

label start:

stop music fadeout 2.0

`$_game_menu_screen = "navigation"`

`show screen keymap_screen`

scene bg 02 with fade

play music "Music/ms03.ogg" fadein 3.0

`$ persistent.codex_CG01 = True`

nar "You never feel as much pride as the first time you are given command. An instructor at the academy once told me that."

nar "There's something to be said about that. My first 'command' was a listening outpost on some backwater swamp planet that didn't have an official name."

nar "I called it my watery hell. My command consisted of myself, two automated recording machines, and a virtual intelligence to manage the machines. I was alone during my stint as a lieutenant and a brevet captain."

nar "The only thing that kept me sane were the games for my virtual system. I'm pretty sure I managed to beat every single roleplaying game known to the galaxy."

nar "Sure, there haven't been very many made since the war for our survival started so many years ago, but still..."

nar "When I signed up to fight, I thought the Katajion Defense Force would have been smart enough to send me to the front."

nar "Nope, I go to watery hell with constant mold problems. They sent my classmates, who were far less capable than I, to the front. Those losers got to command taskforces and fight."

nar "And, like I predicted, most of them perished with their commands. They were blind fools. Idiots. If I would have been there, this war could have been over by now!"

nar "Instead, innocent people, brave warriors, and powerful war machines had to be sacrificed to some dumb tactical officer's bad battleplans."

nar "Not any more."

nar "I've been watching the loadmaster and her droids moving cargo for a few minutes. I might have to inquire if she knows anything about my welcoming party."

nar "As I walk up to her, I catch notice of her short stature and non-regulation issue hat. Great, she's a hobban."

nar "During my academy and training years, I never saw too many of them. While nimble and dexterous, they aren't what you would call our A-class students. Most of them are as dense as rocks."

nar "Even now, she's smiling and waving at me with unprofessional excitement. No bearing, no discipline."

show kylie smile at kyCenter

n hmm "Excuse me, but could I ask you a quick question?"

k "Certainly! How can I help you?"

nar "I glance over her uniform and notice the small insignia that tells me she's a lowly flight officer. If this is the sort of professional treatment my forces give, I'm going to have a difficult time."

nar "Still, she is a member of the crew and someone I am going to have to work with on a day-to-day basis. I can tolerate a little bit of it."

n smile "I am Major Natalie Puccile. I am looking for the bridge."

#show kylie 03

k happy "You are almost there."

n "Thank you for your assistance, flight officer."

k "I'm glad to help out! If you get lost, I'll be finished loading soon and can show you around."

n doori "That's kind, but I should be fine."

e "Don't worry, Kylie, we're here to show her around."

show alphonse smile at alLeft behind kylie

show sol annoyed at right

nar "Waiting at the end of the hall are a pair of majors approaching me. My real welcoming party, I guess."

nar "One of them is a handsome, pale-haired frikon with large creamy wings and a soft, cheery look on his face. The other man..."

show kylie smile

s "You've gotten soft over the years, Natalie."

n sigh "Maybe I have, but at least I haven't gotten lax with my support. Letting a kid load all of the supplies by herself? I expect better leadership from you."

s surprised "I always thought you were asleep during the delegation class at the academy."

n yare "You're one to talk. I know you slept through the first aid course."

e laugh "I take it you two know each other?"

n laugh "We graduated from the same academy class."

s smile "Old friends."

k surprised "Is Major Hackett smiling?"

n "I know. This may be the sign of the armageddon."

e "I'm just glad that something could warm my wingman's heart. My name is Alphonse Tenzin. You already know Sol."

n smile "Major Natalie Puccile reporting. It's a pleasure to meet you."

k smile "I'm Flight Officer Kylie Migi. I'm not actually a kid, I'm a hobbin."

n "It's nice to meet you, Flight Officer Migi, though you could stand to listen to Sol a bit about professionalism. He is right about some things."

k surprised "I'm sorry, ma'am. It has been hard adjusting to military life."

n "Keep at it. Be the best officer you can be."

k happy "Yes, ma'am!"

e wink "I can see why you like her, Sol."

s grumpy "Hush, Major Tenzin. We need to get going and let Natalie settle in before Rasoona gets her claws out."

k "You mean Commander Rasoona."

show alphonse laugh

s irritated "..."

k nervous "...I'm going to go back to loading the supplies, sir."

s "Please."

n happy "..."

e "..."

s "Do you see what I have to go through? That's why I'm glad to see you, Natalie."

n doori "So I can correct you as well?"

s regret "Here. Let me take your luggage."

n htp "Are you sure?"

s quiet "Let's drop these bags off and take a tour of the ship. It's small, but our work is cut out for us."

e serious "I'd let him. Sol let Zuri carry all of her luggage without even offering a single shred of help."

s grumpy "Zuri can roundhouse kick me through a wall. She didn't need the help."

e "Or Kylie."

s "..."

s "You packed light, as always."

n irate "Uniforms and basic health care items. I packed just like the deployment list recommended."

#show sol 02

s annoyed "Most people don't listen to that. They seem to think we have plenty of space on the ship for things like dumbbells and personal affects."

n "I was told that the list was the official record."

s "You were told right. The force is growing so slack. Take Kylie for instance!"

k scared "Meep."

s "I don't think we could have had a better quartermaster. She's a wizard with our equipment, nothing ever stays broken. If you need something, it is stocked on the next supply run."

s "But you saw how she treats superior officers! She seems to think regulations and professional behavior don't matter if you just do it well."

#show sol 01

s "We have those regulations for a reason!"

n hmm "We deal with life and death situations. You have to be able to know exactly what the person next to you is going to do."

s "Exactly! You wouldn't believe how grateful I am to have someone here who understands that. Resoona just doesn't understand that being good and being a team just doesn't cut it."

n "Well, I'm here now. We'll start bringing this ship up to code."

#show sol 08

s "Damn right!"

n sigh "So... you really didn't help poor Kylie with her bags?"

k sad "It was okay... I managed."

show kylie happy

n yare "Well, he can help make it up to you by helping finish loading up equipment. I think that's the first thing we can bring up to code."

show alphonse laugh

s irritated "..."

s regret "Only for you, Natalie."

e smile "I'll help. Kylie never asks for help when she needs it."

n smile "Let's show her the power of a trio of majors!"

e "I am starting to believe that the gods may have blessed us with your presence here."

s "If I can still move after this, I'll consider agreeing."

n "Thanks, Sol."

s annoyed "I'm only helping because Kylie is our quartermaster. I wouldn't waste my time if some of those boxes didn't contain steaks from back home on Quin."

s angry2 "But then we are going back to the tour. No further delays, please."

n doori "Deal."

stop music fadeout 3.0

jump begin2

label begin2:

scene bg 01 with fade

show sol serious at center

s serious "Welcome to the bridge. It isn't much, but it beats being stuck in that tiny Korlet cockpit."

n huh "You flew fighters?"

s "Two years on the frontline with the KSS Xeon."

n doori "Sounds exciting."

s regret "Not when you get caught up in a major conspiracy. Please tell me you aren't planning to overthrow the Board of Directors while you are working here. My career can't handle another one."

n surprised "Woah, what?"

s "On second thought, don't ask. It brings up too many bad memories."

n yare "Speaking of bad memories, where is your ball and chain? I thought both you and Lenna were going to be fighter pilots together."

s "Don't ask."

n sigh "Was it that bad?"

s "Ask me when I've had a few drinks."

n "You don't drink."

s "So don't ask me again, please."

n sad "Sorry."

s "Bad memories, Nat. I never thought befriending mutts could ruin my life in so many ways."

n oi "Non-humans ruined your relationship?"

s irritated "A mutt."

a "Major Hackett?"

s annoyed "We were talking about a pet a friend of mine had. It turned out to be a rabid dog."

show sol annoyed at solRight

show azaia neutral at left

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 3.0

a "Then use the term dog. Remember what I said if I heard you disparage your fellow servicemen again?"

s "I do, ma'am."

a neutral "And what was that?"

s "Immediate discharge, ma'am."

a "That is correct. Major Puccile, you would do well to note Major Hackett's lesson. We are a team here on the Nimross. We work as a single unit."

a "I will not tolerate those who cannot act as a team on my ship. That is the one guiding principle that I must make clear."

n smile "Yes, ma'am."

a "My last experience with a SITO was not a pleasant one. I hope to not repeat it."

nar "I bite my lip. Great, she is one of those commanders who have had a bad experience with our organization in the past. Sure, some of us may be a little cutthroat and determined, but we get results."

nar "The stories I've heard from my instructor were brutal. Selling out your command for success was common, not an exception."

nar "I don't believe in that mentality. There are limits to how far you can go before you become the monster you are fighting to destroy."

nar "Never will I sink that low."

n "You have nothing to fear from me, Commander."

a "Earn my trust, Major Puccile. I want to give it to you, but you need to prove yourself."

n "I will."

nar "Damn it... I completely forgot to report in!"

scene bg CG02

\$persistent.codex_CG02 = True

n "Ma'am, Major Natalie Puccile reporting in. I am the Special Investigations and Tactics Officer assigned to the KSS Nimross."

a "Hmph. Welcome to my ship, major."

s "She is one of the best tactical officers in the force, ma'am."

a "I've read the training report. Top of your class, correct?"

n "Yes, ma'am!"

a "How many failed out in your class?"

n "Huh? Around forty percent."

a "And the average is twenty. Why do you think that happened?"

n "Lack of dedication. They were not cut out for the service."

a "And what did you do to help them pass? Everything you could, am I right?"

n "..."

a "We fight and die as a team on this ship, major. Earn my trust."

n "...yes, commander."

scene bg 01 with fade

show sol regret at solRight

show azaia neutral at left

a "At ten o' five, we will be holding an all-call for the ship. You will brief our mission to the entire crew. Until that time, you are off-duty. Major Hackett will be your guide."

n smile "Thank you."

a "You have her quarters decided, Major Hackett?"

s serious "Yes, I was going to put her in the empty room."

a "Incorrect. She will be rooming with Captain Moonfallow."

s irritated "And what will we be doing with the empty room?"

a "Our ship doctor says he is tired of sleeping in the med ward and laid claim to it."

s "That slimy... yes, ma'am."

a "That's all. Dismissed."

s "Let's get out of here quickly before she thinks of something else."

n "Wait, I have questions to ask."

s regret "Sigh... alright."

a "Certainly. What are you curious about?"

jump questionTime

label questionTime:

if(questionsAsked<3):

menu:

"How is the comlink on the ship for gaming?"if gameQuestion==0:

n smile "Is the comlink speed strong enough for multiplayer gaming?"

show sol regret

a startled "Excuse me?"

n "I'm tired of playing single-player games by myself. There have been some amazing games released in the last few years that I want to play."

s "I forgot you were a gamer..."

n hmm "How could you forget? Even in the academy, I played games when I had a rare free moment. Remember?"

s "I do remember, I was just hoping that maybe you had grown-up after being taken away from them."

n oi "I don't mock your hobbies, please don't mock mine."

s "My apologies."

nar "There's nothing better than the occasional stress relief that comes from playing a fun adventure with friends in the lands of swords and shields. Sol just never understood."

a neutral "Though I agree with Major Hackett that your energies would be better used elsewhere, I understand the need for entertainment after duty."

a neutral "Regrettably, our transmitter is limited and all non-essential communications, including personal data transmissions, are limited."

n oh "Meaning I won't be able to play any multiplayer games."

a "Correct."

s serious "You can still play single-player games."

n "I beat all the ones I want to play."

s "You can still play them with me."

n hmm "I want a challenge."

s regret "Cold."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

\$gameQuestion=1

jump questionTime

"What if I used the investigation link for gaming in my off-time?"if gameQuestion==1:

n hmm "I need a dedicated link for my investigation work. What if I just use that link in my spare time?"

a "You need a dedicated link?"

n "Yes, didn't you receive my request list?"

a "And you need it for playing games in your free time?"

nar "Crud. I should have phrased that original question better. Think next time before you speak, Natalie."

n nervous "What I meant to say was that-"

a patronizing "I understood what you meant to say. While I am sure you were not meaning to

imply that you would use government resources for personal use, it wouldn't be possible anyway."

n oi "Why not? If I already have the link, what is wrong with me continuing to use it?"

a "As I have already stated, we only have one device for transmitting and receiving off-board communications. Any time you are using it for your work, we cannot use it for other purposes."

a "If anything, your work is the reason why you couldn't use it. We will have to use it for our communications during those times you are not working."

n oh "Oh. I understand."

s grumpy "I remember having this same exact conversation with Kika and her navigational equipment."

n "Kika?"

s "Lieutenant Kika Starr, our navigator. Her father is some big-wig politician."

n "I can't place the name."

s regret "Well, it turns out that she's a hardcore closet gamer. Every time we catch her playing on-shift, she always denies it and blames the other mu... lupide."

n smile "I'll have to talk with her to see if she knows any good ways to link out."

s "Good luck with that. She'll probably put you into indentured servitude for the answer."

n huh "What?"

s "Never mind."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

\$gameQuestion=2

jump questionTime

"Are you absolutely, positively sure that there is no way I could just use the outboard line?"if
gameQuestion==2:

n htp "Really? There is no way at all? I think we all just aren't utilizing the transmitter to its full capacity."

a "..."

s "..."

n yare "I'm really pushing my luck here, aren't I?"

s "I would hazard a guess and say yes."

a "This ship is not your personal resort. We have a mission to do here and we expect you to give it your all."

n smile "Without a doubt, ma'am."

a "Then look at it this way. The faster we accomplish our mission, the faster you get back to

civilized space and your games."

nar "I guess that is as good of motivation as any. I hope my sealed orders aren't too complex. I want a promotion that leads me to a ship where we have the technology to play a game now and then."

nar "Until then, I will just have to make do."

n "I copy, ma'am. I'll give it my all."

a "Good to hear."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

jump questionTime

"Please tell me a little more about the ship." if shipQuestions==0:

nar "I've read up on the specs of the ship, but the profile suggested that this version might be different."

n smile "I noticed that your ship's profile was different than a standard Harper-class command and control ship."

show sol smile

show azaia neutral

a "You've got a very sharp eye. Yes, this ship was modified in depo."

n huh "Really?"

s regret "But not for the better."

n oh "Oh?"

a "That all depends. Our crew complement has been reduced due to the removal of the self-defense weaponry."

n surprised "Wait... we have no defensive lasers or cannons?"

a "Correct, so we have no weapons officer or loader. Also, our impulse drive is a KDS-E591 instead of the standard E598."

nar "As much as I want to bluff understanding that one, lying won't help me here."

n smile "And what impact does that have on us, ma'am?"

a "A larger engineering bay and larger fuel consumption. So our medbay is also removed, but the doctor works out of the secondary research bay instead."

s "Try not to get sick. He is a lecherous demon who has no ethics or Hippocratic oath."

n sigh "He's a non-human, isn't he?"

s irritated "An afrik, but that doesn't make him any less of a vile monster."

n "I'll keep that in mind."

s "Please do. It's only a matter of time before I catch him and have him court-martialed."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

\$shipQuestions=1

jump questionTime

"If we don't have any defensive weaponry, do we have any security forces?" if

shipQuestions==1:

n smile "No defensive weapons to protect us from pirates... what about security when I am at a ground site?"

show sol regret

show azaia neutral

s "We have Zuri."

n huh "What is a Zuri? Is it some sort of defensive robot?"

s "How I really, really, really wish it was. I would be able to turn it off then."

a "Lieutenant Zuri is our security officer and in charge of defensive systems on the ship."

s "Which means she doesn't have a lot to do and seems to find time in her day to just wander around and bother everyone."

n smile "She wants to help out others. That doesn't sound like a bad thing, Sol."

s "It wouldn't be if she had a better attitude."

n "What's wrong? Is she grumpy? I thought someone like that would work well with you."

s "Hah hah. No, she's... perky. There have been some days where I just want to tear the happy right out of her soul!"

n happy "Have I ever said that you remind me of a really grumpy cat?"

s "Not in years."

n "And you haven't changed a bit."

a "Though she may be a bit overenthusiastic at times, Lieutenant Zuri is competent at her job and will provide you adequate security on away missions."

s serious "Just don't expect her to shut up at all when she gets on her 'warrior' rant."

n doori "It'll be nice to have someone cheerful to hang out with now and then to compensate for Mr. Doom and Gloom."

s "I'm just realistic and don't lie and sugarcoat things for you."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

\$shipQuestions=2

jump questionTime

"Is there anything else special about the ship I should know about?" if shipQuestions==2:

n "Is there anything else I should know about this ship before we set off?"

s "Beside the lack of defensive weaponry and substandard parts?"

a "While that may be true, most of the crew is relatively experienced in its operations."

s "Despite their laziness and lack of morals, the commander is correct in stating that the crew is decent at their jobs. Don't expect too much, but I do ensure the basics are enforced."

nar "Even though he is rough and derogatory, Sol has never been one to shy away from acknowledging talent. I just wish he'd use it no matter what the outside looks like."

nar "The weaponry shouldn't be an issue. I don't intend to send us into any combat zones. If pirates attack, fleeing in terror, while not heroic, is a perfectly logical course of action."

n smile "Thanks for the briefing. The information will come in handy to maximize the Nimross's utilization."

a "I'm glad to hear it."

\$questionsAsked=questionsAsked + 1

jump questionTime

else:

show sol serious

show azaia neutral

s "I hate to cut the question and answer session short, but we should continue the tour. You don't want to start your first day tomorrow with no sleep, right?"

nar "I can feel the first traces of exhaustion begin to set in. This is the first time I've had to do anything remotely like work in years. It feels wonderful, though tiring."

n hmm "Maybe. Having me mumble through the briefing tomorrow might make it a little more interesting."

s "No doubt. By your leave, ma'am?"

a "Rest well, Major Puccile. We expect much from you. Dismissed."

hide azaia

show sol serious at center with move

stop music fadeout 6.0

s "Let's go drop off your medical records with the perv and grab a bite to eat."

n smile "That sounds delightful. I'm famished."

s "If Kylie finished stocking everything, we might be able to make a decent meal from the synthesizer."

n hmm "No cook?"

s grumpy "No cook. We have some limited cooking facilities, but, alas, no cook. I don't think I'd want to eat any more dog food anyway."

n irate "Lupide food."

s "Same thing. Trust me, wolfie can't cook well. You can try eating it, but you'd rather have the synth stuff."

n "Because she's a lupide or because she can't cook?"

s regret "Can't it be both? I'm not saying all food the mutants cook is bad, but lupide stuff is just bland and mushy. Try it if you want, you'll see."

s smile "I can make a decent meal though. I'll make you something nice some time."

n smile "I'll have to compare them."

s "Then we'll have to have a contest to prove it. Not tonight."

n "You promise?"

s "I promise. Let's get going."

scene bg black with fade

jump firstMeetingStan

label firstMeetingStan:

scene bg 02 with fade

show sol serious at center

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "The clang of metal instead of the mush of dirt is welcoming. Never again will I have to check my hair for spiders after a radar array check."

nar "Everything is so clean, so shiny. I did it. I really am back to the real space force again! I'm free to save the universe once more!"

s "Happy?"

n happy "Does it show?"

s smile "A little bit."

n "I can't help it! I'm excited, Sol. My first real post, my first real mission! I'm finally off that mudball!"

s "What is our first mission?"

n doori "I haven't checked. My orders were just to report here and then receive my follow-on orders over the secured network."

s annoyed "It sounds like they are trying to make it difficult for your first briefing."

n "You're telling me."

s "I have faith in you. Show them how you give a proper intelligence briefing."

n smile "Thanks, Sol."

s smile "I know I can't see the orders, but let me know if there is anything I can do to help."

nar "I'm glad he reminded me before I asked for his help. SITO orders are restricted to SITO eyes' only. My first briefing can only be written by me."

nar "That is the unfortunate truth of my profession. No matter how much I wish I could depend on Sol, on my crew, I am not a part of it. I am just an attached member."

nar "The thought is sobering, bleeding the joy out of my mood. It's lonely at the top."

n "Does my lab have a secure line? I'd rather not have to deal with couriers."

s annoyed "Only the finest for you."

n hmm "It doesn't seem like this ship has a lot of the finer things."

s "It doesn't, but you learn to make do with the things you are given. I'm sure you'll find ways to adapt quickly."

n "Of course."

nar "This ship is a stepping stone! I must keep telling myself that."

nar "We stop in front of a door in the aft section of the ship. Sol doesn't seem to be pleased to be here, so I assume we have found the aux lab."

nar "Sol knocks against the door three times without a single response. Finally, he resorts to loud bangs before we get a response."

stop music fadeout 2.0

st "Whoever it is, you know the hours. Doc is not in."

s "A ship doctor is available at all hours of the day."

st "Not according to your beloved regulations. Come back tomorrow, but make sure you book an appointment first."

s irritated "Urghhhhh..."

s "I'm sorry, Natalie, but I am going to have to resort to some more desperate measures."

n sigh "Why are you apologizing? What are you planning?"

s serious "I wouldn't bother you, Colonel, but our new SITO just arrived and she really needs to turn in her medical records to you. She was very insistent to meet with you right now."

st "She? Well, give me a moment. I might be able to break regulations just this once."

s grumpy "Just this once, my butt..."

nar "From behind the sliding door, I can hear a mild commotion as whoever this colonel is prepares for our visit."

n "You're pretty disrespectful to a superior officer."

s "That thing is not my superior in any way."

show sol grumpy at solRight

show stan hmm at alLeft

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "The door slides open and a dashing afrik with sharp eyes and dull purple hair that falls to his shoulders steps out."

nar "He looks me over with a kind, warm smile, nothing like the predator I was expecting from Sol's descriptions. He looks like a demon of yore, but his demeanor doesn't feel satanic."

nar "Still... there is something... odd radiating from him. Power and confidence, yes... but something feels off. Deep in my gut, a small sliver of ice is forming."

st "My, my. Our humble ship has been blessed with a radiant beauty. My name is Stan Nelson, ship doctor."

n smile "Natalie Puccile. It is a pleasure to meet you."

st sly "No, my dear, the pleasure is all mine."

n "I was told that I would need to drop off my medical records because of some privacy act."

st smile "That's correct. Smart and beautiful, we are truly blessed this day. Why don't you come in? I also double as the resident counselor and would love a chance to get to know you."

s irritated "I don't think so. If she needs to confide in someone, she has friends."

st "An understanding perspective is oft needed to truly cope. In the depths of space, my skills will guide any potential lost souls to salvation."

s "Into your bed is more like it."

st bored "My actions are bound by my Hippocratic oath. What about yours?"

s "What do you mean?"

st "I am a doctor and have an oath to never get involved with my patients. They can feel safe with me. Do you have any such restraint?"

s angry2 "Other than being a trusted friend who wants to protect her from a pervert?"

st smile "You malign me, Major."

n yare "You both know I'm standing right here and understand this conversation, right?"

s "Natalie-"

n oi "I think I can handle myself. There's my medical records, doctor. I look forward to working with

you on the strictly professional basis you mentioned."

st laugh "Precisely, my lovely major, precisely. If you ever need any help or someone to talk to without repercussion, I'm always here."

n "Thank you."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 02 with fade

s "Natalie, wait!"

nar "I'm not slowing down. I know Sol means well, but it isn't like I need some guardian angel protecting me from all the bad non-humans."

nar "That icy feeling in my gut is warning me to be careful around Stan. Even though he is handsome and charming, I'm not a thing that they can use in their pursuits."

