM
I: CP
R: ∅

(S)
A: ETS
R: AD]
Successfully Logged
Helmet Functional
Next operation_

Combat Mode Initiated

TEASER #9

07/09/2021

ACE1 Interplanetary Junction

Requested: immediate and full evacuation
Processing...
Request granted.

Facility has entered power-conservation mode.
Processing...
Eight ships have left the junction with all* of the crew.
A few crew members could not be located in time for the evacuation.

The Taciturn Terminal

Edition Two
07/23/2021
Reading time: ~20 minutes

Something Interesting

Company 027C has been completing boring tasks since the Vault situation happened. They are anxiously waiting for something worthwhile to do. Recent communications suggest they will have an actual interesting mission very soon, so they get a little nostalgic as their excitement rises.

Kate: “I can’t believe we actually managed to take down that thing down there a while back. We don’t talk about that a lot - guys, that was crazy!”
TJ: “i cAn’T beLiEvE wE aCTUalLy maNaged tO – shut up.”
Kevin: “Mintwalk saved us all!”
Erick: “Sure. Aren’t you the one that almost got us all killed by trusting that random survivor?”
Kevin: “No, that was Amiibo.”
Anita: “Hey! What the heck, man?”
Kevin: :pepelaugh:

Colonel walks in bearing news.

Colonel Joe Caprio: “Company 027C, the next mission is fully ready to go, so get your stuff ready.”

The company gets up and gathers their equipment.

Matt: “awwwwww I really don’t want to do this. It’s going to be so boring again.”
Payton: “Hopefully not... I thought we were ‘valuable’ or something.”
Erick: “Yeah, right? We get so much praise for that bunker thing.”
Matt: “Never thought I would say this, but even I want something more challenging.”
TJ: “I don’t think that’s true.”
Matt: “Y’know what? Fuck you TJ.”
TJ: “Go ahead.”
Colette: “Can you guys just stop complaining? The mission briefing is very dif-”
Kevin: “Cooltown!!”
Sean: “Who the fuck took my shoes?!”
Anita: “Your mum!!!”

A Vulture KX32 hyperdrive plane arrives on the landing pad outside. It can hold 16 people and has doors on each side and one in the back. The door on the back has already been opened.

Caprio: “Listen up. Your ship is here. This what you gotta do; figure out how to get this Vulture into orbit. We don’t know if it’s possible and we need to find out soon. Don’t worry if things go haywire, this Vulture is equipped with extra jets to slow your descent. If you reach orbit, head to the main space base. You know the one. We recently lost contact with them so go regain comms. We’ll be in contact with you the entire journey.”
Matt: “What.”
Sean: “Well... I guess we’re doing something more challenging.”
Erick: “About damn time.”

The company enters the KX32 Vulture.

Kate: “Who the hell is going to fly this thing? None of us are pilots.”
Melody: “I could try to fl-”
Kate: “No, you are not piloting. We know how that went last time.”
Melody: “That was just one time! And we didn-”
Caprio: “Shut up. We’re going to send a soldier with you. He’s got extensive combat training and is an excellent pilot.”
Payton: “Who???”
Caprio: “Kyle, obviously.”

The Professional

Kyle walks into the ship. He is equipped with a rifle, jumpjets, and three shock grenades.

Kyle: “Yo. How y’all doin, 27? Don’t answer that, I don’t care. Erick, you’re copilot. The rest of you, sit the fuck down and don’t complain. Looking at you Matt.”
Matt: “If the hamster hurts, then it’s not good.”
Sean: “What are you even trying to say??”
Kyle: “Hamster’s dead. Anyway, you dumbasses sit down already. I got places to be, and though this mission happens to be the only place I have to be for a while, I am going to act as if I am very busy, so move it.”
Anita: “We are actually trusting this guy as a pilot?”
Kyle: “Alright, who here would like to fly?”
…
Kyle: “That’s what I thought.”

Kyle and Erick enter the cockpit.

Caprio: “Take this to ACE1. Reestablish communication with C. If any other lines are broken, try to fix them as well. C is the priority.”
Kyle: “Roger. I’ll keep you updated. Y’all ready?”

The door to the ship closes.

Colette: “Not at all.”
Kevin: “Hell yeah!!”
Payton: “Sure.”
Matt: “I think I forgot m-”

The ship takes off.

Kyle: “Here we go!!”
TJ: “HOOOLY FUUCKKKK!!! RELAX KYLE!!! SOME OF US FEEL PAIN!!!”
Matt: “I think all of my bones are shattered…”
Melody: “And to think we have to trust this guy with our life.”
Sean: “I highly regret showing up today.”
Kyle: “If y’all can’t handle this, you’ll never handle the transition from atmosphere to free space.”

[Payton, Sean, Kate, Melody, TJ]
Payton: “Whew! That wasn’t too bad. You guys doing alright?”
Melody: “Absolutely not.”
TJ: “aBsoLutEly- shut up. Let’s talk about the NOOBIE here.”
Sean: “Oh come on. Not this again.”
Kate: “What’s it like being a little baby boy??”
Sean: “I AM NOT-”
Payton: “Baby man!!!”
Melody: “Baby man!!!”
TJ: “Baby man!!!”
Sean: “Guys, keep it down, you might piss off the ‘supersoldier’ according to Colonel.”
Kate: “Listen, last time that guy knew what he was talking about, he almost got us all killed. I think we’re in the clear.”
Melody: “Wait, what are you guys talking about?”
Payton: “The bunker, Mel. With the corpses. And monster.”
Melody: “Oh yeah.”
TJ: “How do you just forget about that?”
Kate: “Right?”
Melody: “Well, for one, I wasn’t even supposed to be there… thanks a lot, Ashton.”

[Anita, Colette]
Colette: “I honestly think it’s a miracle that we’re still alive. Y’know, with the war and all, and with us being so ‘high priority’.”
Anita: “You’d think they’d pay us more or give us cool missions more often.”
Colette: “Right??” I mean, can’t complain too much though. We get a ton of benefits and at least we’re winning the war.”
Anita: “You think that cool gear we’re supposed to get will arrive soon? Or will it get transferred to the frontline?”
Colette: “I don’t know if we’ll get it. I overheard the Colonel saying the cargo is interplanetary, but I’m not sure where from.”
Anita: “Interplanetary?? Jeez, this stuff must be really worth it for how much they’re paying to ship it.”
Colette: “Hopefully that means the stuff is cool, too. Maybe jumpjets? Actual helmets? Who knows.”

[Matt, Kevin]
Matt: “Y’know, something concerns me a bit.”
Kevin: “What’s that?”
Matt: “This pilot has a rifle and some kind of grenade. What the fuck does he need it for? We’re just reestablishing communication with a space base that we own.”
Kevin: “Yeah, he’s also apparently an expert in hand to hand combat. So badass.”
Matt: “Why would we need someone like that to help us? Couldn’t we have just had a normal pilot?”
Kevin: “Maybe there were no actual pilots ready.”
Matt: “Where would they be though? If this guy is so good at fighting, he should be in the war right now, not with us… wait.”
Kevin: “You got a thought?”
Matt: “What if we are losing the war?”
Kevin: “What?? That’s impossible, we’ve only been told good things about the war.”
Matt: “I don’t know man… it doesn’t just seem like a coincidence that a professional is with us.”
Kevin: “I wouldn’t worry about it. Let’s just get our job done and go home. Kahoot night!”

[Kyle, Erick]

Erick: “So, a professional, huh?”
Kyle: “Yup. Literally warborn.”
Erick: “Can I just ask you a few questions while we’re flying?”
Kyle: “Sure, go right ahead.”
Erick: “Why are you with us?”
Kyle: “I’m not sure what you mean.”
Erick: “Our mission is to test the transition between atmosphere and space with the vulture and reestablish communications at ACE1. None of that requires a soldier of any kind. And you are a professional in combat. So why the hell are you here?”
Kyle: “I’m not entirely sure either. They positioned me away from the war about a month ago, no idea why. I’ve just been doing a bunch of mundane tasks that…”
Erick: “That what?”
Kyle: “That have all been focused on things outside this planet…”

Kyle: “Are we losing the war?”
Erick: “Now that I think about it… it doesn’t really make much sense for us to be winning. Casualties are never counted, gains are never recorded, communication blackouts are regular, and people like you and us are being put away from the fight when we could be helping secure victory…”
Kyle: “Well spoken. Well, I guess we got actual bounties on our heads. Take pride in that. Speaking of heads, look up.”

Kyle: “Beginning transition. Brace yourselves.”
Caprio: (over mic) “This is where the fun begins!”
Kyle: “Breaching!”
Kevin: “Hold your breath!! Or something!! I don’t knowwww!!!!!”

All power, lights, and communications black out.

Sean: “Yo… what just happened?”
Kyle: “Don’t worry about it. The Vulture uses a specific type of proton to transfer energy, it’s gotta relay it from space and back through the atmosphere. Causes refraction because the atmosphere’s denser. Things should be up and running in about… four seconds.
Kate: “Does anyone have any idea what he just said?”
TJ: “Not a clue. As long as it works, I don’t care.”

All power, lights and communications return.

ACE1

Kyle: “Full transition successful. Beginning route to ACE1. Request permission to jump.”
Caprio: “Well done. Hold on request.”
Kyle: “Copy. Holding.”
Payton: “Wait… jump?”
Anita: “No fucking way we are jumpdriving there… right?”
Caprio: “All clear. Permission granted to jump.”
Kyle: “Jumpdrive initiated. Launching.”
Matt: “Oh FU-”

The ship travels faster than light speed to ACE1.

Matt: “CK… wait, it worked?”
Kyle: “Course it worked. I never fail. Anyway, destination reached successfully. Docking.”
Caprio: “Solid work. Stay on the line through your helmet, let me know what is going on when you can.”
Kyle: “Copy. Docking successful. Let’s get off this damn ship and fix some… whatever we are fixing.”
Melody: “Data processors and relays.”
Kyle: “Radical action.”
Melody: “What?”
Kyle: “Listen up. We haven’t had any communication whatsoever with this facility for about four days. This place is huge, so anything could be lingering around.”
Matt: “I really don’t like the sound of that.”
Kevin: “This sounds like a generic movie plot. And not a good one.”
Kyle: “I’m going to lead the pack. I already know where we need to go, so just stay with me. Your job is to look around and point out any irregularities while we make

our way to the communications center. I'll protect you while you guys work. Is that clear?"
Erick: "... solid copy?"
Payton: "Roger that?"
Kyle: "Good. Right this way."

The back door to the Vulture opens. The company enters a short hallway with a thick door on the other end.

Kate: "This is making me very uncomfortable. I'm not fighting monsters again."
Colette: "I agree..."
Kyle: "Don't worry, this is just the airlock. It's gotta pressurize this hallway to the same pressure as this space facility so it doesn't explode or something."
Melody: "Yeah but... what's on the other end?"
Kyle: "Let's find out."

The door to the airlock opens, granting access to the facility. It is pitch black inside, absolutely no lights illuminating the place.

Payton: "Anyone else getting deja vu?"
TJ: "Oh hell naw. Fuck this."
Erick: "If there are a bunch of corpses around the corner, I swear..."
Kyle: "Can you guys relax? We just have to flip the light switch. Facility's been put into power-saving mode."
Colette: "Oh thank god. You better be right."

All lights to the facility turn back on.

Kyle: "When have I been wrong? Come on, let's go."
Kevin: "Whoa. This place looks sick."
Kyle: "I mean, yeah. It's literally floating in open space, it's already cool."
Melody: "How far is the comms center?"
Kyle: "Not too far. They're always close to the docks."
Erick: "Okay, that's cool and all, but why were the lights off?"
Kyle: "Not sure. Power might be low, crew could be waiting for resupply. Some other rooms are probably still illuminated by default."

Matt: “Right… so why is this place dead silent? Our voices are echoing like crazy.”
Kyle: “Well, I guess we’ll find out.”
Matt: “Again. I really don’t like the sound of that.”

The sound of metal clanging echoes through the facility in a loud bang.

Matt: “…or that.”
Kyle: “Relax. Just the crew doing maintenance.”
Kate: “Maintenance WHY? It’s not like the walls to this place are damaged, there’s no reason for ‘maintenance’ that sounds like construction to be that loud.”
Payton: “She’s got a point.”
Kyle: “Y’all act like I have all the answers.”
Kate: “You act like you do…”
Kyle: “Come on, 27. I know what you guys are capable of. So grow a pair and get the job done.”
TJ: “Bro, you weren’t even supposed to come with us. You’re all talk.”
Kyle: “You might be very glad that I’m here later.”
Sean: “Man, I can’t tell if this guy is trying to sound cool or trying to foreshadow.”
Kyle: “Enough talk.”

