

THE DRAGONSLAYERS

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SPACE COURT - DAY

A big, empty, futuristic-looking courtroom; DRED (30) is chained to the ground. She's short, about five feet even, but RIPPED; looks like she could bench press a truck. She wears her hair in three braids.

The JUDGE is a twenty-foot tall hologram in the center of the room. Flowing robes, curly white wig, and a glowing gavel.

JUDGE

If you'd just tell us where the artifacts are, we could-

DRED

Suck my dick. Piss in your booze.

The judge sighs.

JUDGE

Alright. Bring him out.

Another hologram, this one life-size: Lew, kneeling in front of Dred.

DRED

(under her breath)  
Clouds above.

LEW

I'm sorry, Dred. I really am.

DRED

I know, Lew. Did you get the stuff to Ursos?

He nods. Dred relaxes.

DRED (CONT'D)

Then we're square.

Lew's confused.

LEW

Even though the cops confiscated the cash?

All Dred's tension comes back, and then some.

DRED

What cash?

LEW  
The cash. Ursos's payment.

DRED  
That wasn't the deal. He was  
supposed to-

LEW  
Dred, you gotta tell them where  
Ursos put the stuff. They're gonna  
lock us up, Dred, both of us,  
forever. It's not worth it.

DRED  
You don't get to decide what it's  
worth!

JUDGE  
Regardless, he is correct. I have  
the authority to throw you both in  
the oubliette until the artifacts  
are recovered. Which, without your  
aid-

DRED  
DAMN IT.

Beat. The judge is startled.

Dred sighs.

DRED (CONT'D)  
I invoke the Firstmoot.

The judge throws up his hands, exasperated.

JUDGE  
...The Firstmoot.

DRED  
(aimed at Lew)  
I'd been planning to save that for  
a while.  
(to Judge)  
But great-great uncle Winfrith died  
last month, leaving me fiftieth in  
line for the Old Throne.

JUDGE  
You cannot... You're not...

He can't even right now. His hologram winks out.

Dred smiles, but she's worried.

LEW  
What's the Firstmoot?

DRED  
Treaty between the Old King and the  
Federates. With some very specific  
diplomatic immunity for those in  
line for the Throne.

LEW  
You're a dwarf?

DRED  
Half. On my father's side.

LEW  
And a... princess?

The judge reappears, this time life-size, somewhere between  
amused and furious.

JUDGE  
You're Etheldred ov Esmond ov  
Godiva?

DRED  
...Ov Godric, ov Godric, ov...  
Willmar? Ov Old King Leofric. Yeah,  
that's me.

Beat.

The judge disappears again.

LEW  
So what does that mean for us?

DRED  
For us? Not much. For me? I'm  
going... "home."

LEW  
Wait, Dred, you can't leave me  
here-

DRED  
I can do whatever I want. We're  
only here because of you in the  
first place.

Lew freaks out a little.

LEW  
But Dred, it's not my fault Rufus-

DRED  
No, it's just your fault we're  
chained up right now.

LEW  
Well... ye-

A new hologram replaces Lew, this one a short, stout woman in  
glasses, with her hair in braids a lot like Dreds': EDELFRID.

EDELFRID  
Etheldred ov Esmond ov Godiva ov  
Godric ov Godric ov Willhard ov  
Leofric?

Dred mouths "Willhard." Duh.

Beat.

DRED  
Oh, uh. That's me.

EDELFRID  
My name is Edelfrid. You've been  
remanded into my care. I'll arrive  
in approximately eighteen hours and  
twenty-eight minutes. Is that  
sufficient time to sell your  
belongings?

DRED  
And to pack? Yeah.

EDELFRID  
Don't bother packing. Anything you  
bring will be disposed of.

DRED  
Okay, but I have a few heirlooms  
and pieces from my father-

EDELFRID  
Those are property of the throne  
and should have been returned to  
the throne's care at the moment of  
his passing. Someone will be by to  
repossess them.

DRED  
Wait, you can't-

Edelfrid softens, just for a beat.

EDELFRID

It's a formality. They'll be remanded into your care as soon as... as soon as we can decide what to do with you.

DRED

Oh. Okay.

EDELFRID

Are we finished?

DRED

I...

Beat. She groans.

DRED (CONT'D)

I have a handmaiden. Hand... man? I have a handman.

Edelfrid shakes her head.

EDELFRID

You can't take any servants or-

DRED

I don't want to take him with me, but he's been incarcerated while under my authority, and I want to make sure-

Edelfrid grunts, writes something down.

EDELFRID

He'll be taken care of.

She waves her hand, and Dred's chains unlock. Dred stands.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

A car will be remanded into your care until I arrive.

DRED

A lot of remanding into care, huh?

EDELFRID

Please have your affairs in order in eighteen hours and twenty-seven minutes.

Edelfrid disappears.

Dred rubs her wrists. Looks around. Nobody's here.

DRED

Um...

INT. SPACEPORT - DAY

Heavily used and shows it, but it's actually maintained pretty well. People of all shapes and sizes and species mill about from point A to point B. Some noteworthy vignettes:

- A family of blue-skinned, fanged, hunchbacked ORCS nap on top of each other in a corner.

- A dwarf and an elf, both with several bags, argue over a chair.

- A woman whose lower half is a snake struggles to fit her entire tail inside an elevator.

Dred sits opposite the arguing elf and dwarf. She hunches over a wrist-mounted computer, swears under her breath.

DRED

Come on. Yes. Yes yes yes-

An error message pops up: ACCOUNT DELETED.

DRED (CONT'D)

Shit.

She leans back in her chair. Tries to relax.

DRED (CONT'D)

There are no logs or warrants, so he wasn't arrested.

A seven-foot tall HOODED FIGURE in a black robe sits in the chair next to her; she doesn't notice. You can't see his face; it's legitimately spooky, until he speaks. He sounds like someone's dad.

HOODED FIGURE

But you have no way of knowing if we've found him yet. That's rough.

Dred sits up straight. Eyes dead ahead; she can't bring herself to look at him.

DRED

Did you?

HOODED FIGURE

Dred clenches her jaw.

The figure chuckles; he has an endearing laugh.

HOODED FIGURE (CONT'D)  
Relax. Alex is fine, we haven't  
touched him. We got no reason to.

DRED  
Not right now.

HOODED FIGURE  
Hopefully not ever. Gods' Maw, kid,  
we saw what happened. You failed  
miserably, but it's not like you're  
stiffing us on purpose.

Dred scoffs, looks at him.

DRED  
Stiffing you? I owe you money?

The figure laughs again.

HOODED FIGURE  
As far as we see it, Rufus paid you  
so that you could pay us.

DRED  
That wasn't the deal. Rufus was  
supposed to-

HOODED FIGURE  
I'm not making the call, I'm just  
telling you how it is.

DRED  
Screw you.

The figure stands.

HOODED FIGURE  
For what it's worth, I, personally,  
have a lot of faith in you. Even  
when you fail, you fail big. I  
respect that.

Dred flips him off.

The hooded figure walks away, brushes past Edelfrid as she  
arrives.

HOODED FIGURE (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

Edelfrid stands next to Dred, watches the figure go.

EDELFRID

You run in... unseemly circles.

Dred looks to see who was talking; she's a little startled to see Edelfrid, and jumps to her feet.

DRED

What?

EDELFRID

I already wasn't thrilled at the Firstmoot being used to get out of prison. But running from gambling debts, too?

DRED

I don't gamble. And I'm not running from anything. But I need to-

EDELFRID

I don't want to know. Truly.

Beat. Dred hesitates.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

Goodness. Fine. Tell me on the way.

Edelfrid leads Dred away.

INT. LUXURY CABIN - SPACE

EDELFRID

Absolutely not.

The cabin is the size of a small apartment. One wall is a massive forcefield-window showing the blackness of space. The walls are gold and the furniture is covered in silk.

Dred paces around the room, plays with her braids.

Edelfrid sits at a small desk with a tablet and a stein of something blue and bubbly. She rubs her eyes, exasperated.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

You do not get to dip into the royal treasury for personal expenses.

DRED

What about a loan?

EDELFRID

If you have a business proposition,  
certainly.

Dred opens her mouth.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

A legal business proposition.

Dred closes her mouth.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

Otherwise, I suggest you find your  
own way to pay them back. Your  
mother is still a rather successful  
art dealer, is she not? You could-

Dred shakes her head.

DRED

Burned that bridge.

EDELFRID

Ah.

Dred GROANS.

DRED

Ugh. This SUCKS.

Dred collapses on a chair.

DRED (CONT'D)

You know the worst part?

EDELFRID

Tell me.

DRED

This was the last step. I called in  
all my favors, banked everything I  
had on this.

EDELFRID

Tch. Reckless.

DRED

This would've given me everything I  
needed for...

Beat.

Dred smiles.

DRED (CONT'D)  
What was that you said about  
business propositions?

Edelfrid takes off her glasses.

EDELFRID  
If you have a legitimate  
proposition, I would genuinely love  
to hear it. One of my chief roles  
as-

Dred hits swipes at a holo on her wrist. Half a dozen screens  
full of charts and graphs pop up around Edelfrid.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)  
You come prepared.

DRED  
Always.

Edelfrid puts her glasses back on.

DRED (CONT'D)  
I've been working on this for... I  
don't remember a time when I  
wasn't. The last piece in the  
puzzle was last year when I finally  
got access to the Crusade's survey  
data. Well, the last piece was the  
funding, which this job was-

Edelfrid examines the screens. Her eyes bug out of her head.

EDELFRID  
You can't be serious.

Edelfrid waves her hands, closes all the holodisplays.

DRED  
No, no wait!

EDELFRID  
I'm not throwing away royal  
resources so you can commit suicide  
in spectacular fashion.

DRED  
It's not suicide. I do this right,  
there's barely even any risk.

Edelfrid stares at her.

DRED (CONT'D)  
I know every detail of this job.  
Ask me anything.

Edelfrid presses something on the tablet. The holodisplays reappear. She examines them.

EDELFRID  
Just now, I see a dozen reasons it can't be done.

Dred examines the displays Edelfrid is looking at.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)  
You'd need an army. An entire legion wouldn't be enough.

DRED  
I'd need four men. Including me. So three more.

Edelfrid sighs.

EDELFRID  
Okay. Talk me through it. What's the plan?

DRED  
What? Really?

EDELFRID  
Sell me on it.

DRED  
Okay. Okay. Sure. Look here:

EXT. SPACE

The starry void.

DRED (O.S.)  
My parents told me stories about Jushurka when I was just a kid. Big art collector legend.

A wall of... distortion. Everything on the other side is weird and hazy.

DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Surrounded by a constant gravity storm, so nobody can get in or out.

Through the storm, a solar system around a dim star. Shapes move around several of the planets.

DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Inside the storm, countless  
 drakkennests, so even if you did  
 get in, you'd have to fight off  
 endless swarms.

Closer, you can make out the shapes: millions of snakelike  
 DRAKES, each the size of a skyscraper.

Past the swarms, a golden planet, shining peaks and silver  
 seas. It's covered in a weird green laser-net.

DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Then, of course, the planet itself  
 has top-of-the-line security. I'm  
 talking holoproduction facilities  
 that could take down a small fleet.  
 But oh, once you're past that?

In on the planet. It's simply littered with gold and jewels,  
 and that's not even the valuable part. There are massive  
 buildings covered and filled with art of all sorts.  
 Paintings, sculptures, the works.

DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Gold beyond imagining, sure, but  
 entire cities filled with ancient  
 treasures. The greatest works of  
 all the great masters. I'm talking  
 paintings, sculptures, vids,  
 books...

A library the size of Manhattan, all first editions.

DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 A backpack full of stuff, and you  
 could live better than the Old King  
 himself. A frigate, and your great-  
 times-ten grandchildren would.

Zoom out to another global view of the planet.

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
 Not only have you failed to mention  
 anything about any plan to get past  
 the obstacles you mentioned, you  
 didn't say anything about the one  
 obstacle worth mentioning.

DRED (O.S.)  
What, Jushur himself? He's been  
asleep for millenia. Honestly, he  
might be dead.

As the planet rotates, we see a long shape, the size of a  
moon. It's a living being, a dragon: JUSHUR.

INT. EDELFRID'S OFFICE - DAY

"Grand" doesn't begin to do it justice. A massive room of  
hewn stone, with rugs and tapestries as thick as your fist.  
Natural, uncut gems run through the walls in spectacular  
veins.

Edelfrid sits at a desk fit for a king; Dred sits on the  
desk.

EDELFRID  
I am unconvinced.

DRED  
I can fly through the storm.

EDELFRID  
You cannot.

DRED  
(ignoring her)  
Give me a wizard who can cloak the  
ship past the swarm...

EDELFRID  
You can't cloak something that  
large.

DRED  
...A techie who can hack through  
the planet's security system...

EDELFRID  
You can't simply "hack" a planet's  
security system.

DRED  
...And someone strong to lug  
everything to the ship...