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "I am the SITO in charge of this mission and everyone, including Sol, will respect that."

show sol surprised at center

s "I'm sorry. I just..."

nar "My anger slowly fades out as I slow my pace. Even if I had some idea where I was going on this ship, I think Sol got the point."

n oi "You what?"

s "You can take care of yourself, I know. I just don't want to risk losing another friend to a corrupt beast."

n "Learning some of that teamwork stuff the vice commander was talking about?"

s "Perhaps."

n laugh "Then trust me. It wasn't like I was going to go inside alone for a special examination in the nude."

s serious "He made that offer to Zuri."

n oi "And why is he not being brought up on charges for misconduct?"

s "Because she is too dense to realize that his medical reasoning was flawed and perverse."

s regret "But I know you are not. I'm sorry, I should have trusted you to not fall for his traps. To make up for it, why don't I take you to dinner?"

n laugh "You mean the synthetic stuff out of the machines?"

s "Once again, you prove that you can see through a ruse. Will that suffice for tonight? I promise a better meal down the spacelane."

n "I'm going to hold you to that, Sol."

scene bg black with fade

jump firstMeetZuri

label firstMeetZuri:

scene bg 02 with fade

show sol serious at center

nar "Sol leads me to the ship's lounge and cafeteria. I'm not expecting much from it, synth food is synth food, but anything to soothe my gurgling belly is welcomed."

s "Welcome to the ship's lounge. It's all ranks since-

stop music

show sol angry at center

s angry "Watch out!"

nar "In front of me, all I can see is a black boot wizz past the front of my face. It passes so close and so fast that I can feel the wind rushing across my hair."

nar "With a mighty tug, Sol grabs the back of my uniform and yanks me back. He pulls so hard that I stumble and almost slam against the wall of the hallway."

nar "A mere millisecond later, a large, green tail slices through the air where my head used to be."

nar "Before I can react and determine what just about took my head from my shoulders, Sol storms forward."

show sol angry2 at solRight

show zuri happy at zuriLeft

with move

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

s "Damn it, Zuri! How many times have Commander Rasoona and I ordered you not to practice your fighting garbage in the lounge?!"

z "Wow, Sol, you've got pretty good reflexes."

s "I've had to develop them because of you! Answer the question!"

z surprised "I dunno. A couple?"

s "Twenty seven times!"

z confused "Don't you have anything better to do than remember random numbers like that?"

s "I wouldn't have to if you stopped trying to kill people."

z smiles "Oh, hey. Who is she?"

s "The superior officer you about murdered for committing the horrible crime of just entering the room!"

z confused "Huh?"

z cheery "Anyway, I'm sorry. I'm Zuri, who are you?"

nar "Now that she's settling down, I can get a better look at the woman with such amazing speed. She's a... oh, what were they called again...?"

s "Do you have any remembrance of the academy? What is the proper procedure for introducing yourself to someone who outranks you?"

z "Come on, she's not in my chain of command. We don't have to be quite so uptight, right?"

nar "Long ears and green hair would tell me that she is an elf, but elves don't have wings. Possibly she could be an afrik like Stan, but afriks don't have shiny, scaly tails."

s "Wrong! I don't care if we are crew dogs or not, we maintain the chain of command and respect during all phases of operations."

z "But I'm off-duty right now..."

s "What does that have to do with anything, lieutenant?"

nar "I think I remember reading about them in a news bit. If I recall the story correctly, they come from some sandy planet in the far northern reaches of the Ryu'llian Republic."

z "We're just normal people off-duty. We're all the same."

s "Regulations don't go away just because you aren't on-duty. Besides, lieutenant, when we launch from port, we are technically always on-duty."

z protest "Eh heh heh..."

n hmm "I don't mean to interrupt, but what are you?"

show zuri thinking

z "Huh?"

s "Annoying and disrespectful."

z happy "She meant me."

s grumpy "..."

n surprised "I'm sorry, that came out wrong. I've never met anyone of your species before, and I can't remember what you are called."

show zuri surprised

s "Oh. They're called Dreamons. They originate from the planet Ona'thon."

n smile "Ona'thon? It's Northern Ryu'll, right?"

s "Raltin. Our dear lieutenant and her ilk are loyalists to the empire."

s "On second thought, I'm not that hungry."

n "Come on, grandpa. How am I supposed to find my way to my quarters afterward without a guide?"

s "She's with Moonfallow. Take her there afterward, Zuri."

n sigh "Hey, Sol, don't go. Please? I want to hang out and catch up, but I also want to get to understand everyone better."

s "..."

z happy "I solemnly swear that I won't accidentally knock you again, Major Hackett."

s "Fine. Try to keep it reined in, all of you. I don't want to have to clean up the lounge again because someone managed to prove that you can stick spaghetti to the ceiling."

z "I still think you did something to your noodles."

s "It's a cooking technique, lizard brain."

n smile "When the noodle gets close to being ready and the starch gets sticky, you are able to test it by seeing if it will stick to the wall."

z surprised "And if it doesn't, it isn't ready?"

n "Precisely."

z serious "That makes sense. Why couldn't you have just said that instead of insulting me, Sol?"

s "It's Major Hackett, and I was just stating obvious facts. You are a lizard. You have a brain, do you not?"

z protest "I'm not some desert lizard. I'm going to report you to the commander again."

k "B-b-by the time you all stop fighting, the food is going to get cold again."

z smiles "The goop is even nastier when it is cold. If I say I forgive you, could we just drop it?"

s "Sorry? You nearly knocked out Natalie and insulted me. But I'll let it slide this one time. Let's just hurry up and eat."

e "You are a gentleman and a scholar. Come, there is plenty to go around."

scene bg 04 with fade

play music "Music/ms03.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "Inside the small room is an ovoid table with a few gray and black chairs surrounding it. Actual chairs with proper covering, mind you, not the ripped fighter ejector seats I had to scrounge up."

nar "To the side, I can see the synthesizer for making the usual mush, as well as a few other devices. An oven, a refrigeration machine, and some limited space for food preparation."

nar "I'm glad someone added those machines. Because the force is so diverse and every species has their own tastes and nutritional requirements, the synthesizer needs to be able to adapt to everyone."

nar "Which means it produces some rather bland and unoriginal food... if you can call it that. Still, when I haven't had anything to eat all day, I'll take whatever I can get."

nar "Zuri motions to a seat next to her with a mirthful pat on the back. I take it, eager to discover the inner-workings of someone who has seen such a marvelous place."

show sol annoyed at innerRight2

show kylie smile at innerLeft2

show zuri smiles at zuriFarLeft behind kylie

show alphonse smile at alRight behind sol

s "Spaghetti with alfredo sauce? Were you expecting me to visit?"

e "Expecting, no. I was just hoping your favorite would convince you to stay."

s "Well, it seems at least one thing is going right."

nar "Alphonse has a jovial smile on his face, and Kylie seems to be losing the edge she had when Sol showed up."

nar "I think... no, I know Sol is wrong about this. If the rest of the crew are as interesting as these people, I think this may be an acceptable post."

nar "The standard issue blue plate sits in front of me for nary a second before I pounce. Though there may be no wild creatures that may try to steal it from me anymore, habits don't die easily."

z "Natalie, could I ask you a personal question?"

s "It's Major... forget it. I'm tired of arguing with you all."

z happy "Whoooo... thanks."

nar "If she is thanking Sol for finally giving up or me, I dare not ask."

z smiles "Why did you join the force?"

e thought "Ah, the age old question of all deep-space adventurers."

n sad "...well..."

nar "I was hoping for something like if I had a romantic relationship with Sol or something. That one... is embarrassing."

e wink "Why don't you tell her yours, Zuri? It might make her a little more at ease."

z excited "Oh, quod quote pro."

s "Quid pro quo."

z "I joined right out of mandatory schooling. When counseling time came to discuss job options, he didn't get a single word out before I told him I wanted to join the force!"

n smile "Why is that?"

z "Because if I don't defend my home, who will? My homeland has given me so much to be thankful

for, this is the least that I could do to repay them."

z "I had so many offers to join professional ratchet ball, but I turned them all down. I even had an offer to join Ona'thon's Olympic track team."

s "I still don't believe that one."

z smiles "I might not look like it, but I'm one of the fastest runners you'll ever see."

s "Good. I always like my security officers being able to run away really fast."

z confused "Or to those who need my protection."

nar "Alphonse could not have been more wrong. Zuri's reason is so honorable and prideful that it makes mine look so... ugly."

k "I joined because I always wanted to work on fighters. They were always so fast and so cool when I saw them zipping through the air at Duster Station."

n "Why didn't you try to become a fighter pilot instead? Sol was one."

k sad "W-w-w-well... I was better at fixing than I was at flying."

s "What she's saying is that she couldn't see over the dashboard."

k "They don't make seats for my height, so I was rejected."

n oh "I'm sorry to hear it."

z happy "I'm not. We'd be a flying garbage scow with nothing but synth food to eat."

s "That's what she wants to hear, that her dreams are less important than your stomach."

z protest "I didn't mean it that way, Kylie."

k smile "I know."

show zuri smiles

s "Still doesn't sound any less offending."

e "Why don't you tell us why you joined, Sol?"

s "Why do you care? Natalie already knows why. We've had this conversation before."

e "I would like to know. You never tell us anything about yourself."

s "Because you don't need to know."

k "I'd like to know more about our executive officer..."

n laugh "If you don't tell them, I will."

s regret "Fine, force my hand. I joined because of a program that allows veterans to get special treatment in trade deals. I plan on becoming a transporter."

nar "Ummm... that was nothing like the romantic story he told me."

z surprised "I don't see you being one of those old, fat pilots hauling cargo. It's such a funny picture."

s grumpy "..."

show alphonse smile

z smiles "Well, there you have it, Nat. What's your reason?"

nar "Time to admit the truth. If I don't, I could start sewing the seeds of distrust in their minds."

n nervous "I was bored."

show zuri surprised

show kylie surprised

e surprised "Bored?"

n "This is so embarrassing, but I really was just bored one day and said, 'I could just go to the university and become a chemist, but that's boring.'"

n "I decided to sign up on a whim."

s serious "But you stuck around to be the best and prove your might and strength to the universe."

z cheery "It's not why you do something, but that you did it."

k laugh "Exactly!"

e smile "What you do here and now is what matters, not how you got here."

nar "Sol flashes me a small smile. He knows the truth. I came here because my family is incredibly poor. I couldn't afford the university, so I had to find other ways to become the best."

nar "There is nothing I hate more than those sad smiles I get when people discover my poor heritage. They don't know what it is like to fight from the the ground up with nothing more than your heart."

nar "That is why I must continue to be the best. I'll conquer peace for Katajia, be the hero, and prove myself to the universe."

nar "I eat my food quickly and ask Sol to take me back to my room. When I get tired, I get philosophical. My first day is not the place to let myself become that way."

stop music fadeout 5.0

scene bg 02 with fade

show sol serious at center

s "This is your room. If you need anything, you have my freq. Don't be afraid to call me for anything."

n smile "Thanks for showing me around, Sol."

s smile "It's nice having a friend on this ship again. Good night."

n "Good night, Sol."

scene bg 05 with fade

nar "So this is where I am going to be spending the next few months. I doubt I will be visiting this room much when there is so much work to be done."

nar "It is just a tad cramped, but I think I can make a good life here. The crew seems friendly, I doubt my mission is mundane, and I don't have to worry about waking up to giant rats gnawing on my computers."

nar "I glance over at my roommate's bed, but she seems to be fast asleep. The commander said she was Captain Moonfallow. I'll have to introduce myself to her in the morning."

nar "It is hard to maneuver around in the darkness, so I relent on unpacking and head to bed."

nar "Tomorrow... I get to start my job as the hero. This is going to be perfect."

nar "..."

scene bg black with fade

jump meetingKika

label meetingKika:

scene bg 05 with fade

nar "What's that? Is another bird stuck in the ventilation again?"

nar "No... As I look around me, I remember that I've been freed from that hellhole. Somebody is banging on my door with a ludicrous amount of force."

nar "That doesn't sound like it would be Sol. He said that he was going to meet me here in twenty minutes. He's always punctual, but..."

n smile "Coming!"

nar "I quickly throw on a fresh uniform and go to open the door."

show kika angry at center with vpunch

play music "Music/ms10.ogg" fadein 1.0

nar "As the door slides open, an angry looking kitsune with bright pink hair tied into twin drills storms in without so much as a greeting."

kk "Where's breakfast?!"

n huh "What?"

kk "You heard me, Faye!"

n "I'm not Faye."

show kika annoyed

kk "...my mistake. You're not my minion."

n oi "No. No, I am not."

show kika fufufu

kk "Still, you seem like you could make a decent meal. You're my new minion!"

nar "This is making less and less sense as the moments tick on. I glance at her shoulder and notice the thin stripe of a lieutenant. Suddenly, I'm starting to understand Sol's annoyance."

n "Excuse me, lieutenant, but-"

show kika excited

kk "But I'm hungry. Chop chop."

n "I'm a major. You know your ranks, right?"

nar "Behind me, I can hear the rustling of sheets and the loud plop of someone falling out of bed. I want to turn and investigate, but the uppity lieutenant is looking me over like merchandise."

show kika smirk

kk "Not much to look at, but you've got spirit. I think you'll be acceptable in the ranks of my minions."

n "Lieutenant, barging into a superior officer's room-"

kk "Do you know who I am?"

n "No."

kk "I'm Kika Starr, daughter of President of Earth Jullian Starr and the hero of the Xeon."

n "We're on the Nimross."

show kika please

kk "I know that!"

n "And I do not care who your father is. Decorum is critical for all crew members."

show kika annoyed

kk "Hmph. Then who is going to get me breakfast?"

n yare "I have no idea, but I know who is going to get my breakfast this morning."

show kika tsun

kk "What? You can't seriously order me to go get you breakfast."

n "I am. Chop chop."

kk "That's an unlawful order."

n oi "Breakfast or paperwork, those are your two options."

show kika thinking

kk "On second thought, I don't think I want you as a minion."

n "So, you choose paperwork? I might have just arrived on the ship, but I'm rested enough to do some writing."

kk "Grrrrrrr..."

f "Morning, Kika. I brought breakfast."

show kika smirk at innerRight

show faye sleepy at innerLeft

kk "Finally, someone reasonable! I thought you said you were going to meet me at the lounge!"

f "I kind of slept in again."

n smile "Captain Moonfallow, I presume?"

f "Uh-huh."

nar "Her glassy blue eyes and constant yawning tell the story of a girl who isn't quite all there this morning."

n "It's nice to meet you. I'm Natalie Puccile, your new roommate. I hope I didn't wake you when I moved in."

show faye aru

f "You moved in? Sorry I didn't help."

kk "That's why I have to beat on the doors so hard. She doesn't sleep so much as she slips into a coma."

f "Eh heh heh..."

n "It's good to know I won't disturb you when you sleep. Lieutenant... Starr, was it?"

show kika fufufu

kk "Soon to be captain."

n oi "I am not such a heavy sleeper. This is your one warning."

show kika thinking

kk "Faye, did you make the danish like I asked?"

show faye exasperated

f "Danish? I thought you wanted toast."

kk "Whatever, let me see it."

show kika excited

kk "Here you go, Major... Puccile, was it?"

n "Are you making fun of me?"

kk "You said breakfast or paperwork. There, all better now."

n sigh "..."

show kika fufufu

kk "Let's go, Faye. You can make me a danish."

f "I made today's breakfast. It's your turn."

show kika please

kk "It's still today."

show faye aru

f "Aaaaarrrrruuuuuuu..."

hide kika

hide faye

with fade

nar "They go walking off without paying me any attention."

show sol annoyed at center

s "See? She's been that way since I was her upperclassman at the academy."

n "The lieutenant got under my skin, but I don't think you should call her a mutt."

s grumpy "No, Moonfallow is the backstabbing mutt. Kika is just a puffed up housecat."

nar "I look at the toast in my hand. No point in letting it go to waste."

s "The meeting is in twenty minutes. Are you prepared?"

n nervous "It's in two hours and twenty minutes."

s "No, I double-checked with Rasoona this morning."

s surprised "Are you saying you haven't even read your orders yet?"

nar "I jam the toast into my mouth and sprint out of the room and down the hall. I can salvage this!