The company passes by a large storage room.

Melody: “Hey, what is this stuff?”
Kevin: “Yeah… what?? This looks so cool!”
Kyle: “Oh, those? Those’re pilot suits. They’re used in combat. I use one all the time.”
Matt: “Why are they… here?”
Kyle: “My gosh, if you could stop being a paranoid bitch for a few minutes, that’d be nice. It’s a storage room. Why wouldn’t they be here???”
Matt: “You know what I meant…”

Something Terrifying

A loud crash echoes throughout the terminal, the source nearby.

Kevin: “AAAHHHH!!!!! HOLY FU-”
Colette: “WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?????”
Kyle: “Clear the way! I’ll deal with it.”

Kyle takes out his rifle and guns down the “thing” in less than a second.

Kyle: “Well, I guess we know why comms are down. Anyone know what this is?”
Melody: “Wait… what? It looks the same as that thing in the bunker a while back.”
Payton: “Another fucking monster?”
Kate: “What did I say???”
Kyle: “There’s definitely more of them throughout this place… watch your step.”
TJ: “Can’t we just use those pilot suits?”
Kyle: “Y’all would blow this whole place up. Not indoors.”
Erick: “Great. Nothing we can use to defend ourselves.”

The company keeps making their way to the communications center.

Kyle: “Guys, I know you already don’t trust me. But I deadass have no idea what’s going on. Just keep your eyes peeled and I’ll keep you alive. I know I can trust you guys.”
Anita: “Tell us who you are.”
Kyle: “Long story for another time. Right now, I’m all you got. And you’re all I got. With the way things are going, who knows if we’ll ever even land on Earth again.”
Colette: “You still haven’t made a very good case for yourself.”
Kyle: “I just saved all your lives. No matter how much you dislike me, you still need me right now.”

The company goes silent as tensions between them and Kyle remain high. The door to the communication center has been manually closed.

Kyle: “Hold still. Let me check this out.”

Kyle opens the door by entering a passcode and enters the communications center alone.

???: “Hello?”

Kyle: “Oh, what the fuck? It’s you! How the hell did you get all the way over to ACE1?”
???: “Long story. How did you even get here?”
Kyle: “Another long story. So nice to see you man. What have you been working on?”
Colette: “Can we uh… come in?”
Kyle: “Oh yeah, you guys are safe to enter.”

The company enters the communications center.

???: “Oh, hello… people.”
Kyle: “This is Declan. We go way back. Declan, this is Company 027C. We’re here to fix this place. Still, how the fuck did you get here? And what happened to this place?”
Declan: “Well, they sent me out here to do science and stuff a few months ago. Everything has been normal since about four days ago. I woke up on a seemingly normal day, and literally everyone and a few ships were inexplicably just gone and this place was put in power-saving mode. Seems like they forgot about me. Ever since, I’ve been hearing a lot of crashes throughout this place, but I haven’t seen anything.”
Kyle: “Well, we know something about those crashes. Good thing you haven’t seen anything.”
Declan: “Comms were also manually destroyed. I’ve been trying to fix them to no avail. I’ve had plenty of supplies to live off of in the meantime. That’s all I know, so don’t ask questions and I won’t either.”
Kyle: “Well, lucky for you, we're here to help you out. 27, do your thing, I’ll watch your back.”
Matt: “Yeah… thanks…”
Kyle: “I gave you an order.”

The company begins to repair the communications.

TJ: “The tech in this place is garbage. Like it was built 40 years ago.”
Declan: “This sector was constructed 42 years ago.”
TJ: “Shut up.”
Payton: “Sector? You mean this whole facility has been built in sectors?”

Declan: “Yeah, kinda hard to build a massive junction facility between star systems all in one go. Also, new additions have allowed this place to do cool stuff, like mining asteroids and analyzing gravitational fields and stuff.”
Colette: “Speaking of asteroids, how does this facility not get bombarded by asteroids regularly?”
Declan: “Radar can see ‘em coming from light years away. We just mine any that come near.”
Anita: “Yeah, about the radar. I think I’ve got it back up.”
Kyle: “Already? Damn.”
Declan: “Check to make sure the reading is accurate through the windows. Just look at nearby stuff, Earth is too far.”
Kevin: “This place has WINDOWS??”
Declan: “Mhm. If you look through one for too long, you might die within seconds because of an excessive amount of ultraviolet light that the glass can’t filter out.”
Matt: “Wait, actually?”
Declan: “Of course not. Tell me of a single light source that is close enough to accomplish that.”
Matt: “The Sun.”
Declan: “We’re two and a half light years away from the Sun.”
Kyle: “That’s why we used jumpdrive to get here.”
Declan: “Unless Proxima Centauri personally dislikes you, I think you’ll be okay looking out the window.”
Matt: “Who the hell is pronkiga cenkore?”
Declan: “Nearest star.”
Kyle: “Anita, how’s radar?”
Anita: “how the fuck do you know my- uh… it’s working…”
Kyle: “Excellent.”
Anita: “Yeah… it shows 847 objects leaving Earth right now?”
Kyle: “What??”
Sean: “Can confirm. A lot of… things are exiting the atmosphere right now. Cameras on satellites near Earth are running.”
Kyle: “Cap, what is going on?”
Caprio: “I don’t know, those aren’t our ships!”

A massive explosion occurs on Earth.

Abandon Mission

Kyle: “COLONEL! DO YOU COPY?”
Kevin: “I’m guessing that wasn’t supposed to happen?”
Anita: “Radar shows the ships are coming our way!”
Declan: “It looks like they’re preparing for jumpdrive!”
Kyle: “COLONEL?”
Payton: “What the fuck is going on?”
Kyle: “I can’t get a signal to anyone on Earth. Abandon mission, 27. We need to prepare for these ships.”
TJ: “How???”
Kyle: “We’re going to the facility’s storage. We’re gearing up. We need to prepare to fight if it comes down to that.”
Erick: “We aren’t a combat unit.”
Kyle: “Erick, do you not see what just happened? Our fucking planet just blew up! I don’t care what kind of unit you are, these circumstances are fucking dire!”
Anita: “Ships arriving in a few seconds!”
Kyle: “Anita, Declan, stay here. Take this mic and tell me what’s happening over comms. The rest of you, MOVE IT!”
Sean: “Here we go again…”

The company enters the storage unit.

Kyle: “Let me look around. Stay still for a moment.”
Kate: “What are you even looking for?”
Kyle: “Pilot suits distinctions.”
Melody: “You mean there are like… classes of pilot suits?”
Kyle: “Yup. They vary in specialty and they’re all capable of surviving in free space.”
TJ: “We’re going outside?”
Kyle: “Might have to.”
Anita: “Ships have arrived.”
Kyle: “Origin?”
Declan: “No idea… they aren’t ours, though.”

Kyle: “Everyone, suit up. There is no way those ships know we’re here yet, but hiding or running from them isn’t going to work.”
Payton: “No way we are actually fighting these ships, right?”
Kyle: “We need to be able to defend ourselves if we have to.”
Payton: “What does that even mean??”
Sean: “None of us know how to use these things.”
Kyle: “I’m a certified pilot. Trust me, it’s not difficult. Treat it as a video game and you’ll learn quick.”
Melody: “Oooouuu, what’s mine do?”
Kyle: “You’ve got a Hightail build, I do as well. Based on mobility. So move fast, think quick, and attack hard and you should be fine.”
Melody: “Do the wings actually work?”
Kyle: “You bet. And there’s no gravity or friction to slow you down in space, so go crazy.”
Kevin: “How about mine?”
Kyle: “Shatter build. Specializes in ordinance. You’ve got a fuck ton of rockets in your arsenal.”
Kevin: “Hell yeah!!”
Colette: “What the hell is mine?”
Kyle: “Imperium. Focuses on direct, powerful attacks with lasers and shit.”
Colette: “Whoa.”

Hightail: Kyle, Melody (mobility)
Shatter: Kevin, Kate, Matt (crowd control)
Imperium: Colette, Payton (direct)
Rampart: none available (defense)

Erick: “There aren’t enough suits for me. I don’t have one.”
TJ: “Me neither.”
Sean: “Seriously? I don’t have one either! Bullshit.”
Kyle: “You three’ll work artillery. Head up to the weapons center and use the ship’s built-in defenses.”
Erick: “How powerful are they?”
Kyle: “Think crazy fast, crazy powerful, and crazy huge plasma railguns that can completely wreck the biggest and best ships with one well placed shot.”
Sean: “That’s what I’m talking about!”

TJ: “I specialize in sitting in a chair for extended periods of time and shooting things. Perfect for me.”
Kyle: “Anita and Declan, you work recon. Tell us where things are that we miss.”
Anita: “And if we get attacked by monsters…?”
Kyle: “Just close the doors. Same goes for you, artillery crew. Do any of you know how to use weapons?”
Sean: “I do.”
Kyle: “Great, you can use my rifle if you have to.”
Sean: “Oh, cool.”
Declan: “I’ve already got a pistol, don’t worry about us.”
Kyle: “Perfect. The rest of us, we’re going to the hull of the ship. There’s an airlock there that allows us to leave the ship.”
Declan: “The ships aren’t requesting to dock. Engage protocol 3?”
Kyle: “Roger. We have the right to respond.”
Matt: “Respond how?”
Kyle: “With guns. And if that doesn’t work, more guns.”
Matt: “So you’re saying…”
Kyle: “Yes, we’re fighting these hundreds of ships.”
Declan: “You can trust him.”
Matt: “You’re insane.”
Kyle: “Hah, worse…”

Kyle: “I’m a fucking genius.”

END

TEASER #10

01/11/2022

MISSING REPORT
Identity: Eight interplanetary ships
Models: Heron x6, Hummingbird x1, Kingfisher x1
Crew: unknown

Last seen: ACE1 Interplanetary Junction
Last known destination: unknown
Last request: immediate and full evacuation from ACE1
No other information could be gathered

UBNF

TEASER #11

01/13/2022

EMERGENCY TRANSMISSION DETECTED
ORIGIN: Earth, Solar System
DETECTED: Satyrs, Wolf 359

TRANSMISSION IS AS FOLLOWS

?: We're going down! Enemies have activated their cytokine storm early! We need backup ASAP to - HOLY FUCK! WHAT IS TH-

Transmission received.
?: "Failure. Shame on you, you get what you deserve."

Solar System Status Updated
Critical -> Lost

The Encroaching Enigma

Edition Three
01/14/2022
Reading time: ~25 minutes

Anti–CLIMAX

Outdoor lights on the junction illuminate. The artillery cannons on the junction hum to life and point towards the unidentified ships. Sonar and radar lock on to the ships. The radios on the ships are hacked to allow a message to be played. And our soldiers venture out of the junction into open space to threaten the incoming eight hundred ships.
TJ: “Artillery’s all good to go.”
Anita: “Sonar’s got a lock.”
Declan: “Radios are nicked.”
Kyle: “Solid copy.”

The following message is played in the radios of the ships:
Kyle: “Attention. You are not allowed to dock here. Depart now or lethal forces will be engaged.”

All the ships stop at once.

Kyle: “They’re under a hive mind of some sort. Betting that most ships are devoid of actual humans.”
Payton: “What are they doing?”
Kyle: “Probably discussing their options. Everyone, ready your weapons. We are going to threaten them again.”

The artillery cannons become noticeably louder and brighter. Even more cannons reveal themselves from hiding inside the junction. Our soldiers flare their jets, rev their engines, show off their ammunition, and never take their eyes off the ships.

The unknown ships do not respond.

Kyle: “Hold steady. We attack on my go.”

Suddenly, all of the small ships turn around and enter the larger ships. This leaves only 27 ships total, all of them very large.

Declan: “They are preparing for jumpdrive. Unknown destination, it’s not part of our space.”

One by one, the ships vanish without a trace.

Payton: “We did it!!”
Kyle: “They’re gonna need a refuel after that. Two jumpdrives back to back?”
Matt: “Thank fuck, I forgot to get any ammo.”
Melody: “Well that was anticlimactic.”
Colette: “They had so much firepower and we made them surrender. HOW.”
Kyle: “Probably didn’t want to damage this facility. Was too big of a risk to fight us. They’ll be back eventually.”
Erick: “I didn’t even get to shoot anything, are you kidding me?”
Declan: “I’M AFRAID THAT MIGHT CHANGE.”
Anita: “What the FUCK???!!”
Kyle: “Are y’all good over there?”
Anita: *static*
Kyle: “Everyone, back to the C center NOW!”

Our soldiers rush back inside the junction. Six gunshots can be heard. Kyle destroys the door leading to the comms center.