EDELFRID  
That is doable.

DRED  
 ...and we can handle it, no  
 problem. In and out, don't even  
 need to bring any weapons.

Edelfrid is unconvinced.

DRED (CONT'D)  
 We will, though. Lots.

EDELFRID  
 Of course.

DRED  
 Like I said, I know it looks risky-

EDELFRID  
 To call it "risky" would imply  
 there's a possibility of success.

DRED  
 Okay, even if it's low, you can't  
 say there's zero chance for  
 success.

EDELFRID  
 I can. You're asking the  
 impossible. And even if you could  
 find a mage capable of cloaking an  
 entire ship, and someone capable of  
hacking a planet, they would have  
 to be willing to face the absurdly  
 high chance of death on this  
 mission.

DRED  
 So what you're saying is-

EDELFRID  
 That we need to look at something  
 realistic.

DRED  
 -That if I can find the crew,  
 you'll get me the supplies we need?

Edelfrid looks at her. Dred's dead serious.

Edelfrid sighs.

EDELFRID  
 I'm trying to help you, Etheldred.  
 I'm on your team. We'd have better  
 odds just buying lottery tickets.

DRED

Not at all. Look at the cost versus the payoff. Even if we have a one percent chance of success, if you had just a one percent stake in the venture-

EDELFRID

I would certainly not accept-

DRED

-Then, if we succeed, you still get back, like, ten thousand times your investment.

Edelfrid sighs, runs some numbers on a screen that pops out of her desk.

EDELFRID

Don't be silly. It'd be...

Oh. Oh.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

More like fifty thousand.

She realizes the amount of money they're talking about.

DRED

And that's just a one percent stake. You'd obviously get at least...

DRED (CONT'D)

...Five percent.

EDELFRID

Sixty percent.

They stare each other down for a beat.

DRED (CONT'D)

I said at least. And either way, still better odds than the lottery.

EDELFRID

Assuming you actually have a one percent chance of success.

A small holo-alert CHIMES on Dred's wrist.

She ignores it at first.

DRED

You still win if I have point-oh-one percent chance. Which you don't think I'd have because...

Dred looks at the alert: MESSAGE FROM ALEX.

EDELFRID

Because...?

DRED

Uh... what? Because... because you don't think I can find the crew. But if I did...

But she's already engrossed, scrolling through the message. She looks relieved.

Beat. Edelfrid realizes Dred's not paying any attention.

EDELFRID

It's not me who owes the Black Marks money. If you want to waste time on this, then go for it.

Dred looks up.

DRED

What? Wait, what? Really?

EDELFRID

BUT. I'd need to be convinced. And not just me, I have several superiors I'd have to convince. So don't think you can bring in the first hedge wizard or script kiddie you find on a street corner.

Dred's already halfway out the door.

DRED

Of course! I'll tell you as soon...

She's not even paying attention to herself. She hurries out the door.

INT. GOVERNMENT CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

If the hallways are anything to go by, Edelfrid has one of the less prestigious offices. Ceilings thirty feet high, with every sort of precious stone decorating the half-dozen chandeliers you can see from here.

A small hologram of ALEX appears on Dred's wrist. He's a hulking lizardman with an impressive ridge on his head.

DRED

Alex, what the hell? Where have you been.

ALEX

Sorry, I jumped on the first flight out of the Federates and we hit a convergence. My comm still isn't working, this is a loaner.

DRED

So where are you now?

ALEX

Some backwater gnome planet. Why?

DRED

Get to the Dwarven Realms. We're doing it.

ALEX

That's on the opposite side of... it? We're doing it?

Dred grins.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Oh shit. Okay. I'll be a couple weeks.

DRED

In the meantime, can you get me a shortlist of candidates?

ALEX

Now? Like, we're really-

DRED

You know what we're looking for.

She shuts off the comm. Struts outside.

INT. CLASSY BAR - DAY

The bar is made out of one solid piece of marble. Turquoise tiles decorate the pillars. Fancy shit.

ALEX (V.O.)

I want to reiterate one more time how much I disapprove of all of this.

DRED (V.O.)  
I'm not gonna bother reiterating  
how little I care.

Most of the clientele are as classy as the bar. But not  
FRANKLIN.

Franklin is a human, mid 40s, in a dirty jacket, jeans, and  
muddy combat boots. He cuts his own hair, and he's not very  
good at it.

Alex's VO SIGHS.

ALEX (V.O.)  
Fine. I'm gonna send you to  
Franklin. You're not gonna like  
what you see, but bear with him.

EXT. WARZONE - DAY

Rocky crags, bullets, and explosions.

Franklin shoots lightning from his fingertips, defending a  
few dozen wounded men from a whole unit of murderbots.

ALEX  
Franklin's a war hero - or, uh,  
criminal, depending on your team.  
Guy's a savant.

An enemy gunship flies overhead; Franklin waves his hand, and  
a shimmering veil covers everything.

Now, to the gunship, Franklin and all his men look like  
robots, and the robots look like his men.

ALEX (V.O.)  
I only met him in person once, but  
when I did I watched him single-  
handedly levitate a class-4  
cruiser.

The gunship fires on what it doesn't realize is its own team,  
wipes out all of the robots.

Franklin lights a cigar off a smoldering robot. Steps on its  
head.

INT. CLASSY BAR - DAY

Dred sits next to Franklin at the bar, already deep into her  
explanation and pitch.

ALEX (V.O.)  
 He's not technically a mercenary,  
 but when he sees the amount of  
 money we're offering-

Franklin LAUGHS, a big booming laugh.

DRED  
 No, hear me out.

Franklin just laughs harder.

DRED (CONT'D)  
 We can pull this off, it's not-

Franklin turns his back to her. A nearby security guard gives her a dirty look. Dred walks away.

ALEX (V.O.)  
 ...Okay. No big deal. He was a hack  
 anyway. Let's see...

Beat. Franklin's still laughing.

ALEX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Rumor has it Swithin is in the  
 Dwarven systems right now.

INT. TECHED-OUT WAREHOUSE

The walls are lined with sophisticated machinery. At the center of it is SWITHIN, an elf. He looks about 25, blonde hair; he's pale like he tried sunlight once, then decided it wasn't for him.

He wears a very distinctive smartwatch, big and bulky, takes up his entire wrist and then some.

ALEX (V.O.)  
 You may not have heard of him, but  
 in tech circles, he's practically a  
 god.

ZORION stands next Swithin; a glowing woman who looks like she's made out of light.

ALEX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He's got a Dryad assistant tied to  
 a centuries-old gaming watch he  
 salvaged.

INT. WARSHIP BRIDGE - SPACE

A massive bridge; fifty insect-people man stations. They're in the middle of a massive battle, and they're winning.

ALEX (V.O.)  
Even without her, though, the guy  
invented the Asgard OS before he  
hit puberty. Which, yeah, comes  
late for an elf, but still.

In a flash, all the lights on the ship turn up to 11. It's blinding. Warning sirens go off, everyone's panicking.

ALEX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Rumor has it they're the ones  
responsible for the whiteout that  
took down the Zil revolt.

The terminals spark and ignite into flames.

ALEX (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
No way to know for sure, though.

The ship explodes.

INT. TECHED-OUT WAREHOUSE - DAY

Dred, in hologram form, entreats Swithin. Zorion paces around the room, ignoring Dred in favor of the computer displays.

SWITHIN  
Is this not just a suicide mission?

DRED  
It's risky, but it's not suicidal.  
With the right crew, the odds are  
in our favor.

SWITHIN  
"In our favor" meaning, fifty-one  
percent? Fifty point oh-oh-one  
percent?

DRED  
I know what you're thinking. You're  
thinking, "If this is such-"

Zorion flicks her wrist, and Dred disappears.

ZORION  
Come look at this.

Swithin doesn't miss a beat, just wheels his chair over towards Zorion.

ALEX (V.O.)  
 Okay, it sucks, but it's to be expected, the guy's a legend. It was a pipe dream anyway. This next guy is-

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - DAY

Dred plays a chess-like game against a dwarf in a stereotypical pointy wizard's hat. He laughs.

DRED  
 No, I'm serious.

The dwarf laughs harder. Guffaws.

Dred sighs, makes a chess move and smirks.

The dwarf stops laughing, stares at the board, confused. He moves one piece, knocks over half of Dred's.

Dred's face falls.

ALEX (V.O.)  
 Don't worry about him, Puratech is always looking to invest in-

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Dred is a hologram at a business's board meeting.

One of the boardmembers turns off the hologram. They all look at each other and laugh.

INT. DRED'S ROOM - MORE OR LESS CONTINUOUS

Dred stands in front of a holodisplay: CONNECTION TERMINATED.

DRED  
 Same to you. Assholes.

She gestures towards a nearby chair. It wheels over and she collapses into it.

Her room is large, but utilitarian - no windows, holodisplay on one wall, bed in the corner. She's sitting in the only chair. The only ornamentation is a large postmodern painting on the wall above her bed.

A bunch of bags sit on the bed, half-unpacked, and the light's on in the bathroom - Alex is here.

She spins in the chair, faces the painting.

Stares for a beat.

DRED (CONT'D)  
We're going about this wrong.

Alex walks out of the bathroom.

ALEX  
What do you mean?

DRED  
We're looking for experts and asking if they're crazy enough to do something like this. We should be looking for lunatics and asking if they're talented enough to do something like this.

ALEX  
I can think of one downside to that.

Dred shakes her head, spins around to face him.

DRED  
No. I know how the plan looks. They were always going to have to be insane.

Beat.

ALEX  
Okay. I've been sitting on this one.

Dred looks excited.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Don't- don't make that face until you've met her.

She's still making the face.

DRED  
Why? She eat babies?

ALEX  
That was ONE TIME, and I had no way of knowing he had eaten- NO.  
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)  
She does not eat babies.

INT. FIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

A huge ring surrounded by an electric net, with a bloodthirsty crowd chanting and cheering.

Inside, a goblin woman wearing a leather cloak like something from the Matrix: JOHANNA. She shoots jets of fire from her fingertips at a dwarf with a machine gun.

The dwarf has some sort of force field, it repels the flames. He unloads at Johanna, who STOMPS her foot and is suddenly behind him.

The dwarf looks around for her, but she stays behind him, snickering.

Johanna performs a series of gestures. The dwarf sees her just as she finishes.

He raises his gun, but she flicks her wrist and he's INCINERATED BY A TOWER OF FLAMES.

The crowd goes NUTS, as Johanna cackles maniacally.

The flames disappear, revealing the dwarf alive, but charred, curled up on the ground.

Dred watches from the audience, uncertain.

DRED  
This is... she's definitely crazy.

Johanna kicks the dwarf out through a gap in the electric mesh, playing the crowd the whole time.

Alex's voice comes in over comms.

ALEX (O.S.)  
And talented. Or something like it. She's got so many bootleg spells in her system it's like a self-sustaining ecosystem of viruses. Most genius wizards have a library about half the size of hers.

Dred sighs.

DRED  
Okay. I'll talk to her.

Johanna struts around the ring.

JOHANNA

Who else wants some of what I'm  
selling? Huh?

Nobody bites.

CUT TO:

Johanna sits with a glass of something strong, enjoying  
herself. There are several empty stools on either side of  
her.

Dred sits next to her. Johanna doesn't like that.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)

I'll count to one. When I get  
there, you'd better-

DRED

I have a proposition for you. A  
job.

JOHANNA

Don't need a job.

Johanna twiddles her fingers. Prepping a spell. Dred notices.

DRED

More money than you could spend in  
an elf's lifetime.

JOHANNA

Don't need money. I'm gonna start  
counting now.

DRED

What do you need?

JOHANNA

Nothing. One.

Johanna snaps. Dred is THROWN BACKWARDS straight into a  
table, breaking the table in half.

Dred stumbles to her feet.

ALEX (O.S.)

Okay. I've got another lead in the  
city, maybe an hour-

DRED

I'm not done yet.

She cracks her neck.

Sits next to Johanna again.

DRED (CONT'D)  
You familiar with Jushur?

SNAP. Thrown back again; this time she SLAMS into the wall.

Dred clambers to all fours. Coughs up a little puke.  
Struggles to stand.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Thyr's pubes.

ALEX (O.S.)  
Let's leave this one.

Dred gets to her feet.

Sits next to Johanna again.

DRED  
Stellar dragon, planet full of  
treasure?

Johanna is about to snap, but Dred STICKS A KNIFE through  
Johanna's hand, nails it to the bar.

DRED (CONT'D)  
None of that's interesting enough  
to let me finish a thought? Screw  
you.

Johanna blanches, caught off-guard by the pain.

Dred stands, turns around, leans against the bar.

Johanna looks at Dred, confused and angry and...

Amused. She starts laughing.

She hides her other hand below the bar. Sparks dance among  
her fingertips.

JOHANNA  
That was a mistake.

Dred looks back over her shoulder.

DRED  
How big can you get a cloaking  
field?

