

Ascension Endo

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EXT. EXCAVATION FIELD - DAY

A thin line of rope quivers under a strong breeze. It's weaved from stake to stake outlining the boundary of an archaeological dig.

Deep trenches of dark black dirt are cut into the lush fields of an English countryside.

From inside a trench a STUDENT(20s) excitedly pops up. He hurriedly rushes along, almost tripping over his own feet, as he weaves his way past fellow WORKERS.

STUDENT  
Excuse me, excuse me...

He hops over the boundary line and crosses to a...

TENT

The tent flap pulls back and the student barges in.

STUDENT  
Sir.

An ARCHAEOLOGIST (50s) looks his way.

STUDENT  
I found something... odd.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXCAVATION FIELD - DAY

The archaeologist kneels down into the muck. He leans his head in close and gently starts to brush away the dirt.

Slowly, the edges of an object begin to be unearthed.

It's cylindrical in shape. Black and glossy where it isn't tarnished by dirt and mud.

Freeing it, he delicately pulls the object out of the ground and holds it up to his face.

His eyes narrow.

ARCHAEOLOGIST  
What the devil is this?

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

The sun not quite out yet.

Only a small bit of light trickles in through the blinds, but we can still see that it's a tiny place. Compact.

Living room, kitchen, and bedroom all greet you when you open the front door.

A figure moves about, deftly navigating the dark. Female, 30s, she slips into a pair of boots and slings a bag across her shoulder.

This is MAZUKU ENDO. Bright eyes. Short jet-black hair with strips of blue throughout. Carries herself with a swagger.

She crosses to the door.

VOICE (O.S.)

You're just gonna slip out like that?

She freezes.

MAZUKU

Apparently not.

She spins back around and flashes a smile.

A light clicks on.

Sitting up in the bed is LEE MADDOX (30s) Strong jaw, crew-cut hair, steely gaze, looks like a Marine Corps ad come to life.

MAZUKU

It's not personal.

LEE

No. Of course not. Why would it be?

MAZUKU

I didn't promise you anything.

LEE

I didn't ask you to.

MAZUKU

Then what are you expecting from me?

LEE  
Decency. But I'd settle for at  
least a proper goodbye.

Beat.

MAZUKU  
Goodbye.

He shakes his head in dismay.

LEE  
This is how you treat me?

MAZUKU  
Horrible isn't it? Terrible. What  
kind of person would do such a  
thing?

She slowly eases herself onto the bed.

MAZUKU  
And the answer is, a bad person. A  
selfish person.

Mazuku reaches out her hand and caresses his face.

MAZUKU  
(softly)  
And you don't need someone like  
that in your life.

He takes hold of her hand.

LEE  
I don't accept that.

Mazuku snorts a laugh.

MAZUKU  
That's always been your problem,  
Lee. You think I'm good.

LEE  
No. I don't.

He stares into her eyes.

LEE  
(softly)  
I just think you want to be.

There's a moment.

LEE  
(softly)  
Stay.

She opens her mouth to reply, but he interjects.

LEE  
I'm not saying for forever. Just  
for today. And then we'll see about  
tomorrow. And the day after that,  
and in thirty years who knows where  
we'll be.  
(beat)  
Just stay.

She thinks for a moment and then leans in and kisses him  
gently.

MAZUKU  
It's tempting. I'll give you that  
much.

Then she rises to her feet and walks out the door.

INT. BASILISK - CORRIDOR - SPACE

CAPTAIN AMBROSE (40s) and his deck officer TARAVALA (30s)  
walk down the long corridor, their footsteps CLANGING  
against the grated flooring.

Like the rest of the rooms on the freighter Basilisk, the  
hallway is dim and dirty. It's industrial and cold.

Hard metallic edges.

Lights flickering and needing replacement.

Exposed cable running along the ceiling into conduits.

AMBROSE  
A stowaway? On my ship?

TARAVALA  
Aye.

Ambrose stands a head taller than his men. There's an  
intelligence in his eyes, but also a ruthlessness.

The sidearm perpetually holstered to him is often the  
instrument of that ruthlessness.

AMBROSE  
What crawlspace did you find her  
in?

TARAVA  
Actually we found her in your  
chair.

Ambrose stops.

AMBROSE  
What?

TARAVA  
She was on the Command Deck just...  
sitting there--

AMBROSE  
In my chair?

Beat.

TARAVA  
Yes.

Ambrose gives a perplexed look and keeps walking.

INT. BASILISK - LOADING DOCK - SPACE

Captain Ambrose storms onto the loading dock.

His CREW, comprised of about twenty men are waiting for him. They're a hard-nosed bunch, scrappers, with calloused hands, missing teeth, and smudges of motor oil on their skin.