Anita: “My god…”
Kyle: “What just happened?”
Anita: “I don’t know… he just turned into one of those… things. I took his gun before he could attack me.”
Kyle: “You mean you won a fight against a monster?”
Anita: “Yeah, there’s a reason I survived the vault.”
Kyle: “This is really bad news.”
TJ: “Right? Would’ve been more interesting if she died.”
Anita: “Hey!!”
Kyle: “No, the fact that this monster “disease” is either transmissible or that it can flawlessly impersonate people.”
Melody: “Hold on, let me study the corpse. I might be able to identify if it was actually human or not.”

Kyle: “Hopefully none of you are “corrupted” or something…”

More clangs echo throughout the facility, this time accompanied by screams of… something.

(through microphone to TJ, Erick, Sean) Kyle: “TJ, Erick, Sean, stay put. It is not safe to leave your current position.”
*(through microphone to Kyle) Erick: “Is there anything we can do?”
Kyle: “Given that we know nothing about these things yet, I won’t advise turning off the lights. Just keep the door closed and make sure Sean is ready for anything.”
*Sean: “What??? Why me?”
Kyle: “You’re the only one armed.”
*Sean: “Oh yeah.”
Anita: “So uh… since you destroyed the door here, how do we keep this room safe?”
Kyle: “Well, let's hope we don’t have to.”
Kevin: “I’m guessing we won’t get to do kahoot night?”
Colette: “Come on!!! Mine is so good!”
Kyle: “Not saying no.”
Kevin: :pog:
Kate: “Well, what do we do now?”
Kyle: “I guess the best course of action is to collect everyone and get the hell out of here.”
Matt: “Um… how are we leaving?”
TJ: “Bro, how’d we get here in the first place?”
Matt: “How can you even hear us?”
TJ: *laughing*
Kyle: “Since I actually know my way around this facility, I’ll get the artillery crew. None of y’all know how to work those pilot suits, so I’ll go alone.”
Payton: “Are you sure that’s a good idea? There’s more than enough of us to split up.”
Kyle: “Payton. I’m a professional. I’ll be fine.”
Payton: “Ok jeez, I’m just asking.”
Kate: “So we aren’t allowed to use the pilot suits inside? How do we protect ourselves if you, the amazing combat professional wowwww, are gone?”
Anita: “I got that covered.”

Matt: “So you’re telling me that we have state-of-the-art combat things and we are opting to defend ourselves with a singular pistol?”
Kyle: “Your English is getting better, Matt! So proud.”
Matt: “Are you serious?!?”
Melody: “I’m having trouble getting a reading on this thing, but I have found something. I think this is from an outbreak that was part of a massive cover up, so it’s not a disease. None of its biology is similar to humans.”
Kyle: “Well that’s helpful.”
Payton: “And terrifying.”
Kyle: “Okay I’m going to save the day, be right back!!”

Kyle opens the door to the rest of the facility, immediately greeted by an intense darkness.

Kyle: “Aww, that’s cute. Too bad I have night vision.”
Anita: “Everyone, get away from the other door. The one Kyle so gracefully destroyed for our safety. We don’t need any more corpses.”
*Erick: “Hey uh, quick question. How exactly are the three of us going to get back to the comms center if we aren’t covered in armor and weapons?”
Kyle: “Well I’ll just kill everything and we walk back in safety through the wake of my destruction.”
*TJ: “That was poetic on purpose, wasn’t it?”
*Sean: “I hope this actually works.”
Kyle: “Considering that you all made your way in there without any trouble, I think we’ll be fine.”

Kyle steps into the darkness and closes the door behind him. The team has split up once again.

*Sean: “OH YEAH THAT’S RIGHT! There’s an elevator directly to your left that leads right up to this room. That’s how we got here so fast. Duh!”
*TJ: “How did we all collectively forget about that?”
Kyle: “Hold on, I hear something.”
*Erick: “Hell yeah! More killing! Don’t worry, we’ll be fine, take your time with SAVING OUR LIVES.”
Kyle: “No, for real, this actually sounds human.”

*TJ: “Can’t they impersonate humans flawlessly? Isn’t that why they’re scary?”
Kyle: “Oh yeah. Maybe we could have Melody inspect this. Later. Alright, I’ll bring you guys down.”

Kyle goes up the elevator and descends with the three others. They then open the door to the communications center.

Colette: “That was fast. And much quieter than expected.”
Sean: “We forgot there was an elevator.”
Melody: “To be expected.”
TJ: “What!!”
Kyle: “Anyway, I saw some [illegible] activity out there, I’m going to check it out. Be ready when I come back, Melody.”
Melody: “Wait, what? Why?”

Kyle leaves the communications sector for the second time and closes the door behind him.

Payton: “Wait, where is he going?”
Erick: “Said he heard something human.”
Kate: “Oh no…”
Kevin: “Are we going to die again?”
Erick: “Again? Oh yeah, we technically did.”
Matt: “We?”
Anita: “You guys just suck.”
Matt: “Honestly.”
Colette: “Should we stay away from… both doors?”
Kate: “Would probably be a good idea.”

Anti–Addition

The door Kyle left through opens seconds later. He is restraining an unknown person in a chokehold.

Kate: “Maybe it would be a better idea to just leave right now.”
???: “Please, let me go!!”
Kyle: “Melody, can you see if this is an actual person? We might be able to get some answers.”
Melody: “Umm…. uhhhhhhhh okay, I’ll try.”
Erick: “Here, use these. Found them up top.”

Erick tosses a pair of handcuffs to Kyle. Also, a mouse comes through the open door. Matt promptly closes the door.

Kyle: “Cool. That helps. Not asking why you took them with.”
TJ: “I like how a mouse looks so much less scary than normal because of what has been going on in the past hour.”
Matt: “I don’t know man, I’m staying far away from that.”
Colette: “My gosh, grow up.”
Payton: “So why did we even bring… whatever that thing is… in here?”
Kyle: “I already said. We might be able to get some answers. Also shouldn’t just leave survivors here.”
Kate: “Because that went SOOOO well last time.”
Kyle: “Last time was way different. Probably.”
Payton: “Yeah, right…”
Erick: “You weren’t even there!”
Kyle: “This conversation is pointless.”
Melody: “Okay, I’m almost certain she is actually human. No signs of… shapeshifting or whatever. Also, I’m almost certain that mouse is her pet.”
Anita: “Dammit! I wanted to keep the mouse.”
???: “Can you let me go now?”
Kyle: “Oh yeah. I forgot about that.”

Kyle releases the unidentified person. Melody gives them some food and water.

Kyle: “Okay so… what happened?”
Melody: “Can you give her a second to relax?? She’s still in shock.”
Kyle: *sigh* “No fun.”
Melody: “Let’s start with something easier. What is your name?”
???: “Just call me Nat, please. The mouse is Buddy.”

Melody: “Okay, Nat. We’re here to help. Let us know if you need anything.”
Nat: “Okay, thank you.”
Melody: “Just take some time to relax and eat some food for now, you look starved.”
Colette: “So um…. What now?”
Kyle: “We head back to the KX32 and get out of this taciturn place.”
Matt: “Taciturn??”
Kevin: “Kay ecks three two??”
Kyle: “Go back to plane.”
Matt, Kevin: “Ooooooohhh, okay.”
Payton: “We are screwed.”
Kyle: “While we stay here, yeah. Let’s get the fuck out of here. To the docks!”
Anita: “You think we’ll make it there unharmed?”
Kyle: “Did it last time. Should be fine. Anita, you go first, I’ll cover our backs. Move slow.”
Anita: “Okay…”
Erick: “Hold on. Are we taking this random person with? I don’t think that’s a safe thing to do.”
Sean: “I second that. Don’t want a repeat of the vault.”
Kyle: “I don’t really care, I was just trying to get some answers.”
Anita: “Are you kidding me? Melody just confirmed that she’s a human. She clearly poses no threat to us. What is wrong with you guys?”
TJ: “Okay Anita, go off.”
Melody: “We are taking her with. She’s already in critical condition.”
Erick: “Fine, but I’m staying far away from her.”
Anita: “Grow up.”

The company gradually makes their way back to the KX32 Vulture without encountering any monsters. However, they can hear them the entire way.

TJ: “Close the door! Come on!”
Sean: “Get us out of here!!”
Kyle: “Relax! It takes a minute.”

The KX32 Vulture disconnects from the ACE1 Interplanetary Junction with the entire company on board.

Kyle: “Where to?”
Payton: “We thought you would have some ideas…”
Kyle: “I’m just being a polite host.”
Erick: “Do we have enough fuel for a jumpdrive?”
Kyle: “Yeah, but it’s probably too risky given that our entire fucking planet exploded. Debris is probably everywhere and we don’t have a safe destination to go to yet.”
Anita: “Let’s just take the Current.”
Kyle: “I’m surprised you know about that. Well, we’re headed to a new star system, fellas.”
Erick: “We all know about the Current. Excited to finally get to use it. Which system are we going to?”
Kyle: “I don’t know, I can’t remember which one we actually own.”
Kate: “What???? Where are we supposed to go??”
Kyle: “I’ll figure it out. I have a database.”
TJ: “I’m actually surprised we are alive given everything that has happened. We’re like, the chosen ones.”
Nat: “You’re one to talk…”
Buddy: *squeaks defiantly*
Matt: “How long is this journey going to take?”
Kyle: “About 10 minutes to get to the Current, they built one close to the ACE1. Should take a few hours to get to a different star system.
Colette: “Can we finally take a nap?”
Kyle: “Yeah, sure. You can actually convert those chairs into bunk beds.”
Sean: “Sick! I only got three hours of sleep last night.”
Kevin: “Hey guys, look at this!”

Kevin pulls out a wad of 100 dollar bills.

Erick: “What the fuck.”
Payton: “Where? When? What?”
Matt: “Yo, let me get some!”
Kevin: “NO!! It’s MINE!!”
Kate: “Not like it has any value anyway.”
Kyle: “Alright crew, I’ll take us away. Y’all get some rest.”
Melody: “Finally…”
Matt: “Good night y’all. Or whatever time it is.”

Current–ly

PERSPECTIVE OF: Anita

It's been hard to sleep. Well, it always has. But it's been harder tonight.

?: *mumbling*
TJ: "Is that how you got the mouse? That's so cool!"

Yep, that settles it, I'm done with trying to sleep. Going to be impossible if people are having a midnight discussion right next to me.

Matt: "Good morning, Anita. If it's even morning."
"Yeah, thanks. Terrible sleep."
TJ: "Us too, clearly."

I get up to check on the cockpit. Kyle never told us where we were going, so it's stressing me out not knowing.

Nat: "Hey, Anita?"

Caught off guard and sleep deprived, I turn around while bumping into a bed frame.

"Uh, yeah?"
Nat: "Thanks for defending me back there. It means a lot."
"Oh yeah, of course."

I'm too tired for this.

Matt: "What were we talking about? The mouse?"
Nat: "Yeah, he came from-"

My thoughts start screaming as I see Kyle asleep in the pilot's chair. But I breathe a sigh of relief as I notice he has turned on autopilot and that we've already been safely in the Current for three hours.

Kyle: *snoring obnoxiously*

God, he's so full of himself. I push him out of the chair and he stays asleep. Not even surprised. I take a look at the document he has pulled up;

Luhman 16: Well
Wolf 359: Cleared
Sirius: Lost
Alpha Centauri: Balanced
Luyten 726-8: Critical
WISE 0855−0714: Well
Epsilon Eridani: Lost
EZ Aquarii: Cleared
Solar System: ~~Critical~~ *lost*
61 Cygni: Balanced

ON COURSE FOR Wolf 359
STATUS: Cleared, coordinated, up-to-date. Destination rating: A

Pilot Notes
DATE Oct 6th, 2547, 00:12
LOCATION Current AC
PERSONNEL Sergeant Kyle A. King of Epsilon Eridani

He's from EE? Guess him saying he was "literally warborn" was true. That system was mayhem.

SUMMARY ACE1 is infested with monsters. 027C claims it's from an outbreak, nontransmissable. Were threatened by enemy forces shortly after Earth explosion, they retreated to unknown. Headed to Wolf 359 to unite with friendly forces…

I scroll down to see the notes are four pages long. I lose interest in reading and turn to the aviation details.

Destination - Wolf 359 Star System
ETA - 05:47 Oct 6
Departing from - ACE1 Interplanetary Junction
Current location - Current AC, 47%
Current time - 03:09

Build condition - Great, 94%
Fuel condition - Adequate, 62%
Safety - No unidentified forces detected nearby, prediction 92%
Build details - KX32 Vulture 2544 Build….

Expected worse conditions. This is relieving. I don't care about the build details.