Johanna splays out her fingers, and the lighting grows-

Dred SPINS AROUND HER BACK, and STABS JOHANNA'S OTHER HAND TO THE UNDERSIDE OF THE BAR.

Johanna gasps in surprise and pain again. Dred chills there, leans over Johanna's shoulder.

DRED (CONT'D)  
I have more knives.

Johanna bites her tongue. Snarls.

Yields.

JOHANNA  
In atmo, or in the void?

DRED  
Does it matter?

JOHANNA  
(fuck you)  
Yes.

Dred sits back down next to Johanna.

DRED  
Void.

JOHANNA  
I could sparking cloak a moon. If I had the time.

DRED  
You can't cloak a moon.

JOHANNA  
You can't cloak a moon.

Dred looks at her with something between respect and disbelief.

DRED  
How long would you need for a freighter? Think class-six.

Johanna stares at Dred; contemplates all the things she'll do to her once she gets a hand free.

JOHANNA  
Two years of prep. About a week to start it once that's done.

DRED  
Not good enough.

JOHANNA  
Excuse me?

DRED  
You'd have about three months of  
prep, less if I'm lucky.

JOHANNA  
You can't cloak a burning D-class  
with three months of prep.

DRED  
You can't.

She gets up, walks away.

Johanna tries to tug her hands free; winces.

JOHANNA  
Hey!

Dred stops, turns around.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
How long if you aren't lucky?

Dred smiles, just a little.

DRED  
Five months, tops.

Johanna shakes her head.

JOHANNA  
Your mother drop you as a child?

DRED  
Have fun setting people on fire.

She turns around to leave.

JOHANNA  
Five months of work, anyone within  
two megs would see right through  
it.

Dred stops.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)

And even that's only if you're crawling, no more than a hundred kips.

Dred turns around.

DRED

A hundred kips would get you from here to the edge of the system in, what, four days?

JOHANNA

I look like a calculator?

Dred smiles wide. Walks closer.

DRED

So with five months, you could cloak us against anything more than two megameters away, as long as we stayed under a hundred kips?

Johanna isn't sure if she's still angry, or if now she's interested.

JOHANNA

What are you even trying to do? Two megs, any planetary defense system will get you, easy as farting. It'd get you past solar defenses, but at a hundred kips, you're not doing anything interstellar. You said something about Jushurka?

Dred nods.

DRED

We're gonna rob it.

JOHANNA

Like, the Jushurka?

Johanna considers, honestly considers, but shakes her head.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)

I couldn't cloak you onto the planet. Nobody could, not in five months. Not in five years.

DRED

But you could get us to the planet.

JOHANNA

I told you, we couldn't go fast enough to... Does it have a solar defense network?

Dred sits next to Johanna again.

DRED

Nope. Just a grav storm that surrounds the whole system.

Hm. This is interesting.

JOHANNA

Shit. That's enough to keep everybody out. But if it wasn't... yeah, I could get you to the planet.

Dred takes the knife out of Johanna's closest hand. Johanna hisses, pulls out the other knife.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)

What's your plan for the storm? And landing?

Dred smiles.

INT. SHIPYARD - SPACE

Massive doesn't begin to do it justice. You can only see the wall near the door; it stretches off so far, the other walls are too far away to make out.

Inside are ships ranging from individual craft up to massive colony vessels that could fit millions of people.

Dred, who just entered, is awed by the scale. Alex, behind her, looks uncomfortable.

DRED

Never really get used to this.

ALEX

I don't like it. It's unnerving.

The place is mostly automated; flying bots whirring around in every direction, working on the ships, painting them, disassembling, reassembling.

Two spherical bots hover up next to Dred and Alex. She holds up a finger: "Wait."

DRED  
(to Alex)  
So who are we here for?

ALEX  
I... you're not gonna like it.

DRED  
I didn't like Johanna, but she'll  
do the job. This is our hacker,  
yeah?

ALEX  
...No.

A voice comes from one of the spherebots.

AGRIPPA  
Etheldred. Ov. Esmond.

Understanding and anger slowly wash over Dred. She glares at  
the bot, but keeps talking to Alex.

DRED  
You son of a bitch.

AGRIPPA  
You come into my house, and the  
first thing you say to me-

DRED  
Not you. Alex.

The voice is suddenly bright and chipper.

AGRIPPA  
Yes! How are you, Alex?

ALEX  
Still breathing.

The speaking bot moves closer to Alex.

AGRIPPA  
I told you she was trouble.

Dred waits, frustrated, but willing to let them talk.

ALEX  
Honestly, if not for her, I  
would've been fried years ago.

The bot shifts to look at Dred, then back at Alex.

AGRIPPA

I find that difficult to believe.  
Do you want to talk in my office?

ALEX

That would be nice.  
(to Dred)  
Wouldn't it?

Dred glares at him.

INT. AGRIPPA'S OFFICE - SPACE

Stainless steel everything. Lots of holodisplays, more than one person should be able to use at once.

Sitting in the center of them all, though, is not a person: it's a seven-foot-tall humanoid robot with five arms. This is AGRIPPA, a GNOME.

Dred stands in front of Agrippa's desk, Alex sits in a very comfortable chair beside her.

AGRIPPA

So what have you been up to? It's been, what, six years?

DRED

Do I really need to be here for this?

ALEX

Dred. We're asking for his help.

AGRIPPA

Are you? That's a bit surprising.

DRED

We don't need a pilot.

ALEX

You're going to fly a class-six freighter through a grav storm?

DRED

Yes!

AGRIPPA

Class six? Why? Old ones, why? What are you planning?

ALEX

We're plundering Jushurka.

AGRIPPA

No kidding?

(to Dred)

You've been working on this one for a long time, haven't you?

Dred sighs.

DRED

I have. Which is why I know I can handle it.

AGRIPPA

Good. I'd hate to think you were going to get yourself killed. If that's everything-

ALEX

Agrippa.

Alex looks at Dred. Back at Agrippa.

ALEX (CONT'D)

We're in with the Marks.

Agrippa freezes.

AGRIPPA

What did you do, Dred?

Dred opens her mouth to respond, but Alex interrupts.

ALEX

It wasn't her fault. My guy flunked out on us, and the job went deep, fast.

AGRIPPA

(to Dred)

This isn't the first time things haven't gone like you thought they would.

Dred glares at him.

DRED

Job couldn't have gone worse, and we're all alive and free. You know my motto.

Agrippa HUMS - GROWLS? It's a strange, digital sound.

AGRIPPA

"Everybody comes home." But you can't make that promise here. Robbing a stellar dragon? Not everybody survives this one.

DRED

No exceptions. I know what I'm doing.

Another angry HUM.

AGRIPPA

How do you do this? How do you do this to me? Even when I know you're wrong, I believe you.

Agrippa looks at his displays. Dozens of fingers start flying across keys and buttons, working on something inscrutable.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

Do you need a ship, too?

What he's really asking: Are you okay with me flying?

Dred chews on her tongue.

DRED

The Dwarfthrone is supplying it. I'll put you in touch with-

AGRIPPA

No. They're going to put you in something fast and durable because those are the most valuable traits in a freighter, but for a job like this we'll need to be agile and quiet. I've got something that should work, I'll get started retrofitting it now.

Dred looks at Alex.

ALEX

"You were right, Alex. Thank you."

Dred rolls her eyes.

INT. MEAD SHOP - DAY

Technically a bar, but more analogous to a tea shop. Doilies, small cups, lots of simulated sunlight inside - though outside the windows is a massive cavern.

A \*lot\* of open space, doorway at least three meters tall, ceiling a meter above that.

Edelfrid and Dred sit by the front window with a hot pot of mulled mead. Edelfrid doesn't look happy. She nods.

EDELFRID

It's... it's true. We put her through all of the standard tests of wizardry, and then some. She had a few... unusual knowledge gaps, but I am forced to believe she's up to the task.

DRED

So when will Agrippa get the money for the ship? He's already preparing it.

EDELFRID

That wasn't the deal. You still need at least a hacker. And more importantly, my colleagues have pointed out some gaps in your strategy, and I agree with them.

DRED

What gaps?

EDELFRID

Suppose something goes wrong?

DRED

Nothing will go wrong.

EDELFRID

Plan for failure if you want to succeed. I want some indication that things won't fall apart at the first hiccup.

Dred sighs, leans back, thinks.

DRED

I hear you, but there's really no room for error here. I'd rather focus on making sure things go right. If things go wrong, we'd have to fight an army, and there's not much we can do against that.

EDELFRID

You could bring a mercenary.

Dred laughs.

DRED

If we bring enough people to bump our odds up at all, we don't have any room for booty.

EDELFRID

We have a candidate in mind we'd approve of.

DRED

"A" candidate? One guy?

Edelfrid stands, gestures on a tablet; Dred's wrist beeps.

EDELFRID

I've set up a meeting with him. He'll be here soon. I regret not being able to join you, but you are hardly my only ward, nor my most foolhardy, so-

DRED

Wait wait wait-

Edelfrid leaves.

DRED (CONT'D)

You can't just...!

What the hell, man.

She looks at her wrist, examines the info Edelfrid sent her.

Dred's eyes bug out of her head.

DRED (CONT'D)

Claude the Maelstrom? She just casually sets up a meeting with Claude the booming Maelstrom?

A deep, booming voice, but restrained, like it's used to trying not to scare anyone. Thick accent.

CLAUDE

Are you Etheldred, then?

CLAUDE, a three-meter-tall OGRE with a single twisted horn, massive upturned tusks, and deep yellow skin, somehow manages to squat down on the chair Edelfrid had been sitting in.

He nods to a waiter, who seems to be familiar with him. They bring over a massive stewpot full of wine, which Claude picks up like a mug.

Dred swallows.

DRED  
Um... I didn't... Edelfrid gave me,  
like, two minutes notice that  
you... it's an honor to meet you?

Claude shrugs, embarrassed.

CLAUDE  
How are you doing today, Etheldred?

DRED  
You can call me Dred.

Claude chuckles.

CLAUDE  
Ooh! Very intimidating. It's a good  
name for a... what do you call  
yourself? Surely not "criminal."

DRED  
I guess I think of myself as an  
"outlaw."

Claude hums approval, nods. Sips his wine.

DRED (CONT'D)  
That's behind me, though. I'm  
royalty now.

Claude smiles, a little sad. It'd be patronizing if he didn't seem so vulnerable.

CLAUDE  
I have wished many times that my  
past did not define me, also.

DRED  
I can understand that. With a  
reputation like yours.

CLAUDE  
I earned it, in fire and blood. And  
that is what it is. I understand  
that we are fighting a dragon?

DRED  
No! Gods, no. Not if we can help  
it.

Claude nods. "Looks like you're sane." But he is a little  
disappointed.

CLAUDE  
Then what are we doing?

DRED  
Robbing one. Jushur, to be  
specific.

Claude chuckles.

CLAUDE  
Oh. This is fine, then.

DRED  
What's with the laugh?

CLAUDE  
You tell me we are not fighting a  
dragon, but then tell me we are  
stealing from him. As though there  
will not be a fight.

DRED  
We've got a plan. It's all-

Claude holds up a hand.

CLAUDE  
I am okay with this. Fight or no  
fight.

DRED  
You'd just... fight a dragon?

Claude shrugs.

CLAUDE  
Not for no reason.

DRED  
But this counts as a reason?

CLAUDE  
Certainly. When do we leave?

DRED  
You don't want to know about pay or  
anything?

CLAUDE

I am sure you will be fair. Or else  
I will kill you, probably.

Dred takes a beat to digest this conversation.

DRED

O-kay then. It'll be about four  
months. But we're getting together  
next week to start talking  
strategy.

Claude finishes his wine. Stands to leave.

CLAUDE

I will spend the time practicing.

Dred stands, struggles to find a way to shake Claude's hand  
that doesn't make her look like an infant.

She gives up, waves goodbye.

INT. AGRIPPA'S OFFICE - SPACE

Agrippa looks at a screen with a blinking yellow exclamation  
point.

Beat.

He hits a button. A holo of Dred's head pops up behind him.

AGRIPPA

We have a problem.

INT. DRED'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dred and Alex stare at each other, Dred in her chair, Alex on  
the bed.

ALEX

You're sure we need it?

DRED

Agrippa's right. You can't fly  
through a grav storm this size  
without a subspace ballast.

ALEX

You knew that, though, right?

DRED

Yeah, but I put the plan together in the Federates. Ballasts aren't restricted there like they are here.

ALEX

What do Dwarves do about grav storms, then?

DRED

Storms big enough to need one aren't a problem here. Meaning they'd mostly just get used for smuggling.

ALEX

We can't import one?

DRED

No. Not... ironically, we'd need to smuggle it in. And we can't just add it after we've left Dwarven space, because it's a key drive piece Johanna needs to cloak.

ALEX

Well... shit.

Dred shakes her head.

DRED

No. It's worse than that. It's fine. But it's terrible.

ALEX

What?

Dred runs through her options. She doesn't have any.

DRED

Damn it. Okay.