They stand before a large hatch that's mostly comprised of thick metallic glass.

On the other side of it is Mazuku. She stands like a woman waiting trial.

Ambrose saunters over to the glass.

He peers at her, a memory wafting into his mind.

AMBROSE  
Endo, wasn't it?

MAZUKU  
You have a good memory, Captain.

AMBROSE  
And a long one.

He cocks his head and takes another step toward her.

AMBROSE  
You worked for Jamarr.

MAZUKU  
I ran his network.

AMBROSE  
Good man.

MAZUKU  
Not really.

Ambrose gives a toothy smile.

AMBROSE  
Shame what happened to him though.

He takes another menacing step forward.

AMBROSE  
And how did you manage to avoid the gallows?

MAZUKU  
I got recruited.

AMBROSE  
Ah.

MAZUKU  
Science Officer.

Ambrose gives a little whistle.

AMBROSE  
Respectable.

She shrugs.

MAZUKU  
A girl's got to make a living.

AMBROSE  
And that's hard to do when dead.

MAZUKU  
Yeah, that was my thinking too.

Beat.

AMBROSE

So... Miss Endo, how did you manage to sneak aboard my ship?

MAZUKU

Oh, that? Wasn't that hard. You really need to upgrade your security. Basically I just flirted with that guy and swiped his access card.

She points at a SCRAWNY CREWMAN.

All eyes turn to him. He MUMBLES something in protest but before he can formulate any cogent thought -- BANG!

Bits of brain and blood splatter across the room.

Captain Ambrose holsters his weapon and the room goes deathly silent.

They all stare at the remains of the Scrawny Crewman.

Long beat.

MAZUKU

Actually... sorry, I think it was that guy.

She points at another CREWMAN, who GASPS at the charge and vigorously shakes his head.

MAZUKU

Boy -- that's embarrassing.

(then)

You know it's not really a great idea to discharge a weapon on a space ship--

Captain Ambrose casually crosses to a control panel. He flips off a protective cover.

MAZUKU

What uh-- what-- what are you doing?

AMBROSE

What we do with all our garbage.

MAZUKU

(starting to panic)

Wait a minute, wait a minute...



She leans up against the barrier.

MAZUKU  
(trying to be casual )  
You know you're asking all the wrong  
questions. You wanna know *how* I got  
on board, don't you wanna know *why*?

AMBROSE  
(flatly)  
Not particularly.

He flips a switch.

BRRRNG BRRRNG. Red warning lights FLASH.

VRMMMMMMM -- the large bay doors behind Mazuku start to  
open.

MAZUKU  
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

There's a HIISSSSS as the vacuum of space starts to pull  
at Mazuku -- the doors slowly opening -- VRRMMMM.

MAZUKU  
There's a million credits in it for  
you! Standard!

Ambrose's eyebrows raise.

He thinks for a moment...

VRRRRMM...

and then... CLICK.

He flips back the switch and the bay doors start to seal  
back.

VRRRRMM -- CLANG. Seal tight.

Mazuku breathes a sigh of relief.

AMBROSE  
A million? Science Officers must be  
paid more than I thought.

MAZUKU  
It's Jamarr's.

AMBROSE  
They seized his assets.

MAZUKU  
The ones that they knew about.  
(then)  
I set up the accounts myself, I can  
get it to you.

AMBROSE  
Mmmm.

He thinks for a moment.

AMBROSE  
So a million... in exchange for?

MAZUKU  
Number one, not blowing me out the  
damn airlock. And frankly, I'm a  
little peeved I have to mention  
that.

AMBROSE  
And two?

MAZUKU  
And two, sort of related to number  
one, I want safe passage to the  
Meridian system.

There's a slight MURMUR among the CREW.

AMBROSE  
That's Horde space.

MAZUKU  
If it weren't, my fare would be  
cheaper.  
(beat)  
Jamarr said you've been.

Beat.

MAZUKU  
We have a deal Captain?

Ambrose eyes her a moment.

AMBROSE  
Color me intrigued.

INT. BASILISK - COMMAND DECK - SPACE

Captain Ambrose, Tarava and Mazuku are gathered around a circular display that's about table height. On the display is a galactic map and on that map is a blinking red dot.

MAZUKU  
Long-range Confederate sensors  
picked up an SOS here.

She points at the blinking dot.

MAZUKU  
It was weak, but steady. Short-range  
signal -- kinda thing you might use  
on a spacewalk.

AMBROSE  
How did you come by this?

MAZUKU  
I'm friendly with a Commander with  
some loose lips.

TARAVA  
(seething)  
Friendly with Confederates?