[TJ, Nat, and Matt enter the cockpit]
TJ: "Whatcha lookin' at? And why's Kyle on the floor?"
"Where we're going. Because he doesn't know where we're going."
Matt: "Well, where we goin', then?"
"UBNF Home system, Wolf 359. Hopefully this one doesn't blow up."
Nat: "That's my home system too."
"Really? What's it like?"

I sound patronizing but I'm actually curious.

Nat: "It's pretty cool, there's a lot of smaller Currents that make it super easy to travel from planet to planet. Also, the star has this cool red glow. I enjoyed my time there."
"So how'd you end up at ACE1?"
Nat: "I just like to travel a lot. I am - or, was - a co-supervisor for delivery of Faulkner Robotics. The only star systems I haven't been to yet are Epsilon Eridani because it went supernova before I began working and WISE because they have their own robotics company over there."
"So you're saying that you'd be a great pilot?"
Nat: "Haha, yeah actually. I've lost count how many ships I've piloted."

“Well I guess this dumbass made the right decision saving you. Ain’t that right?”

I kick Kyle in the ribs, waking him up.

Kyle: “Ayo, whut the fuck goin on??”
TJ: “You didn’t have to do him like that!” *laughing*
Kyle: “I’m gonna kick your ass back to Jurassic Park over there.”
“Oh please, I was the only other person able to defend myself. I’m so scared.”

I’m not scared. Just clarifying.

Kyle: “Hey, that reminds me… what did y’all do with the pilot suits?”
Matt: “We just tossed them in the back of the ship.”
Kyle: “Okay cool, I was wondering if you guys just slept with them on. That shit’s mad uncomfortable.”
Matt: “I won’t lie, I almost did.”
TJ: “Typical.”
Payton: “Can you guys keep it down? Some of us are trying to sleep…”
Nat: “Sorry!”
Kyle: “Your first mistake was waking up.”
Payton: “Ugh… just shut up…”

Y’know, I haven’t enjoyed Kyle’s company while he’s been here because of how unnecessarily sassy he is, but now I’m thankful. We probably all would have gone insane without his comedic relief. And I do NOT want to see what these people are like when they are insane.

“Okay, for real though, we should go back to sleep. We don’t get to Wolf for another few hours and we may as well rest while we get the chance.”
Kyle: “Well, that’s what I was TRYING to do before you kicked me!!”
“I’ll do it again.”
Kyle: “You’re lucky I’m exhausted.”
Matt: “Wait, who is going to pilot if we are all asleep?”

There’s an awkward silence for a while. We’re all tired and none of us want to stay on guard for the night.

“Fine, I’ll do it. I haven’t been able to sleep tonight anyway.”
Kyle: “Appreciate it. I hope you know what you’re doing.”
“Please, when have I ever seemed clueless?”

A lot. I just don’t like showing it.

Kyle: “I don’t pay that close attention.”
Nat: “Okay, we should really get some sleep.”
TJ: “Let’s do it.”
Matt: “Y’all wanna have a dream competition?”
“What even is that??”
Kyle: “Sounds like my kind of thing. I’ll kick your ass, first try.”
Matt: “No shot!”
[TJ, Nat, Kyle, and Matt exit the cockpit]

And now I realize how tired I am. Maybe this was the wrong decision. I try to stay awake by watching the passing stars but they all move so slow because they are all so far.

Pro–Climax

I wake up.
The ship is completely stopped. There’s other ships completely surrounding us. They all have bright lights pointed at my face.

“Uhhh.. GUYS??!”

They all fire rockets at us.

I wake up in a cold sweat.
Thank god, it was just a dream. But our ship really has stopped.

Destination reached - Wolf 359 Star System

Arrived - 05:51 Oct 6
Departed from - ACE1 Interplanetary Junction
Current location - Wolf 359 Planet Satyrs
Current time - 08:23

Fuck! How have we all been asleep for two and a half hours? I don't want to wake everyone up, so I wake up Kyle to deal with that.

"Hey, uh... we're here."
Kyle: "Already??"
"Actually, we've been here for a while."
Kyle: "Bruh."

Kyle: "Alright idiots, get up! We're home."
Kevin: "Hello?? What is going o-"
Colette: "AAAAHHHH!!!"
Melody: "What??"
Sean: "SHUT THE FUCK UP!!!"
Kyle: "I hate all of you."

Me too. Well, some of you are alright.

Kyle: "Have we even docked yet?"
"Oh, uhh.. Let me see."
Kyle: "Weren't you the pilot?? How do you not..."

Okay, yeah the screen says in big green letters "DOCKED," I think that means we are docked. I hope.

"Yeah, we're docked."
Kyle: "Okay, make sure y'all get your pilot suits. If you came in with one, leave with one."
Kate: "Our... what suits?"
Kyle: "The big thing with the big rockets. Understood?"
Kate: "uhhhhhhhhhhh"
Kyle: "MOVE IT!"

I've never been to this star system before, I don't know what any of this looks like. Hell, I've never been outside the Solar System. We open the door to the ship and are greeted with unfamiliarity.

Erick: "Well, this looks… safe…"
Payton: "Guessing there's no monsters here."

There's plenty of soldiers - I think they're soldiers - walking around casually. The technology in this place is noticeably better than on Earth.

Melody: "What planet are we on?"
"Satyrs. It's the one closer to Wolf. Pretty hot here."
Matt: "Thank fuck, I couldn't stand Earth's winters."
TJ: "Honestly. I couldn't stand them normally but they got so much worse after the Sun shrank."

A professional looking man walks up to us. He's accompanied by two also professional looking soldiers. His patch reads Marlow.

Marlow: "Excuse me. Who is in charge of your unit?"
"I uh-"
Kyle: "That's me. Short one."
Marlow: "We read your pilot notes. Assuming you all fell asleep? It's taken you almost three hours to leave your ship."
Kyle: "I assume so. I was asleep, so I wouldn't know."
Marlow: "Normally I would suggest to be more careful, but given what you have all gone through, I'll let it slide. You might be the only UBNF forces that made it back from Earth."
Kyle: "Really? Nobody else survived?"
Marlow: "Nobody we know about. Also, correct me if I'm wrong, but this is Company 027C, correct?"
Kyle: "Yeah. They seem pretty competent. I don't know much about them though, this has been my first mission with them."
Marlow: "Well, excellent job Sergeant. You kept this entire unit alive. Well done."
Kyle: "Not my first time."

Marlow: “We have some barracks where you all can stay. And before I forget to say, we are truly grateful you all made it. Welcome to Satyrs, the birthplace of the UBNF.”

He directs us towards our new home then proceeds to walk away. Based on what I’ve seen so far, I have high expectations.

Colette: “Well he seems nice.”
Kyle: “Eh, he’s normally a lot stricter. Probably just being nice to us because of all the information we retrieved. Don’t expect him to be a nice guy.”
Payton: “Really? He sounded genuine.”
Kyle: “I’ve had more than enough experience with higher-ups to know that most of them only give a shit about the numbers, not the people.”
TJ: “Way to crash the party.”
Kyle: “Just telling you what you need to know.”

Everyone falls silent for a while as we head to the barracks. We’re all still tired. I have a headache. But I manage to get a look out a nearby window to see the planet. It’s covered with what looks like gray sand with frequent… oases? And there is a unique red glow from Wolf. When I turn back around, that red glow somehow enters the docking station. Then I realize that there are flashing red lights and sirens blaring.

Kyle: “You gotta be fucking kidding me. We JUST got here.”

All the soldiers start running in one direction. My anxiety skyrockets.

Payton: “What do we do!???”
Kyle: “Ignore it. We haven’t been signed to an official Company yet, legally we aren’t even on this planet right now.”
“Are you sure that’s a good idea?”
Erick: “Yeah, we don’t know what the alarm even is.”
Kyle: “We need some rest first if we are going back into comba-”

Part of the roof tears off from a plane flying overhead dangerously close. Seconds after, someone wearing one of those pilot suits lands inside, only a few meters away from us.

???: “Should’ve been ready.”

Kyle gets into his pilot suit faster than I can think to grab my pistol. He lunges into the enemy pilot and slams him into the wall. The enemy pilot kicks Kyle in the stomach while I adjust my aim. He starts running towards Kyle, so I shoot and manage to hit his left leg. While he falls, Kyle uppercuts him with some sort of electric energy, sending him flying into the stratosphere.

Kyle: “Shoulda been smarter, jackass!”

A massive and deafening pulse emits from the sky. I look up and see the same 27 ships that ran from us at ACE1. They start spewing hundreds of smaller ships.

“What’s the fucking plan??!”
Kyle: “Well, 27, hope you’re ready for another trip to hell.”
Kevin: “Let's go!!! Wait-”
Erick: “The fuck? No! Can’t we just get the hell out of here?”
Kyle: “You can. The rest of us ain’t. Who’s gonna help me out?”

Nobody moves. I can feel the frustration brewing in his mind as his fists clench.

I step forward.

“You’re gonna need all the help you can get.”

Next is TJ. Then Kevin. Then Melody. Then Matt. Even Nat steps forward. Colette is the last one.

Erick: “I’m not fighting this. It’s your fault this is even happening.”
Sean: “You got me fucked up to think I’m challenging THAT.”
Kate: “I have no energy left for this…”
Payton: “Why the fuck should we trust you??”

Kyle: “Oh, you don’t have to. But if you run away or sabotage us, I’ll treat you the same as I’m about to treat them.”

Silence yet again.

Kyle: “You don’t have to fight. You just gotta do everything else.”
Sean: “Fine…”
Payton: “This isn’t over.”
Kyle: “Correct. You are correct. This is just the beginning.”

The rest of us quickly embark into the leftover pilot suits. For once, I truly feel unstoppable.

Kyle: “Soldiers, if you access the screen on your left arm, you can request a dose of some stimulants. It’ll keep you awake and make you more alert.”
Kate: “You didn’t tell us about that!!”
Kyle: “You didn’t tell me you were considering becoming a traitor.”

I take the stimulants. The terrible sleep I got the night before is completely irrelevant now, I feel more awake than ever. Ships are currently hurtling towards us, but nobody looks at all scared.

Kyle: “One final request before unleashing everything you got, 27. Verbal confirmation that you’re ready to fight.”
Kevin: “Let’s do it!!!”
Nat: “Might be a bit rusty.”
Matt: “Hamster’s spinnin’.”
Colette: “Never felt better.”
TJ: “Finally!”
Melody: “Show ‘em the thunder.”
“All systems are go.”
Kyle: “HERE WE FUCKIN’ GO!!!!!”

We burst into the red sky in slow motion. War crackles around us. Kyle activates his jets and shoots towards certain death. Kevin unleashes a swarm of tracking rockets. Nat lets loose with a focused beam of lightning. Matt lobs so many grenades it looks

like a swarm of gnats. Colette slices around a supercharged laser. TJ reflects all the bullets and explosives being shot at us right back at the enemies. Melody's already dashing towards the nearest drones and smashing them to pieces.

And I?

Well, it wouldn't be any fun to just tell you, would it?

END

TEASER #12

02/07/2022

SOS Signal Detected

Origin: Satyrs \ Wolf 359, Anita Konopka on behalf of Sergeant Kyle King
Request: Immediate and full evacuation
Offer: To be negotiated

R: We taking this?
H: Shouldn't leave our old pal behind.
R: Right, but something seems a little off with this one, wouldn't you say?
H: It's SOS. Always seems off.
R: Hopefully he's doing alright down there. Don't understand why they'd need an SOS from Satyrs.
H: We'll get our answers as soon as we start moving.
R: Shit, let's go!

Request granted

TEASER #13

02/20/2022

UBNF Database

Star Systems -> Epsilon Eridani -> General Information

Epsilon Eridani is home to an orange star, two planets (Chastea and Maera), two asteroid belts, and a dust cloud surrounding it all. The star is slightly smaller than the Sun and is a K-Type Main Sequence star. This star system was very stable.

Unfortunately, the star went supernova due to deliberate human activity. Most of the mass of the star remains as a white dwarf, leaving the orbits of the many objects mostly unaffected. However, because of the lack of warmth and light from the pre-supernova star, and the devastatingly destructive effect the supernova itself had on the planets, this star system was abandoned by all human life.

There are no current outposts known on Chastea or Maera and this system is controlled by no known interplanetary nation. There are no useful resources left on either planets, however the asteroids do contain some heavy metals. There is virtually no reason to visit this star system.

The Forgotten Family

Edition Four
02/21/2022
Reading time: ~30 minutes

Aftermath

PERSPECTIVE OF: Matt

I'm dizzy.

I'm dizzy I'm dizzy I'm dizzy I'm dizzy I'm dizzy

all i see is white
MY HEAD HURTS MY EYES HURT MY
arm hurts?