She turns to the holoscreen. Fiddles with the controls.

ALEX

Oh, shit.

INT. ATMOSPHERIC OFFICE - SUNSET

The office is completely empty. Just floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the clouds.

The hooded figure stares out at the view.

A CHIRP.

                  HOODED FIGURE  
Etheldred? So soon? I'm impressed.

                  DRED (O.S.)  
I've got something big. Like,  
stupidly big. Enough to pay you  
back ten times over and not care  
about it.

The figure cocks his head.

                  DRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I know it sounds crazy, and it kind  
of is, but you've got to trust me.  
I don't know how I can-

                  HOODED FIGURE  
Okay. I believe you.

                  DRED (O.S.)  
...Really? O-okay.

                  HOODED FIGURE  
You need something from us?

INT. DRED'S ROOM - INTERCUT

Dred and Alex stare at a little chibi avatar of the Hooded Figure.

                  DRED  
...We need a subspace ballast.

                  HOODED FIGURE  
That's it?

                  DRED  
In Dwarven space. Like, tomorrow.

                  HOODED FIGURE  
Hoooo. That's, uh... that's a big  
ask.

                  DRED  
I told you. Ten times what I owe  
you.

                  HOODED FIGURE  
I'm gonna need more than that.

DRED  
More money?

HOODED FIGURE  
You're asking me for a loan, boo-boo, when you already owe us quite a bit.

He looks towards a small display with a picture of Dred.

HOODED FIGURE (CONT'D)  
What's the job?

DRED  
It's solid.

HOODED FIGURE  
You'll have to forgive me for not taking your word on it.

ALEX  
(to Dred)  
You can't. A take like this, there's no way they don't just kill you and take it the second your back is turned.

Beat.

DRED  
(to Hooded Figure)  
He's not wrong.

HOODED FIGURE  
Well, I guess you'll have to take my word for it.

DRED  
You'll have to forgive me for-

HOODED FIGURE  
Yeah, yeah, spitting my own words back at me, very clever. I'm not gonna lie to you. I'll kill you the second I think that's more profitable than further business with you. Which includes if I don't think you'll be able to pay me back. Your call to make.

DRED  
A hundred times. I'll pay you a hundred times what I owe you.

The hooded figure is flabbergasted.

HOODED FIGURE

What in Enlil's green asshole is this job?

DRED

I don't lie, either. But I can't do the job without the ballast. Your call to make.

Beat.

HOODED FIGURE

Shit. I can't say no to that. But the curiosity is killing me.

Dred relaxes.

ALEX

Don't bother with tracking beacons, we're gonna be triple-checking.

HOODED FIGURE

Like I'm not gonna try.

He ends the call.

INT. EDELFRID'S OFFICE - DAY

Dred, Alex, Johanna, Agrippa, and Claude sit in a circle of chairs, along with Edelfrid.

Johanna picks at her prodigious nails, Agrippa sits motionless, and Claude drums his hands on his knees.

Edelfrid looks at Dred. Coughs.

DRED

So.

Dred stands.

DRED (CONT'D)

This is us. This is the crew.

EDELFRID

What about the hacker?

ALEX

I'm working on it. Got a lead.

EDELFRID  
How many leads have we been through  
so far?

ALEX  
(casual)  
Seventeen.

Edelfrid looks at Dred.

DRED  
You didn't think we could find a  
wizard, either, and look at...

Johanna looks up from chewing on her toenails.

DRED (CONT'D)  
You really need to do that here?

Johanna spits out a nail. Shifts in her seat, still holding  
her foot.

Dred looks back at Edelfrid.

DRED (CONT'D)  
We've got time.

CLAUDE  
I have a friend. He is a pretty  
good hacker.

DRED  
Great. Give us his contact  
information, or give him ours.

CLAUDE  
I will do it.

He puts a finger to his temple; his eye flashes.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)  
Yes, hello.

DRED  
I didn't...

Fine, whatever.

CLAUDE  
Hello, yes. I have some friends who  
have a job idea for you to take.  
Yes. Go ahead.

ZORION, the glowing woman who worked with Swithin, appears among them.

ZORION  
Swithin is very busy right now, but  
I...

She notices Dred. Barks a laugh.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
Hang on.

She disappears. A hologram of Swithin appears in her place.

SWITHIN  
Oh.

ALEX  
(starstruck)  
Swithin?

SWITHIN  
Yes?

ALEX  
...Hi.

Beat.

CLAUDE  
My friends need someone to do a  
hack for them.

Swithin looks at Dred.

SWITHIN  
Yeah. We've talked.

CLAUDE  
Oh, really?

SWITHIN  
As I recall, I said no because I  
didn't want to die. That hasn't  
changed.

DRED  
Technically, you just hung up on  
me. And we didn't have Claude  
before.

Swithin looks at Claude.

SWITHIN  
That's true. You're really on board  
with this?

CLAUDE  
I think that it sounds like it will  
be fun.

SWITHIN  
"Fun."

DRED  
Can you even do it?

Swithin laughs.

SWITHIN  
Can I get you on a planet running a  
four-thousand-year-old defense  
mesh?

Another laugh.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
No.

Everyone's shoulders slump, Dred's especially.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
But Zorion should be able to.

Zorion reappears.

ZORION  
You'd need to get me there,  
physically.

JOHANNA  
Aren't you a sprite? You can't just  
bounce around the ether?

ZORION  
I'm still bound.

Swithin holds up his arm, showcasing the massive "gaming  
watch" that takes up his whole forearm.

JOHANNA  
That blows.

ZORION  
(no shit)  
Yes.

EDELFRID

But you can do it? No doubts about your ability to perform?

ZORION

I'm more concerned with whether you can get me back safely. Swithin finding me floating in the void was a once-in-a-lifetime stroke of luck, I'm not counting on another.

DRED

We'll get you back safely. I have a rule about survival. The second the odds turn against us, we back out.

Zorion looks at Dred. Calculates.

SWITHIN

(to Zorion)

I mean, if I decide to go, you're kind of stuck. And I'm almost as immortal as you.

ZORION

There's no such thing as "almost" immortal.

SWITHIN

What's the plan?

Dred looks at Edelfrid.

Edelfrid sighs. Nods.

Dred smiles.

INT. SHIPYARD - SPACE

Dred stands by one of the docks with a set of suitcases hovering behind her.

Their ship, DRAGONSLAYER, rises into view in front of her. It's massive, about half a kilometer long, and a hundred meters wide and tall, and shaped sort of like a black fish with three tails and a huge bulb on its forehead. The bulb is a thin frame around a transparent bubble - the bridge.

Dred takes it in. She doesn't smile; too nervous. But she is excited.

Johanna walks up next to her.

JOHANNA  
Did we really settle on black?

DRED  
That alone won't hide us, but any  
other color works against us.

She scoffs.

JOHANNA  
Cowardly.

DRED  
(for fuck's sake)  
We literally hired you to help us  
hide.

JOHANNA  
That's different!

Johanna stomps on board. Dred shakes her head.

Alex walks up. Takes a breath.

ALEX  
So.

DRED  
I'll be fine. Relax.

ALEX  
I'm not going to relax.

Dred chuckles.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
You know, if you don't come back,  
the Marks will come knocking on my  
door. They might anyway.

DRED  
I know.

ALEX  
And now your debt is a hundred  
times bigger.

DRED  
I get it.

ALEX  
My limbs grow back, Dred. Do you  
know how easy it is to torture  
lizardfolk?

DRED

Alex. I'm coming back.

ALEX

I know that's the slogan, Dred, but this is... this is gonna be messy.

DRED

If it ever looks too bad, I have no compunction against turning the whole thing around. Even if I don't get the money, it's me they'll be torturing to death, not you.

Alex sighs.

She puts a hand on his shoulder. He reciprocates.

Neither of them knows what to say, but they both know what the other wants to say.

They release. Dred boards the ship.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - DRED'S CABIN

It's state-of-the-art. Stainless steel, but with illusory displays set up on every surface, making decorating as simple as changing your phone's background. Dred swipes through several options, settles on a mountaintop for the moment.

Edelfrid walks in, shudders.

EDELFRID

I have to remind myself you're half-human.

She looks out over the (simulated) horizon.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)

This is torturous. Can we get some walls while I'm here?

She doesn't wait for Dred to respond, just gestures, and wooden walls prop up around them, a ceiling drops down; you can still see the view through windows, but now they're in a monastery.

DRED

My dad never minded open air.

EDELFRID

Your father didn't grow up with us, either.

DRED  
You knew him?

Edelfrid shakes her head.

EDELFRID  
Worked with him a few times, mostly  
on your uncle's behalf. Seemed nice  
enough. Poor taste in women.

DRED  
My mom wasn't really that bad. She  
was just... really not a dwarf.

Edelfrid laughs.

EDELFRID  
Only if you think honor and respect  
are intrinsically dwarven traits.

Dred scowls.

DRED  
She's still my mom, okay?

Edelfrid holds up a hand in apology.

EDELFRID  
I look forward to your safe return.

DRED  
You manage to negotiate a  
commission?

Edelfrid smirks.

EDELFRID  
I've been looking at some  
retirement options.

DRED  
(genuine)  
Good for you.

Edelfrid hesitates. She's uncomfortable saying it, but...

EDELFRID  
It's not too late to call it off.

DRED  
If I didn't think we could do it, I  
never would've started.

EDELFRID

So be it. I...

She bows. Dred gives her an awkward hug.

DRED

See you when I see you.

EDELFRID

Indeed.

Edelfrid gestures, the walls fall away. She shudders one more time, leaves.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - COMMON ROOM

It's pretty big; tall ceilings to accomodate Claude, enough space to more or less combine a dining room, living room, and a few desks and terminals.

Johanna sleeps on one of the oversized sofas, Claude walks around examining everything, and Swithin tweaks one of the terminals to meet his workflow.

Dred walks in at the same time as Agrippa.

Dred clears her throat, gets everyone's attention.

Claude taps Johanna, nods towards Dred. Johanna sits up, grumpy.

Swithin taps his wrist computer; Zorion appears next to him.

DRED

As captain, I feel like I should give a little speech before we get going.

AGRIPPA

Actually-

JOHANNA

Who says you're captain?

Dred was not expecting this to be a question.

DRED

I put the team together. This is my op.

SWITHIN

And we're going along with your plan, but let's be honest: you are not the most experienced person here.

DRED

I've been working on this plan for decades now. I know every part of how it'll work.

SWITHIN

Really? You know every part of how hacking the planetary mesh will work?

Dred lets out an exaggerated sigh.

DRED

Obviously not. But-

CLAUDE

I am willing to follow you as captain. Do you want for us to call you Captain Dred?

DRED

That's not necessary. I just-

JOHANNA

I'm definitely not calling you that. I'll probably call you "Ethel" because it'll be like I'm making fun of your name.

DRED

That is my name.

Johanna laughs.

DRED (CONT'D)

Can I just give my speech so we can launch?

AGRIPPA

I was trying to tell you, we launched half an hour ago.

Beat. Dred stares at him.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

As soon as everything was loaded and Edelfrid was off. Did you want to wait?

Dred bites her tongue.

Walks away.

Beat.

Everyone goes back to what they were doing.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

The ship is currently travelling through subspace - the outside view is filled with sparkling lights in all the colors of the rainbow.

Dred stares out the window. Agrippa walks up next to her.

They stand for a beat.

AGRIPPA

Should take us about three months.

Dred shakes her head.

DRED

Four.

Agrippa cocks his head. Looks at a holodisplay.

AGRIPPA

No, my calculations-

DRED

Aren't accounting for the convergence we'll bump into next week.

AGRIPPA

There's a convergence? Where?

Dred looks at the display, cycles through a galactic map to a seemingly random point in space.

DRED

It hasn't appeared yet, but this one flares up pretty regularly.

AGRIPPA

Why isn't it on the charts?

DRED

Because it's outside traveled space; waste of effort to track. But napkin math says we'll hit it. No big deal to switch to astral for a while, and we don't need comms.

## EXT. DWARVEN STREETS - UNDERGROUND

Everything is opulant stone and precious jewels. Light comes from glowing crystals spaced all around the walls and buildings.

DRED (V.O.)  
 Besides, it'll make it impossible  
 for anyone to track us.

Alex walks down the street, eating a large piece of meat.

A hand made of shadows reaches out of an alleyway, wraps around him, and yanks him in.

## EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

The hooded figure stands with his back to Alex, who's bound in shadows.

ALEX  
 Oh, shit.

HOODED FIGURE  
 How are you, Alex?

ALEX  
 I'm not gonna tell you anything.

HOODED FIGURE  
 You think I'm gonna torture you for  
 information?

ALEX  
 You're... you're not?

The figure turns to face him.

HOODED FIGURE  
 I don't think I need to. We got a  
 good look at her supplies, we know  
 she's planning for a nice long  
 trip. We've got weeks to do  
 whatever we want to you, before we  
 even start pressing you for  
 information.