Really! I can!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump missionBriefing

label missionBriefing:

scene bg 01

show stan hmm at allLeft

show azaia neutral at center

show sol serious at right

nar "Twenty minutes later (to the second), I'm standing before the assembled crew with a page of hastily scribbled notes and an anxious looking Sol."

nar "Doesn't he know I've got this? There's nothing to be worried about."

a "Everyone is assembled, Major Puccile. You may commence."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

n smile "And... time hack at 0800 fleet standard time. Welcome everyone, I am Major Natalie

Puccile. I will be briefing you on the newest mission for the KSS Nimross. The operation will go by the code name Runaway Book."

n "Three days ago, an all-points bulletin was issued for a Marakian Institute research team that failed to report in at their designated times. The team is currently considered missing in action."

n "While this would normally not require a response, the final report for Doctor Nimian Sunflower, the team's xenotechnician, suspected that the recovered artifact may hold some importance to modern transportation."

hide stan

show zuri confused at zuriLeft behind azaia

z "Question! How did an ancient civilization manage to make something that we have to worry about? They're old and... ancient."

show sol annoyed

s "Just because they are old doesn't mean they weren't technologically advanced."

z "Then why aren't they still around?"

hide sol

show faye smile at right

f "There's a lot of reasons. They could have been wiped out in a war, some sort of viral plague, or simply moved on to other parts of the universe."

n "Precisely. Marakia isn't filling us in on the details of what the expedition was supposed to uncover, so we will be doing a lot of the leg work."

n sigh "They probably just found some old traffic sign, but command feels it important enough to warrant a follow-up. Odds are we will find them sitting there, dumb and happy, but I'm not taking any risks."

hide zuri

show kika fufufu at left

kk "Investigation work! This wouldn't be the first time, would it, Faye?"

f "Nope."

a "Our ground team at any potential site will consist of Major Puccile, Major Hackett, Captain Moonfallow, Lieutenant Zuri, and Colonel Nelson."

show kika surprised

kk "What?!"

hide faye

show stan lazy at right behind azaia

st "I must agree with Starr, the team line-up will not do."

a "How so?"

show stan sly

st "Would it not make more sense to keep the doctor here? Should I become incapacitated in the field, I will no longer be able to render life-saving aid."

st "For the sake of those who may be injured in the line of our noble duty, I beseech you to not risk such a valuable asset."

s "You just don't want to risk your neck."

show kika angry

kk "I've trained in first aid! I'm a qualified first responder."

st "See, commander? Does our swap not make sense?"

a "Lieutenant Starr, your father has given me specific orders to keep you out of harm's way. Unless I can assess that there is no danger, I cannot authorize the swap."

kk "But if there isn't an element of danger, what's the point of going on the adventure?"

a "Military necessity."

show stan complaining

st "But risking a high ranking officer with valuable training is? I dare not believe that."

a "Believe it. Everyone, sit down. Continue, Puccile."

hide stan

hide kika

n smile "We are going to the last known location and will attempt to trace their location from there. I don't think we are going to face any dangers, but our current knowledge is limited."

a "Wandering into the unknown always brings a certain level of risk. Flight Officer Migi, what is the status of our ship and supplies?"

show kylie smile at left

k "Everything is working within approved levels except for a few minor crew comfort things."

show sol annoyed at solRight

s "So the aft bathroom is not going to be fixed for a while is what you are saying."

show kylie sad

k "Supplies... aren't as good. We got shorted on a lot of our order. We've got roughly a solid month's worth of food and fuel."

show sol grumpy

a "Then we will make do with what we have. You will file another report on this to fleet support."

s "I will take care of it."

show kylie happy

k "Thanks, S... major."

s "I'm not pleased with command's subpar performances any more than our crew's. I don't have double standards for my subordinates compared to my superiors."

show kylie surprised

k "Thanks... I think."

a "Crew, prepare for jump. Major Puccile, upload your coordinates to the nav station for Lieutenant Starr. Major Hackett, ready our ship."

hide kylie

show kika angry at left

kk "But-"

s "If you have a complaint, voice it later. I want this ship ready for jump in five minutes and our course in three."

kk "But-"

a "Now, Lieutenant Starr."

show kika annoyed

kk "Fine! Come on!"

hide sol

hide azaia

show kika annoyed at center with move

nar "The rude lieutenant grabs my arm and violently yanks me to the position on the far left side."

kk "Give them to me."

n hmm "Hmmm?"

kk "The coordinates! If Sol wants it in three, I have to do it in two."

nar "I click the transfer button and watch the file pop-up on the navigator station. In a heartbeat, Kika has pounced onto the station, her fingers flying like hawks as she manipulates the screen."

n smile "Why do you have to do it in two? If he said three, I'm sure he is fine with three."

show kika smirk

kk "Because that's the standard. I'm the best of the best. You don't become the hero by simply doing the bare minimum."

n htp "And because we do-"

show kika excited

kk "That's why you are all going to be my minions some day."

nar "The best of things are typically done with the worst of intentions. Still, my mission is more likely to succeed with someone who has the drive and motivation."

nar "But something bugs me about watching her type and draw so fast."

n huh "Is the ship navigation virtual intelligence not working?"

show kika please

kk "Hard to concentrate when you are blabbing."

n smile "Just trying to get a better feel for my ship."

kk "Whatever. It works just fine, it just suffers the limitations of all VI."

n "Their programmers."

show kika smirk

kk "Exactly! My methods are faster and have better results. Theirs are paranoid."

n huh "Wait... you're not flying us into a star, are you?"

show kika thinking

kk "No, but I might be flying us through pirate space. It's not like we are going to stop our shift jump and let them attack us."

n hmm "..."

kk "Trust me. I know what I am doing."

s "Natalie, over here!"

hide kika

show sol serious at center

nar "Trust is a limited commodity, especially when I feel the best way to describe her is 'The candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long.'"

nar "Sol is standing by a small chair that looks rather uncomfortable in the back next to Zuri."

s "We're making the jump. It may get a little rough, so strap in and keep your emergency pressurization device under your chair turned on."

n oh "Isn't there anything I can do?"

show sol smile

s "Trust me. I'll make this a smooth one. Just sit back and watch."

stop music fadeout 5.0

hide sol with fade

n "...I'm not worried about it. Ship accidents making the jump to subspace nowadays are rare."

show zuri complain at center

z "I'm always a little jumpy when we make the jump. You can't do anything to fix a bad jump sitting back here in the baby seats."

nar "Why does she have to vocalize my fears? All it would take is one little mistake by the hasty lieutenant or the slip of Sol's hand. We could be dead in a millisecond."

nar "I love space travel. The science behind getting a ship into the space between space is amazing. That doesn't make it any less dangerous or frightening."

nar "Still... I do feel better know that I'm not the only one who is a tad skiddish about this. Zuri's alright."

n "How do you cope with it? I'm not scared or anything... just curious."

z happy "Night night."

n huh "Huh?"

hide zuri

nar "Zuri closes her eyes and snuggles into her restraints. Sleep? How the hell can anyone sleep at a time like this? Between the chaos and noise, there's no chance of sleep."

n "Zuri?"

z "..."

nar "Yet, there she goes. That's talent."

show azaia neutral at innerLeft

play music "Music/ms18.ogg"

a "All crew, sound off."

show alphonse smile at solRight behind azaia

e "Flight station, ready."

hide alphonse

show kika excited at innerRight

kk "Navigation, plotted and good to go."

hide kika

show kylie laugh at innerRight

k "Engineering, all green."

hide kylie

show sol angry at innerRight

s "Non-essential crew are strapped in and secured. The Nimross is prepared for jump at your word, commander."

a "Engage jump."

s "Roger, engaging jump drive."

nar "Under my seat, I can feel the deck shift from a slow, steady vibration shift to a much louder, much more violent rattle. The warp space generator is beginning its charge."

nar "The massive power required to tear a rift in normal space is astronomical. If any of the capacitors were to suddenly explode, there wouldn't be even atoms of me left floating around..."

scene bg black

nar "I close my eyes, wishing I could fall asleep like Zuri. No amount of personal brilliance can help me if the manufacturer skimmed on something or Kylie didn't put her best into her checks."

nar "The volume finally crescendos as the capacitors are charged to the required values. Next comes the part that scares me the most. The power is transferred to a bellino crystal to pull the ship into subspace."

nar "Bellinos serve as the focal point. Without it, the energy used to break the holds of the universe would be useless. The material is rare, mined in three locations galaxy-wide. I doubt we have a spare."

nar "Stop thinking about everything that could go wrong, Nat. If you explode, you won't even have time to feel it."

s "Shift drive stabilized. My ship, my controls."

e "Your ship, your controls."

a "Advance into the void."

s "Moving forward."

st "It begins."

nar "..."

nar "... ..."

nar "..."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg 01 with fade

nar "I open my eyes to the bright lights of the bridge. I feel groggy and disoriented. Did I manage to fall asleep?"

nar "The bridge is emptier than when I closed them. I must have blacked out for a little bit. Miracles do happen, I suppose."

show zuri smiles at center

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "Good morning."

n sad "How long was I out?"

z "Two hours. We're still in shift."

n "Uguuuu..."

z "That first shift nap is always the hardest to recover from. Why don't you take a moment to walk around? It always helps me."

n huh "Can I?"

z "Yep. You only have to be buckled up for entry and exit of subspace."

nar "It feels like someone beat me with a rubber mallet. I think I'll need to get better sleep tonight; increase my water intake."

nar "I think I'll go talk with some of the crew. That should help clear my head."

menu:

"Talk with Zuri":

n smile "How many shift jumps have you gone on?"

z thinking "Errrr... a couple dozen, I think. I used to command a small team of military police before this, so we had more station duty than fleet duty."

n "You were a cop?"

z confused "It's a lot more boring than it sounds. Most of the time, we'd just ticket marines who sped on base or would do drills for events that never happened."

z "If I never have to sit in some hanger checking ID's of pilots again, then my life will be sunny."

n happy "You did critical work that ensured the safety of mission essential equipment."

z excited "I know, and I'm proud of never losing a single one."

z complain "It doesn't make those twelve hour shifts any less boring. I used to practice my fighting style with one of my troopers during our downtime."

nar "I'm a little envious. The lieutenant, probably a flight officer at the time, had command of troops and I never did."

z smiles "What did you do before coming to us?"

n smile "I worked a small listening outpost on the edges of Katajion space. I was by myself, hoping that some sort of ship would drift into my space."

z "Did you ever see any Raltin ships in your space?"

n irate "The only ship I ever saw was the automated cargo ship that would bring me in supplies every other month."

z excited "Still, you did critical work that ensured the safety of mission essential equipment."

n huh "..."

n laugh "Hehe. I guess we both have had exciting careers."

z happy "But that's the point of this adventure, right? We're finally going to do something with a more visible impact."

n "Indeed."

nar "Zuri looks at me with eager smile and a fierce look. I sense determination in the dreamon's soft green eyes. Sol... I think you might be underestimating her."

z uneasy "Hey... ummmm..."

n smile "Speak your mind."

z "Well... I know I might have almost nearly possibly knocked you out yesterday... but..."

n "If you are looking for my permission to keep practicing, you are going to have to go to Commander Rasoon instead."

z "Oh, no no no. It's..."

z "...I'm sorry."

n laugh "I forgive you. It must be hard to keep busy on this ship."

z smiles "How did you keep yourself entertained at your post?"

n "I played computer games."

z confused "Really? I've tried before but I couldn't understand it very well. Something about falling candy and you had to move it around..."

n smile "Candy Shop. I've played it before, it was fun."

z sad "It looked really fun, I just couldn't understand it."

nar "Hmmm... Perhaps..."

n laugh "How about a trade? You teach me your martial arts and I'll teach you Candy Shop."

z cheery "Whooooo... I was worried you were going to ask me to teach you the flute."

n huh "Wait! That's a much-"

z "Nope! Too late! I accept your original offer."

n smile "Could you at least play me a song sometime?"

z defeated "..."

n surprised "Never mind. Training is more than enough."

nar "The pain in her eyes whenever she talks about her music... why? It's something to be proud of! I wish I could play such beautiful, alluring music. She's so fortunate..."

stop music fadeout 2.0

s "Crew, resume your stations. Prepare for shift."

"Talk with Kika":

\$kikaPositive= True

hide zuri

nar "I still need to ensure that our navigator knows for certain that we are going the right way."

n smile "Lieutenant St-"

show kika angry at center

kk "Good, I needed to talk to you."

n "As do-"

kk "You need to go tell Rasoona to drop the doc and take me instead. Chop chop, time is wasting."

n sigh "Why?"

kk "Why what?"

n "Why should I do anything for you, lieutenant? You're rude and disrespectful."

kk tsun "Because I'm the best. You'd have to be an idiot to trade me out for someone who would bring you down."

n yare "No, I'd be a fool to bring someone who can't respect command. How can I trust you with the big things if I can't trust you to even show the barest amount of courtesy?"

kk annoyed "I'm sooooooory. Major Puccile, I humbly request that you find it within your heart to talk with Vice Commander Rasoona and replace Colonel Nelson with the lowly lupide that is myself."

n "That's not helping the situation."

kk please "Why? I did exactly what you asked me to do."

n "The manner in how you did it-"

kk smirk "-is still better than the false sheen you get from Colonel Nelson. Didn't I tell you I was the hero of the Xeon? My record speaks for itself."

n "Correct me if I am wrong, but the Xeon-"

kk "-was a battlecarrier that served as Admiral Tsuku's flagship during the war. I personally knew him."

n "Then why are you on this dinky little destroyer instead of on it?"

kk "..."

s "Because it was destroyed during the battle that Kika so adamantly flaunts."

kk "I forgot that he was there..."

show sol annoyed at solRight

show alphonse wink at allLeft behind kika

s "Yes, I was there. I was Gold Finch Two, Al was Black Eagle Eight. We were some of the real heroes who shot down the missiles that nearly blew the Xeon up."

kk uneasy "We were fine! I identified the launchers and was getting the ship out of danger..."

s "Then why are you here?"

kk "..."

n hmm "Lieutenant Starr?"

kk thinking "Are you going to help me or not? Nothing I say is going to make a difference anyway."

n "Try me."

kk "Right, major. With all due respect, just give me your answer."

nar "There's anger in my navigator's eyes. Not hostility, but bitterness. Distress. I want to know what happened at that battle. Sol better have a good story."

n htp "I'll consider it. Show me that you can do your job, and I'll talk with the commander about swapping you in."

kk "That's the best you are going to give me?"

n "For now."

kk sad "Think about what I told you and consider it some more."

stop music fadeout 2.0

s "Crew, resume your stations. Prepare for shift."

\$stalkedWithKika=True

hide kika

hide alphonse

hide sol

"Talk with Sol":

hide zuri

show sol serious at solRight

show alphonse serious at alLeft

n smile "Hey, Sol. How did the jump go?"

s "Flawlessly. I hope it didn't disrupt your nap."

n hmm "I didn't think I was going to actually fall asleep. I just wanted to close my eyes to drown out the shaking."

s "It's good to catch a nap every now and then. I would catch a nap sometimes on long patrols."

n happy "Sleeping on the job?"

s annoyed "Twenty four hour patrols wear on you. Taking short breaks during subspace shifts help keep you sharp when you shift out into combat."

n oh "Combat..."

s "Scariest thing I've ever gone through in my life was my first dogfight. A Raltin snubby slid in right behind me and had missile lock."

n "Did you think you were going to die?"

s regret "No... I was so focused on the situation that it wasn't until after the mission that I realized how close to death I came."

s "I almost cried. Almost. But not when I was in real danger, not when I was under the missile lock."

s "It's how I wasn't scared of losing Lenna until she was already gone."

n hmm "What happened?"

s annoyed "I don't have the right to reflect on it anymore."

nar "Odd words to match a very odd expression on his face as he looks at Alphonse. Anger... unrestrained anger from the depths of hell."

e thought "Reflection has its time and place. Natalie is your friend, and she wishes to share your burden."

s "Thank you for your permission."

n huh "What's that about?"

s "Nothing."

e "Do not worry about it. Just old friends and their squabbles."

s "We are not friends. Please remove yourself from our conversation."

e "Forgive me for intruding."

hide alphonse

show sol grumpy at center

s grumpy "Stupid frikon, always butting in where he isn't wanted."

n yare "He can still hear you."

s "I know. I'm hoping if I say it enough times, he'll stop doing it. I'd order him to stop, but-"

show alphonse smile at allLeft

show sol grumpy at solRight

e "-we share the same rank. I have seniority, but Sol has the executive position."

s annoyed "See? He just keeps butting in when I don't need him talking!"

n laugh "Hehe."

s "What?"

n "Are you two an old married couple?"

s angry2 "No. No. No way in hell."

e "We've flown together in rival training fighter squadrons. I was a Black Eagle and he was a Gold Finch."

s "You flew under the command of the most pretentious man in the history of fighters, which is astounding to fathom."

e "Your squadron leader was a shy-"

s "Don't. Say. A. Word. You. Monster."

e sad "Forgive me, I-"

s "Shut up and focus on the controls. We're going to be shifting out shortly."

n hmm "Who was his squadron leader? Someone I know?"

s "Go sit, Nat. We've got work to do here."

e serious "I do not care if you are hostile with me, but you shouldn't treat your friends so roughly."

s "..."

show sol regret

extend "sorry. It was Lenna. Could we drop it now and get back to the task at hand?"

nar "Lenna? The redhead who would never stand up for herself was a fighter squadron leader? What the hell happened in fighter training?"

nar "But... I wonder. We hung out a decent bit. She never struck me as someone who was sharp enough to formulate tactics on-the-fly. Sharp reflexes, but a dull mind."

nar "...how many fighter pilots did she kill in a stupid blunder? Is that why she isn't here with Sol anymore? He looks so broken and hurt when he talks about her..."

n sad "I'm sorry, Sol. I didn't mean to bring up bad memories."

s "Bad memories are the story of my life. Don't worry about it. Please sit down, we are shifting out now."

nar "As I walk back to my seat, I hear Alphonse quietly whisper to Sol."

e sad "Were they all that bad? You just told her that your time together was nothing but a bad memory."

nar "He did... didn't he? I hadn't considered it that way, but by exclusion, he did imply that."

nar "I look at our time at the Academy fondly... does Sol?"

s annoyed "I did not."

e "Consider your words or all you will have are bad memories."

s "Next time, I'm going to find a co-pilot who isn't a philosopher."

e smile "I'm trying to help."

s "Then help me with the shift out."

stop music fadeout 2.0

s "Crew, resume your stations. Prepare for shift."

hide sol

hide alphonse

nar "I barely manage to strap myself in before the violent rattling starts up again. Clutching to the straps, white knuckled, all I can do is pray that we didn't damage some critical piece of equipment during our shift in."

nar "If it didn't take a few thousand years to get from one place to another, I would never take such unreliable transportation. Why can't we have developed wormholes instead? Point-to-point! All done!"

nar "When I become fleet tactician, I am going to devote all of my resources to developing that technology. So much safer and quicker than this-"

#play a heavy vibration

scene bg black with vpunch

nar "It's okay, Nat, it's okay. Trust the ship. Trust the maintenance. Trust Sol and Alphonse."

nar "Okay, maybe life on that mudball had a few perks over being on an adventure."

z "Are you alright?"

n "Fine."

f "You don't look-"

z "If she said she's fine, she's fine."

f "Oh."

z "Nat, you gotta hang tough."

n "Right. I can do this."

nar "After a few more seconds of fear-inducing vibrations, the ship returns to the normal convulsions of space travel. Not smooth, but not so terrifying that I can't focus on anything else."

scene bg 01

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 2.0

nar "There... I see the world that will be my first investigation site."

nar "The planet is unnamed, just some random alphanumeric designator. Nobody would have cared about it, if some research team hadn't decided to go digging around."

show azaia neutral at center

a "Captain Moonfallow, environmental report."

f "Ummmm... can I get up yet?"

s "Sorry, I hadn't completed my shift out checklist. You are now cleared up."

show faye smile at innerRight

show azaia neutral at innerLeft

f "Thanks. Let's see..."

f "Everything checks out. Hospitable for all crew life, though it may be a little too oxygen rich for Commander Rasoono to breathe comfortably. Slightly smaller than Earth, gravitational pull is within .000001 percent of Earth's."

f "The supplied coordinates will put us down in a temperate area. Mid-seventies fahrenheit temperature, grassland, no major life forms of note. I see some smaller ones, similar to small mammals, in the local area."

hide faye

show zuri confused at alRight behind azaia

z "Awwww... I wanted to bring the heavy weapons today."

show azaia neutral at center

show kika angry at left behind azaia

kk "That's not dangerous! If I have to be afraid of some stray cat, then I have bigger problems in my life!"

a "My orders stand."

if (talkedToKika):

kk "Natalie..."

n smile "Commander, would it-"

a "Negative."

n oi "But-"

a "I just have orders to support you, Major Puccile. How I do that is up to my discretion."

n "Copy, ma'am."

kk thinking "This is unacceptable..."

a "Major Puccile, what are you expecting to find at this site?"

nar "Truthfully, I have no clue what I am going to find at the first site. We were always taught that it was the most dangerous part of the investigation. You can only go in with what Intel told you."

nar "I'm going down there with nothing but me and my wits. Everywhere from now on is going to

have much better intelligence, since I should be able to find some sort of clues here."

nar "But, for now, this mission is operating in the blind."

a "That is not what I like to hear, major."

hide zuri

show sol serious at solRight

s "Really, Natalie? You don't have any better idea?"

hide sol

show zuri cheery at alRight behind azaia

z "Awww, come on! Life is boring when you know everything ahead of you."

hide zuri

show sol annoyed at solRight

s annoyed "And a lot shorter."

n oi "W-w-what are you all talking about? I'm expecting to find an abandoned camp in the middle of a forest."