It feels like a... needle...?

My head clears and my vision is no longer blurry.
Can confirm, it was a needle. A syringe.
Where am I?
I can hear frequent and distant explosions outside this room. How did I get here?

We were fighting all those ships... and someone grabbed me?

Why did nobody help me

why

I look around. I'm in a dark room with only a small lamp to the left. My wrists are restrained to the wall.
The wall.
The wall shakes violently.
An explosion. Close.
VERY close.

Someone kicks down the door. I can't see who it is for a moment.

TJ: "Come on, let's go!!"

He runs off before I can tell him I can't move.
But I start moving...

... up?

Gravity is gone. I don't know what is happening.
The room is sliced in half by a laser. I get a look outside.

I'm falling. FAST.

Someone flies into my room. They smash the wall I am restrained to. I can move my arms.

But I'm falling through the atmosphere. And I can't breathe.

Kyle: "No worries, I gotcha."

Someone is holding me. I am not falling nearly as fast. It is still difficult to breathe.

But then we start falling faster.

Kyle: "Mayday, MAYDAY! My wing has been clipped, I am losing control. I repeat, I am losing control! I need somebody to catch Matt!"

I'm falling even faster now. I can see the ground approaching faster and faster. I am going to hit the ground.

That's what I think is going to happen before some forcefield slows me down and I calmly land on the ground. I feel safe.

Nat: "You're safe now. I'm going to roll you onto your back so it's easier to breathe."

I hear something hit the ground nearby. And something much bigger slam into the ground further away. Somebody screams.

Kyle: "Ah... FUCK!!!"

I look up and notice the ridiculous amount of crashed planes nearby. The ground looks completely unrecognizable.

Nat: "Yeah, you missed a lot. But we're all safe now."

I feel reassured.

I turn left and see people that look dead and a concerning amount of blurry people approaching us.

I don't feel reassured anymore.
They get closer.

Erick: "You can't do this to us! What were we even supposed to do?"
Marlow: "What an ignorant question."
Sean: "What an ignorant answer."

Nat uses a syringe to inject me with some blue liquid. I feel my senses start to work again.

Marlow: "I would choose your next words wisely."
Sean: "Come at me."
Marlow: "Gladly."

Marlow stomps on Sean's ankle and violently punches him in the head. Sean hits the ground hard.

Sean: "You bitch..."
Marlow: "I'll give you one final warning, imbecile."
Sean: "Dig your own grave, bastard."

Sean is shot. He is no longer moving.

Marlow: "Would you like to make a comment as well, Erick?"

Assisted by Kevin and Anita, Kyle walks towards Marlow. He is limping.
Kyle: "HEY HEY HEY, what the hell is going on here? What the fuck are you doing!?"
Marlow: "Sergeant. You are a traitor to the UBNF. The payment for this action is death."

Two soldiers walk forward, weapons point directly at Kyle.
Kyle: “What? Hold the phone, back the fuck up. How the fuck am I a traitor? Did you not just see us!?”
Marlow: “I was given some valuable information by two of your units.”

I look behind Marlow. Payton and Kate stand behind him, unrestrained.

Marlow: “Tell me Sergeant, does the line ‘Ignore it. We haven’t been signed to an official Company yet, legally we aren’t even on this planet right now.’ sound familiar to you? You are well aware of the desired conduct we require here at UBNF. You knew better.”
Kyle: “Go to hell.”
Marlow: “You directly sabotaged the UBNF’s survival with this action.”
Kyle: “You blind, fucking senile, old little shit, you know damn well I was right. You should know the rules of this organization better than anybody. Get off your temper tantrum power trip. You have zero reason to even trust those fucking traitors behind you, yet you do in pursuit of dominance. And now you’re threatening quality units for this minuscule comment that was 1) true, and 2) ignored at full realization of the predicament. You no longer deserve your rank. Hell, you don’t deserve to be a part of this organization. You deserve all that you got coming.”
Marlow: “I recognize and understand your noncompliance. Forces, take care of him.”
Kyle: “You don’t have the nerve. Just imagine what they’d do to you after they find out what happened. ‘Renowned officer kills off pilot on a power trip.’ I can already feel the shame.”
Marlow: “See, that’s the thing, Sergeant. There will be nobody to inform anybody of the truth. You have miscalculated yo-”

“What about us?”

I thought I only thought that. But because everybody around me simultaneously looks at me, I think I said that out loud.

Anita: “Yeah, what about us? You think we’ll just *let this slide?*
Marlow: “How unexpected. The entire company is full of traitors.”

Kyle: “You listening to the only two traitors of this company. And they’re the two right behind you.”
Marlow: “I suppose we could afford the extra few bullets it will take to rid UBNF of this entire company. Forces, eliminate them all.”
TJ: “Yeah, roger that.”

TJ unleashes numerous explosives on the soldiers. Anita starts shooting at them. Colette even uses that laser from earlier. Most of them drop dead, Anita deals with the rest. Erick is killed in the crossfire. Marlow, Payton, and Kate are, conveniently, wounded, but alive.
Kyle: “Burn in hell, cunt.”

Kyle’s fists blaze with electricity as he smashes Marlow’s head. I am not hallucinating when I say Marlow’s entire head disintegrates.
Kyle: “Alright you two pieces of shit, what'd ya have to say for yourselves?”

They say nothing. I don’t blame them, I wouldn’t say shit either.
If we weren’t getting shot at.
Anita: “RUN NORTH! NOW!”

New Enemies, Old Friends

I scramble to get up in a frenzy and bolt. I don’t know where we are going. Bullets keep grazing past me.
A ship enters the atmosphere and lands a distance away from us.
Anita: “KEEP MOVING TO THAT SHIP!”
TJ: “That’s our getaway! … Right?!”

I look back for a moment. There are a fuck ton of ground troops close to where we just were. TJ is carrying Kyle on his shoulders while running. Nat is just behind me.

Colette is the first to make it to the ship. She takes cover inside and begins firing back at the ground troops with that laser. Kevin reaches the ship seconds after and does the same, only with rockets. Then I make it and stay next to the door, ready to

close it as soon as possible. Nat dives in shortly after. Lastly, it's TJ with Kyle. I slam the door shut and we take off with a jumpdrive. Suddenly we're in the middle of nowhere.

???: "What's up homies?"
????: "Really was a fuckfest back there, huh?"

Those voices sound familiar. I look towards the cockpit and am comforted by two familiar faces.
"No way. No way!!"
Rafal: "Yes way! We're here! Look at us! We're cool."
Hao: "Did you expect us not to be here?"
Kyle: "Hey, um, I don't mean to crash the party, but I'm kinda dying over here."

Can confirm. He's losing a lot of blood right now. I think he got shot a few times on the way to the ship.
"Where's Melody?"
Colette: "She uh... didn't make it."
"Well fuck."
Kyle: "Hao, can you take us to Epsilon?"
Hao: "Epsilon??? Are you out of your mind??"
Kyle: "There's a small colony on the backside of Chastea. They can help us."
Hao: "I'm trusting you with this."

We jumpdrive a second time.

Rafal: "You better be right. We have no way out of here."

I look out a window and see, probably, the most beautiful thing ever. It's like the star's energy was dragged around throughout the system. It's so bright and colorful.
"What... happened here?"
Kyle: "I'd rather not explain it now."
Kevin: "I can. The fighting here was really intense at one point. They tried eating Epsilon's energy like OMMM and shooting it all at once at Chastea. Our planet. Their experiment failed miserably, nerds, but it also made Epsilon very unstable. As a result, it went supernova, which just means it went BOOOOOMMMM and turned

into a much smaller star. Nothing useful left in this system besides cool looking things, so both sides abandoned it. Now it's a ghost town. Or a ghost system, I guess."
Kyle: "I grew up here before that all happened."
Hao: "Where exactly am I going?"
Kyle: "Just left of that massive crater. You'll see it when we get close."

We descend onto the surface. I can see some ruins of buildings in the distance, but not much. There is no visible atmosphere, and the "town" isn't really a town. It's a single building.

Rafal: "There's no atmosphere here, so keep those suits on. If you take it off, you'll go like AHHGGHGHHGK. TJ, Matt - take Kyle in, I'll be comin' with. The rest of you, I don't know your fuckin names, sit tight."

We exit the ship. Again, no atmosphere, and it seems like nobody lives on the surface, so the sky is absolutely stunning.

"So much for a town."
Kyle: "It's underground."
That would explain it.

Rafal: "How exactly do we get in?"
TJ: "Yeah, I'm tryna put this fatass down already."
Kyle: "Bring me over to the door. We have to vocally request access."
"Are you sure they'll even let us in?"
Kyle: "No. But we're out of options."

I don't like the sound of that.

Kyle: "This is Kyle King of Epsilon Eridani. Requesting entry to New Chastea, injured. I have with me Tuvshinjargal Amarsanaa and Matt Lampa of the Solar System and Rafal Ciurus of Wolf 359."

The silence lasts a bit too long. I grow increasingly worried. Until it talks back.

???: “Only two of you may enter. Disembark your mechs upon entry. Once you do so, the elevator will bring you down.”

TJ: “Obviously Kyle’s going in. I think Matt should as well, we don’t know what they did to him up there.”
Kyle: “Let’s do that.”
Rafal: “We’ll be on the lookout. Go get patched up.”

The door opens. I help Kyle walk in while the door closes behind us. He leans up against a nearby wall.
“Do you need any help getting out of that?”
Kyle: “Nah, I just can’t walk by myself.”

We get out of our pilot suits. Kyle takes quite a bit longer than me. I notice his left leg looks… mangled. And he’s got a few bullet holes scattered over his body. I help him off the wall. Shortly after, the elevator arrives.

Kyle: “How you feeling?”
“I’m good, just a little nauseous.”
Kyle: “Great. So we’re both fine.”

I’m not sure if I would consider you “fine,” but okay.

The elevator takes an entire minute to descend.
“How far down even are we?”
Kyle: “About 3000 feet. This place wasn’t built to look cool, it was built to last.”

The elevator door opens. I remember the vault as this place looks somewhat similar. A nurse soon comes to our aid with a stretcher.
Nurse: “Lay him down.”

I help her place Kyle on the stretcher. At this point, I notice just how small he is. He looked taller when he was acting like he was taller.

Nurse: “Come with me.”

We follow her down a few hallways before we eventually enter a decently sized room. She puts a needle in Kyle's arm and immediately begins giving him some kind of fluid.
Nurse: "Wait here for the doctor."
She leaves.

Kyle: "Yeah, I don't think we'll be getting a doctor."
"Wait what? Why?"
Kyle: "I've got too much history here… and it ain't good."
"What happened?"
Kyle: "Forget it. Too much to ex-"

The door opens.

Newer Enemies

Kyle: "Ah… hey guys. Johnny, Jake. Long time no see."
Jake: "Shut up."
Johnny: "So why'd you come back?"
Jake: "Real dumb of you."
Johnny: "Why the fuck would we help you?"
Kyle: "One question at a time, boys."
Johnny: "Second one."
Kyle: "Uh… haven't really thought that one through."
Johnny: "Really? You come all this way looking like that, possibly exposing our location to whatever the hell is out there, and you don't have anything to say to redeem yourself? Not to mention how you left us on a power trip back then."
Kyle: "Listen. This place still my home. After all those years and I never ratted you out."
Jake: "How are we supposed to know if that's true or not?"

I don't want to be here anymore.

Johnny: “Exactly. It’s not like you or your little friends have anything to gain from us. You could have easily told them all about us and they’d’ve done nothing.”
Jake: “You really gotta change our minds somehow if you want our help. And I don’t even know what you could say to do that.”
Johnny: “Not like we can trust you with anything.”
Kyle: “Can you just let me not die first, then we can talk about this?”
Johnny: “Fine. Only because I don’t want to deal with your corpse. Or whoever the hell this is next to you.”
Jake: “This ain’t over.”
Kyle: “Never is with you two.”
Jake: “Fuck off.”
Johnny and Jake leave the room.

“So uh… what was that about?”
Kyle: “We were Epsilon freedom fighters. Fought off the UBNF and the Marauders in an attempt to stay independent. Just before the supernova, I thought we were a lost cause, so I ‘defected’ to the UBNF. But we weren’t a lost cause. But it was too late to return. They all hate me for leaving. Justifiable, but… still hurts.”

The door opens again.