The hooded figure leans down, gets in Alex's face.

HOODED FIGURE (CONT'D)  
 I'm sure you'll do whatever you can  
 to make us stop.

Alex GROWLS at him.

EXT. SPACE - GRAV STORM

Space is warped, distorted. Fuzzy; hard to see past it. This is the perpetual storm that surrounds Jushurka.

The Dragonslayer hovers just outside it.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

Dred and Agrippa stare at the storm.

AGRIPPA

What are we waiting for? It's not going to calm down.

DRED

I'm getting ready. Psyching myself up.

AGRIPPA

...For?

Dred looks at him.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

You don't still think you're the one flying through it?

DRED

How many storms have you ridden, Agrippa?

AGRIPPA

One. How many eyes do you have?

DRED

Almost fifty. I've been- what? Eyes?

Agrippa points at a plug on the control terminal.

AGRIPPA

That port connects me directly with all of the ship's navigation systems. I see in every direction at once, on all natural spectra and several supernatural. I can dip into subspace with a thought, and back before you'd finish blinking.

(MORE)

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

I can see a projected map of up to point-five megameters, including gravitational anomalies both visible and predicted.

Dred grits her teeth.

DRED

And you think that makes up for years of experience?

AGRIPPA

I think it does far more than that. Moreover, it's not as if I am a rookie pilot. I have more flying experience than you, even if less of it is in a storm.

DRED

A lot less of it.

Agrippa shakes his head.

AGRIPPA

This is absurd. How many of those storms did you fly through with a frigate?

DRED

Five.

That surprises him.

AGRIPPA

...Really?

DRED

One of those a class-seven.

AGRIPPA

(impressed)

And you made it through?

DRED

No.

Agrippa laughs, moves to the plug.

DRED (CONT'D)

But it wasn't my fault! The whole ship was on fire and the engines were on the fritz. And I managed to get the escape pod out.

Agrippa sighs. He walks to the plug, sticks one of his arms in.

DRED (CONT'D)  
No. This isn't your call to make.  
I'll-

AGRIPPA  
We'll compromise.

A joystick pops out of his back, and a small holo control panel shimmers in around it.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)  
Deal?

Dred cocks her head.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The Dragonslayer drifts for a beat.

DRED (O.S.)  
Buckle up, everyone.

It SURGES forward into the storm.

As soon as it hits the storm, it's YANKED upward, even as it continues forward.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

Dred, manning... Agrippa, looks around, confused.

AGRIPPA  
What are you doing? I'm taking full control.

DRED  
I don't feel anything!

AGRIPPA  
...What were you expecting?

DRED  
You to turn off the stabilizers!

AGRIPPA  
I was wondering why you told everyone to buckle up.

The lights go red. A standing harness materializes around Dred as gravity disappears; her braids float every which way.

DRED  
That's more like it.

She eases on the joystick. Her braids jerk downward, then hang.

AGRIPPA  
Upcoming front.

DRED  
I feel it.

AGRIPPA  
You "feel" it? How can you-

DRED  
I need to focus here.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The Dragonslayer heads forward for a beat, then is yanked to the side. This time, it turns with the pull, rides it in a large circle until it's headed forwards again.

No sooner has it stabilized than its rear flips upwards over the front; they continue the flip until they've straightened out and dive straight down.

AGRIPPA (O.S.)  
Ready for a dip.

DRED (O.S.)  
Do it.

Space disappears; for a beat, there's only sparkling lights in a rainbow of colors, moving in rivers that match the flows of gravity.

AGRIPPA  
See that path?

They surface into normal space, and the lights disappear.

DRED  
Let's do it.

The ship makes a sharp curve to ride one of the flows. It shudders as they enter, then stabilizes.

Wreckages of other ships drift around them. They have to dip around to avoid them.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

Dred goes pale.

DRED  
Get Claude up here in the next  
twenty seconds.

AGRIPPA  
Why? What is he going to-

DRED  
(half-panicked)  
DO IT!

AGRIPPA  
He's coming, but... oh, no.

The stream of broken ships they're riding leads to a passive pool of debris formed into an impenetrable sphere.

Claude runs in, surefooted despite the shifts in gravity.

CLAUDE  
What do you need?

DRED  
How big is your biggest gun?

CLAUDE  
Very big. Why?

Agrippa points.

DRED  
We need you to clear us a path.

EXT. SPACE - THE POOL

A closer view reveals it's not as solid as it looked before - it's just all moving so fast it might as well be.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

CLAUDE  
I don't know if I can-

DRED  
If you can't, we die.

Claude nods.

CLAUDE  
Then I may as well try, no?

He pulls out a pistol the size of a mortar, that somehow still looks small in his hand.

AGRIPPA  
That's your biggest?

CLAUDE  
I am not telling you the correct way to fly the ship.

DRED  
Here we go.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

They rush towards the sphere. A few SHOTS from the bridge; something in the sphere EXPLODES, clearing a very small hole just big enough for the Dragonslayer.

They slide it like a glove, and are JERKED forward with the current. They overcorrect, bringing the nose of the ship high enough that Claude can fire another SHOT behind them; another EXPLOSION stops a small wave of junk from overtaking them.

A HUGE METAL BEAM bigger than their ship rushes towards them from inside the sphere.

DRED  
DIP!

Just as the beam would hit them, they dive into subspace, and everything explodes into color again. There's still wreckage here, but it's different wreckage, and warps at weird angles, like space itself is bent here.

They have to immediately swerve to avoid some junk, and are about to crash into a ship ten times their size when they surface back into normal space.

A small current leads off of the sphere, and they're headed right towards it.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

AGRIPPA

That's our exit. Claude, can you-?

CLAUDE

Silent.

He lines up a shot.

Beat.

DRED

Any time!

Claude lowers his gun.

CLAUDE

I can't!

DRED

Oh shit.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

They don't have a choice at this point; they rip into the current, smashing through some debris. A few small explosions along the hull, gaps that get covered by shiny green shields.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The bridge seems undamaged.

DRED

How bad is it?

AGRIPPA

Nothing that affects our control, thankfully.

DRED

What the hell, Claude?

Claude shakes his head.

CLAUDE

Not my fault. All very... what is the word?

A huge series of EXPLOSIONS behind them. They would've been caught in the middle of it.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Very that.

Dred peeks behind her. Things are still exploding.

DRED

Okay then.

Her attention is forward again.

AGRIPPA

We're almost there. One more dip should be enough.

They dive; colors all around.

DRED

Hold...

AGRIPPA

Dred, we're not stable and the shields aren't-

DRED

HOLD.

The ship CREAKS and GROANS. Warning lights and alarms.

AGRIPPA

I'm taking us out!

DRED

I SAID HOLD, YOU OVEN-HUMPING SON OF A-

AGRIPPA

We're going to die!

More alarms, more creaking.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

Dred, I'm still holding and-

DRED

NOW!

EXT. SPACE - GRAV STORM

The far side of the storm.

The Dragonslayer surfaces just in the calm.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The warning lights still flash, but everything is quiet now. No gravity; everything floats gently.

Claude smiles; Agrippa laughs.

Dred sighs, relaxes.

The gravity comes back on, slowly, so everything drifts to the floor.

AGRIPPA

Did you say something about me and ovens?

DRED

I'm gonna go take a nap. Wake me next week.

AGRIPPA

We have time. Get your rest.

INT. EDELFRID'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Edelfrid talks to a small hologram on her desk - LORD THYRFAR (60), a dwarven bureaucrat dressed in an ornate outfit.

To one side, a MISSING PERSON report for Alex is displayed.

LORD THYRFAR

You still haven't heard from her?

EDELFRID

I still haven't expected to. The convergence-

LORD THYRFAR

This trip was supposed to be how long, in total?

EDELFRID

I told you, the convergence delays things. They encountered it so early, it wouldn't be surprising if the entire trip took twice as long as it was supposed to.

LORD THYRFAR

I understand you liked her, but she was going dragon hunting. She was never going to come home.

Edelfrid doesn't crack.

EDELFRID

I understand that. But legally, we can't write her off until she's had a chance to return.

LORD THYRFAR

We've been discussing this. It's been decided that, in circumstances where the likelihood of death is this high, we should make our decisions based on the presumed time of death, rather than news of that death.

Edelfrid is surprised.

EDELFRID

What are you saying?

LORD THYRFAR

I'm saying, as far as the Throne is concerned, Etheldred is already dead. Has been for almost a month now. You're considered to be open to another ward.

Edelfrid looks at the missing person report.

Beat.

LORD THYRFAR (CONT'D)

Hello?

EDELFRID

No. No. I refuse to accept that decision.

LORD THYRFAR

Edelfrid-

EDELFRID

It's not about me, it's about the Law. Your interpretation is in opposition to both the letter and the spirit of the law, and if you try to hold me to it, you can expect a full challenge in the Council.

LORD THYRFAR

You have to know she's dead.

Edelfrid considers. Nods hesitantly.

EDELFRID  
Unofficially, yes.

Beat. Saying it out loud sucks.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)  
But not in a legally binding sense.  
While I admit that her death is a  
likely occurrence, I do not agree  
that it has legally occurred.

Thyrfar throws his hands up in exasperation.

LORD THYRFAR  
So this is, what, to get another  
couple months of lighter workload?  
What's your endgame?

Edelfrid smirks.

EDELFRID  
Goodnight, Thyrfar.

She switches him off.

Deep breath.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)  
Okay, Dred. Don't say I never did  
you any favors.

She pulls up a form titled "RESCUE REQUEST FOR ROYAL  
RETAINER."

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - COMMON ROOM

Johanna and Swithin play some virtual sports game.

Claude nurses a pot of some hot drink, reading, still  
strapped in to a wall seat.

Dred walks in, collapses on the sofa.

Zorion appears next to Swithin, blocking his view of the  
game.

SWITHIN  
Zorion, you're right in the way of-

ZORION  
There's a problem.

She shows a readout to Swithin.

DRED  
It can wait.

SWITHIN  
(oh dear god)  
It really can't.

Johanna cranes her neck, jumps to see.

JOHANNA  
What? What is it?

Dred groans, rolls over. Zorion shows her.

DRED  
(leave me alone)  
What am I looking at?

She sits up, rubs her eyes.

DRED (CONT'D)  
(oh dear god)  
What am I looking at?

CUT TO:

Everyone sits around the table with a display of the solar system in front of them.

ZORION  
The perpetual gravity storm stops the outside world from getting reliable data within the system, meaning we were basing our plans off of a predicted model - which is what you're looking at now. But...

The display swaps; it's mostly the same, but a few of the planets are a teeny bit off - especially Jushurka.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
This is what the system currently looks like.

AGRIPPA  
I assume this is a bigger difference than our margin of error?

ZORION  
For practical purposes, there was no margin of error.  
(MORE)

ZORION (CONT'D)

The storm stops most outside influences.

JOHANNA

So the planets moved. You're not telling me they're too far away?

DRED

No. The question is, "Why did they move?"

She zooms in on Jushurka, and on Jushur in particular.

Everyone squints, stares, examines.

DRED (CONT'D)

He moved?

ZORION

Jushur's size is indeed significant enough to alter the orbit of the planet, yes. But unfortunately, no, he did not move.

Dred closes her eyes. Prays under her breath.

ZORION (CONT'D)

It would be more accurate to say he is moving.

DRED

He's awake.

Beat. Silence.

AGRIPPA

Luckily, we're not in any danger here, right? So we can just leave. We don't get our treasure, but we've yet to get to the actual risk, so-

DRED

No.

AGRIPPA

I know it's unfortunate, but-

DRED

No.

AGRIPPA

Are you suggesting we wait until he leaves?

CLAUDE  
Are we in danger? Can he sense us?

JOHANNA  
I need some banging warning. If you  
wanted me to start the cloak, you  
should've-

SWITHIN  
No, we're too small, still too  
close to the storm.

He looks at Dred.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
Zorion has been scanning through  
all of our records regarding him.  
He is definitely waking up.

DRED  
But he's not awake yet. Not fully.

SWITHIN  
No.

Claude thinks he understands. Takes a deep breath.

CLAUDE  
Oh. I am ready.

JOHANNA  
What? He can't sense us yet, but if  
we run he will?

DRED  
The convergence... how long before  
comms are up?

ZORION  
Too long. Months.

AGRIPPA  
Oh no. Oh no no no. You can't be  
serious.

JOHANNA  
Am I dense? What's going on?

DRED  
We have a unique opportunity here.  
Nobody in the nearest dozen  
clusters knows more about Jushur  
than us. And even if they did,  
nobody is closer.

AGRIPPA

We can't. We are simply incapable of it.

DRED

How many people did he kill last time?

ZORION

(quiet)

5% of the population of the galaxy. 23% of the population of the Federates. 40% of the population of the High Dwarven Systems. 89% of the population of the Tengu, including over 99% of their males. They never recovered.

DRED

If we have a tiny chance of preventing that, don't we have to take it?