show kika thinking at left

kk "Then why the whole 'I have no stinking clue what to find' bit?"

show sol regret at solRight

s regret "Natalie, you were doing your internal monologue out loud again."

n nervous "Why didn't you stop me?"

s "Because it was kind of important information."

nar "Great... now I look like a fool again. I need to be more careful about that."

a "Lieutenant Zuri-"

hide kika

show zuri excited at zuriLeft behind azaia

z "Yeah, yeah. Safety, security, and... what was the last s-word you're always saying? Swords?"

a "..."

s grumpy "Why would we ever criticize your practice of swords?"

z "I dunno, I really don't pay attention."

s regret "..."

z "I mean... yes, major! Safety, security, and swords!"

s "Just... fallout."

z "Yes, commander!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 02 with fade

show sol regret at solRight

show zuri smiles at zuriLeft

s "Zuri... just don't let us get killed..."

z cheery "How about mauled?"

s "No."

z happy "Ravaged?"

s "No."

n happy "Maimed?"

s "Don't encourage her."

nar "I know I shouldn't, but I'm trying my best not to lose my cool. My first real ground-side investigation! The butterflies in my stomach won't stop zooming around my gut."

nar "Four people under my command... I have to be on point, I have to be the razor's edge. They are counting on me!"

nar "Time to earn those major stripes, Natalie!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump firstGroundSite

label firstGroundSite:

scene bg 07 with fade

play music "Music/ms17.ogg"

nar "A planet that has no name, a world that has no civilization... The woods are as still as the lost grave of the adventurer Killik Harnson."

nar "No, bad! No thinking about dead SITO's! If you think about the names on the wall, you're going to end up being one."

nar "Still, the comparison is warranted. It's so silent around here, so still. Not even a breeze is blowing through the abandoned camp site."

show faye smile at innerRight2

show stan lazy at alRight behind faye

show zuri smiles at zuriFarLeft behind faye

show sol grumpy at innerLeft2

st "Such peacefulness sits ill in my heart. We should return to the ship."

f "It's okay. We just scared all the animals away with the ship's engines. They will return in time."

st complaining "And eat us, perchance?"

f aru "I dunno."

z "Stop worrying, colonel. I checked the scanners and nothing bigger than my fist registered for five miles around us."

st "Small can be ferocious."

s "With all due respect, we should limit our voices to not disturb any potential wildlife, sir. Major Puccile, are you ready?"

nar "The sudden shift of Sol's professionalism towards me catches me off-guard for a moment, but I grab it as an anchor. Focus is key. This is no different than a training mission."

n htp "I am ready. Nobody touch anything. The clues around here could be anything."

st "Then I am heading back to the shuttle. If you need me, my lady, please call."

n "That will be fine, sir."

st smile "If you need a break, I could always use the company."

s annoyed "We've got work to do."

hide stan

show faye smile at right

show sol serious at center

s "We are yours to command, Major Puccile."

n "Okay, Lieutenant Zuri, I want you setting up sensors and seeing what you can about any remaining camp defenses."

z happy "Already did."

n huh "Really?"

z "It was the first thing I did when I came off the shuttle. It'd be really bad of me to let you step on a landmine or something."

nar "She's right... I should have had her check the first second she stepped off. A mistake..."

s "Surprisingly good work from you."

z complain "Don't sound so surprised all the time... please?"

n smile "Then could you keep an eye out for any potential threats?"

z smiles "Of course. Nobody is going to hurt you while I'm here."

nar "My gut tells me that casual remark is a serious one. It's a comforting thought to know someone is ensuring my safety."

hide zuri

n "Captain Moonfallow, I want your help in determining what happened to the camp's residents. The camp looks almost too spotless to be abandoned."

f "I need to study the local fauna anyway."

s annoyed "Our mission takes priority. Don't lose focus."

f aru "Sol-"

s grumpy "Major Hackett."

f sad "Major, my mission to investigate flora and fauna is a mission from the Board of Directors. Yours is Space Force directed. My mission trumps yours."

s "Now wait just-"

f sheepish "But I can do both! You can count on me, Natalie!"

n "Thanks."

hide faye

s regret "She needs to remember we are a team, not a bunch of lone wolves."

n "If she has her own mission, we can't hold a grudge. Orders are orders."

s irritated "Whatever."

n htp "Focus, Major Hackett. I need you to help me look for clues about what they were looking for here. This place reeks of strangeness."

s "Then we are in agreement. Why here? Why this place? I don't see any good reason to stay here."

n "That's what we need to find out."

s smile "And may luck bless us. I'll report anything I find."

hide sol

nar "I walk through the camp with the utmost care. Any potentially delicate clue could be lying underfoot. I have to be cautious."

nar "But as I nose around the tents, it is the lack of clues that highlights itself to me."

nar "There is no sign of a struggle, no sign of an attack by wildlife that could have driven the researchers away, no signs of a hasty departure..."

nar "Why would someone abandon all of their survival gear? Yet, I cannot find any trace of what they were doing. All computers, all documentation, are conspicuously absent."

nar "Personal effects are also strangely absent. I can find plenty of jackets for what I suppose would be cold nights, but I can't find a single picture of somebody's loved ones."

nar "Why?"

nar "I sit down on one of the thin, collapsable chairs around a table that I could only presume once held computer racks. There has to be something here that I'm missing."

nar "Were they planning on returning soon? Maybe an excursion into the local area? Still, why would they take all of their computer equipment, but none of their survival gear?"

n "Bridge, this is ground team."

e "Go ahead, ground team."

n "Requesting a scan for any humanoid life forms within a fifty mile radius of our site."

e "Wilco. We'll send you the results in ten."

n "I copy, thanks."

if (zuriHP):

show zuri smiles at innerLeft

z "There isn't any point in doing that, Nat."

n hmm "What makes you say that?"

nar "Zuri flares her wings, like a hawk zooming in on its prey. I have to resist the urge to jump back."

z thinking "I can feel the disturbances on the wind, the voice of the world."

n surprised "You can? Your wings are sensitive enough to detect those sorts of things?"

z "It takes a lot of work to decipher what I feel, but you don't get to perform if you can't feel the wind."

z "When a warrior's spirit is in harmony with the world, all of its secrets will be revealed."

n happy "I knew it was a good idea to bring you along! What do you feel? What secrets are out there?"

z uneasy "Ummmm..."

n "I'm sorry, I'm just a little excited. This place... it feels..."

z sad "Dead."

n smile "Yeah. Like the inhabitants disappeared in a flash."

z "The wind... the world... it all feels vacant. Like we are sitting on a sacred site that was to remain undisturbed."

n "You sound a little scared."

z uneasy "A true warrior fears nothing."

z sad "I guess I'm not a true warrior though. It is putting me on edge. Like any moment something will rise and devour me."

n doori "We're all here together. I might not be able to do much to fight, but you can count on me."

z serious "Don't worry. I haven't trained for years just to let some spooky camp make me run in fright! Defending you is my duty!"

z sad "I just feel really ill here. Could we go soon?"

n "We will soon. Is there anything I can do to help you out? I have some tea, if you'd like it."

z smiles "Tea is a sage's drink, not a brave warrior's. But thanks for thinking of me."

n huh "Aren't all warriors supposed to be scholars as well as fighters? Try some."

z uneasy "You caught me. It's too bitter for my tastes. I like sweet things."

show sol grumpy at solRight

show zuri uneasy at zuriLeft

s "So things that aren't like you?"

z happy "I'm so sweet that you can't leave me out in the rain."

n smile "Did you find anything?"

show zuri smiles

s "Whoever was here fled quickly, but ensured that we would have no easy way to follow them. It could be possible that the researchers were captured by pirates."

z "Pirates would have taken everything of value. That generator over there is worth thousands, but it was left behind."

s "Then what do you think happened, lizard-brain?"

z confused "I dunno."

s annoyed "If you are going to shoot down my theory, at least have something to replace it with!"

e "Ground team, this is the bridge."

n "Go ahead."

e "Negative on those scans. You are all alone down there."

n "Thanks. Puccile out."

z "I told you. The wind never lies."

n sigh "So... we have no clues."

s "It would appear so. Someone is trying very hard to make sure that we do not find out what the researchers were doing."

nar "Faye shoves her way past Zuri's outstretched wings, clearly trying to get to me in a hurry..."

show faye exasperated at center

f "Ummmm... I might have a clue."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 2.0

s "Did you find a bone or something?"

f "I'm not a dog."

s "You always fool me."

f "Please hurry, major. I didn't want to touch it."

n surprised "Is it hazardous? Sol, get our chem gear."

s serious "Roger!"

f "No, no, no! It's... you just need to see for yourself."

hide sol

hide zuri

hide faye

nar "Captain Moonfallow leads me to a spot on the far edge of camp. The soil is disturbed and I can see where she was digging. Was she secretly looking for a bone?"

nar "If she was, she found me one. A datapad lies half buried in the soil. The corner of the rectangular tablet juts out. I can only assume that Captain Moonfallow was pulling it out when she realized I should do it."

show faye exasperated at center

n smile "You were very smart to leave the excavation to me. We don't want to risk damaging it."

f "That's not it... that isn't dirt staining the screen."

nar "Curiosity gets the better of me, so I skip safely following procedures and pull it out without being delicate. She's right, that dirt stain is far too red to be from this soil."

n "Perhaps they found it on another planet. If they found it somewhere with red sand... or..."

nar "That makes no sense. Why would they dig it up one place just to bury it another? It wouldn't have a splotchy pattern like it has now if it was from soil."

n hmm "Could it be... blood? Dried up blood?"

f sad "It smells like it."

nar "Blood... but whose? Why? Who would bury a blood-covered datapad?"

n "How deep was it?"

f "Barely under the surface. I was looking for more signs of disturbed ground, but none of the others had anything buried in them."

n "Drats. Still, we might be able to pull something useful from this one."

f "We shouldn't stay here."

n oi "What do you mean? We need to do a full scan of the area. It's possible that we may find the fate of our missing researchers!"

f "There's something wrong here. Very wrong. The land... My father always taught me to listen to the animals. If you can't hear them, he said, you should run."

nar "Even though I've got a slightly worrisky feeling, I don't feel anything like Zuri or Moonfallow are talking about. Still, I would be unwise to ignore the advice of my crew."

n sigh "Everyone, gather up. We'll head back to the Nimross and investigate this datapad there further."

show zuri thinking at zuriLeft behind faye

show sol annoyed at solRight behind faye

s "Don't tell me you are getting cold feet because of a spooked puppy who can't handle a little blood."

f exasperated "I can."

z "Major, please listen to us. We need to go now! Darkness is setting."

if (zuriHP):

s "That's just a storm cloud. You can't seriously think you are going to dissolve because you are so sweet..."

else:

s "That's just a storm cloud. Afraid of a little rain?"

n "Sol, our security officer just said they don't feel safe here any more. We are going."

s "..."

show sol regret

extend "tsk. Fine."

nar "I look at the storm clouds off in the distance. I don't like retreating from a mystery, but if my crew is to trust in me, I must trust in them."

nar "Besides, I've got a potential clue. I brush off the remaining specks of dirt from the tarnished silver casing. My little enigma must have something important on it. It has to."

nar "Someone tried hiding this one. I can only hope it was a researcher who didn't want whatever got the other computers. It must be someone who knows the truth can never die."

nar "People don't murder others over old trinkets and ruins. Something important was here. Perhaps something dangerous."

nar "Command wouldn't have sent me after old pottery. A weapon, maybe. A weapon is something people would kill over. A weapon is worth sending out a SITO."

nar "A weapon... Could there have been an ancient weapon of mass destruction buried on these grounds? Have we disturbed the grounds of a mystery best left unsolved?"

nar "Zuri lightly grips my shoulder, bringing me back to reality."

n "Sorry. Everyone, pull out."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black with fade

jump zuriAndSol1

label zuriAndSol1:

scene bg 02

play music "Music/ms04.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "As I step out of the shuttle airlock, I can't help but feel a little happy. It almost feels like returning home after a long day at work."

nar "Actually... that is what it is. Huh. I... never really thought about it. This ship is my home now."

show sol grumpy at solRight

show zuri smiles at zuriLeft

show faye smile at center

n smile "The commander should hear about our discoveries. I'm going to report in to her before I tear this thing apart."

s "Go on ahead. I need a word with Lieutenant Zuri."

z thinking "Huh?"

n "Sol, it was my decision to come back home."

s annoyed "I know, and I accept that. I just need to talk to her about something work related."

n "Alright. Don't be too long."

s "This will be quick."

hide sol

hide zuri

f aru "Do you think she'll be alright with him?"

n oh "..."

f "..."

n "Tell the commander that I got mud all over my boots. I'll be there shortly."

f smile "I'll go tell her!"

n smile "Thanks."

hide faye

nar "I barely make it ten feet before Sol's deep voice booms out."

show sol angry2 at solRight

show zuri angry at zuriLeft

stop music fadeout 1.0

s "Lieutenant, what were you thinking out there?"

z "Thoughts. That's what most people think."

s "Let me make myself a little more clear. When I looked up from my investigation, do you know what I saw?"

z "The sun? A bird? Natalie?"

s "If you knew what was good for you, you would stop talking. I saw you, lieutenant, staring off into space when she was on-duty."

z uneasy "I wasn't staring off into space, I swear, major."

s "Okay, the forest. I don't care where you were staring, it wasn't at any of your security equipment."

s "Let me be clear, I barely tolerate your constant 'accidental' assaults, your lax behavior, and your disrespect. I somehow manage to muster the strength each day not to write all of that paperwork."

s regret "But when we finally have a real use for you, the last thing I imagined you doing was just standing there with your mouth open! You keep telling me how you want to be a real warrior!"

z "I do. I am."

s angry2 "Then what the hell were you doing out there? The whole team was in danger because of your actions!"

z angry "I had it under control! Why can't you trust me?!"

s "Mind your tone."

z "..."

z serious "...sir, I wasn't zoning out or whatever you think it might have been."

s "Oh? And what were you doing, lieutenant?"

z "I was sensing the wind."

s "What...?"

z surprised "With my wings. I can detect the slightest vibrations in the air, which allows me to detect any threat long before it gets close to us."

s surprised "That's amazing."

z "You think so?"

s angry2 "Of course. How anyone could be so remarkably stupid proves that we clearly have not hit the bottom of the barrel."

z angry "It's true!"

s "I don't doubt that you believe in your freaky mutant superpower. However, can you tell me what this is?"

z defeated "It's my sensor monitor."

s "And what does it do?"

z "It allows me to monitor my sensors that I placed around our camp... sir."

s "And now I'm sir again. You know what I'm going to say, don't you?"

z "That I should have relied upon my sensors per regulations, sir."

s regret "I know it is pointless to say, but if you know that, I shouldn't have to remind you. Don't slack at the next site. I'm counting on you to protect us."

z "Yes, sir."

s "And watch where you put those talons of yours. You smashed a couple of bottles at the site that I was going to inspect."

hide sol

show zuri defeated at innerLeft2 with move

nar "Sol looks exasperated, but I'm on the fence if I should support him. True, Zuri needs to follow her checklists, but having a second layer of defenses is smart."

nar "What if Zuri's method had detected something the sensors couldn't read? But what if Zuri missed something on her sensors and we got attacked?"

nar "Both of them are right. I want to move in to support them and end this, but I can't undermine the Nimross's executive officer when he is setting his standards."

nar "All I can do is support them both and hope they someday see that they both could have been right or wrong today."

play music "Music/ms04.ogg" fadein 2.0

z "Oh... hey."

n doori "You seemed to hold up pretty well."

z sad "He must have been in a good mood today. He actually yelled at me for something other than being a 'lizard'."

n sigh "I'm sorry."

z "It's not your fault. Besides, a good warrior doesn't let petty insults get under her skin."

nar "She says as she brushes away something that glistened from the corner of her eye. Still, her ability to bounce back is admirable."

n "If it makes you feel better, I didn't feel like I was in any danger with you there."

z "I felt like we were in danger... It was like the land was crying out in anger at our arrival."

nar "Land? Crying out? I'll have to check the shuttle's external audio recorders to see if there was something I didn't hear."

z soft "Hey... Nat... thanks for standing up for me out there."

n hmm "Don't look so surprised. What did you think I was going to do? Call you lizard-brain and ignore your recommendations?"

z smiles "You're good friends with Sol, so... yeah."

n laugh "Just because we're friends doesn't mean we see eye-to-eye on everything. I trust him, Zuri, but I trust you as well."

z surprised "You... trust me? I've never heard that before!"

n surprised "W-w-w-what?"

z "Most people only say that they can trust me to screw things up!"

z excited "I'm going to be the best warrior there is! You can count on me, Nat!"

nar "People trust her to screw things up...? Well... ummmm... I meant that I can trust her because she's a fellow soldier."

nar "No. Zuri seems so passionate... I want to have faith in her. It would be ill of me not to give her my full support."

z "Let's go back! I'll show you! I'll fight the evil storm threatening to destroy you!"

n smile "How about we go report in to the commander before she becomes an evil storm herself?"

z happy "Roger!"

hide zuri

nar "I like her. It's good to have a kind, good-spirited security officer. Victory and promotions are assured!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump theFirstClue

label theFirstClue:

scene bg 01 with fade

show sol grumpy at left

show kika excited at right

show azaia neutral at center

play music "Music/ms06.ogg" fadein 2.0

n smile "Ma'am, Major Puccile report-"

kk "I found the escape trails for the shuttles."

a "Welcome back, major."

kk "I found all five of their escape trails to throw us off. I bet you didn't find anything."

a "I've already heard your story, lieutenant."

kk "But she hasn't. I bet you are regretting not sending me along now, aren't you?"

n "The camp was abandoned. It didn't appear to be ransacked, but we were unable to locate any documentation or electronic devices."

kk fufufu "See? You should have had the real hero go with!"

n "Except for this datapad. We found it covered in dried blood and buried in the dirt. Captain Moonfallow was the one to find it."

a "Excellent work. I also want to commend you on the hasty retreat. The storm you spotted appears to have grown in strength. Our sensors are reporting weather strong enough to prevent takeoffs."

nar "So much for going back there now. That storm... it could have been dangerous. But was that a simple coincidence or a sign of something more sinister?"

nar "Zuri looks disturbed, her frank smile from earlier being replaced by restless look of distress. I'm going to bring her with me from now on."

nar "Even if she was wrong, she's got a good sense for the weather. I'd rather not be trying to search a site in a hurricane."

kk "Let me see that."

n irate "Not so fast."

kk annoyed "Leeeeeeeeeet meeeeeeee seeeeeee thaaaaaaaaaaaat."

n "I meant I haven't done an in-depth investigation on it yet. We don't know the secrets it may contain."

kk "Uh-huh. Power on..."

n "We should be doing this in a controlled location!"

kk "Uh-huh. It needs a password. Did you think to find that?"

n angry "Give it back!"

show kika surprised

nar "I snatch it out of the rude kitsune's hands before she has a chance to inflict any further potential harm."

n oi "If you will excuse me, ma'am, I will report in once I determine what sort of secrets it may contain."

kk "While we do... what? Sit on our thumbs? I already told you I have the locations of five outbound shuttles."

n "Then follow one of them! I'll give you a better idea of where I want to go after I work on this!"

kk tsun "Fine!"

n angry "Fine!"

s "This is not fine. This is actually dangerous, unlike the storm we ran from."

hide sol

show alphonse smile at allLeft behind azaia

e "Trust in her, Sol."

hide alphonse

show sol regret at left

s "I do trust in Natalie."

hide sol

show alphonse smile at allLeft behind azaia

e "If she thinks that we should continue forward while she works on the device, why can you not support her decisions?"

kk "Because he doesn't trust any of us."

hide azaia

show stan sly at center

st "Never mind them, my dear. Let us return to the lab and begin our work."

show zuri excited at left

show kylie smile at innerRight

z "I want to help!"

k "Me, too!"

n hmm "A-a-alright. Let's get cracking."

s regret "I'll get us to the sites where Starr thinks the runaway shuttles went. You can count on me."

e "Us."

n smile "Thanks. I won't let you down."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black

jump unravling1

label unravling1:

scene bg 03

show zuri confused at zuriLeft

show kylie sad at solRight

show stan bored at center

z "..."

k "..."

st "..."

n sigh "I'm a little nervous with all three of you hovering over my shoulder."

z "This is boring. Make something happen."

n "It takes a while for my program to work. It takes a few hours before we can pull all of the encrypted data off."