Kyle: “Finally.”
Declan: “Great to have you back. Woohoo. Can you tell I’m excited?”
Pranet: “Yikes… yeah, you’re gonna need a whole new leg. We can’t fix that.”
Kyle: “Already a cyborg. No difference.”
Declan: “Can we kill him while he’s unconscious?”
Pranet: “Not until he makes a full recovery.”
Declan: “Boring.”
Pranet: “Hey, you there. What’s your name?”
“Me? Just call me Matt.”
Pranet: “Okay, Matt. You’re gonna have to step out.”
Declan: “Pranet! He’s a patient too!”
Pranet: “Oh! I’m so sorry. What’s uh… what’s your issue?”
Kyle: “He was captured by enemy forces and was knocked unconscious. We don’t know what happened to him up there. Still a bit dazed by it.”
Pranet: “Oh, okay. You’ll be fine with just some medicine. Here.”

He hands me a container of green liquid.
Declan: “Now GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!!!”
Pranet: “He’s just having some fun. But no - seriously - you’re going to have to step out.”
I step out.

Where am I supposed to go?
I guess I’ll just go to the bathroom or something and take this medicine.

…
Where’s the bathroom?

I’m just going to go back up the elevator. I have no idea what to do here.
Getting lots of angry stares as I walk towards the elevator. Only makes me walk a little faster each time.
As I’m about to step inside, someone grabs my shoulder.
Jake: “Where’d ya think you’re goin’, pal?”
“Um.”
Jake: “Haha, I’m just playing. Please get the fuck out of here.”
Never used an elevator so fast before.
Most tense minute of my life.
I spend some time remembering the events of the past few days… unwillingly. Been through hell and back so many times. Ever since this Kyle guy showed up.

The elevator finally stops moving and the door opens.
Rafal: “Hey, what’s up dawg?”
TJ: “Where’s Kyle?”
“Uh, surgery. Leg’s fucked.”
TJ: “Damn.”
Rafal: “How’d they treat you down there?”
“Not good. Kyle was a bad influence.”
Rafal: “Not surprising.”
TJ: “So are we waiting for him… or what?”
“Honestly, probably shouldn’t. We don’t really need him at this point.”
I’m a bit biased, but still. He’s caused us so many problems. I’d rather not have to deal with him anymore.

TJ: “Maybe let’s discuss with everyone else first.”

We enter the ship.

Rafal: “Hey NERDS.”
Kevin: “THAT’S MY LINE!!!”
Rafal: “It’s all good.”
Kevin: “Huh.”
TJ: “Anyway, we have a predicament. Kyle is currently under surgery right now. Do we leave without him?”
Anita: “What? Why are we even discussing this? Absolutely not.”
“Why do we need him?”
Anita: “He knows the most here. We’re only alive because of him.”
Hao: “Excuse me.”
Rafal: “Ahem.”
Nat: “I’m still here.”
Anita: “Okay, he’s ONE of the most experienced here. But he still saved our lives.”
“How exactly?”
Hao: “So did we…”
Kevin: “I just think he’s cool.”
Colette: “Listen, you’re all wrong. Depending on how long his recovery takes, we stay or leave. We need everyone we can get right now.”
Nat: “I second this. He did rescue me from ACE1, I kinda owe him one.”
Rafal: “Yeah, didn’t you guys do some fucked up shit at Satyrs? That’s why you need the extra help?”
Kevin: “Like becoming traitors to the UBNF and killing a LOT of people? No!”
“No. Kyle did. Not us. He’s the problem.”
Anita: “I-”
Colette: “Did anyone even listen to me?”
Hao: “Well, either way, we have a problem. If we stay and wait, where do we stay? This ship doesn’t have enough space or resources for all of us. If we leave, where do we go to refuel? We don’t have enough fuel to make it to a Current or for a jumpdrive.”
“We wouldn’t be in this situation if it weren’t for him. May as well get rid of him while we have the chance.”
Anita: “Well, where would we even go if we left?”

Rafal: “Our place.”
Anita: “Oh, come on…”
Nat: “How far is it?”
Hao: “It’s tucked away at Luhman 16 at the moment.”
Nat: “Damn, that’s… really far. Wait, at the moment? You mean it can move?”
Hao: “Yes… this is a surprise?”
Nat: “No, sorry, I’ve just… I-I really need some rest.”
Hao: “Oh. Can’t help with that.”
TJ: “So, anyway… does that make our only chance of surviving at all… whatever and whoever is down there?”
Hao: “Pretty much.”
TJ: “Better start getting friendly with them.”
Kevin: “I’m great at that!”
Rafal: “Finally useful for something…”
Kevin: “WHAT DID YOU SAY.”
Rafal: “BRO CHILL IT WAS A JOKE!!”
Anita: “How the hell are we even getting down there? Didn’t Kyle request access?”
TJ: “I can’t do dis no more man.”
Colette: “Uh, Matt. Do you have a way back down? You’ve already been there.”
“No…”
I really don’t want to go back there.
TJ: “You might be our only option.”
Hao: “At the moment, yeah.”

For fucks sake.

“What the hell do I even say!? And to who??”
TJ: “Shouldn’t you know the who part? You were down there.”
“Answer the first question!”
TJ: “Well, you could say we ne-
“Nah, shut the fuck up. You know what I saw down there? Everyone there hates Kyle. And by account, me too. And probably the rest of you. Kyle has such a bad history with this place that it’s fucking over our own chances of survival. There’s literally nothing we can do or say to anyone down there to get them on our side. They literally said that.”
Hao: “They?”

TJ: “Who you talking about?”
“Kyle’s old friends he betrayed.”
Kevin: “Ouch… that must have been an awkward conversation.”
Colette: “I’ve got a better idea. We cou-”
Anita: “Better? Nobody even mentioned an idea.”
Colette: “Shut up. We could look through on the surface for something, anything, to help us.”
Hao: “Uh, yeah that’s kind of a stretch. Anything on the surface’ll be years old.”
Colette: “So every single option we have doesn’t work?”
Rafal: “Well, we still have one option left.”
Anita: “Which is?”
Rafal: “We get what we want by force. I mean, we’re already kitted for it.”
Anita: “You can’t be serious.”
Nat: “I’m literally about to pass out.”
Rafal: “What else can we do?! We are fucked no matter what, this is our very last option.”
Kevin: “Woo hoo! Fun time!”
“Well fuck.”
Anita: “May as well just get literally everybody to hate us. Great idea.”
Rafal: “Oh, my bad. Did you have a better plan?”
Anita: “Anything but that.”
Rafal: “And that’s worked out great, hasn’t it?”
TJ: “Alright ladies, let’s get ready to go!”
Kevin: “Hell yeah!”
“Not really what I had in mind, but sure.”
Anita: “Not at ALL what I had in mind and I’m not happy about it.”
Nat: “My mind isn’t really working right now… but I’ll try.”
Colette: “Okay, let’s go.”
Rafal: “Well, I sure hope the half of us can carry the other half.”
Hao: “Come on man, I’ll single handedly win this for us.”
Kevin: “Yay Hao!”

Here we go again. Back into the vault. Made it out once, can do it again.

INTERLUDE

Commander: “Well done out there. We respect you for standing up for what is right.”
Payton: “No biggie. Thanks for keeping us around.”
Kate: “You are keeping us around, right?”
Commander: “Of course. We assure that all useful assets are rewarded properly. And that harmful assets are dealt with properly.”
Payton: “So what are we doing about the rest of them?”
Commander: “Well, we tracked their jump drive. Unfortunately, it led to the middle of nowhere. However, jump drive detectors are still functional on Chastea of Epsilon Eridani.”
Kate: “Epsilon? They went to Epsilon?”
Commander: “Possibly. We have checked with all recorded jump drives, and none part of the UBNF arrived anywhere near Epsilon Eridani. Which means that this is either an action from the enemy Marauders, or it is the remains of Company 027C.”
Kate: “Is it possible to tell which?”
Commander: “Given how abandoned Chastea is, no. But, the jump drive was only one ship, meaning that if we arrive at Chastea to investigate, it’s not like there would be much of a threat.”
Payton: “Let’s get moving then.”
Commander: “That is the attitude we support in the UBNF.”
Kate: “Can we get some combat stuff though? You know, just in case. Couldn’t hurt.”
Commander: “Of course. We value your lives.”
Payton: “Awesome.”
Commander: “In any case, I recommend you both prepare. It is time to rid the UBNF of these weak links.”
Kate: “Yeah… all for it.”
Payton: “Right with ya.”

The Commander leaves the room.

Payton: “So… we still doing this?”
Kate: “Well yeah, right?”
Payton: “Uh… yeah. Yeah. We are still doing this. We are.”

Kate: “Okay. You just let me know when it’s time.”
Payton: “Yup.”
Kate: “Alright, let’s go before they get suspicious.”
Payton: “Right.”

Payton and Kate leave the room.

Sending transmission…
Transmission sent.
Transmission received.
Transmission read. ✓

Newer Friends

PERSPECTIVE OF: Kyle

I’m… awake? Surprised they didn’t kill me off.

Pranet: “Okay, I’ll help you walk around a bit while you get used to your new leg.”
Declan: “Really? Think he can figure it out himself. Like everything else.”
Declan leaves the room.
Y’know, for making one mistake, everyone here sure got a lot of sass towards me.
Guess they still need me for… whatever.
“Thanks, Pret.”
I’m pretty used to mechanical accommodations, so walking feels strangely familiar, even though I can’t feel my left leg. Still a bit difficult though, understandably.
“Alright dawg, I’m gonna be fine. You’re good.”
Pranet: “You let me know if you need anything else.”
“Not like I’ll be talking to anyone else down here.”
Pranet: “I don’t blame you.”
Pranet leaves the room.
Pranet: “Are you… seeing Kyle?”
He isn’t talking to me…?
???: “Yeah, I am. He still there?”
Pranet: “Yes, but he just came back from surgery, so be light on him.”

???: “I gotcha.”
This voice sounds familiar.
“Ayo, who is that?”
Pranet: “An old friend.”
Yondeez: “Kyle!!! You came back!!”
He runs up to me and gives me a big bear hug. I don’t have the reflexes to respond.
“Ay, easy, easy…”
Yondeez: “Yeah, my bad. But still! You’re back!!”
“You seem to be the only one excited by that.”
Yondeez: “Of course I am! … wait, only one? What do you mean?”
“You don’t remember?”
Yondeez: “I do, but everyone’s still upset with you about that? It’s been years.”
“I guess so.”
Yondeez: “Hey, you let me do the talking. We should be celebrating your return right now, not mourning it. I’ll change everyone’s minds, you don’t even worry about it.”
“Appreciate it, JLo.”
Yondeez: “No problem, Metra.”

A loud crash echoes throughout the facility.
“Um… is that normal?”
Yondeez: “Not at all. Check it out?”
“Well, yeah!”

We walk over to the source of the noise. There is a crowd.
I notice… the elevator has crashed?
Jake: “Alright Kyle, what are you up to this time?”
“For real, I had nothing to do with this.”
I walk towards the elevator shaft. And then I look up.
TJ: “Incoming!!”

The eight of them land and shove their way past me, all firing their weapons.
“HEY HEY, STOP!! STOPPP!!!!!”
They don’t listen.
TJ and Rafal grab me and throw me into the elevator shaft before resuming combat.
“What the fuck are you doing!??? Stop fighting!!!”
Rafal ignores me while TJ listens. He does not respond.

TJ: “Stop firing! 27, stop firing!”
It takes them a moment to hear him.
I watch Yondeez get attacked by Anita and Kevin, to which he holds his own.
TJ: “Stop, god damnit, stop!!”
They all finally do.
From what I can see, nobody looks dead, but quite a few people look injured. Both sides remain with their weapons pointed at each other. There are a few seconds of silence.

Johnny: “I would like to speak to Kyle.”
Rafal: “You got it.”
Rafal helps me up and brings me to the front.
Johnny: “You got a hell of a lot of explaining to do, boy.”
“No, I don’t.”
I walk towards him and stand next to him, facing Company 027C.
“Y’all got a hell of a lot of explaining to do. The FUCK was that!?”
Matt: “Awkward…”
Kevin: “We came to rob you!”
Colette: “Well, not exactly. We just had no other options.”
Hao: “No, wrong. We were attacked on the surface and had nothing to take cover behind, so we forced our way in here. We did not intend to open fire on any of you, we were trying to move you out of the way.”
Matt: “We were attacked?”
Hao: “We were attacked on the surface by unknown forces.”
Matt: “Oh, okay…”
Pranet: “Hey, I must say - Matt is still recovering. His memory might be a bit slow.”

I can tell ALL of them are lying. That’s not why they’re here. But I say nothing, I know damn well they can’t explain themselves.
Johnny: “Okay, whatever. Jake, I need you to check the radar. This is an emergency.”
Jake: “On it.”
Johnny: “The rest of you, follow me. We are heading to a safe room.”
I’m not sure why he’s trusting them so easily, but it’s not like this place gets invaded every other day, so I understand his hastiness.
Yondeez: “I’m going up to check it out.”
Johnny: “You are free to.”