JOHANNA

Wait. We're gonna fight him? Like, straight up fight a stellar dragon?

DRED

That's what I'm asking.

Beat.

Johanna WHOOPS.

JOHANNA

YES! Hell yes! Let's blow this shitburglar UP.

AGRIPPA

We'll all die. Accomplishing nothing.

SWITHIN

If we can even wound him, it makes the rest of the galaxy's job easier. He's not awake yet-

AGRIPPA

The Knights of the Three Points tried to attack him while he was fast asleep.

Dred waves him off.

DRED

The Knights brought an armada.

AGRIPPA

And we have one tiny freighter with  
no significant weapons systems.

DRED

They couldn't hide, got slaughtered  
by drakes. Then when they did reach  
the planet, the mesh blocked their  
orbital laser, which was only  
barely functional after getting  
through the storm.

ZORION

That's correct. As I calculate, our  
odds are not good, but they are  
better than the Jushurka Crusade.

Agrippa shakes his head.

AGRIPPA

I understand your thinking. I don't  
like the idea of doing nothing  
either. But there's nothing we can  
do. We're an insect fighting a  
mountain.

DRED

Once he's awake, nobody can touch  
him. Our odds now are better than  
the entire galaxy's in a month.

SWITHIN

Zorion, you're the only one of us  
who's immortal. Do you-

ZORION

He killed many Sprites, and he will  
kill many more. If sacrificing my  
life now saves two lives later, it  
would be worth it.

AGRIPPA

Would it save two lives later,  
though?

Zorion looks at him. Calculates.

ZORION

Maybe. As Swithin said, even  
wounding him would be a monumental  
victory.

Agrippa puts his head on the table.

DRED

We'd need everyone operating at the top of their game. So we won't even try unless everyone is all-in.

She looks at Claude.

CLAUDE

I will do this. You know that I will do this. What a meaningful method to die.

JOHANNA

If you guys leave, I swear I'll stay here and wreck him myself.

SWITHIN

Zorion's done... too much for me. If she's in, I'm in.

Everyone looks at Agrippa.

DRED

Up to you, Agrippa.

AGRIPPA

Should I live the rest of my life trying to calculate how many lives I could've saved, but didn't? Or lie to myself, pretend to be useful as I march to my death?

He stands up straight. Beat.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

I'll do it.

Dred nods.

DRED

How long do we have?

ZORION

It's all a guessing game. A month seems reasonable, but the longer we wait, the higher the risk.

DRED

Put your affairs in order. Do what you can. As soon as Johanna has the cloak up, we move.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - DRED'S CABIN

Dred sits at her terminal, stares at it.

Beat. She hits a button, speaks into it.

DRED

Zorion, when you get a chance-

Zorion appears in the room.

DRED (CONT'D)

Oh. Hello.

ZORION

You wanted something?

DRED

You can't get any messages out, can you? With your Sprite magic?

ZORION

No, why?

Zorion walks over, looks at Dred's screen.

It's a big MESSAGE CANNOT BE SENT to Alex.

ZORION (CONT'D)

Oh. Your friend.

DRED

They'll kill him as soon as they realize I'm not coming back.

ZORION

Jushur might kill him as well.

DRED

I mean, maybe.

Beat.

DRED (CONT'D)

It's not... it just sucks.

ZORION

Yes.

All the lights go out. Even the emergency lighting is dim; Zorion is the main source of light now.

Dred freezes.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
We've stopped. I need to-

DRED  
Go.

Zorion disappears.

Dred listens. It's dead quiet, you can't hear anything.  
Almost sounds like the ship is off.

She creeps out.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

It's dark up here, too.

Johanna stands by the windshield, gold light held in tight fists like she's struggling to hold on to a rope tied to something heavy.

You can barely make out Agrippa, Claude, and Swithin, hugging a wall. Zorion is a shadow hovering near a window.

Dred appears in the doorway, slips over to Swithin.

Swithin holds a finger to his lips. "Shh."

Dred nods at Johanna. "What's going on?"

Swithin points out the window. Dred looks.

It takes a second to see it, but there's something moving.

A DRAKE. It's the size of a skyscraper, slithering through space.

Johanna GRUNTS; it echoes through the silent room.

Beat.

Johanna mutters swears.

Beat.

Johanna YANKS. The glow disappears. There's almost no light in the room now.

Beat.

A long beat.

The drake turns towards them.

JOHANNA  
Shitting shit.

All the lights come on at once; Agrippa is already piloting the ship away from the drake.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
I told you! Two megs! This guy is less than one!

DRED  
Get ready to fight.

Johanna cheers, looks at Claude.

JOHANNA  
Alright! Let's do it, big guy!

Claude's pumped and ready to go.

Dred looks back at Johanna.

DRED  
No. He's big and loud, we need to do this while avoiding any more attention.

Claude's shoulder's slump.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Can you-

JOHANNA  
Singlehandedly kill a drake without being at all noticable? Hellz yeah.

DRED  
No. No heroes, we're going with you. Can you whip up a cloak for us once we're outside the ship?

She shakes her head.

JOHANNA  
For myself, yes. For a party? No chance.

Dred hesitates.

AGRIPPA  
He's getting awfully close.

DRED  
Damn it.

She looks at Johanna.

DRED (CONT'D)  
It gets bad, just say the word,  
we'll grab you and get the hell out  
of here.

JOHANNA  
Sure thing, Ethel.

Johanna stomps on a button on the floor; a spacesuit materializes around her.

She charges out the window, slides right through like it's a hologram.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

The space around Johanna ripples, and she hurtles forward.

EXT. THE DRAKE - CONTINUOUS

Johanna speeds past the drake, which ignores her and continues towards the Dragonslayer.

JOHANNA  
Hey! Dicklips!

She moves in front of it, holds up her hands.

It dips right past her; its back skims her feet.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
Don't ignore me!

A sharp black blade appears in her hand. She rams it into the drake's back as it slides along, cuts a massive gash.

It ROARS, whips back impossibly fast and swats her with its tail. She goes flying.

It takes her a beat to get control back, and when she does it's right on top of her.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
Woah, hey, look at the big ship!

It doesn't. She barely avoids its massive jaws, can't avoid the headbutt, and she goes flying again.

This time, when it closes in on her, she jukes towards it and slips between its teeth, slashing again with her blade.

It HOWLS in frustration, but she ducks the tail and gets a cut off on it, too.

She starts to cheer, but then it breathes a BEAM OF ENERGY at her.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

The energy beam almost hits the ship.

DRED  
Watch it, Jo, that blast almost got us!

EXT. THE DRAKE

Johanna looks down at her feet. She couldn't dodge the blast completely, and she's missing her left foot, and her right leg below the knee.

JOHANNA  
Oh, I'm really sorry about that.  
Must be really scary to have almost been hit.

DRED (O.S.)  
Don't need the snark.

Johanna dodges another energy beam.

JOHANNA  
If you don't stop that, you son of a newt, I swear-

She charges towards it.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

More energy beams. These ones not anywhere near the Dragonslayer, but they are big and bright.

AGRIPPA  
Dred, this guy's drawing attention all by himself.

DRED  
Jo, those beams are really bright. Anything you can do about that?

JOHANNA (O.S.)  
You wanna get out here and help?

DRED  
Claude's coming out.

Claude jumps up, ready to go.

JOHANNA (O.S.)  
It was a figure of speech,  
cockhole!

Claude hangs his head.

DRED  
I know you want to do this alone,  
but-

JOHANNA (O.S.)  
If you come out here, I swear to  
me, I will kill them AND you!

DRED  
Them?

SWITHIN  
Three now. More coming.

Dred hesitates, looks at Claude.

CLAUDE  
I will go.

Claude nods, suits up, serious now.

DRED  
Alright, Jo, I know-

JOHANNA (O.S.)  
Oh STINK. What's the policy on  
heroics again?

Dred freezes.

JOHANNA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You know what? Nevermind. I hated  
your rules anyway.

DRED  
Jo, what are you-

A BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHT, as Johanna GLOWS LIKE THE SUN and  
shoots away from the Dragonslayer.

DRED (CONT'D)  
NO! Johanna, STOP, you're gonna-

JOHANNA (O.S.)  
 Eat shit, Ethel! Eat a whole pile  
 of it!

Johanna cackles like a maniac.

EXT. SPACE - ON JOHANNA - CONTINUOUS

Johanna whizzes past another drake, which turns to follow her. She dodges energy blasts, laughing and glowing and speeding away from everyone at lightning speed.

JOHANNA  
 I'm the BEST! I'm SO HEROIC!

Another drake; she SLAMS into it, creating a massive GLOWING SHOCKWAVE.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
 Don't try to hide me! I've always  
 been best with an audience!

She's now got half a dozen drakes following her.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
 How many more are there?

Beat.

JOHANNA (CONT'D)  
 How many, dickwads?

AGRIPPA (O.S.)  
 You've got everything local  
 following you.

JOHANNA  
 Once I'm gone, the cloak only holds  
 for an hour or two, so you bastards  
 should just gun it.

AGRIPPA (O.S.)  
 Johanna...

JOHANNA  
 You wanna see something AWESOME?

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

They're so far away, but you can still see Johanna's glow.

A BLACK RIPPLE as Johanna EXPLODES INTO A BLACK HOLE, and then there's nothing.

A long,

Long,

Beat.

DRED  
Stupid, self-centered, arrogant  
little...

She closes her eyes. Leans hard on a console.

Everyone looks at her.

DRED (CONT'D)  
FUCK.

Beat.

DRED (CONT'D)  
You heard her. Gun it.

Beat. Agrippa nods.

The ship rockets forward.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Timetable just got moved up. Get  
ready for trouble.

She leaves.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - COMMON ROOM

Dred, Swithin, Zorion, and Claude look at a holo of Jushurka.

DRED  
Is there any reason we shouldn't  
just jump right on top of him?

SWITHIN  
Other than the fact that he's a  
gigantic dragon who could destroy a  
planet?

DRED  
Other than that.

SWITHIN  
Yes.

He swipes a hand, and a shining web appears above the planet.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)

This is the defense mesh. All these little glowing points are interface nodes, but this one here-

He points to a particularly tight-knit part of the web near the south pole.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)

This is the heart. Zorion and I can get in anywhere there's a node, but if you want us to get in fast, that's where we need to be.

DRED

How fast is fast?

Zorion flickers, calculates.

ZORION

Minutes versus days.

DRED

That's a lot faster.

Zorion nods.

DRED (CONT'D)

We've got shuttles. Could we drop you at the pole and then head to Jushur without you? I don't want to lose what little surprise we have.

SWITHIN

You remember what we're doing, right? If you try to do anything before we've gotten through the mesh, you'll have to deal with the planetary defenses.

DRED

...Shit. Okay.

She looks at Swithin.

DRED (CONT'D)

I know Johanna was a little... over-the-top. But I just...

She takes a breath. Claude puts a hand on her shoulder.

DRED (CONT'D)

Is this crazy? Should we just turn back?

Swithin takes her question seriously. Examines the planet.

SWITHIN

No, this will work. We might have to deal with some traditional defenses while we're hacking the mesh, but once we have the mesh, it'll work for us. Might not do much against Jushur himself, but it should clear the way for us to focus all of our attention on him.

Claude nods.

CLAUDE

I have fought a planet defended by a mesh such as this one before. More advanced, but similar. Very effective. Even if we are only taking this, it makes Jushur vulnerable many hundreds of years from now.

ZORION

He is correct. Taking the mesh, if we are successful, prevents Jushur from remaining in safety and security after his next rampage.

CLAUDE

He will find a new planet to go to.

SWITHIN

And that one won't be surrounded by a grav storm. Either way it's a win for, you know. Everybody who's still alive.

Beat. Dred chews on her lip.

DRED

Okay. South pole it is. I'll tell Agrippa.

Agrippa pipes in on comms.

AGRIPPA (O.S.)

I heard. Twenty minutes.

DRED  
We going to have company?

AGRIPPA  
You should see this.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE

Dred walks over to Agrippa. He gestures behind them.

AGRIPPA  
Remember how the cloak was only  
effective if we stayed below a  
certain speed?

Dred looks at a dustcloud behind them. It's hard to make out at first, even through a magnified viewport, but then she understands.

DRED  
They're swarming.

AGRIPPA  
Johanna's display drew them behind  
us. That's instead of in front of  
us, so it's not like she screwed  
us; she made it possible to get to  
the planet. But leaving will be...

DRED  
Can we hook around the planet?  
Leave from the other side of the  
system?

AGRIPPA  
I'll get to work calculating if  
there's an escape route. You should  
gear up for planetfall.

Dred nods, heads towards belowdeck.

Zorion appears in front of her.

ZORION  
There's a problem.

DRED  
Of course there is.

Dred runs.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - COMMON ROOM

Swithin and Zorion look at a display of their landing site - it's swarming with giant serpents and KOBOLDS - little lizard-rat-men.

Claude sits nearby, examining a truly dizzying arsenal, laid out on a table. Pistols and rifles, yeah, but also axes, grenade launchers, something shoulder-mounted that looks like it belongs on a tank.