st "Ah. If you will pardon me, I must do an inventory of our supplies, my dear."

hide stan

k "I gotta go as well. Bye!"

hide kylie

show zuri confused at center with move

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "..."

n "Go ahead and leave. I can tell you are bored out of your mind as well."

z "Aren't you bored as well?"

n doori "No way. There's too much mystery behind this. I want to be here the second this finishes."

z happy "You're so motivated."

nar "I'm annoyed is more like it. Try as I might, there aren't enough clues to build any sort of case. My report back to Command is going to sound so weak and pathetic."

nar "I can feel my promotion slipping through the cracks. But I'm going to let it!"

z smiles "How about you show me how to play Candy Shop?"

n htp "We need to focus on the job at hand."

z complain "You look like you are about to tear your hair out..."

n sigh "I am."

z cheery "Maybe you just need to think about it in a different way?"

n laugh "By playing games? I would think that I should serve as a better role model than that, Zuri."

nar "That sounds professional, I believe. The real answer is that I would have broke one out if the security cracking program didn't cause immense lag."

n doori "I have an idea. Why don't you play some music for me while we wait?"

z defeated "Or we could just sit here in silence and wait. I like that idea."

n oh "You don't have to play if you don't want to play. It's okay."

nar "So much for that approach. I think I'm going to try playing my soundtrack of flute music and see if she'll play along next time. I know I'm being a bother, but I want to hear it live..."

nar "Over the whir of the machines, I can hear faint muttering. I glance over at Zuri and see her lips moving ever-so-slightly."

n smile "If you want to tell me to shut up, feel free. The lab is the one place where rank holds no place."

z "You think I'm a warrior, right? I am. I think I am."

n "You are what you think you are."

z "..."

n oi "Wait? Is that why you won't play for me? You can't be seriously thinking that."

z complain "I think a good workout is exactly what I need right now. My coach would be so disappointed in how much I've been slacking."

n "I'm not that stupid. You are what you think you are."

z "So I'm a slacker?"

n smile "Do you think I'm a real warrior? I've played more computer games than you know exist and barely pass my fitness test!"

z thinking "...ummmm."

n "No rank here. Tell me the truth."

z uneasy "I... don't think you are. Scholars aren't warriors, they're weaklings!"

z "But you seem like a really smart scholar and I like you as a friend."

n doori "I'm glad you think so; I like you as well. However, I also think you are completely and utterly wrong. I am a real warrior."

z excited "Oh? Then let's spar! I need to practice my stances!"

n laugh "No. You'd have me sprawled out over the floor; I'd rather not have to do my work later with a potentially broken bone."

z "But you said you were a warrior."

n doori "I am. I just fight a different type of battle than you do."

z confused "I don't get you. You scholars are all the same, trying to confuse me."

n smile "Maybe you're just not trying hard enough to understand."

nar "A glowing green light catches my attention. I flick the transfer switch and sit down in my computer chair."

play music "Music/ms12.ogg" fadein 4.0

n hmm "Sorry, Zuri, the rest of my life lesson is going to have to wait until later."

z excited "It's ready? Is there anything I can do to help."

n "Let me concentrate and I'll show you how to be a warrior in the digital age."

z happy "That's not a real fight."

n laugh "It never is when I'm involved."

nar "Transfer complete. The program reports that I have acquired all files from the datapad. The most boring and exciting part of my investigation begins."

nar "One by one, I have to sort through each one of the files until I find something that is of use. People might call this an invasion of privacy, but I like to think of it as getting the mission done."

z "Whoever owned this played Candy Shop, too!"

n htp "Focus, Zuri."

z smiles "Sorry."

nar "The first thing to check is the personal documents. If there is one place I am going to jackpot, it is in these. Incriminating records, here I come."

nar "Minutes tick by as I flip through each of the twenty massive files in the documents folder. Occasionally, I'll throw a non-suspect one to Zuri to keep her distracted."

nar "My excitement dwindles with each passing one. Most of them are standard issue textbooks. I even recognize a few of them from my schooling days."

nar "There isn't even a general theme. I've got an ancient civilization book on one side and a fantasy book about dragons on the other. I pass the dragon one to Zuri, who dives right into it."

nar "Whoever owned this didn't keep records or journal entries. The only written documents I can find are for a basic composition course."

nar "I found a damn undergraduate's datapad! Damn it! Worthless!"

z excited "If I could breathe fire and smash stuff with my massive talons... it would be so cool."

n hmm "Didn't you smash things at the site according to Sol? Would you want to do more of that?"

z uneasy "No... You're no fun."

n laugh "If you were twenty feet high, we wouldn't be able to fit you in the ship either."

z "Can't you let me have my dream of being a super powerful beast of legends?"

n happy "I'm just curious why you'd want that. You seem to be powerful enough as you are."

z excited "Nobody would dare fight me if I was such a menacing monster! Protecting people would be easy."

n hmm "Dragons protected gold, not people."

nar "The mindless drivel coming out of my mouth is only stalling the onset of fear. Some young

student's notes on a course I once taught isn't going to solve this!"

n sigh "..."

z smiles "Don't fear, Nat. We'll get through this. You'll find the clues and I'll transform into a towering green dragon."

n smile "...of course, Zuri. I'm show you how a warrior of the digital era fights."

nar "Rally, Natalie. You can't appear weak..."

nar "I flip through the pictures next. Nothing jumps out at me. The kid couldn't have been a year over sixteen. Where he is now... I can only assume the worst."

nar "I see a picture with a tall male and plump female, both with graying hair. Parents. They're probably at home, wondering how their son is doing on his adventures in the galaxy."

nar "Mom... does she worry about me? If Dad was still around, I know he would. He was adamant that I become a professor and teach history, not travel the universe."

n sad "..."

z "This is why we fight."

n oh "Yeah. You might not believe it, but Sol always used to tell me that he joined the force so kids didn't have to feel unsafe in our turbulent age."

z confused "Really? Why couldn't he have said that?"

n laugh "Does Sol seem like the type to admit something so 'weak' and heartfelt?"

z "Having compassion isn't a weakness."

n oh "It is when you put yourself in danger every day of the week."

z sad "..."

nar "I flip past the picture, unable to dwell on it any longer. It isn't until the very last set of pictures that I finally find something of interest."

z excited "Oh! Transfer me that one, transfer me that one!"

nar "A towering limestone tablet with delicate inscriptions carved on it. I don't remember seeing this at the research site. A giant rock would have stuck out."

nar "The pictures come in a variety of angles. There are no notes associated with them, but I can only assume that the person who took these was excited. This rock was something important."

n hmm "Zuri, do you understand these inscriptions? I've never seen anything like this before."

z "Ick nat fa la sore tooi mzkno."

n happy "You can read it?"

z confused "Nope, I'm just saying random things to sound smart."

n sigh "...not sure if sarcastic or just trying to upset me."

z "Sorry. I really don't have any clue what these things are."

n yare "Do. Not. Ever. Joke. Like. That. Again."

z uneasy "Sorry, major."

n "I enjoy a good laugh, but not in the heat of things."

n http "Computer, cross-check this with my cryptography database. I want to know what language this is."

comp "Yes, Major Puccile. Cross-checking with internal database before sending to external sites. Estimated response time from SIT Sector Three Linguistic Database is twelve hours."

z angry "Twelve hours?!"

n sigh "Welcome to the joys of interstellar communications. We won't even be able to get a connection when we are in shift. I guess command is gonna have to wait a day."

n "Which reminds me..."

n smile "Lieutenant Starr, this is Major Puccile on private."

kk "If you want to talk to me, do it in person."

n http "Too pressing. Could you distinguish what type of shuttles left the shift trails?"

kk "Even if I could, do you know how many different types of ships are out there? Billions!"

n "Three thousand, eight hundred, and twenty two known types of craft still in use, but I really just need to know if you can determine the size of ships."

k "No! They're all the same stupid size. I just picked a random path or do you suddenly have one for me to choose?"

n sigh "No, lieutenant, I don't have any updated routes for you. We just need to be on our guard. One of those escaping shuttles is carrying precious cargo."

kk "So you do have something!"

n "Not until I can confirm a few things. Puccile out."

kk "Hey, wait!"

n "Didn't you hear the out part of my call?"

kk "Stuffy wants you buckled up. We're going to make the shift in five minutes."

n "Roger. Out."

n "Geeeeehhhh... I forgot about the jump..."

z happy "Like I said before, you're not quite a warrior yet."

n hmm "I'm going to buckle myself down in my bunk and think this over. Wake me up in a few hours, please."

z "Good night and good dreams."

nar "No, I don't want dreams, I want answers. Let it simmer for a while, and the answer will come to you."

nar "I can only hope that some answers to this mysterious script will be delivered soon; that we are not too late before the shuttles disappear on us."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black with fade

jump preludeToSmashySmashy

label preludeToSmashySmashy:

scene bg 05

show sol grumpy at solRight

show faye smile at innerLeft

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

f "Natalie? Are you awake?"

n smile "Ughhhh... I am now. What's wrong, Faye?"

s "Wow. I can see why they paired up the sunshine twins."

n "Hah hah."

f "Zuri wanted me to come and wake you up. She said something about your datapad beeping."

n doori "Oh? Did my message come in?"

s smile "You can afford a few moments to grab a bite to eat with me, can't you? I wanted to talk to you about the camp. Even the mutt is invited."

show faye sad

n irate "Apologize."

s surprised "Huh? For what?"

n "Apologize to Faye. She's not a mutt."

s annoyed "..."

n angry "..."

s "You don't understand a thing."

n "I understand that I'm not tolerating that sort of attitude, even from you, Sol."

f aru "It's okay, Natalie. Sol doesn't mean it."

s "You know I mean every word of it, you sneaky, despicable dog."

n "Sol!"

s grumpy "..."

hide sol

n "Sol! Get back here."

nar "...all I hear is the clink of boots get faint as he storms away."

show faye aru at center with move

n oh "I'm sorry about that."

nar "I'm also sorry that I have to keep apologizing for him."

nar "Faye's fluffy tail hangs limp and those crystal blue eyes of her remain dim, but she waves my apology away with a brush."

f sheepish "Some things never change."

n oi "Some things should change."

f sad "I don't want to start a fight between friends."

n smile "They aren't a very good friend if you don't know something about them that makes you angry."

f "Please don't. He's been getting better, honest. Our relationship is a... special case."

n irate "That doesn't make it better. You seem like a nice lupide, he shouldn't be so mean to you or Zuri or Alphonse or anyone else on this ship!"

nar "Slowly, that soft, sleek tail of hers begins to wag once more."

f sheepish "Thanks. But there are some things you don't know."

f smile "Then again, there are some things I don't know either."

n smile "...alright. You're right, there are things I don't know. Want to come with me to find out what Zuri wants? We can get some food afterward."

nar "And I can get the REAL story behind why Sol seems to hate you more than the others. Brilliant, Natalie, brilliant."

f "Sure!"

scene bg black with fade

label smashySmashy:

scene bg 03 with fade

show faye smile at center

n smile "Hi, Zuri, I'm back."

f surprised "Huh? Nobody is here."

stop music fadeout 3.0

n htp "Something is wrong."

f "Do you hear that? It's all crinkly sounding."

n "No, but I smell it. That's smoldering electronics smell. It's just like when my radar's used to overheat."

nar "But where is it coming from? I don't see anything from my lab equipment or any of the testing processors. But this room is pressurized and sealed to prevent potential contamination. It has to come from here."

nar "My eyes scan the room, but nothing jumps out at me. What the hell could have...?"

nar "I step further into the room and hear the noise Faye was talking about. It sounds like boots stepping on some sort of glass... oh."

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 1.0

nar "I look down and am rewarded by the sight of the obvious answer to who was stepping on glass. Shards of sparkling glass are scattered around on the floor. Where did they..."

nar "It takes all of my self-constraint not to scream in primal rage when I trace the glass to its origins. My datapad. All of those hours... all of that data... my heroes..."

nar "A ceremony honoring the dead warriors of over a dozen games, that is what I must do after I get this cleaned up. Heroes who will never see their adventures completed."

nar "I can't even begin to imagine the punishment that awaits Zuri when I find her. This sort of crime is unforgivable! She couldn't even be bothered to admit she broke my stuff!"

f "It looks like someone stabbed your datapad with some sort of cone-shaped object."

n angry "No, Faye, they knocked it to the ground and stepped on it. The damage is obvious."

f "I'm not talking about that one."

n surprised "...what? I only own one."

nar "With the utmost care, she lifts up my precious, precious clue. No, not precious anymore. The thin polymer sheeting has been defiled with a large hole gouged in the middle."

nar "I yank my only lifeline out of Captain Moonfallow's hands. No. No. No! This couldn't happen. I jam the power button again and again, but the shattered screen remains as dark as my dreams."

n angry "What beast could have done this?"

f exasperated "It wasn't like that when I left, I promise!"

nar "I hadn't uploaded it to command yet... all gone... everything... I can feel myself deflating, like a punctured balloon. Chasing the shuttles was a shot in the dark... this... my hope..."

s "And watch where you put those talons of yours. You smashed a couple of bottles at the site that I was going to inspect."

z "Most people only say that they can trust me to screw things up!"

n "Captain Moonfallow... what would you say could have caused that hole...?"

f "I dunno. A spike, maybe?"

n "Would you say it is about the same size as the spikes on Zuri's wings?"

f "...maybe."

nar "I don't know what my heart feels like now. It's as empty as the void, but the heat of unbridled rage burns strong in it."

n "Lieutenant Zuri!"

nar "I'm screaming at the top of my lungs. I don't know what I'm yelling. It's the painful howl of someone who has just lost their everything."

nar "No words will be able to explain my loss of precious information to command, no words can replace my only lead, and no words can make sense of the pain in my heart."

show faye exasperated at innerRight

show stan lazy at allLeft

st "My sweet major, whatever is wrong?"

nar "I don't trust myself to speak. I can only raise my shattered dreams up."

st "The research camp datapad! What happened to it?"

n "Zuri."

f "We don't know-"

n "Are you saying you did it?"

f "No... I didn't."

show stan lazy at stanLeft

show azaia shocked at innerLeft2

show faye exasperated at innerRight2

show sol surprised at right

nar "Sol and Commander Rasoona sprint in. Rasoona's composure is strong and uncompromising, but Sol... he's breathing hard and there is an almost manic light in his eyes."

s "Natalie! Are you alright?!"

a "Calm down, major. Puccile, why are you screaming like a banshee on my ship?"

n "Look..."

s angry2 "I don't give two craps about some stupid trinket! Are you alright? Did she hurt you?"

n sad "What does it matter? It's gone... the spike went right through the central drive unit. There's no way I can recover anything."

st sly "If you want me to give her a look-"

s "I want you to shut the hell up. Nat, there are more things to find out there. Are. You. Alright?"

n "...I'm physically fine."

hide faye

show zuri uneasy at innerRight behind azaia

z "I came as fast as I could! What's wrong?"

f "Zuri..."

st bored "It seems odd that our security officer would take so long to respond to an emergency."

z "Odd? This is my downtime."

n irate "You decided to go off-shift right after... this?"

z confused "This? What this?"

n "Don't lie to me!"

z "Really! I don't know what you are yelling at me about."

n angry "This!"

nar "I shove the broken pad under her nose and watch those green eyes widen in terror, clearly frightened that I knew of her foul deed."

z uneasy "Natalie... oh my..."

n "..."

z "Why are you all looking at me? You don't think that I did this, do you?"

n "Did Faye leave before you?"

z "Yes. Faye left, then I left. It was fine before I left! I swear upon the winds, I do!"

n "You were the only person here! You were the only person who could have done this?"

st irate "I'm afraid the hole caused by whatever damaged the pad matches your spike size. I know your measurements."

z angry "You have spiked wings, too!"

st "Mine are much too big to have caused this. For your next question, I was with Kylie trying to fix the bathroom."

n "Then there is my personal datapad! Crushed!"

z uneasy "It could have just fallen!"

n "There's a boot print on it! A large one! One like yours!"

z "Sol has big feet! Maybe he came in here and tried to frame me! You all know he doesn't like me or non-humans."

nar "I glance at Sol. Out of the sea of hostile faces, his is the only one that is calm and collected. I figured he would be the most upset person, this incident confirming his anger over Zuri."

nar "But he's not. If anything, he looks contemplative."

a neutral "Lieutenant Zuri, the major was with me during the time in question. You would do well not to cloud our investigation with bias and petty insults."

n "You have a history of stepping on things, don't you?"

z defeated "..."

n "Who else could it have been but you?! Stop lying to me! Stop lying to all of us! You broke both of them, by accident I am sure, but you did it!"

z "..."

n sad "This was my only clue, Zuri! My only hope! And you smashed it! You destroyed them both and you can't even find the courage to admit it! What sort of warrior does that?"

z "Please... Nat... on my honor as a warrior, I swear before the winds that I didn't do it. You have to believe me."

nar "She's pleading with me, her tone as hurt and weak as mine. My anger is draining out as it begins to vent from my heart. She was the only person who stuck with me during the dull time."

nar "I don't want to think she did it, but the facts are the facts. Zuri was the only one who could have done it."

jump believingZuri

label believingZuri:

\$believedZuri=True

nar "Zuri wouldn't lie to me. I've just gotten to know her, but I can feel in my heart that Zuri wouldn't lie to me. I have to have faith in my crew."

nar "I need to start considering more than just the damning facts. There's more here. There has to be."

nar "I've let my fear take over my mind. My emotions are swirling around like a vortex. I'm not thinking straight."

stop music fadeout 1.0

n sad "Okay, Zuri... I believe you."

show sol quiet

z soft "Nat..."

a patronizing "Major Puccile, you are allowing your emotions to cloud your judgment."

play music "Music/ms19.ogg"

n surprised "Excuse me?"

a "The evidence you have submitted is the proof I need. Lieutenant Zuri, you had the means, the

history of clumsiness, and the opportunity."

z defeated "But-"

a "That you continue to deny your guilt is conduct unbecoming an officer."

st lazy "Quite appalling."

a "Until I can determine what your punishment should be, you are here by restricted to your quarters. Myself or Major Hackett will escort you for food at designated periods of the day."

z protest "Confined?!"

a "I will determine what sort of punishment this act of negligence warrants at a later time. Captain Moonfallow, please inform Lieutenant Starr that she will be rooming with you on alternate sleep cycles."

f exasperated "Yes, ma'am."

a "Major Puccile, report to me the damage after you do a less emotional assessment."

n irate "I will comply..."

a "And you are coming with me back to your quarters."

z sad "...I didn't do it."

a "Keeping your mouth shut and not making your situation worse would be wise."

z protest "But I didn't do it!"

a "Lieutenant!"

z sad "...I didn't. Why won't you believe me?"

a "If you had proven yourself more trustworthy in the past, it wouldn't have had to end this way."

hide azaia

z "..."

hide zuri

st laugh "If you will excuse me, my dear."

hide stan

stop music fadeout 2.0

n hmm "Sol... you haven't said anything this whole time."

show sol serious at center with move

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 3.0

s "I was pondering the mysteries of the universe. Tell me, Natalie, why do you think Zuri is innocent? The evidence is against her."

n sigh "I can't let my anger at the situation dilute my understanding. Right now, every single

piece of evidence suggests that it was Zuri. That fact alone makes me suspect others."

n "Everything just seems too convenient. Even if she hadn't been the last confirmed person in the room, we would have suspected Zuri due to her nature of not watching her surroundings."

n "If we consider a second suspect, Zuri logically would be the first person I'd try to pin the blame on. As you saw, nobody would question it."

n htp "Then there is the circumstances surrounding it. Where did she go? Less than ten minutes passed between Faye leaving and my arrival."

n "If she really was the one who smashed the pads, she should have been near the scene and one of the first to respond."

s "She could have waited."

n hmm "Perhaps. What also bugs me was her defense. Most criminals would have tried to show an alibi to prove their innocence. Zuri didn't, she just repeated that she didn't do it."

n "It makes me feel she really believes that she didn't do it."

n htp "Then there is the damage to the recovered datapad. I didn't consider this in my anger, but what sort of weird angle would she have had to be at to do that?"

s "What about her martial arts?"

n irate "In my lab? I give her some credit. Besides, there was no other damage to the rest of the room."

s "Do you want to know what I think?"

n "I'm letting my emotions blind me? Really, Sol, look at-"

s regret "You're letting yourself be blinded by presumptions now. I fully agree with you. I think Zuri is innocent."

nar "Huh?"