I join him. Along with someone else."
Nat: "I'm coming with."
Yondeez: "You know her?"
"Yes."
Yondeez: "Alright."
"How we getting up?"
Yondeez: "Phase runner."

We walk to a part of the facility I haven't been before and approach a thick metal door. JLo opens it using facial recognition, along with fingerprints and his own voice.
"Tough security, huh?"
Yondeez: "Ya need it when you tryna stay hidden."
"Fair enough."

We approach some kind of portal.
Nat: "You keep this on?"
Yondeez: "For emergencies, yes."
Nat: "Ever had to use it?"
Yondeez: "Not until now."
Nat: "So we should test it."
Yondeez: "Good point. Here's what we'll do - I'll go through and come back down if it's functional. If I don't come back, go to the safe room."
He put his life on the line just like that... damn.
He backs away from the portal before getting a running start and disappearing into it.

"You ever use one of these before?"
Nat: "Yeah, actually. They're fun."
I get this feeling she doesn't want to speak to me.
"Cool."
I am aware of every passing second and it sucks.

Nat: "Hey, I uh... got to tell you something."
"I'm all ears. Not literally. That's just weird."
Nat: "So um... the rest of the company was... uh, trying to leave without you."

“For real?”
Nat: “Yeah. ‘Cause you were ‘causing all the problems’ or something.”
“Bro, that’s what I do. Cause problems.”
Nat: “Okay… but, yeah. That’s why we ‘invaded.’ Well, no. But we had no other options, I guess.”
“I get it dawg. I’ve been there. No shade.”
Nat: “Just felt like you should know that. I know this place means a lot to you, so.”
“Appreciate it.”

Y’all dumb mfs.

JLo comes back through the portal.
Yondeez: “Alright, it works! Thankfully, I didn’t die. Woulda sucked.”
“Damn right.”

Yondeez: “Since we are going up so far, you’re gonna have to get a running start to preserve momentum. It’s just faster that way. Also, gonna need some helmets. No atmosphere.”
Now I’m excited.
Yondeez: “You go first Kyle, I’ll go last.”
I run full speed into the portal.
I can’t really describe what I’m seeing. It’s like I’m speeding through another dimension. Like I’m in space where it has this purple glow and the stars are much bigger and closer together. I don’t have much time to observe it before I pop out the other side.
Back on the surface, I’m in the ruins of some abandoned building. I can see our ship quite a far distance away. Looking up, I see no ships. Or any signs that anybody else has been here. Knew they were lying.
Someone exits the phase runner. I don’t bother turning around, I already know who it is. As I continue looking at the destroyed surface, I am hit with an overwhelming feeling of dread. This was my home. And there’s nothing left of it. Nat gives me a sympathetic look as I turn to see JLo exit the phase runner.
“Ay, there’s nothing here.”
Yondeez: “What? Let me take a look.”
We both look at the empty sky. Well, sky empty of threats. It for sure ain’t empty.
Yondeez: “I don’t understand… they lied?”

“Guess so.”
Yondeez: “For what??”
“I don’t know man, I was down there with you guys.”
Yondeez: “Well, I guess we’ll just go call a false alarm…”
We start walking back towards the phase runner.
Until… it happens.
Yeah, of course it did.
Loud noises and bright flashes.
The three of us run to look outside and…
Yeah.
Multiple ships just jump drove here. And they’re UBNF.
Yondeez: “I was sure hoping that wouldn’t happen. That’s like… REALLY fucking bad.”
Some capsules begin to descend to the surface. Inside them, I assume, are soldiers. And how convenient, the elevator is broken. That should hopefully buy us some time. Maybe not.
Yondeez: “They won’t find this phase runner. They will, however, see that destroyed elevator shaft. It’s only a matter of time before they get down there. We gotta go warn the others.”

Change of Heart

JLo and Nat run back through the phase runner, but I…

I don’t.

The UBNF are after me, after all. If I can expose myself quick enough, they won’t even know there’s a colony underneath the surface.

In a moment of hesitation, I think.

I’m about to sacrifice my life for this colony.

No, not this colony. This is my home. And I’m damn proud of it.

I run out onto the surface. I just keep running and running and running close to where the capsules are landing.

And for the first time in my life, I raise my hands up in surrender. To my own team. I am approached by a concerning amount of soldiers and two familiar faces that piss me off.
The two traitors.

No words are spoken. Three soldiers surround me, weapons pointed at me, while another puts me in handcuffs. A few smaller ships descend to the surface, and I am escorted by numerous soldiers into one of them.
I begin counting my last few minutes.

We enter one of the motherships, to which I continue to be escorted to somewhere. I am sat down in an enclosed room facing a blank wall, completely surrounded by soldiers. Two of which are Payton and Kate. The blank wall suddenly turns to glass, and I am faced with multiple leading members of the UBNF.

Captain: “Hello, Sergeant.”
“Yeah.”
Captain: “Let’s have a quick chat, no?”
I say nothing.
Captain: “You have always been a very valuable member of the UBNF. You’re diligent, reliable, and devoted to this nation.”
Get to the fucking point.
Captain: “However, your recent actions have been questionable. Such as the political disrespect and the murder of Captain Harold Marlow, both on Satyrs. This has caused us to reevaluate your position as part of the UBNF.”
Commander: “You are being terminated from this nation.”
Thought so. No point in trying to explain myself to these power freaks.
Captain: “It is not as simple, however. Given your… rowdy nature, it would be a real shame if you were to fight against us. As a result, we will be giving you the death penalty.”
I’d like to see you try. Absolutely fucking nothing can kill me.

Commander: “Your replacements would like to do the honors. Corporal Payton Kohlberg and Specialist Kate Burke will be executing you.”
How fitting. The traitors kill the “traitor.”
Captain: “Do you have any last words, Sergeant?”
I feel the barrel of the gun against the back of my head. And I know full well who’s holding it.
“Yeah, I do.”
Captain: “You may say them.”
I grin.

“You wanna see a magic trick?”

END

TEASER #14

03/15/2022

EMERGENCY MESSAGE DETECTED
FROM: [Corrupted]
[Tracking signal location...]
[Tracking successful.]
[EPSILON ERIDANI]
TO: _____
RETRIEVED: WISE 0855−0714 System

Message encrypted. Beginning text decryption...
Decryption failed. Retrying...
Decryption successful.

BEGIN MESSAGE

SOS

END MESSAGE

“What? No message? What the hell happened over there?”

“Should we send in reinforcements?”

“Not until we know what the actual fuck is going on. There was a MASSIVE energy spike there.”

The Interstellar Empire

Edition Five
03/22/2022
Reading time: ~20 minutes

Magic Tricks

PERSPECTIVE OF: Payton

Kyle: “You wanna see a magic trick?”

“Go.”
Kate flips the glass wall back into a normal, not see-through wall.

And we start shooting all the soldiers around us who are not prepared.
They don’t last long.

“Damn, did you have to be so dramatic about it?”
Kyle: “You know me.”
Kate: “We don’t have time for this, we gotta go!”
I unlock Kyle’s handcuffs.

Then something else happens that wasn’t part of the plan.

More loud noises. And the ship shakes. “Shakes” is an understatement.

“Um.”
Kyle: “Wow.”
“The fuck you mean wow? What was that??”
Kyle: “They… they’re shooting us down.”
Kate: “Is that a good thing?”
Kyle: “For me, yeah. For us, no.”
“Huh??? They???”
Kyle: “I’ll explain later. Y’all got jump jets and helmets, right?”
Kate: “No duh!”
Kyle: “We gonna need to use them. They’re shooting the ship down, we gotta bail or we’re toast. Burnt toast.”
“Here, we got a spare. You can use this one.”
Kyle: “Great, now three of us will survive the fall instead of two. Give me the gun.”
I give him a set of jump jets and the rifle I’m holding that I also don’t know how to use. We run over to the door.
Kyle: “Stay behind this wall. Definitely gonna be some bad guys on the other side.

Kyle kicks down the door and sprints outside. I hear a LOT of gunfire. Ain’t no way that crazy mf survived that.

Kyle: “All clear.”
??????????????????
I walk out and see at least 11 corpses.
“So are you like, immortal or something?”
Kyle: “I ask myself the same question. Follow me.”

We run over to a nearby window which Kyle shoots.
Kyle: “Y’all jump out first. Use the jump jets to slow your landing. And don’t cut yourself on this glass.”

I climb out first, trying to be careful. As I’m skydiving through what is supposed to be an atmosphere, I realize how close we are to the ground. Maybe a few thousand feet at best. We really gotta move before this ship hits the ground.

I look up and see Kate jump out and Kyle soon after. I am diving as fast as I can. Even though gravity is doing all the work.
Looking at the surface, I can see hidden cannons I assume shot this ship down. Still don't know who from.
As I reach the surface, I quickly flip right-side-up and activate my jump jets, drastically slowing my fall. I hit the ground lightly and sprint as fast as I can away from the ship.
Kate somehow lands a distance in front of me. At least she is safe.

Then the ship hits the ground. It's so loud I can't hear it because my ears are already ringing.
Wait. Sound just doesn't travel in space. Duh.
I keep running as fast as I can until I meet up with Kate. We turn around and see what looks to be a flattened city.
Kate: "Where's Kyle??"
"I don't know, did he hit the ground in time!?"
Kate: "I don't think so!"
We start running back to the debris.

"Where do we even look??"
Kate: "I don't know!!"
Didn't think to look up. Even though that's where he was.

Kyle: "Y'all do know you can fly with these things, right?"
He lands.
"You do know we don't use these? Like, ever?"
Kyle: "Mistook you for someone capable. My bad."
I want to punch this loser.
"Right. Just remember I could have easily killed you up there."
Kyle: "But cha didn't!"
Kate: "I don't mean to kill the party, but um... are we just going to stay here? We have no way off this planet."
Kyle: "Oh... right. About that."
Why do I ever bother trusting him????

Well shit. Could really use someone to trust right now.

The other ships never left. They're sending down a LOT of soldiers.

Kyle: "Oh... that's no good..."
I've never heard him sound so baffled. Which only worries me more.
"What's the fucking plan, tough guy!???"
Kyle: "I... I don't know!"
Kate: "Run to that ship!"
A distance away, I see a parked ship just casually sitting there. I don't remember starting to run, but I already am.
"Didn't you use that to get here??"
Kyle: "Shut up!!"
oh my god

We all reach the ship just in time because that's the only way to make these situations tense for the reader.
And we take off in probably the most violent way possible. Why did I expect anything different from Kyle.

"Where are we going???"
We are heading right into what used to be the star, turned white dwarf.
Kyle: "Just trust me!"
As if.

I check the radar and see... more ships than I can count behind us. Chasing us. And we have no jump drives left.
I'm trying my best to hold on as we dodge all that they're shooting at us. While we're shooting towards the star.
"You gonna move out of the way???"
Kyle: "JUST TRUST ME!!!"
"WHY????"
We are headed straight into the star. What the fuck

I can't even speak as we dive right into the star.
And Kyle activates a jump drive that shouldn't work.

Super–Supernova

But it… does??
We end up on the opposite side of the star, pretty far away from it.
Kate: “What did you just do?”
Kyle: “Watch.”
In the next few seconds, the star explodes in one of the biggest explosions I have ever seen.
Kyle: “HAHAHAH!!! Go to hell.”
how
“What… happened?”
Kyle: “We jump drove THROUGH the star. Once the gravity pulled it back together, the star collapsed in on itself, basically causing a second supernova. ‘Cept this time there’s nothing left.”
Kate: “And how’d you find out that would actually work?”
Kyle: “Ain’t my first rodeo.”
“Wait… nothing left?”
Kyle: “Yup.”
“What are the planets going to orbit around???”
Kyle: “Oh. Um.”
Kate: “Well thankfully nobody lives in this system.”
“Yeah, that coulda been REAL bad.”
Kyle: “So… about that…”
Oh for fucks sake.
“The fuck is it now??”
Kyle: “There’s a colony under Chastea.”
Kate: “How far under?”
Kyle: “Almost two miles.”
Kate: “So they’re fine.”
Kyle: “Not if they collide with Maera.”
“What’re even the chances of that happening?”
Kyle: “Given that they’re now the two most massive objects in this system, pretty high.”
“So… what’s the plan?”

Kyle: “We gotta get all of them out of there. As soon as possible.”
Kate: “And how exactly are we doing that?”
Kyle: “I’ll just pull another magic trick or something. Look, they either all die or get off the planet. It’s their choice.”
“But it’s also your fault. Like, entirely.”
Kyle: “Doesn’t change the options.”
“K, but this was your idea.”