Dred runs in, sees the holodisplay.

DRED  
What am I looking at?

SWITHIN  
This is our core node. I figured it would be defended, but not... I was expecting Jushur to rely on the automated defenses.

ZORION  
To be clear, he likely has those, too.

Swithin nods.

SWITHIN  
Which can be dealt with. But not while fighting off an army of ankle-biters and giant snakes.

Dred looks at Claude.

DRED  
Claude?

He doesn't look, just nods.

CLAUDE  
I can handle them.

ZORION  
Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

CLAUDE  
I did not say that it was easy.

Zorion zooms the display out. You'd think there'd be less hostiles further away, but their numbers only seem to increase.

ZORION

The minute we get started, we're swarmed. Even if we could kill a dozen of them every second-

CLAUDE

I could do this.

ZORION

-There'd be hundreds left to deal with. Then thousands.

CLAUDE

I could do this.

DRED

And survive?

CLAUDE

I came with you to fight a dragon. I have never assumed I would survive.

DRED

Nonstarter. Alternatives?

Swithin and Zorion look at each other. Back at Dred.

Swithin takes off his wrist computer. A tiny hoverpad inside levitates it. It drops to hover just above the ground; Zorion changes her display so she looks like a kobold, and engulfs the computer.

ZORION

Kobolds are dumb. I might be able to walk right past them all.

DRED

What's the downside?

SWITHIN

All those drakes swarming have made enough noise that the defense mesh is on yellow. It knows something is up, defenses are activating. If we want to pull this off, we have to draw attention away from the core. Without, you know, drawing so much attention that it vaporizes us.

ZORION

And if you fall too far on either side of that line, now I get all of its attention, and get overwhelmed.

(MORE)

ZORION (CONT'D)

But it's a risk I'm willing to take.

Dred shakes her head.

DRED

No. I like our odds better together.

ZORION

We don't have odds together.

DRED

Then we call it off. We run. To hell with the galaxy, I'm not losing anyone else.

SWITHIN

This will work.

Dred is pained.

DRED

I can't... Couldn't one of us do it? Someone who's not immortal? Could I do it, somehow?

Zorion changes to look like herself again.

ZORION

I'm only doing it because I'm the best choice. Don't try to be a hero.

DRED

I'm not trying...

Beat.

DRED (CONT'D)

The first sign of something going wrong, you're gonna book it out of there.

ZORION

If I do, our entire mission ends in failure.

DRED

But we'll survive.

ZORION

Maybe. Our odds of survival are higher at almost every point if we run, but... Maybe.

Deep breaths all around.

AGRIPPA (O.S.)

We're getting close.

EXT. THE CORE NODE - DAY

Just like we saw on the display. No visible computers or anything, just tremendous numbers of kobolds and serpents in a variety of primitive camps.

The wrist computer falls from the sky. Lands behind some rocks.

A kobold sees it, gets curious.

It walks over to the rocks.

Peeks behind them.

It sees Zorion in kobold form.

It YELLS in some high-pitched yet guttural language.

Zorion YELLS BACK, LOUDER. She cows it, and it leaves.

A glowing green line appears in the sky directly over Zorion. It... opens, and scans her.

Zorion concentrates, and the line turns blue. Disappears.

ZORION

(quiet)

I'm down. Moving towards the core.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - DAY

Everyone else is on the bridge, burning across the sky, high up in the atmosphere.

Several glowing lines appear below and behind them, trying to scan them.

SWITHIN

We have the system's attention.

Swithin swipes rapidly at a holodisplay, gestures towards the lines, turns them blue as fast as they show up.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)

It's been a long time since I did something like this without her.

DRED

Are we okay?

SWITHIN

We should be fine for now. The global mesh has picked us up, but I'm keeping it from alerting local defenses.

A RED WARNING LIGHT.

AGRIPPA

Missile lock!

SWITHIN

Global mesh still has some defenses of its own.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

A missile materializes from one of the lines, rushes towards the Dragonslayer.

Just before impact, the missile flashes blue, and dematerializes

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Swithin doesn't miss a beat, just keeps working faster and faster.

DRED

That was a little close.

SWITHIN

We're fine as long as it sticks with one at a time. I can handle-

Another MISSILE LOCK warning.

AGRIPPA

We've got another... oh no.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

No fewer than eight missiles materialize.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

AGRIPPA  
I'm putting full grav to  
maneuvering!

Everyone grabs on to something as the ship lurches hard.

EXT. THE CORE NODE - DAY

Zorion wanders around the camp. Every once in a while, she waves a hand and reveals a holodisplay in midair. She hits some buttons, then it disappears. Rinse, repeat.

The kobold that found her originally watches her, sneaks behind her.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - DAY

The ship dips and dodges, narrowly avoiding the missiles a couple times.

One of the missiles turns blue, drops out of the sky. Another missile materializes in its place.

SWITHIN (O.S.)  
Zor, the faster the better!

EXT. THE CORE NODE - DAY

Zorion deals with another display, peeks over her shoulder at the kobold tailing her.

ZORION  
I'm going as fast as I can, but I  
have company.

The kobold draws a nasty looking knife. Nods towards her, and half a dozen more pop up around her, two of them riding serpents.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
Oh. A lot of company.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - DAY

Dred, strapped into the wall, looks at a display of Zorion's situation.

DRED  
Zorion, get out of there!

SWITHIN  
Is she in trouble?

ZORION (O.S.)  
I'm almost done! Just one more-

The kobolds attack. She has to run, but they're fast.

DRED  
Damn it!

An EXPLOSION rocks the ship.

AGRIPPA  
We're hit!

SWITHIN  
Remember how we were supposed to ride that line of "some attention, but not too much?"

DRED  
I'll get in the shuttle and draw some of it off. Agrippa, don't-

CLAUDE  
I do not need a shuttle.

Claude unstraps himself from the wall. Stands steady despite the rocking of the ship.

DRED  
Claude, you can't-

Claude puts a hand on her shoulder.

She shakes her head.

DRED (CONT'D)  
No. You're our best shot against Jushur. You're our only-

He holds out a hand. Materializes a gigantic bomb, bigger than Dred.

CLAUDE

It will not penetrate his skin.  
Mouth is the best entry point.

He puts the bomb down, shrugs.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Not only entry point.

Dred grits her teeth. Looks away.

Claude stretches. Walks to the window.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - DAY

Missiles all around.

Claude LEAPS out of the ship. Lets off several shots with a pair of cannon-sized pistols, and hits each of the missiles dead on; they explode in mid-air.

Claude keeps falling. More missiles appear, but smaller ones, aimed at him.

He shoots them out of the sky as quickly as they appear.

He clicks his heels together; rocket boots appear, shoot him back towards the pole.

A huge cone of fire and death extends behind him as he keeps blasting the missiles chasing him.

EXT. THE CORE NODE - DAY

Zorion, surrounded by kobolds, moves like some sort of ghost - which, she kind of is. She dodges spears and knives and bites, and retaliates with arms like blades.

For every kobold she kills, the circle closes a little tighter around her.

A thrown spear in SLOW MOTION. It has deadly aim, but luckily, Zorion isn't really real, and it goes right through her.

Inside her illusion, though, the spear is still headed right for her computer - her real self. She's barely able to wheel it out of the way, but the spear catches one of the straps and pins it to the ground.

Back to REAL TIME.

Zorion's illusion jerks like it was just yanked by a chain, falls to the ground on top of the computer.

The kobolds and serpents surround her, spears to her throat.

In the distance, a massive cone of fire grows from the sky to the ground. The dull BOOM of repeated explosions reaches them, distracts them.

One BIG EXPLOSION as the cone touches the ground. The shockwave rushes over them.

Everyone's attention is there.

Everyone except the first kobold that noticed her. It stabs a spear STRAIGHT THROUGH THE COMPUTER. Zorion SCREAMS, disappears.

The kobold's head EXPLODES.

All around her, kobolds die. One serpent SCREECHES, only for a harpoon to slide straight into its mouth.

Claude, a WHIRLING MAELSTROM OF MURDER, bounces around the battlefield, light as a feather with a machine gun.

Guns materialize in his hands, fire, then dematerialize as soon as he's done with them. A shotgun for this serpent that's close, a rifle for a kobold that's far away, grenade beneath his feet as he leaps away from a whole group...

By the time he lands next to the computer, everything in the immediate area is dead.

Claude looks at the damaged computer.

He scoops it up. Zorion appears next to him, hazy, distorted. She gestures.

ZORION

Get me over there.

Claude looks around.

A dull THUNDERING - more enemies coming. Additionally, several glowing lines appear above them.

CLAUDE

We do not have time.

ZORION

I've almost got it.

Claude carries her over where she said.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
Here. You can go.

The kobolds are on top of them.

Claude shoots a few, looks at her.

She struggles, manages to open a node.

ZORION (CONT'D)  
GO.

Claude leaps away, and they all give chase, leaving Zorion alone.

She flickers. Reaches for the node.

EXT. JUSHURKA FROM SPACE

A BLUE FLARE at the south pole; the entire green defense mesh glows, as the blue climbs across it to the north pole.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - DAY

The few missiles tailing them dematerialize.

Everyone laughs and cheers.

AGRIPPA  
They did it! I'll circle around and pick them up.

Swithin SLAMS a fist into the wall.

Tears in his eyes.

Dred shakes her head. Agrippa's worried.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)  
Swithin? Are you...

SWITHIN  
Zorion is gone.

Beat.

AGRIPPA  
I'll... head to Claude.

CLAUDE (O.S.)  
Do not. There is too much here. I am-

He cuts out.

AGRIPPA  
Claude! Claude!

Dred clenches her fists.

SWITHIN  
What do we do?

DRED  
We head to Jushur.

She nods at the bomb.

DRED (CONT'D)  
We've got the bomb, I've got some weapons programs, I know Swithin has something.

Beat. Swithin tries to push his emotions away.

He examines a display.

SWITHIN  
We've got the whole defense mesh, now. It's pretty old, but I should be able to get us something that can drill through his armor. How are we delivering the bomb?

AGRIPPA  
I'll go load it in a shuttle.

DRED  
We don't have long. All of our surprise is gone. Jushur's probably already stirring.

Agrippa lifts the bomb with surprising ease, carries it off. Dred takes the helm.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Heading towards the big guy. Do we have eyes on him?

SWITHIN  
Putting him on screen.

An image of Jushur on the monitor. It's an aerial shot, but he doesn't fit in the whole image. He's so big.

He shifts, shakes. He's waking up, and he's pissed.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
I'll let him know we're coming.

DRED  
Is that a good-

A storm of missiles and lasers shower Jushur. He looks straight up, ROARS - the roar echoes through the ship a beat later.

EXT. JUSHURKA FROM SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A massive net of blue lines circles the planet, tightest over Jushur.

Jushur raises his head, breathes a huge beam of stellar energy straight up. It TEARS THROUGH the defense mesh, leaves a huge tear in the net above him.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

DRED  
Shit.

Swithin SCREAMS at the display. MORE MISSILES fire from the nodes all around Jushur.

EXT. JUSHURKA FROM SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A swarm of drakes surrounds the planet like gnats around a fire. They're thickest around Jushur.

Jushur arches his back. Unfurls glowing, delicate wings the size of continents. One mighty flap, and he's off the planet, scattering drakes as he goes; another flap, and he's soaring away.

The drakes swarm in a massive column to follow him, but the defense mesh GLOWS OUT, expands like a balloon, then traps them behind a tight laser grid.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Swithin has recovered himself and frantically hits buttons.

DRED  
I'm going after the big guy.

SWITHIN  
NO!

Dred looks at him.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
The drakes will rip us to shreds if  
I can't stop them, and I can only  
control the mesh in atmo.

DRED  
He's getting away!

Swithin stands, his display following him.

SWITHIN  
You go. I'll stay here.

DRED  
What if... we could all stay. We'll  
circle to Claude, find somewhere to  
hide. Jushur gets away, but-

SWITHIN  
Etheldred.

They lock eyes.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
I'll punch you a hole, but it won't  
last long.

Swithin kicks a button on the floor, suits up.

SWITHIN (CONT'D)  
Go get him.

He leans backwards out of the window.

Dred pulls up hard, leaving the atmosphere in a second.

DRED  
Agrippa! Where the hell is my bomb!

She panics, looks back.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Shit! Swithin, I still need you to  
make me a drill or something!

Beat.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Damn it!

Agrippa runs in.

AGRIPPA  
What's going on? Where's Swithin?

DRED  
Hold on! Full grav to propulsion!

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

The Dragonslayer flies away from Jushurka.

ZOOM OUT to show Jushur already halfway to the grav storm.

A spear of light grows out of the defense mesh, pierces a tunnel through the drakes.

The Dragonslayer shudders, then BLASTS FORWARD at impossible speed, straight through the tunnel.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

They're going faster than Jushur now, catching up.