s quiet "Your analysis of the situation where we could have a true culprit framing Zuri matches my thoughts. You just missed one very important detail though."

n oh "Oh?"

s "As odd as it is for me to be the one to say it, you missed the emotional aspect. Zuri is not the type to lie. She believes that babble about being a real warrior and is almost always truthful."

s "She'll dodge questions like no tomorrow, but she has never straight-out lied to me. If she says she is innocent, I am forced to believe her."

nar "There's something belittling about being told to look at the psychological aspects of a case by Sol. Still, I agree. Zuri seems so... open. Lying doesn't fit my picture of her."

n htp "But if we conclude that Zuri is innocent, we are going to be forced to face another

unpleasant fact. Someone destroyed those datapads. They didn't want me looking at what those pictures contained."

s surprised "Pictures?"

nar "I explain what limited findings I had gathered before my information was ripped away from me. Just like when I first thought about it, the look of worry and irritation crosses his eyes."

s "The report said they were looking into an artifact, not a giant rock. You didn't recognize the language?"

n "It was gibberish. I might be able to reproduce some of it from memory, but without the original, we have no idea what it said."

s annoyed "Could the shuttles have been dispatched to find the pieces of some weapon and the rock was directions?"

n hmm "Maybe? If the writing was coordinates, it was done in a prose format."

s "But our problem now is not what was written on them, but why someone decided to destroy that information. What would they gain by thwarting your investigation?"

n "To determine the why, we must also determine the who. Our list of suspects is rather large."

s grumpy "I have an alibi, as does Commander Rasoona. I also highly doubt that you are suspect in this."

n sigh "Of course I'm not smashing my own stuff! Idiot, I was sleeping! You walked in!"

nar "That's right... he walked in with Faye. Could either of them, or Rasoona, have done something when Zuri left, but before getting me? Their alibi isn't airtight."

nar "That doesn't even discount the possibility that Rasoona and Sol are working together because they don't like my mission here."

nar "Any presumptions I make now are premature. I need more facts. No matter how strong our bond is or how foul I feel about even considering it, I need to keep all logical options open."

nar "I hate this! I don't want to think ill of Sol or Zuri! I just want to find out what happened to these researchers! Why did someone have to butt in?"

s quiet "Why don't you go talk to Zuri while I try to convince our illustrious commander of why Zuri shouldn't be confined?"

n surprised "You'd do that?"

s regret "Of course, though it is a colossal waste of time. She'll say you're emotionally compromised by your feelings towards Zuri and I'm compromised by my friendship with you."

n huh "W-w-what feelings? Idiot! She's a member of this crew and deserves to have our full support."

s "I just meant that you two seem to be friends. You sure seem to be defensive over that, Natalie."

n "You're just cruel. Why are you even helping Zuri anyway? You hate her."

s grumpy "It comes with the title of Executive Officer. You look out for all of your troops, no matter how annoying or how small their lizard-brain is."

n laugh "A leader..."

s "That's right. Your job is to find out the truth, mine is to make sure it doesn't destroy people in the process."

n "I should get going."

s regret "I as well. Just... don't let her know I'm worried about her, alright?"

n "Because people might think you have a heart."

s "Because they need to respect their superior officer. We don't need any more discipline failures on this ship."

n happy "Suuuuuuuure. Good luck, Sol."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump consolingZuri

label consolingZuri:

scene bg 05 with fade

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 8.0

n smile "Hey, Zuri... can I come in?"

show zuri sad at innerLeft2

z "Are you going to yell at me some more? I wouldn't blame you."

n hmm "You said you didn't do it."

z "And when has anyone believed my innocence?"

n "Sol did."

z "Huh? No way."

n laugh "He did. He told me that the one person on this ship I can always trust to be honest and forthcoming was you. He knows how much you pride yourself on being a warrior."

z "...I'm a joke."

n oi "Don't say that."

z "Not even you considered my side at first. I saw how angry you were at me and I thought..."

n htp "What?"

z complain "..."

n smile "Tell me, Zuri. I want to know."

z "There I go again, screwing up another friendship because I can't be dependable. A real warrior is someone everyone admires, that everyone wishes to be."

z sad "Nobody wishes to be me. Most people tell me they are glad they aren't me. Funny, right?"

n htp "No."

z "You're so stuffy. It's hilarious!"

n sigh "No."

z "Really! Imagine working so hard your entire life to live up to an ideal and not even being remotely good at it. Graceful, not blundering. Focused, not distracted. Stoic, not... not.."

hide zuri

nar "Zuri turns away from me and sits back down with her head buried in her arms. I'm not sure if dreamon can cry, but I know a depressed one when I see it."

nar "I'm sure that I'm violating her personal space, but I take a seat on the bed next to her anyway. Her bunk is just as hard and cold as mine. These blankets do nothing against the cold."

nar "What do I say to her? I know what my leadership courses taught me on consoling, but this just doesn't remind me of any of the scenarios we went over."

show zuri defeated at innerLeft2

n smile "Why do you think that you're so awful?"

z "..."

n nervous "Wait! I didn't mean to call you awful! I meant-"

z "It's okay, I understand. I'm awful."

nar "Damn you, open-ended questions! You aren't helping me~"

n sad "Why do you think you aren't a real warrior?"

z "...I'm not one, am I? A real warrior wouldn't sit here questioning herself."

n "That's not what... I mean..."

z "After they demoted me, I should have learned. I should have known I was worthless at anything other than being a grunt, lifting boxes and running around the track really fast."

n irate "Shut up!"

z "Huh?"

n oi "What I'm trying to say is that you only think you're worthless! You aren't actually that way!"

z "But everyone-"

n "Screw everyone! A real warrior doesn't care about the opinions of others, she cares about her own opinion of herself!"

z "I know, but-"

n "But nothing! You are who you want to be! You are who you think you are! How many times must I tell you that?"

n "You're driving me crazy! Nobody can take away your pride in yourself other than you. If you believe you can be a real hero, a real warrior, you can't let mean or blind people hurt you."

n smile "You have to fight! You have to take all that courage and all that honor in your heart and fight! Be the warrior you want to show to the world!"

z "Not all of those screw-ups weren't my fault. I'm..."

n happy "Then instead of moping about what you should have done, focus on what you can do! You train so much that you're driving Sol crazy! Keep at it until you are a fighter you can be proud of being!"

z sad "..."

z happy "Hehe. For a scholar, you certainly have the heart of a true warrior. You certainly are the dashing hero when you are worked up, major."

n "See? You shouldn't make assumptions."

z "I feel a little better. Thanks. I know I'm innocent, and so will Commander Rasoona when you and Sol find the real culprit."

nar "The real culprit... I wish it was Zuri in the darkest parts of my heart; this mystery isn't going to lead me anywhere simple or pleasant."

nar "But the truth is out there. The truth can never die."

if (believedZuri):

z uneasy "Ummmm... I know the evidence pointed at me... I know I must have looked like the villain... but..."

z "It meant a lot to me that even though you looked so enraged, you still found it in your heart to trust me."

n smile "Don't think anything of it."

z happy "Don't say that. I'm touched. None of my seniors have ever stood up for me when I was getting in trouble."

z excited "I'll find some way to repay your trust. My code demands it."

n "Really, don't think anything of it. We're friends."

z soft "..."

n nervous "W-w-w-what?"

z happy "Nothing!"

n "Sheesh, don't look at me like that without saying something, Lieutenant Zuri."

z "Sorry, major!"

n smile "So, got any plans on how to keep yourself busy?"

z surprised "I was going to spend them crying before, but I don't think that is such a good idea anymore."

n happy "Nope! Sol would be disappointed even more if he heard his security officer was crying."

z happy "Hmph."

z "Heh heh heh... Now that Kika isn't going to be constantly camping out in here, I might have enough room to practice stances."

n "You should practice your flute."

z serious "Awwwww... you just gave this passionate speech that made me think I was wrong about you being a scholar! Why'd you say that?"

n laugh "I think you're hearing the words coming out of my mouth, but missing the key details."

z smiles "You're just proving the scholar label was the right one!"

n sigh "Sigh..."

z "Ooo... how about you help me with my Candy Shop game?"

n laugh "I would, but electronic games aren't useful for 'honing one's physical body and spirit to be a warrior'. Seems pretty scholarly to me."

z "..."

show zuri sad

extend "yep. I guess you're right. That's sad, I was looking forward to playing it. Delete."

n irate "Wait!"

z "Nope. I'm not-"

z protest "Hey!"

nar "I take away her datapad before she can commit any sort of heinous crime against her save files. No more innocent data will suffer this day."

n angry "You can't do that! You have... almost twenty hours into this game! Think of the characters you've unlocked!"

z thinking "Hmph. I'm not falling prey to things that would seduce me away from the path."

n "Clearly you have. You've played this level twenty times."

z "That's mean."

n sigh "Besides, how are we supposed to trade skills if you delete your game? You were going to teach me your martial arts, remember?"

z defeated "...fiiiiiiiiiiiiine. It can stay."

n doori "You're still going to keep playing it, right?"

z thinking "I'm not as strong as I need to be... so I might. Maybe."

n smile "Okay. Don't let yourself give up on something that you find enjoyable."

z smiles "I won't, elder."

n "I'll stop by later. I need to go check up on Sol."

z "Have fun. I'll still be here when you get back."

nar "I wish she didn't sound so sad when she said that. Sol's right, there is no lying in her soul. I have to resist the urge to give her a hug and tell her one last time that everything will be fine."

nar "Keep your discipline, Natalie. Don't let your emotions overtake your professionalism."

nar "But... she's my friend."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump secondSite

label secondSite:

scene bg 03 with fade

#show picture of scribbles

play music "Music/ms03.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "They kinda looked like this... I think..."

nar "Stupid pen! If only I had something that allowed me to write in glowing blue runic symbols! These pen scratches look nothing like the picture."

nar "I've been at this for almost three full days. I haven't had a decent meal or rest since the start of this. My batteries are far past depleted."

nar "This... this is just awful. I can't base my investigation off of drawings that look like something a three year-old drew for her class. I doubt my decryption program on my defunct datapad could do anything with it."

nar "But I've been at this for three days. Every time I try to sleep, I come back here to milk my brain for any remaining drop of information. That rock has been drained of any drop of memory."

nar "The only break I have permitted myself is an occasional visit to Zuri's confinement. True to our mutual word, we have been exchanging lessons."

nar "For a girl who can move as fluidly as the wind and as quickly as lightning, her timing is just awful in Candy Shop. She couldn't move a piece into the right place if her life depended on it."

nar "I glance at the ship chrono on the wall. It doesn't really matter when you work on your own schedule."

show alphonse smile at center

e "It's good to see you are still alive, Natalie."

n smile "Oh. Hey. Off-shift already? Didn't you just replace Sol?"

e "That was almost twelve hours ago."

n surprised "Ah... I've been in thought."

e "Thinking is important, but don't lose track of the world around you. We tried calling for you a few hours ago."

n "The shift! I remember that! Did you find something on the sensors?"

e sad "...forgive us."

n smile "It's not your fault. We're going to the next site, right?"

nar "Another failure... who cares about getting a promotion? I'm more concerned about having a job by the end of this."

e serious "With all haste. Kika isn't pleased with herself. She bet Faye her entire dinner that we were going to find the shuttle with your artifact on the first try."

n sigh "Faye bet against me."

e wink "Faye likes food more. She'll take risks if the meal is great enough."

n smile "Heh. Well, I suppose I'll have to take a cut from her dinner later for that."

e smile "Are you hungry? I was going to bring Zuri her meal."

n "If I've been sitting her for twelve hours, I could use the break. Let me lock up first."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black

with fade

scene bg 05

with fade

show alphonse smile at alRight

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 4.0

e "Hello, Zuri."

nar "There is a bit of commotion as Zuri shuffles something under her blanket and leaps to her feet."

show zuri protest at zuriLeft

z "I keep telling you to knock, Al!"

e "If you did not wish uninvited visitors, you should lock the door."

z serious "Baaaaaaah... Oh! Nat!"

n smile "Hi, Zuri. How are you feeling?"

z smiles "Same old, same old. It's so boring in here."

e "Don't fret. Sol is still trying to get the commander to remove you from being confined to quarters."

z "It still sounds weird hearing Sol and doing something sweet in the same sentence."

n "He really does want the best for his troops, even the ones who almost knocked him out."

z "Did knock him out. Twice."

n surprised "Twice?"

z happy "What? He walked right into it!"

e laugh "I do not think that would be exactly the way he would describe it."

z confused "How could he describe the incident at all?"

n happy "Touchè."

z smiles "So... what did you bring me?"

e "Faye felt so bad for you that she wanted to make tonight's dinner extra special."

z excited "Is it her linguine?"

nar "Sliding next to Alphonse with remarkable precision and haste, Zuri almost seems like when I first met her. Faye's pasta must be something amazing."

e "It is indeed."

z "Nat, you've got to try this."

nar "Alphonse distributes the small containers of noodles between us. I move to sit down on Zuri's bed, but she nudges me to the side."

z protest "Don't sit there."

n yare "What are you hiding?"

z "Eat up!"

n "Are you dodging my question?"

z happy "Yes. Now eat up! They're so much better warm than cool."

n sigh "Warriors and their secrets. Alright, let's dig in."

nar "The gurgling in my gut reminds me that I forgot to eat again today. I eagerly pop open the lid, not eager to let the rumbling consume my gut further."

nar "But... The smell that wafts out of my container reminds me of a rotting carcass. The white gloop

that covers my noodles makes me feel ill, not excited."

nar "I push the noodles around with my fork, though it takes a bit of effort to move the wheat noodles around in the paste."

nar "This... is this edible? Could this be an attempt to assassinate me? I wonder if I should look into Faye's activities a little closer."

z "Go on! You'll love it."

nar "Zuri isn't even touching hers yet. She's watching me, waiting to judge my reaction to this mushy, chalky, slimy... grossness."

nar "Well... even if this is a joke, I'm not one to back down. Bottoms up!"

nar "..."

nar "For a split second, I had hoped this was going to prove my initial assumptions wrong. Instead, it proved Sol's assessment of Faye's cooking accurate."

nar "It tastes like I just ate a salt shaker and tried to wash it down with bonding glue. How I managed to get a single spoonful down is an act of God."

z "Well? What do you think?"

n "It's... interesting."

z "It's amazing! Sol and Kylie won't touch it. They don't know what they are missing, right?"

n "True."

nar "They don't know, and it is probably for the better."

e "Here. I know the flavor leaves much to be desired for human tastes."

n smile "Thanks for looking out for me."

z smiles "What are you two whispering about?"

e "A prayer before dinner."

z "Ah."

nar "I take the glass of water and try to clean out the waxy remains left on the roof of my mouth. At least my hunger is gone for now..."

e smile "So, Natalie, we haven't talked much since you arrived. Are you settling in well?"

n "I'm still getting used to not seeing the sky or fresh air, but I'll adjust with time."

e "If there is anything I can do to help you settle in, let me know."

z happy "Isn't he so sweet? It's so hard to think that Al and Sol were wingmen when they were fighter pilots."

e laugh "Not initially, but we did serve some time in the other's company."

n laugh "You do have a knack at making a person feel welcomed, Alphonse."

z "And he's pretty cute, too, right? He has that sweet, gentle boy next door feel."

show alphonse surprised

nar "Alphonse gives Zuri a curious look for a split-second before replacing it with that warm, natural smile."

e smile "That's very nice of you to say, Zuri. Though I think Sol might have the more classic handsome look than I."

z complain "Bleh, the personality is rotten though. He doesn't know what the phrase 'fun on the job' means."

e "Some would say you could learn much from him, and he could learn much from you."

z smiles "Or we could just ask Natalie. Who do you think is cuter?"

n hmm "I don't think it's my place to judge."

z "It's not like you are the sole decider! Come on... I want to know."

e "Don't worry, you won't offend me with your choice."

nar "They're not going to let me go..."

n smile "Well..."

menu:

"Sol":

n "Sol, I suppose. He might be a little hard sometimes, but there's something dashing in his features."

z complain "B-b-but he's such a jerk!"

n laugh "He might have his awful, despicable moments, but there's more to him than those comments."

e "He's actually a lot better than he used to be. In the old days, he wouldn't even consider a non-human to be anything more than a beast."

e thought "Now he looks past that and finds other reasons to hate everyone."

n hmm "If he could learn to let the little things slide and focus on the big ones, Sol wouldn't be so uptight. Still... he seems different than when I last saw him."

e "Losing the love of your life does that to a person. He just can't seem to look past her and see the rest of us."

e "You would have really hated him in the fighter squadrons, Zuri. He'd drill from dawn to dusk. He kept everyone in the books and the simulators from dawn to dusk."

z surprised "I would have liked him then. Training to be the best warrior you can isn't something to frown on!"

e sad "But now... he's lost his edge. He mostly just yells at everyone for minor issues."

z happy "You mean he mostly yells at me."

e thought "I'm afraid you do deserve it occasionally."

z "I know, I know."

e smile "Why don't you tell him you find him attractive, Natalie? I think he might appreciate hearing that."

z surprised "What? No! You can't sacrifice her that way!"

e "He's not some monster, Zuri."

z thinking "You're no help..."

n sigh "Would he even notice if I did?"

e "..."

z "..."

n "..."

if(zuriHP):

n smile "He's my friend. Maybe if I give him some words of encouragement, he might be able to finally let Lenna go."

e "That's all I can ask for."

z complain "Hmph."

"Alphonse":

n smile "I suppose I would have to go with Alphonse. There's a softness to him that is really quite charming."

z excited "Right? That wavy creamy hair just makes him absolutely handsome! Sol has nothing on our Alphonse."

e smile "Thank you for saying that."

z "And he's single, Natalie."

n huh "Oh."

e wink "Zuri, aren't you being a little deceitful with Natalie?"

n "What do you mean?"

z smiles "He might be single, but he isn't available."

n smile "Why not? Do you have a special lady in your life back home?"

z "No special ladies."

e "Natalie, I'm gay."

n huh "Huh? Really?"

e thought "I'm afraid so. While you may be a kind, attractive woman, Natalie, I'm afraid you simply aren't my type."

n laugh "You make the ladies of the universe cry, you big meanie."

n smile "But oh well. You're still a handsome guy and a gentleman. Besides, love is love. It doesn't matter what species or gender you are."

e "See, Zuri? I told you there was nothing to be afraid of."

n huh "You like girls, Zuri?"

z uneasy "..."

e "She'll charge headlong into battle, but our little dreamon needs a lot of help when it comes to expressing her true emotions."

z "Stop picking on me."

e smile "What about you, Natalie? Would you consider going out with someone of your own gender?"

n laugh "What part of love is love don't you understand?"

z "..."

e "What's wrong, Zuri?"

z cheery "N-n-n-nothing."

n happy "You are a really bad liar, Zuri. I guess that's what makes you almost as adorable as Alphonse."

z uneasy "Stop making fun of me!"

n "I mean it."

z smiles "..."

"Zuri":

n happy "Actually, I'd have to go with you, Zuri. Your ruffled hair and cheeriness makes you cuter than either of them."

z uneasy "W-w-what?"

e thought "Not to mention her warrior spirit and strength of heart. Zuri certainly is a very unique dreamon."

z "Unique is just another word for saying I'm a freak, right?"

n laugh "Not at all. I like to think I'm unique in an otherwise conformist galaxy. All of the brightest minds are."

z complain "Now I know you're making fun of me. Brightest mind of the galaxy, I am not."

n "I'm serious. You are a very cute, very attractive woman."

e wink "I've told her that before, but she doesn't seem to want to listen to me."

n hmm "Oh? Why not?"

e "Because she doesn't want the attention for those who are of the male gender."

z happy "You aren't interested in girls anyway."

n "Oh. Are you gay, Zuri?"

z uneasy "Talk about cutting straight to the heart of the matter..."

e smile "She is. Does that upset you?"

n laugh "Huh? Why would it upset me? Love is love."

e wink "See, Zuri? I told you that you had nothing to worry about."

z "Worry? Why would I be worried? Brave warriors are afraid of nothing!"

n smile "You could have just asked me instead of trying to use Alphonse to get my answer.

We're friends, that's not going to change so easily."

e "She'll charge headlong into battle, but our little dreamon needs a lot of help when it comes to expressing her true emotions."

z complain "Stop picking on me."

e "What about you, Natalie? Would you consider going out with someone of your own gender?"

n doori "What part of love is love don't you understand?"

z uneasy "..."

e "What's wrong, Zuri?"

z cheery "N-n-n-nothing."

n "You are a really bad liar, Zuri. I guess that's what makes you so adorable to me."

z uneasy "Stop making fun of me!"

n laugh "I mean it."

z soft "..."