We fly back to Chastea. The nebula looks impossibly beautiful. Probably because it’s supposed to be impossible for a white dwarf to go supernova.
However, we gotta fly slow. There’s a good amount of debris that wasn’t immediately vaporized.

Back on Chastea, we land a distance away from where we took off from. There’s some sort of destroyed building close by.
Kyle: “Aight, there’s a way in here. It’s like a portal. Just run in.”
Kate goes first, then me, then Kyle. It looks like we’re inside a star. Even though I have no idea what that looks like.
On the other side, I get some PTSD. Looks too much like that vault from a while ago.
Kyle: “Follow me.”
Guess he’s been here before.

We find two guys that look to be important.
??: “Kyle!!! You crazy bitch, you’re alive!!!”
Kyle: “You expected me to die?”
??: “A little bit, yeah.”
Kyle: “Come on, JLo. You know me.”
I’m just gonna call him that.
???: “Y’know, I gotta say. I think I trust you again.”
Kyle: “Wasn’t working to gain your trust, Johnny.”
Kate: “Hey, I don’t mean to intervene, but we’re kinda in an emergency.”
Kyle: “Yeah, uh… I kinda completely destroyed Epsilon. So we are orbiting nothing at the moment. And we’re gonna crash into Maera eventually. So we should probably get off this planet.”
JLo: “Ah, there he is! Causing problems. He’s a natural.”
Johnny: “Man, come on.”

Kyle: “We should probably start evacuating. Everybody.”
Johnny: “Don’t both sides dislike us now? Where we going though?”
Kyle: “Yeah, good question.”
JLo: “bruh.”
“Maybe we could go to an uninhabited star system? Make it ours.”
Kyle: “True. Not like we have any other options.”
“Wonder why that is.”
Kyle: “You almost got us all killed. Can’t talk.”
“I’m also the only reason you’re alive right now.”
Kyle: “I could say the same thing. For myself, too. Go me.”
Kate: “Hey, again, WE’RE IN AN EMERGENCY. You, Johnny - do you have a way to get everyone onto the surface and in a ship as fast as possible?”
Johnny: “Well, we have a method. But it isn’t that fast.”
Kate: “Let’s hope it’s fast enough then.”
JLo: “Is there an estimate for how much time we have?”
Kyle: “Maera is on the other side of where Epsilon would be right now, so we have as much time as physically possible. Though that might not be much.”
JLo: “Let’s get a move on then!”

The next few days were jam-packed with running back and forth through what I learned is called the phase runner. We were exporting as much stuff as possible from this colony onto a mothership on the surface. Also salvaging what we could from the crashed ship.

Luckily, those who’ve been in combat got some time to rest. Basically just the new Company 027C. Surprisingly, there were no attacks from the UBNF or Marauders during this time, even though they definitely both knew we were here. And in a pretty vulnerable position, despite the cannons.

Unfortunately, there’s a lot of asteroids in Epsilon, and Chastea is now the most massive object in the system, so we did get rained on multiple times. We set up some defenses to automatically detect and destroy/relocate asteroids if they were landing near the mothership, so thankfully no asteroids hit it. But each day Maera was getting closer, and it was accelerating. Time was running thin fast and only building more stress in all of us.

Soon enough, Maera was too close to waste any more time, so we all made one last trip through the phase runner, taking with us as much as we could and depositing it in the mothership. And in a historic moment, all the Epsilon colonists and Company 027C took off from Chastea. We didn't witness the two planets collide, but that'd've probably been too painful for these guys to witness anyway, so kinda a win there. Though it woulda been cool to see.

The plan is to just drift in a direction away from both the UBNF and Marauders until we find a suitable star system to inhabit. That's where we are at the moment. In a random part of space trying to find a new home because our old homes are uninhabitable for a surprising variety of reasons.

Doomed

PERSPECTIVE OF: TJ

What an interesting story this'll be to tell.
First we work for a nation fighting an interstellar war.
Some shady stuff happens behind the scenes.
We almost die. (Get used to this)
Things become boring.
Things become unboring.
We become scared. ACE1 is scary bro!!
We almost die.
We do our job and fix what we were supposed to.
The Earth blows up.
Hundreds of enemies threaten us.
We threaten them back, and almost die.
Anita almost dies.
We almost die.
Again, we almost die.
We leave ACE1. Yay.
We almost die.
We are welcomed to Satyrs.
We bring with us the said enemies from before.

We almost die.
We fight them.
Matt almost dies. Some people actually do die. LOL
Kyle almost dies.
Kyle almost dies.
We kill a lot of soldiers.
We leave Satyrs.
We end up on Chastea.
Kyle and Matt enter the colony, the rest of us staying behind.
Matt returns and we discuss completely leaving Kyle behind.
We invade the colony.
But it turns out they are peaceful.
Hao makes up a lie for us.
We're in.
We hide in a safe room.
We are actually invaded.
We shoot down one of the ships for fun.
Kyle, Payton, and Kate almost die.
Epsilon dies. The star.
And a LOT of enemies die.
The entire system is about to die.
The colony is about to die.
We almost die. But we escape Chastea.
The colony does die. None of the colonists. Just the place.

How fun!
At the moment, we are trying to find an uninhabited (and preferably unknown) star system with a habitable planet to inhabit. Because we have nowhere else to go.

What I've noticed from most of these colonists is that they seem... happy. Like they aren't sad about their home being destroyed by us. I mean, it's got to have sucked to live in that bunker for years. But still. You'd think they'd be a bit more disappointed.

Johnny: "Really? So you almost killed all your friends because you were tired? Man, I'm getting deja vu."
Payton: "Listen!! We didn't know that could happen!!"

Colette: “Yeah sure, I believe you.”
Payton: “Thank you!”
Colette: “What? No - I was being sarcastic.”
Payton: “What the fuck!!!”
Kyle: “My favorite part about that was my threat. I was serious, by the way.”
Kate: “Sure you were.”
Kyle: “Whatever coping strategies help you sleep at night.”
Yondeez: “Damn Metra, you still scaring people for fun?”
Kyle: “It’s basically in my DNA.”
Jake: “Hey, remember when he scared the shit out of us a few years ago? Good times. That’s a joke. Fuck you.”
Kevin: “He scared us too!!”
Johnny: “Yeah, that’s… what he does.”
Kyle: “Johnny, I’m gonna fuckin kis-”
Matt: “Yo Pranet, any update on star systems?”
Pranet: “Not really. Same old same old other than 14 new uninhabitable ones.”
Anita: “Come on, can’t we just make one inhabitable??”
Pranet: “No, that’s not how it works.”
Nat: “Yeah, we’d need an absurd amount of material, like the size of Mercury, ‘cause th-”
Declan: “Shut up. Nobody is going to understand what you’re saying.”
Nat: “Okay, damn.”
Hao: “I would understand.”
Declan: “Hao, you don’t count. You’re like, the smartest person here. By far.”
Hao: “So I don’t count? Wow, Declan.”
Declan: “No!!! That’s not what I meant!!”
Rafal: “Can we start another minecraft server while we’re waiting to find a new home? May as well.”
Matt: “I’m down. You think Aubrey’s on this ship?”
Rafal: “Haha yeah, that’d be great.”
“Do I get to be a part of this one?”
Matt: “If you don’t completely annihilate the server.”
Kate: “What about the rest of us?”
Kevin: “MEGA minecraft server???”
Colette: “That would be amazing.”
Kyle: “That would be utter fucking mayhem.”

Two types of people.
Nat: “That’s not amazing?”
A lot more than two types of people.
“Let’s do it. Actually. But Kevin, you’re hosting because of tradition.”
Kevin: “jesjes”

Things are going great. I’m almost happy for the terrible turn of events that took place in the past few weeks.

aaaaaand then of course, as soon as I’m thinking about everything I’m grateful for, the alarm starts blaring.
Jake: “COME ON!!!! REALLY???”
Johnny: “What the fuck man :(“
Anita: “SHUT UP!! What’s happening????”
Pranet: “Uhhhhhhhh… we are surrounded by 112 fighter jets. And it looks like they’re directing even more ships here via jump drive.
Kyle: “Origin?”
Pranet: “UBNF, I think?”
Kyle: “Fuck. Where’s the third party when you need it.”
“What if that ‘third party’ doesn’t even exist? What if the UBNF completely made up the idea of the Marauders?”
Hao: “Yeah, we don’t have time to discuss this.”
Payton: “I’ve asked this so many times in this story, what’s the plan???”
Johnny: “There’s really nothing we can do… we’re overwhelmed.”
Kyle: “Nah, fuck you. We ain’t going out like this. I’m calling a code green, every person on this ship is helping us fight back.”
Jake: “Who said you were in charge??”
Kyle: “Battle is no time for democracy.”
Well at least I finally get to use that artillery.

To sum things up because it’s too difficult to write about a battle as it’s happening, it was a tough battle. We are a big, slow moving, easy target, whilst our enemies are not. Imagine pissing off a beehive and fighting all the bees. That’s basically our situation. We fought as hard as we could, but we really didn’t stand a chance.

Soon enough, UBNF soldiers started boarding our ship and apprehending important people while killing off those who aren't. All of us were apprehended and taken into a UBNF mothership.

Currently, we are all being escorted down a very long hallway by a concerning amount of soldiers. JLo, Jake, Johnny, Pranet, and Declan have been transported somewhere different because they're part of Epsilon, not our company. We all have handcuffs and a device that electrocutes us if we try to run.

Trial

UBNF Soldier 1: "What's up, Kyle? Decided to switch sides again?"
Kyle: "Watch your mouth before I make you beg to be on my side."
UBNF Soldier 1: "Whatever you say, crazy."

At the end of the hallway, we are greeted by a massive titanium door, which opens to reveal a sort of courtroom. There's about... seven judges. Guess we broke a lot of laws.
Judge 1: "Company 027C. You have all been charged with seven counts of mass manslaughter against the UBNF. The penalty for your actions is life imprisonment."
What a speedy and fair trial.
Judge 2: "Kyle A. King, you have too many penalties to effectively list. You will receive the death penalty."
UBNF Soldier 2: "But we do things a little differently here, as I'm sure you know."
Kyle is pushed forward by two soldiers into the center of the room. A circular wall a couple feet wide rises up a few feet, encasing him. From the sides of the room, more soldiers walk in with four of those monsters from the vault and ACE1 on fucking leashes. They are lunging at Kyle despite the fact that they are separated by a wall.

Judge 1: "Release th-"
UBNF Soldier 3: "No. This is wrong. Kyle used to be a very valuable asset to our cause and still is. We can't kill him. Let alone like this."

Kyle gives this look to that soldier that is simultaneously sympathetic and frustrated. Like he's thankful for the soldier speaking up to try to save his life but nonetheless has already accepted his fate.

A tangible peace of hope lingers in the silent room for the next few seconds as we all realize what this could do for us.

Until the soldier who spoke up is shot by another soldier. And all the hope is ripped from us.

Judge 1: "Release the hounds."
All four monsters enter the cage Kyle is trapped in at once. In an act that surprises me but also doesn't, he begins fighting them. While handcuffed. Combining various kicks and headbutts and fucking goomba stomps, he manages to kill all four monsters, although not without losing some of his blood to them.
Kyle: "Look at all you've done, you fucking monsters. You have killed MILLIONS of innocent people. And you have forged so many lies to cover up your desire for infinite power. Well guess what bucko, this is just the fucking start. Your greed is going to kill all of you. Kill me and six more people'll take my place. You have no idea what kind of hell is coming your way."
Judge 1: "Wonderful speech. Unfortunately, people will likely not listen to a traitor."
Judge 2: "Assets, kill him."
The walls containing Kyle fall and numerous soldiers surround him, guns pointed.

Kyle: "...Goliath was bound to lose. Because David broke the rules."

Kyle is shot eighteen times.

And in one last act of defiance, he remains standing for multiple seconds before eventually falling to the ground.

Kyle is dead. For real this time.

Judge 2: "Assets, contain the rest of them."
We are escorted out of the room and down the long hallway again.

Nobody speaks.

EPILOGUE

PERSPECTIVE OF: Unknown

Journal Entry #13637

I am PWC04. I have been in the same building for 37 years. I am 55 years old. I do not remember my past life before being transported here. My life is good. I am protected from the enemies. So are my friends. They say that one day we will escape. I do not know what they mean by this.

End Journal Entry

“I know damn well who I am. I know exactly who I was before this hell. I hate this life. I am a prisoner of war. So are my friends. We will escape one day. I know it. The civil war is going in our favor. All we need now is an opportunity. Let’s not mess this one up.
Colette Lampa, signing off.”

END