Dred and Agrippa are pinned to the rear wall by the acceleration.

AGRIPPA  
I'm turning the dampeners back on!

DRED  
No! We're almost there!

AGRIPPA  
You're blacking out!

DRED  
I'm... not..

She is. Her eyes roll back.

Agrippa looks ahead. They're almost to Jushur.

Dred goes limp.

AGRIPPA  
You are incredibly frustrating to work with.

He holds on. Closer...

Closer...

Agrippa hits a button. Gravity on the bridge returns to normal.

Dred collapses, slowly comes to.

Agrippa takes control of the ship.

EXT. JUSHUR

The Dragonslayer is like a flea next to him. They're closing in on the grav storm.

INT. DRAGONSLAYER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Dred is conscious, but still sits on the floor.

AGRIPPA

When he gets to the storm, he's gone. Dragons are born in grav storms, we'd be on his home turf.

DRED

Speak for yourself.

AGRIPPA

That response doesn't make sense.

DRED

I'll take the shuttle, fly it right up his asshole.

AGRIPPA

I've got it set up to autopilot. We can control it from here.

DRED

In the middle of a grav storm?

AGRIPPA

No, but if we get to him before-

Everything shakes and explodes. Vacuum fills the bridge. An emergency suit pops up around Dred.

The bridge is crushed, like it just ran into a wall.

Or a giant claw ran into it.

DRED

WHAT. THE.

AGRIPPA

He noticed us! Hang on!

Agrippa hits some buttons. He grabs onto Dred, leaps out of the window as another massive claw looms closer.

EXT. THE DRAGONSLAYER - CONTINUOUS

Jushur casually swats the ship; it explodes.

Agrippa and Dred float away from the explosion like debris.

ON DRED AND AGRIPPA

Dred looks behind them in despair.

DRED

No...

AGRIPPA

We don't have time.

DRED

We don't have anything.

AGRIPPA

Hang on.

Foot thrusters carry them towards some debris.

As they get closer, you can see it's not just debris - it's the bomb.

AGRIPPA (CONT'D)

We can't catch up to him, though.  
Maybe if I detonate my power core,  
you can ride the wave-

Dred is filled with resolve. This is the end, and she's going to go out with a bang.

She climbs out of Agrippa's arms and onto his back.

DRED

Get us to the grav storm.

AGRIPPA

Dred, we don't have a ship. We'll  
be torn to shreds.

DRED

Gimme that joystick.

AGRIPPA  
You're gonna... pilot... me?

DRED  
Hold on to my bomb.

Agrippa grabs the bomb.

AGRIPPA  
He's still too fast!

DRED  
Get me. To. The storm!

Agrippa's foot thrusters kick into gear. They head to the storm, watch Jushur disappear into it.

The joystick pops out of Agrippa's back. Dred grabs on.

DRED (CONT'D)  
Let's be heroes.

They hit the storm.

EXT. GRAV STORM - JUSHUR

Jushur flies through the storm, weaving among the currents. He's graceful, fluid. Natural.

Behind him:

ON DRED AND AGRIPPA

Dred HOLLERS AND CHEERS. She rides riptide gravity currents, narrowly dodges debris and adeptly slips through shifts in the flow.

They're rocketing along way too fast, but if they were going any slower they wouldn't be GAINING ON JUSHUR.

AGRIPPA  
(only a little panicked)  
Big drop coming up!

DRED  
I know!

AGRIPPA  
How can you- LOOK OUT!

They almost get creamed by a huge piece of junk, but the current drops and yanks them out of the way in the nick of time.

DRED  
Arm the bomb!

AGRIPPA  
Once it's armed, any impact will-

DRED  
ARM IT!

Agrippa arms it. It glows red.

DRED (CONT'D)  
WHOOOOOO-

ON JUSHUR

Jushur reaches the huge pool that almost got the Dragonslayer on the trip in. It slows him down.

Enough that Dred and Agrippa reach his tail.

He notices. Tries to swat at them with his tail, but the grav currents limit his movement.

They reach his back claws. He grasps at them, but a shift in the current lets them slide right between his fingers and up towards his belly.

ON DRED AND AGRIPPA

AGRIPPA  
Etheldred. This may not be a good time, but-

DRED  
I'm busy here!

They narrowly dodge Jushur's front claw.

AGRIPPA  
I just wanted you to know I hold you in the utmost respect. Frankly, an unrealistic amount of respect.

DRED  
Thanks?

AGRIPPA

So while any other living thing in  
the universe would die here, I  
fully expect you to find some way  
out.

DRED

What? Out of an exploding dragon?

They're parallel with Jushur's head now. An eye the size of a  
city stares at them.

AGRIPPA

Sorry about this!

Agrippa's joystick retracts; he spins and kicks Dred off of  
him.

Still hugging the bomb, he hurtles towards Jushur.

Jushur turns his head, but Agrippa is too close now. He slips  
right into Jushur's tear duct.

Dred flops through the storm, barely manages to grab onto  
some passing debris.

The bomb EXPLODES.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The far side of the storm.

A long beat.

Dred drifts through the void, unconscious.

A shape behind her.

It's a SHIP - a large gunship, spiky and intimidating.

Dred comes to; doesn't notice the ship yet.

DRED

What the...

She blinks a couple times. Remembers what happened.

DRED (CONT'D)

Agrippa! What-

She looks around. Sees the ship. Her comms light up.

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
Hey, Dred. You doing okay?

Dred makes a face: "What the hell are you doing here?"

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Where's the money, Dred?

DRED  
On the other side of the storm,  
surrounded by a swarm of angry  
drakes.

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
I've got Alex here with me. Say hi,  
Alex!

Beat.

INT. BLACK MARK GUNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The hooded figure stands next to Alex, who's chained to the floor.

The hooded figure gestures. Alex is ELECTROCUTED, lets out a GUTTURAL SNARL. He's still fighting.

HOODED FIGURE  
That'll do.

DRED (O.S.)  
You son of a bitch.

HOODED FIGURE  
Oh please, like you didn't see this  
coming.

EXT. SPACE - ON DRED - CONTINUOUS

Dred pats herself down, looking for something, anything that might help.

DRED  
You're such a dick.

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
You know what? At this point it's  
looking like he's more useful to me  
than you. I'm thinking maybe I blow  
you out of the sky and make him pay  
me back.

A new voice on comms.

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
Not so fast, dustlicker.

A small Dwarven WARSHIP jumps out of subspace directly across from the Black Marks' gunship. It's bulky and armored, with a huge cannon down its spine.

EDELFRID (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Etheldred and her companion are both under my care at the moment, as is this rather large gun that's currently pointed at you.

DRED  
Edelfrid?! What the hell?

INT. DWARVEN WARSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Edelfrid stands next to the CAPTAIN and two copilots. She nods at Dred.

EDELFRID  
Looks like your trip went about as well as I expected.

DRED (O.S.)  
Better, actually. Well, worse by most measurements.

CAPTAIN  
Hm. Ma'am?

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
What the hell does that mean? You do have my money?

DRED (O.S.)  
I saved both of your asses. You should be competing to see who can give me more kudos.

EDELFRID  
Explain.

CAPTAIN  
Ma'am, you really need to see this.

EDELFRID  
(to the captain)  
What is it?

CAPTAIN  
I'm getting a strange-

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
HOLY SHIT!

EXT. SPACE - ON DRED - CONTINUOUS

Behind Dred, a massive, world-ending shadow in the grav storm.

The gunship spins to point at it, weapons glowing.

Dred looks behind her.

DRED  
Oh, come on!

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
Dred, get to the airlock! Engage shields, activate-

Jushur emerges from the storm. He burns with angry energy. Where his right eye used to be is instead a massive charred crater twenty kilometers wide and several kilometers deep - it goes all the way down to his glowing, pulsating brain.

He ROARS, and a wave of energy ripples off of his skin, shakes all of them.

INT. BLACK MARK GUNSHIP - CONTINUOUS

The hooded figure has his face pressed to the window as the ship stabilizes.

HOODED FIGURE  
Why are we not firing?! SHOOT IT!

They unload a volley at Jushur's side; Jushur doesn't notice.

DRED (O.S.)  
Hey dipshit! He's got armor plating kilometers thick!

The hooded figure is losing it.

HOODED FIGURE  
What do you want me to do!?

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
Charging cannon. We're only going to get one shot at this.  
(MORE)

EDELFRID (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Dred, get on the ship!

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jushur ROARS at the Dwarven warship, moves it to swallow it whole.

Dred looks over at the Black Marks' gunship. It's on Jushur's left.

DRED  
Aim for his eye!

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
We don't have a shot at his eye!

DRED  
Not you, you hold your fire! Tall,  
dark, and evil! You want to live?  
Hit the eye!

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.)  
DO IT!

They unload another volley at Jushur's eye; it doesn't hurt him, but it's enough to catch his attention. He turns his good to face them, pointing his open eye crater at the Dwarves.

HOODED FIGURE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
IT DIDN'T WORK!

DRED  
Edelfrid!

EDELFRID (O.S.)  
We see it!

The Dwarven ship's cannon suddenly EXTENDS to twice its length, and a spiral glow wraps around it.

Jushur opens his mouth; his gullet glows with a growing energy blast.

The warship FIRES. The cannon HAMMERS BACK with the recoil as a massive energy quarrel shoots out at light speed.

It's a DIRECT HIT; Jushur's head JERKS, and IMPLODES as his entire skull liquefies into magma and shoots out of his mouth, nostrils, and eyes.

Jushur SPASMS; falls back into the grav storm.

A long beat.

Dred LAUGHS UNCONTROLLABLY.

DRED  
SUCK IT! SUCK IT! SUCK IT!

Beat.

DRED (CONT'D)  
YEEEEEEAAAAHHHHHH!!!

SUPER: THE DRAGONSLAYERS

ROLL CREDITS

AS CREDITS ROLL:

INT. DWARVEN WARSHIP - AIRLOCK

Pristine and tidy. Edelfrid and a medical officer await Dred, who hovers in the airlock as it repressurizes.

As soon as it does, she collapses to the ground.

Edelfrid and the medical officer run in and take Dred's helmet off.

She's still laughing.

INT. DWARVEN WARSHIP - BRIDGE

The ship faces the Black Marks' gunship. Edelfrid stands, her back to a viewscreen showing the Hooded Figure.

EDELFRID  
While it would now be trivial to convince the Throne to repay Etheldred's debts, it also wouldn't be too difficult to convince them the Black Marks are a direct threat to a Dwarven Champion.

She looks over her shoulder.

EDELFRID (CONT'D)  
And I think you know what that would mean.

The hooded figure is back to his calm self.

HOODED FIGURE

Why don't I send the Champion's friend over to you now, as a gesture of goodwill and peaceful intentions?

Edelfrid smirks.

EDELFRID

That sounds like a wonderful start.

INT. DWARVEN WARSHIP - MEDICAL BAY

Dred, bandaged and bruised, is examined by the medical officer.

Alex is helped inside by another aide.

Dred jumps off the table, tearing open some stitches the medic had been working on. She wraps Alex in a deep embrace; he hugs her back.

EXT. DWARVEN AMPITHEATRE - DAY

Dred stands on stage with Alex, a massive Gnome, a pair of elderly goblins, a young elf, a glowing golden tree with a face, and a vicious ogre king.

Dred and Alex receive medals around their necks from the Dwarven King; the others get medals in small boxes.

INT. MASSIVE MANSION - DAY

Edelfrid leads Dred and Alex inside; it's all marble gilded with precious metals. Fit for an empress.

DRED

Ho-lee... this is for me?

Alex wanders off.

EDELFRID

Technically, it's shared among all living Dwarven Champions. Seeing as you're the first Champions in centuries, though...

Dred's mind is blown.

Alex runs back to them.

ALEX  
Dred! There's a swimming pool... in  
my bedroom!

Dred's eyes widen. She runs after him.

Edelfrid laughs, walks behind them.

Over on the wall next to the entrance, a long series of names are inscribed.

The most recent ones:

AGRIPPA MURENA

SWITHIN OAKES

ZORION OF THE SPRITES

JOHANNA

CLAUDE LARUE

EMPOROS ALEXANDER

And finally, ETHELDRED OV ESMOND

FADE OUT

POST CREDITS:

EXT. JUSHURKA - DAY

A shuttle lands, and a dozen armed Dwarven GUARDS jump out, followed by Dred, followed by dozen more guards.

The guards all aim their guns at a massive DRAKE CORPSE the size of a skyscraper.

DRED  
Guys, cool it! It's dead. Come on,  
the bulk of the artifacts looked  
like they were over-

Something shifts; everyone's silent.

Dred draws a pistol.

A dull ROAR.

GUARD 1  
I thought the scans said this area  
was clear!

DRED  
Shit.

GUARD 2  
Quiet! It's coming from-

Another ROAR, but this one sounds more like...

A SNORE?

They creep around the serpent to find:

CLAUDE, fast asleep, leaning against the side of the serpent.

Dred barks a laugh.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END