"Kylie":

\$saidKylieWasCute=True

n happy "Kylie. The little hobban is waaaaaay more cute and adorable than both of them."

e laugh "I'd agree. She's the type you just want to hug."

z smiles "Ohhhhh... that's a totally different type of cute."

z cheery "But I have to agree. When she gets flustered, she gets all shy and embarrassed. It's so cute."

e "Want to know something interesting?"

n irate "Are you trying to spread a juicy rumor, major?"

e laugh "Perhaps."

n happy "...well, the spread of information is critical for my job. Let's hear it."

z "Heh. You're just as eager to hear rumors as the rest of us."

e wink "Kylie has a big crush on Sol."

z surprised "No way!"

n oh "I have a hard time believing that."

e wink "It's true. She's had a crush on him since they met. Of course, it's a one-sided relationship when you are the Mistress of Bad Luck."

z "She's always making more work for him. Besides, the grump would never consider going out with us 'mutant freaks'."

n "I'm not so sure. Even though she has a disrespect problem for authority, Sol was very complementary about her. That might be enough to spark the flames of romance."

e "I also heard that Sol once had a secret romance with a non-human."

n huh "Tell me! I've never heard anything of the sort."

z smiles "I bet you it's a story of jaded love! That would explain everything!"

e sad "I'm afraid not. During his second year at the academy, Lenna caught him cheating on her."

n "Sol? Cheating? I don't believe it. Lenna was never the brightest bulb."

e "That's what she said anyway. She wouldn't go into more detail because it was one of her friends."

n smile "I've got another case to solve now."

e "Please don't. When I asked, he blew up and was yelling at everything and everyone for hours."

n oh "..."

e "Natalie, please promise me."

n sad "Alright, alright. Still, it might mean that Sol could be open to a romantic relationship with Kylie."

z "I hope not. She's too cute for him."

e smile "Well, since Natalie confessed who she finds cute, I think it is only fair that we do so as well."

z complain "Awwwww... not that quad prot quat again."

n smile "Quid pro quo."

z uneasy "Ummmm... you've both been here for a long time. The commander doesn't want people always visiting me, so you both should really go now."

e "It's okay. I'm positive Natalie would like to hear it from you."

n "I'm not going to laugh."

z angry "Shoo! You're not getting in trouble because of me!"

n laugh "Alright, but you have to tell me some day."

e "Bye, Zuri."

z sad "Bye..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 02 with fade

show alphonse serious at center

e "I wish she'd be a little more truthful to herself."

n laugh "Admitting your feelings isn't easy. I'm positive she would have said you were cuter though."

e "I don't think so."

n "Really? Who do you think she would have said?"

e "That is not my place to say."

n sigh "I just can't seem to get good intel on this ship. Well, I'm going to bed for a few hours before I try start my search into linguistics of every known language ever."

e smile "If you need any help, just let us know."

n smile "I'm glad to know I can count on you all. Good night."

e "Sleep well."

scene bg black with fade

jump thirdFailure

label thirdFailure:

scene bg 03 with fade

show faye aru at innerLeft

show sol grumpy at innerRight

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

f "Arrrrruuuuuuu... there are so many civilizations out there..."

n irate "I know, Faye, trust me, I know."

f "Arrrrruuuuuuu..."

n sigh "Sigh..."

s "Please stop groaning... both of you."

nar "I understand her howling, I really do. As annoying as it is, it is not nearly as annoying as going

though alphabet after alphabet. Every now and then, we'll find one that might be it."

nar "Hopes are built and destroyed in seconds. Even if the language of the Wallz-Wallz from the dust world of Wallz was the one I was looking for, I have no ability to be confident in my answer."

nar "With each passing day, each passing false shuttle trail, my dreams are dying little by little. The truth is disappearing into the fog of deception."

nar "We've been at this for two weeks. Two weeks of nothing but decreasing resources and waning morale. I did not think this expedition would take more than two days."

s "I think we should take a break."

n irate "We are running short on time! Every second that passes and we don't find them is a second that our truth fades away."

f exasperated "Natalie, you look awful."

n "You don't look great yourself."

s annoyed "Wolfie never looks great."

kk "You're one to talk."

show faye aru at center

show sol grumpy at solRight

show kika annoyed at left

s "And the housecat appears. What do you want?"

kk "You all look like undead zombies! It's bringing down the rest of the crew!"

s "Maybe between the pointless imprisonment of Zuri and our failure to complete our primary mission, we're a little down right now. I don't see you helping us."

kk "I'm the one getting us to the next site where we are going to find the real truth!"

n oi "The real truth that nothing is out there. Let's face it, we're just chasing our tails in the dark."

kk "We could try that. We could try chasing Faye's tail in the dark and see if that improves your moods."

s "We're busy here! Get out!"

f "I think Kika has a good idea."

s "Oh? You want Natalie to play with your tail? You like being a little floozy with every cute girl you meet?"

f "That's not what I meant."

s annoyed "Then explain your ideas before you go rambling on!"

f smile "Why don't we have some sort of contest or competition to build morale? Wouldn't that be fun?"

s "That is an aw... hmph. Alright."

n smile "That's a sudden change of heart."

s serious "I wanted to have a cooking contest between myself and wolfie. This would be an excellent chance."

kk excited "And I can show you all how it's done! Let's go get the boss to sign off on it."

s "Sounds good."

scene bg 01 with fade

show azaia neutral at innerLeft

show sol serious at innerRight2

show kika smirk at innerRight

a "Major Hackett, this is an odd request to be paired with another report of no developments."

s "That the reason we need this, ma'am. Morale is low right now, we need something to distract us from our lack of success so far."

a "You believe this is the correct course of action?"

s "Yes, ma'am."

a "I will consider your request after Major Puccile's investigation into the next system."

n smile "That's all we can ask for, commander."

a "Thank you. If you could excuse me, I have some... news for you, Lieutenant Starr."

kk "Go ahead and say it. I don't have any secrets."

a "Are you sure?"

kk "Uh-huh. You can be honest when you are the best."

a "I was just delivered a report from High Command."

n oh "Are they recalling us?"

a "No, this is something closer to home. Lieutenant Starr, it is my sad duty to report the death of the president and First Lady Starr."

stop music fadeout 5.0

show sol surprised

kk surprised "Mom... dad...?"

a "There was a shuttle accident. I'm sorry."

kk "..."

n sad "I'm so sorry, Kika."

s quiet "So... she is the sole inheritor of the estate. Have you coordinated with Alphonse to get her to the nearest spaceport and back home?"

kk "No."

a "He's prepping the shuttle right now."

kk tsun "I said no! I'm staying here. I have a mission and I'm not abandoning it! Heroes don't turn away, especially when you all need my help more than ever!"

n smile "It's okay. We'll be fine."

kk crying "Shut up, you stupid idiot! I'm fine! I'm fine!"

nar "I try to wrap my arm around her shoulder to comfort her, but the lieutenant pushes me away. She's on the border of sobbing, but she's still putting up a strong face."

kk "I said I'm fine! I'm not going home until the mission is complete!"

s "But your parents-"

kk "Are dead, I know! What can I do for them now? Cry on their graves? I can do that after we save the universe!"

n sad "Kika..."

a "This is highly against protocol. Are you sure?"

kk "Stop asking me that! You can't get rid of me!"

a "Very well. I'll notify command of your decision."

hide azaia

show sol quiet at solRight with move

n "I know she didn't say it, but all of us are here for you."

kk "Y-y-you think a hero like me can't deal with this. I didn't cry when they took Blade away from me, I didn't cry when my best friend on the Xeon died in the attack, and I'm not crying now."

kk "You all can still depend on me!"

s "How close are we to dropping out of shift?"

kk "Thirty minutes."

s "Grab a bite to eat, pull yourself together, and then report back in. I want all crew ready."

kk "Sir."

hide kika

show sol quiet at center with move

play music "Music/ms17.ogg"

n sad "She should be mourning, not preparing herself for a mission."

s "It's her decision."

n oi "This is irresponsible! All three of you!"

s "I've known Lieutenant Starr since she was Trainee Starr. You want to destroy her, take away this

mission from her."

n "Does she even care about her parents? I thought lupide and kitsune were supposed to be family-oriented!"

s "She cares about them more than anything. If you think otherwise, you're blind."

n huh "Then why-"

s "Because we believe in the mission. We believe in the Katajion Space Force. We believe in you. If there is a potential weapon of mass destruction out there, we have to stop it at any cost!"

s "You've told me that a thousand times before. Now, when you see someone paying part of that bill, you want to back down?"

n oh "No... but-"

s angry2 "Kika understands that without our navigator, we would be stuck here for two or more weeks until a new one arrived. How far away could our culprits get in that time?"

s "We have a potential saboteur on-board! We can't afford any delays, any distractions!"

s "Major Puccile, are you committed to this mission or not?"

n sad "I just wish it didn't have to come to this."

s "If you had to give your life to protect this land, would you? I don't care what you said during your oath, I want to know what Natalie Puccile would do right now."

menu:

"I don't know if I could.":

n "I'm... not sure. I don't want to die."

s quiet "Nobody does. Nobody wants to lose their life. Nobody wants to make sacrifices."

s serious "But we have to sometimes to protect what we value most. To Kika, that means not being there for her parents at their end."

n "What can I do, Sol?"

s "Be there for her. She might be a puffed-up housecat, but even she needs someone to give her a pet every now and then."

s "Also, make sure Faye knows. They might not act like it all the time, but those two are incredibly close."

n smile "I'll make sure."

s "..."

s regret "Hang tough, okay? We're all in this together."

n "Yeah... we're going to find something at this next site. We're going to make this happen."

s quiet "Hear, hear."

"I could.":

n smile "I could. I made the oath and I'll give my life if that is what is required of me."

s "Even if it was for a mission you didn't agree with? Even if it wasn't for something important?"

n sad "..."

s serious "If you are waning in confidence now, remember that you can always depend on us. We're here for you, Natalie."

s "You don't need to fear death as long as I'm still here."

n doori "And you can count on me as well."

n happy "Sol, let's find that damn weapon. If we find the damn weapon, Kika can go home to grieve."

s smile "Well said."

nar "I... want to make sure I write a letter home to my family. They probably worry about me. If things go wrong, I don't want them thinking I hated them."

nar "Mom..."

stop music fadeout 4.0

scene bg black with fade

jump preFinalSite

label preFinalSite:

scene bg black with fade

s "Reentry in progress. Standby."

nar "It feels so empty without Zuri giving me reassuring support up here. Kika's deadpan and Faye isn't saying much either. We need to find something..."

nar "I... need something. Not for my promotion's sake, but for theirs. For my crew's. We need something we can rally behind."

scene bg 01 with fade

show sol grumpy at solRight

show kika sad at innerLeft

s "Reentry successful."

kk "Beginning scan..."

st "And so begins another leg in our fruitless chase. We should just turn around now for our dear navigator's sake."

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 5.0

kk "How about you shut up for my sake? I've got an ion reading for a shuttle that landed on the planet as well as what I think might be its exit vector."

n huh "What?"

nar "I spring from my seat and sprint over to Kika."

s angry2 "Moonfallow, get up. I want a planet readout now."

nar "They are real! There was something that landed on this planet, and recently. Since this is another abandoned world in the middle of nowhere, there has to be a reason."

nar "Please let it not be smugglers or their ilk. Please let it be something valuable."

show azaia neutral at center

a "Major Puccile, do you think this is worth investigating?"

n http "Of course I do! Lieutenant Starr, work on getting me some better readings! I want the ground team prepared to be boots down in five minutes."

kk please "No."

n sigh "No what?"

kk "I want to come with you. Alphonse can do the readings!"

a "I thought I made myself clear when you last requested this."

kk annoyed "You did. My father is now dead. Let me go."

a "You are clearly not in a stable mindset."

kk "I want to do something useful! Anybody can do this!"

s annoyed "I say let her come with. We'll need the extra manpower without Zuri."

n hmm "I want Zuri to come with."

a patronizing "It seems questioning my orders is the theme of today. That is a negative, major."

nar "No. I decided last time that I wasn't going to go on any expedition into the unknown without her. If I have to play the power card here, I will."

n http "This is an executive order under the SITO clause. You are to hereby permit Lieutenant Zuri to accompany me. I'm not going down there without a trained security officer."

s serious "Commander, we'll be down and back quickly. I doubt Zuri is going to make any trouble returning to her quarters."

a neutral "...so be it. Colonel Nelson, you will be trading places with Lieutenant Starr. Major Hackett, you will bear all responsibility for Lieutenant Zuri."

s "Yes, ma'am."

a "If anyone gets hurt down there, Puccile, it is on your head."

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri excited at zuriLeft

show kika sad at right

show faye sad at innerRight2

show sol grumpy at innerLeft2

z "Wow! Maybe Nat isn't wrong about you not being such a bad guy."

s "If you do anything stupid out there again, lizard-brain, I'm going to make sure you never get any visitors and are cut down to one meal a day."

z sad "Or not."

s "I'm only letting you come with because Natalie was going to make a fight of it. You both should be thanking her."

kk "..."

z thinking "Is she alright?"

s annoyed "This is one of those moments when you should keep your big mouth shut."

z "This just doesn't feel right. We didn't even let Faye do her in-depth analysis this time. Aren't we being hasty?"

n sigh "There's not much time. We need to be swift!"

s "This is a bleak day when Zuri is the one saying we aren't thinking things through."

kk "...we'll be fine. I'm here."

n "She's right. We are all some of the best of our professions. Though this may be in haste, we can do it."

s regret "..."

n sad "Sol... Back me up."

s "Everyone, be careful."

nar "They're right, I'm rushing this operation. I don't want Kika to suffer any longer, even if it puts our operation in a state of increased danger. If I'm being hasty..."

nar "I should stop this now. This against everything I've followed, everything I've been taught. I could get killed because of this."

n "Knock-it-off."

s quiet "Excuse me?"

n oi "I said knock-it-off."

n htp "Lieutenant Starr, tell me where we think the shuttle left. Captain Moonfallow, I want a detailed report of the conditions at the suspected land site. Lieutenant Zuri, stretch and warm-up for any

potential combat."

show zuri smiles

n "Everyone, check your gear, do what I asked, and meet me back here in twenty minutes."

s "You heard her. Get everything squared away."

stop music fadeout 2.0

hide sol

hide kika

hide faye

show zuri thinking at center with move

nar "Sol gives me a thumbs-up and a pat on the back as he walks by. If he was thinking I was being hasty, why didn't he just come out and say it?"

nar "This is my first real mission and I'm forgetting the basics of mission planning. This is completely unsatisfactory. Stop letting emotions play into your plans, Natalie."

nar "I'm ashamed of myself."

z "Don't look so down. We all get caught up in the heat of the moment."

n oi "What are you still doing here? You should be getting ready. If you're not going to take my orders seriously, I'm not letting you come with me."

z happy "I'd like to see you try."

n "I will."

z "Did you forget that I have to stick with you or Sol? I'm not freed, I'm just on parole."

n oh "Oh... that's right."

z smiles "What about your gear?"

n smile "I've got everything I'll need to complete this mission."

z excited "Where's your radio at?"

n oh "...back in the lab."

nar "I expect a sarcastic remark, something about how having double-standards is bad. Instead, she gives me that warm smile I enjoy seeing so much."

z smiles "Let's go get it. We can be back before anyone else."

n sad "Don't tell anyone. They don't need to be worrying that their leader is losing her marbles."

z "I won't. You can trust me."

n smile "That I can."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri smiles at center

nar "I move to key the unlock for my laboratory when a cold shiver runs down my spine. Something is wrong."

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 3.0

n oi "The door... it's unlocked."

z confused "Forgot to lock it? You are kind of scatterbrained today."

n "Despite how true that statement is, I've been careful lately. I didn't want anyone breaking back into my lab. I even threw Faye out when I had to go visit the bridge."

show zuri angry

nar "Zuri is slowly shifting her stance from her regular playful self to some more aggressive, more focused. It's that same stance from when she felt we were in danger from the weather."

z "Get behind me."

n htp "Be careful."

z "Don't worry, I have you watching my back."

scene bg 03 with fade

show zuri serious at center

z "Clear. Whoever was here didn't stay long."

nar "Could I have just left the lab unlocked? Everything appears to be untouched since the last time I was here."

z thinking "I'm not going to touch anything."

n hmm "I don't think there is anything to be careful of disturbing. It appears I must have been losing my mind."

z "You must have. Even your papers are still in a perfect stack."

n huh "What?"

z "Yep. You really are very orderly."

n irate "I'd love to say that I am, but I left in a hurry. The papers were in a stack, sure, but it certainly wasn't a very pretty one."

nar "I do a quick inventory of my documentation and ugly sketches. Everything is here and accounted."

nar "Even if they had taken any of these, there is nothing to be gleaned from them. My awful drawings of symbols I can't remember don't have any intellectual value. Anyone who would have seen them would know."

nar "I suppose that would exonerate Faye or Sol. Both of them would have known that there was

nothing of value in the pages.."

nar "Zuri was locked up in her room, so there is no way she could have done it. Besides, Zuri has already proven her innocence to me."

nar "That leaves Commander Rasoona, Colonel Nelson, Major Tenzin, Lieutenant Starr, and Flight Officer Migi. All of them have been alone in the last thirty minutes."

z "But last time they smashed up the datapads. Why didn't they take these pictures?"

n "Because they are worthless. Even if someone stole them, there would be nothing of value lost."

n htp "But whoever did this did not try very hard to conceal their presence here. I doubt the doctor or the commander would have been so sloppy."

n hmm "Lieutenant Starr and Officer Migi are the two primary suspects. Kylie doesn't seem to be very detailed and Kika is currently distraught."

if (saidKylieWasCute):

z "But you thought she was adorable. Kylie is too cute to do something like this."

n "Cute does not make one innocent."

else:

z "Kylie is too sweet and lovable."

n "The perfect cover."

z "And why is Kika distraught? Stupid Sol wouldn't tell me."