MAZUKU  
Did I mention his lips? Believe me  
this is not the best thing he's  
done with them.

Tarava scowls.

AMBROSE  
SOS, so this a rescue?

MAZUKU  
Lord no.

AMBROSE  
Then what?

Mazuku eyes him for a moment.

MAZUKU  
It's a recon mission.

MAZUKU (cont'd)

(then)

The signal wasn't fixed so... based on its speed and trajectory -- factoring in the time delay of the signal to reach the inner core, and barring any intersection of gravitational forces--

Ambrose leans in close and cuts her off.

AMBROSE

Recon for what?

They lock eyes.

MAZUKU

Just follow my coordinates, alright?

Ambrose shakes his head.

AMBROSE

I'm not gonna put my ship and my men in danger unless there's a good reason.

MAZUKU

I'm giving you a million good reasons. If that's not enough I'll give you fifteen K for your trouble and you can just drop me off at the nearest port.

AMBROSE

Or maybe I'll just blow you out the airlock.

MAZUKU

Then you get nothing.

AMBROSE

Good point.

(then)

I guess I should sell you as a sex slave.

He looks her up and down.

AMBROSE

Think I'd get more than fifteen K for you?

MAZUKU  
 (insulted)  
 I would certainly hope so.

He eyes her, silently threatening.

She gives an exasperated sigh.

MAZUKU  
 You strike a hard bargain.  
 (then)  
 Alright, I'll tell you what we're  
 after -- but this doesn't leave this  
 deck.

AMBROSE  
 Fine.

MAZUKU  
 And no new alterations on our deal.

AMBROSE  
 On my honor.

She glances around and then leans in close.

MAZUKU  
 (hushed tone)  
 The call sign on the SOS was  
 Science Station Ascension.

She pauses a moment, hoping that statement would wow.

It doesn't.

MAZUKU  
 (off their response)  
 Nothing?

TARAVA  
 Is that supposed to mean something?

She gives another exasperated sigh.

MAZUKU  
 Thirteen years ago Science Station  
 Ascension vanished off the face of  
 the universe, which is particularly  
 unfortunate because their last two  
 known transmissions indicated that  
 their experiments had been  
 successful.

AMBROSE  
What experiments?

MAZUKU  
Teleportation.

Beat.

AMBROSE  
Teleportation?

MAZUKU  
Of organic matter.

TARAVA  
Who the hell would want to mess  
with that?

MAZUKU  
Everyone.

TARAVA  
Not me.

MAZUKU  
Well then you lack imagination.

TARAVA  
I can imagine my body being  
disintegrated just fine.

Mazuku swivels to Tarava.

MAZUKU  
How many known natural wormholes  
are there in the universe?

Tarava scrunches his face.

TARAVA  
Two hundred and uh--

MAZUKU  
Thirty-four thousand. Some  
controlled by the Confederacy, some  
by the Horde, and an ever shrinking  
number are free. All space travel  
runs through those wormholes, but,  
if you could create your own  
wormhole, you'd have open skies,  
right?

TARAVA

No.

MAZUKU

No? Why not?

Tarava's forehead creases, confused why she's asking questions to common knowledge.

MAZUKU

(explaining)

It's called the Socratic method.

TARAVA

Huh?

MAZUKU

Just answer the question.

TARAVA

You can't generate a wormhole much bigger than a centimeter--

MAZUKU

Correct, otherwise you risk -- you know -- destroying the universe.

(then)

Pretty serious drawback. So, big things like people or spaceships are out. But data is in.

(beat)

And the same way we transmit communication signals over those wormholes, we could teleport.

(beat)

Makes space travel a thing of the past. Makes the skies free.

She cocks an eyebrow at Tarava.

MAZUKU

That doesn't interest you?

Tarava purses his lips and gives a shrug of the shoulders.

MAZUKU

And that might just be the tip of it.

She stares off in wonder.

MAZUKU  
It opens up a world of  
possibilities.

Beat.

AMBROSE  
If it worked.

She turns back to Ambrose.

MAZUKU  
We find that station, we'll find  
out.

Ambrose gives a slight nod.

AMBROSE  
Okay. What's our heading?

Mazuku grins.

INT. BASILISK - BUNK - SPACE

SCRIMM (20s) a lanky crewman with bulbous eyes, escorts  
Mazuku into her sleeping quarters, which is about the size  
of a closet.

There's a bed, a toilet and not much else.

SCRIMM  
This is your bunk.

Mazuku glances around.

MAZUKU  
Cozy.

SCRIMM  
Mess hall is down that way.

MAZUKU  
Okay. Thank you.

He doesn't leave. Just stares at her.

MAZUKU  
Is there something else?

He smiles creepily.