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 5.0

n sad "Kika... lost her parents today. She just found out the news."

show zuri defeated

n "I told her that she should have just took some time off for everything to sink in, but she refused. It's like she doesn't care..."

z "She does care."

n irate "That's what Sol said as well. I understand why she wants to stay, but she should sit this one out. It's only making her more suspicious in my eyes."

z "But a dedicated warrior would appear to do the same thing as an insidious spy."

n "I know... Why couldn't this mission have been something simple? Blow up shipdock. Easy."

z soft "It's during the most trying of times that we learn who we truly are."

n laugh "And who your friends are."

z "Yep..."

z sad "Parents, huh? Are kitsunes very close to their parents?"

n "Lupide are incredibly close to their families. Kitsunes, not as much, but still tight."

z "Oh."

n hmm "You sound like you don't care for yours."

z "I really don't have one. Dreamons lay nests in the middle of the wilderness. Our young learn to survive and are brought into the fold of society as they grow."

n irate "That sounds incredibly neglectful."

z smiles "I didn't think so. It was fun and excitement every day!"

nar "Only the hearty survive. Perhaps that is why Zuri thinks that warriors have to be these brawn muscleheads."

z "I guess the closest thing to a family I have is my hatchmates. You all learn to protect each other. Most don't survive, but some of my hatchmates made it to civilization with me."

n hmm "Like how we have brothers and sisters?"

z confused "Kinda? We aren't related by blood, but we are as close as any of your families."

z happy "Want to know something really embarrassing?"

n happy "Not if I have to reveal something equally embarrassing."

z "This one is a freebie. I was hoping to the spirits that I'd be able to have something like that here. Silly, right?"

n smile "Not at all. I'd be happy if we could have that sort of relationship here, though I'd also like it if we could respect the rank structure as well."

z uneasy "Eh heh heh..."

n "Come on, I'll grab my radio and lock up again. We've got a mission to fulfill."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump finalSite

label finalSite:

scene bg 08 with fade

show zuri excited at zuriLeft

show kika sad at right

show faye aru at innerRight2

show sol irritated at innerLeft2

play music "Music/ms13.ogg"

nar "The heat... Even though I knew that this place was going to be warm, this is almost unbearable."

nar "I hope there is some sort of ancient power that we are disturbing. I could use a nice

thunderstorm overhead right now."

nar "Like an unmerciful god, the sun beats down on my latest disaster. The site is absolutely trashed. Did the researchers go mad from sunstroke?"

n smile "Bridge, this is ground team."

e "Already on it. You are alone, major."

n "Very nice. Thank you."

s "Suck-up..."

n hmm "I don't know, Sol. He already gave me my first clue. What do you have to counter?"

s "Bah! Give me five minutes!"

hide sol

hide faye

n htp "Captain Moonfallow, I want you to look for signs of disturbed soil."

nar "..."

n irate "Faye? Where'd she go?"

kk thinking "To study a cactus or something. I'll look for your piles of disturbed sand."

hide kika

show zuri smiles at center with move

nar "She's also gone before I get a chance to fully explain what I want done. I bite my lip, trying not to let my annoyance get the better of me."

n smile "Zuri, you have the most important assignment of all. Do you feel anything?"

z "..."

z thinking "This is going to sound silly, but..."

n sigh "How many times do I have to say my security officer's perspective is the most important when it comes to safety?"

z happy "I dunno, ask Sol. He keeps track of things like that."

n happy "Maybe I will."

z thinking "Well... I can't feel anything on the wind, but my gut is screaming warnings at me. Something feels off."

n hmm "Think it is the heat? Perhaps the tattered campsite is disturbing you?"

z "I like the heat. It makes me feel happy and at ease. It's almost like being back home again."

n sigh "You're a strange person, Zuri. This heat is killing me. I'm starting to think the researchers melted."

z "But the claw marks..."

n "It's a joke."

nar "I knee down next to the tattered remains of a makeshift tent. Their better supplies must have been left at the original site. This isn't much more than canvas and poles."

nar "Still, the canvas is thick and durable. I try to tear it with my bare hands, but I can't even manage to rip a single thread. Something strong or large destroyed this site."

nar "The cuts aren't clean, they aren't the precise measure I would expect from someone using a knife or machete. These scars are... wild."

n htp "Are you sure you don't feel something on the wind? Large felines, perhaps?"

z confused "Nothing. It's calm. Peaceful. It's just like how the monks told me inner peace felt."

n hmm "..."

z cheery "Hey, don't worry. Nothing is going to happen to you as long as I'm around. I'm your protector."

n smile "I'm not concerned, Zuri, you're here. You don't need to worry about me."

z "But I like to worry about you."

n laugh "..."

s "Natalie! Natalie!"

hide zuri

show sol surprised at center

n hmm "What is it?"

s "It's an audio log. You need to hear this!"

n irate "You should have waited to play it until I was there."

s "Damn your pride, listen!"

nar "If he's getting gruff even with me, there is something utterly important and damning on this. My heart flutters a bit as I consider what sorts of intrigue await me."

res "We have it. We have it. Though our blood may soak these dunes, by God we have it!"

nar "I can hear howls in the background. Not feline, but... guttural? They're hard to hear over the sounds of shifting sands."

res "Though we pay the ultimate price, we have it. We have the key to the entire universe. Though my team has given their lives in pursuit of this, I am now the caretaker of the universe."

res "The blood... it draws them near. I do not have much time left in this world, but I will do what must be done. I will be the patron saint that they demand I become."

res "Nobody will be able to stop what I am about to do. I have taken the step to the heavens with no challenge from the masses."

res "I do this for everyone. I do this for everyone. I do this for everyone."

res "The universe is in my hands."

nar "The garbled, pained tone fades to static. The universe is in his hands. Did the researchers truly find a weapon of mass destruction? I can only presume so."

s "What are we going to do?"

n irate "What can we do? We need to finish up our investigation for any additional clues."

show sol angry at center

s angry "Every second we sit here twiddling our thumbs, that mad scientist is running rampant with a device we know nothing about! No 'key of the universe' should be out there and not be accounted for!"

n "First I'm hasty, now I'm slow!"

s "There are times and places for both! This is not the time to be slow or hesitant!"

n htp "Sol, what if we aren't understanding this? What if there is something bigger than-"

s "What is bigger than this?"

n "...I don't know. But one datapad doesn't give us a guaranteed path to our objective. This little recording is nothing more than speculation."

n irate "We can afford five minutes to ensure we do this right."

s "I'm not going to win on this, am I? Alright, I wanted to confirm that there are no other computers in this camp anyway."

n "We should find some here."

s "I doubt it. That message confirmed my suspicions that whoever we are chasing doesn't want anyone to know what they are pursuing."

n "Then why would they leave this message?"

s "Why do criminals leave any sort of message? To taunt their pursuers. That message doesn't give us any more knowledge than that person is dangerous."

n angry "I'm going to do a full and detailed investigation of this campsite, with your permission or not. I'm not going to be hasty."

s "So Lieutenant Starr's dead parents are worth being risky but my trying to prevent mine for dying isn't worth the same value? A mutt is worth more than me?"

n "Get back to the shuttle. The heat is screwing with your mind."

s irritated "Whatever."

hide sol

nar "Maybe it is messing with mine as well. I can barely keep the sweat out of my eyes. My water intake isn't keeping up. Major Brumford would be screaming at me right now."

nar "I'll be quick. Yeah, that will fix everything..."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 08 with fade

nar "Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Just like before."

nar "I pull myself into the limited shade of a ravaged tent. Who cares about the stupid radio? I should have brought another liter or two of water."

nar "The racist grump is still sitting in his nice, climate controlled shuttle. Lousy jerk. This would go so much faster if he would just apologize to me and help out."

show zuri uneasy at center

z "You don't look so good. Your face is all red."

n irate "Just a bit of a headache."

z "That's no good. Here."

nar "Zuri tosses me a worn leather bota. I run my finger over the fraying stitching and scuffed brown leather."

n smile "This canteen has been through a few beatings."

z cheery "I made it when I was still a hatchling. A wandering elder showed me how to make it really strong and tough, just like me."

n "Crafting... odd hobby for a warrior."

z "You have to learn how to make do when you are a warrior. You won't always have what you need in the heat of battle."

n happy "So non-combat related skills have their place when you are a warrior."

z complain "You're not going to give up on trying to claim you are a warrior, are you?"

n "Not until you realize the truth."

z "And I won't stop until you see the truth."

nar "I take a few swigs of cool, refreshing water. Even little boons like this are enough to keep me going."

z confused "Find anything?"

n hmm "Only this."

nar "I toss Sol's discovery to her. While she plays it, I distract myself by watching the shifting sands. I don't need to hear that dire warning again right now."

nar "That's life, I suppose. Just like these shifting sands, everything seems to be in a constant movement. I'm having a hard time keeping up."

nar "The winds of fate seem to be blowing everything around on me, never leaving the truth

uncovered for long."

stop music fadeout 3.0

nar "But there is no wind here, now that I think about it. What could be shifting...?"

n huh "Zuri, you said you didn't feel anything in the air, right?"

z "Nope."

n "What about the ground?"

z "Slight tremors, but I figured they were-"

n angry "Where are Captain Moonfallow and Lieutenant Starr?"

z "Over by the-"

show zuri surprised

play music "Music/ms14.ogg"

nar "A sharp, piercing scream breaks the moment of dread in my heart. Too slow, too late."

n "Captain Moonfallow!"

z angry "Stay here!"

n "I can help!"

z "Trust me! Stay here!"

menu:

"I can help! Let's go!":

\$arguedWithZuri=True

n "We need to help them now! Let's go!"

z "Stay put!"

n "No! I'm in charge of this operation, I'm helping."

z "Looks like Commander Rasoonia is gonna add insubordination to my charges."

nar "Before I have a chance to understand what she meant by that, Zuri swings her tail and sends me flying off of my feet and into the sand." with vpunch

nar "How dare she! I try to scramble to my feet to grab her, but she's already on the move towards the source of the screaming."

"Ughhhh... okay.":

n irate "Fine. Hurry."

z excited "Trust me. Everyone will come home this way."

nar "Her words feel like a knife to my pride. Special Investigation and Tactics officers are trained for this. Why am I not fighting back with more vigor?"

nar "I'm the one overseeing this operation... why am I permitting a lieutenant to order a major

around?"

hide zuri

nar "Like a speeding bullet, Zuri is skimming over the sand dunes. Her speed is something I could never match, her boots look like they aren't even touching the ground."

nar "Wait! They aren't! In a heartbeat, I understand why she was the only one who could do this. Whatever is under those shifting sands would have me dead without a fight."

nar "Why... didn't I think about that? Why am I not reacting fast enough? Why am I not understanding enough?"

nar "I want to blame this heat, but I know the real answer is in my head."

nar "But if I can't help, what use am I here?"

nar "No, I refuse to think like that! There has to be something I can do! I yank my radio out of my pack."

n htp "Sol, come in."

s "What? Tired of chasing after nothing?"

nar "It's going to pain me to say this, but not nearly as badly if Faye or Kika die because of my lack of judgment."

n "You were right, but we have bigger issues to worry about! There's something moving under the sand and I think it attacked Moonfallow and Starr."

s "Roger. I'm running the takeoff checklist right now. Where are they?"

n "Zuri took off to save them."

s "Then godspeed to her. Get on-board."

n angry "Not until they are here."

s "I'm not having this fight. Get on the shuttle!"

n "I'm not moving until I have my entire team here. Call me stupid, but nobody is getting left behind on my watch!"

s "...roger."

nar "In the distance, I can see what appears to be a wild storm of sand blowing towards me. At the head of it is a desperate Zuri with Faye and Kika under her arms."

show zuri angry at center

z "We need to go! Those things chug along at a super fast pace!"

kk "..."

n huh "Kika?"

kk "..."

n "Faye? What are those things?"

f "..."

nar "Faye's eyes are closed, the torso of her uniform is stained in the dark red fluid of her blood.

Numerous cuts and claw marks decorate her."

n htp "We need to get her to Doctor Nelson now! Sol, we need to go now!"

nar "I may have killed her... my xenobiologist and roommate might have just paid the price for not keeping my head in the game..."

scene bg black with fade

jump desertDebrief

label desertDebrief:

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri angry at zuriLeft

show sol angry2 at solRight

show kika crying at innerRight

n angry "Kika! Get the doctor now!"

hide sol

n "Sol? Sol! I need you!"

nar "Just like that, he's gone. He abandoned me when I needed him to help me get through this."

nar "Zuri has been doing her best to give Faye aid with our emergency kits, but the blood... More than once, I almost lost my lunch. I had to hide away in the cockpit with a silent Sol."

kk "..."

z "Kika, I need you to put pressure on this wound!"

kk "..."

z serious "Kika? She's going to die if you don't help."

kk "Right... I... I can do this."

z "That's right. We need you. We need Hero Navigator Starr."

kk "S-s-s-she's my minion. They expect this from me. Right here?"

z "Right there."

show zuri serious at zuriFarLeft

show azaia shocked at innerLeft

show stan panic at center behind kika

show sol serious at solRight behind kika

show kylie scared at kyRight behind sol

a "Major Puccile!"

n "Tell me when you run off like that, Sol!"

s "Kika wasn't focused and we didn't have time to waste. Just like now. Time to prove your worth, colonel."

st "Well... ummm... you see..."

s irritated "You keep telling me that we have to keep you around for situations like this. Situation happened. Do something."

st "Have you... stabilized the bleeding?"

z "I'm trying, but those things must have some sort of venom in their claws. I'm having a hard time."

st "Well, alas, our anti-venom supply is drastically small. There is little I can do to aid her."

k "But what about that box-"

st "..."

k "I-I-I-I mean... never mind."

s "What box?"

st "..."

st "Perhaps our lovely quartermaster means my most recent shipment of medicines. Perhaps she is right and there may be just enough for our dear lupide friend."

s "There better be. I also want a full report on what was contained in that box."

st "That you think ill of me at a time like now. No matter. Come, let us take her to my lab."

a patronizing "Major Puccile, I want a full report."

s angry2 "Commander, there isn't a lot of time. We need to send the ship in pursuit of the shuttle whose route we tracked earlier."

a "Then have Major Tenzin take care of it, and I'll waive the safety regulations about being strapped in. I want to know what happened down there."

kk "...down there...."

s "Kika, I need you to tell Al the coordinates to follow. Are you sure you can handle that?"

kk "..."

kk tsun "Of course I can! Leave everything to me!"

a "Report to the bridge as soon as you are done. I want your story as well."

hide kika

a "Bridge. Now."

nar "How am I going to explain this...?"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 01 with fade

show zuri serious at zuriFarLeft

show azaia shocked at innerLeft2

show kika sad at innerRight

show sol serious at solRight behind kika

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 3.0

a "That recording was the only thing you found down there?"

s "Yes, ma'am."

n hmm "I did a thorough sweep of the site and did not find anything else of value. Just like the previous site, everything had been stripped of information."

a "Two hours at the ground site and that was all you were able to discern?"

n sigh "...yes, ma'am."

a "I've heard tales about how SITO's were masters at discovering even the most hidden truth. This performance is not living up to those standards."

n "Yes, ma'am."

a "Did you take photographs of either ground site for later study?"

n oh "..."

a patronizing "Of course not. Major Puccile, did you ensure that your security officer had performed her checks to ensure safety of my crew?"

nar "Oh, now she is MY security officer."

n oi "I did. We ensured that all protective measures were taken."

a "So you let Captain Moonfallow out of your line of vision?"

n "She was within shouting distance and had Lieutenant Starr with her! How could I have foreseen this?"

a "Correct. You all made the right choice at the start. When you heard from this recording that their team had been attacked, did you deem it important to notify them?"

n sad "..."

s "That is my fault, ma'am."

n huh "Sol?"

s regret "I was agitated with Major Puccile and started a fight with her. She was going to notify Captain Moonfallow, but I pulled her away from it. The error in judgment resides with me."

n oi "Don't let him lie to you! I was the one who cared more about finding more clues!"

z thinking "They're both wrong, commander. I just watched them fight instead of doing anything to break it up."

a "You all screwed up equally."

n oi "As the ranking officer in charge of this operation, I bear all responsibility for what happened out there."

a "Major, you will learn as you command that there are times when you could have prevented a catastrophe. Hindsight will always be perfect. You screwed up today in a way that could have been prevented."

a "You let emotions drive you and let your guard down. Captain Moonfallow had to pay for that mistake."

a "But mistakes happen. Learn from them. Tell me, what happened to Captain Moonfallow?"

show sol serious

kk "I can explain that."

a "By all means."

kk "Faye was investigating some wild flower she had noticed on the fringes of the camp. The pup thought it was really strange because it was the only flora she had found."

a "What were you doing?"

kk "Thinking..."

a "So both of your guards were down and you were outside the vision range of Lieutenant Zuri."

kk tsun "Well, I'm sooooooorry! We thought everything was safe."

a "Bearing."

kk "I'm sorry if my bearing isn't rock hard right now, I'm a little shook up! One minute I'm staring off into space, the next there was these... things leaping out of the sand!"

kk thinking "They were like large fish with stingers grafted to their tails. These long, curved ghastly things that reminded me of the night sky. They were on top of Faye before I could do anything."

kk "I tried! I tried to beat them off of Faye, but they just swarmed all over her. I beat them! I hit them but they just kept coming!"

kk sad "It meant something, right? She might have been gravely injured, but I saved her life."

a "We will see in time. Lieutenant Zuri, does that match your impression of them?"

z complain "Swarm was the best way to describe them. I think the camp site was on top of their nest."

a "Could they have been used as a defense from intruders set up by the researchers?"

n hmm "I don't think so. I think they were meant to protect whatever the researchers uncovered. Like the thunderstorm... could these have been defenses against intruders?"

nar "The idea is bleak, but strangely reassuring. There should have been tougher defenses if this device was truly dangerous. The calm in Rasoon's face tells me she came to the same conclusion."

a "Are either of you injured?"

kk annoyed "Like they could hurt me!"

z smiles "A couple of scratches. Nothing serious. The stingers didn't get me, so no poison to worry about."

a "All of you except Lieutenant Zuri, return to duty. We will need all hands prepared for whatever awaits us at our destination."

s "Where is it, ma'am?"

a "Deep space. No known worlds out there. We are jumping into the depths of darkness. Our supplies are limited, so I am ordering us move to Rat Two."

nar "Bleh... I've survived on Ration Level Two before, but I don't like it. Smaller portions, nothing wasted."

a patronizing "You messed up, but completed the objective. We can do better next time. Dismissed."

s "Yes, ma'am!"

hide azaia

stop music fadeout 5.0

n smile "Come on, Zuri. Let's stop by my lab before I walk you back to your room. I want to take a look at your wounds."

z "Not going to experiment on me, are you?"

n laugh "Perhaps. There might be information on where these things came from if they were a genetic weapon."

z surprised "I was kidding."

s grumpy "That's why you don't joke about those sorts of things around Natalie."

z complain "I'll remember that."

s regret "Sure you will..."

s "Let's get back to the bridge, Starr. Wingy will want to hear all about how you beat back swarms of mutant fish."

kk sad "Fine. Have fun playing doctor."

n "Let's go, Zuri."

jump zuriDebrief

label zuriDebrief:

scene bg 03 with fade

show zuri thinking at center

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 2.0

z "Here you are. Going to take a nap?"

n hmm "Not until I've had a look at your wounds."

z cheery "Nat the mad scientist."

n sigh "Here I am, trying to make sure you are happy and healthy, and you are trying to escape from it. What if those wounds contained poison?"

z "I dunno. Take me to Stan?"

n yare "I'm starting to suspect that our good doctor might be trying to pocket medical supplies on the side. I'd rather be the one to inspect your wounds."

z "Me too. He's very nice to me, but he always asks the strangest questions."

n hmm "What sort of questions?"

z thinking "I dunno, he doesn't ask them to me anymore. After a month or so, he just stopped caring about me or my existence."

n irate "That's probably for the best. Where were you cut?"

z smiles "My hand. Don't worry, I'm fine."

n oi "..."

z uneasy "Stop glaring at me, please."

n "Hand out."

z thinking "No."

n "Don't make me get a sedative from the doctor. I'm not letting you get away without an inspection."

z complain "If you insist."

n laugh "I am. You saved Kika and Faye today. A legendary warrior like yourself deserves the best treatment possible."

z soft "I did... I saved them. Were you impressed?"

n "Very."

if (arguedWithZuri):

z complain "You're not mad about me having to hit you with my tail, right? I tried to be very careful."

n sigh "Normally, people slap the other person when they aren't being logical. Your tail had a lot more force."

z uneasy "Sorry."

n "Don't apologize. If I would have went with you, those things would have torn me apart. You saved my life today. Almost broke my arm in the process, but you did."

else:

n smile "I want to thank you for stopping me. I would have charged straight into those beasts without thinking it through."

n sad "I'm such an idiot."

z "No way! You just keep proving to me more and more you might have the spirit of a true warrior hidden under your scholarliness."

z "You only thought about the safety and protection of your troops and were willing to brave any danger. That's what it means to be a warrior."

n smile "Thanks..."

nar "While she's distracted with thoughts of being a valiant warrior, I take her coarse hands into mine."

nar "Despite her protests earlier, I can see that her hand was sliced up pretty bad. I can see trace amounts of a liquid other than blood on her hand."

nar "With a small vial and rubber gloves, I gather up as much of the liquid-infused blood as I can. I don't remember reading about many animals that can leave notable amounts of venom on their victim."

z smiles "What is it?"

n hmm "I'm not quite sure. I want to have it analyzed though. You don't appear to be showing any signs of contamination, but tell me immediately if you start feeling funny."

z happy "Knock knock."

n laugh "Not that kind of funny..."

nar "On closer inspection, I can see that slice was the right word for it. The cuts are clean and deep. How Zuri manages to go without wincing as I clean up the wounds is remarkable."

nar "But why would a wild beast be able to claw up someone in such a perfectly straight and precise manner? This is most peculiar."

z "Go test it."

n hmm "Hmmm?"

z "I can see it in your eyes, you really want to go test it."

n sigh "Not until I finish bandaging up your hand."

z "Don't you need to focus on-"

n sad "I don't know what I need right now. Just let me help."

n smile "...there."

z protest "See? See? See? All better! Come on, I want to know what is bugging you."

n "I want to know how you aren't moaning and groaning. Those were some deep cuts."

z happy "These little scratches? They're nothing! I've gotten roughed up a lot worse."

n "I guess all that physical training has its perks."

nar "I walk over to my identifier and pour the fluid into the mixer. Since we are in shift, heading for the furthest reaches of space, I'm not going to be able to use the database. I'm gonna have to hope that this is a common toxin."

nar "Yeah... that will happen. The mutant creature on some far off-world isn't going to be-"

z smiles "What's that light?"

n oh "It's... done."

nar "I pull up the readout, expecting to see an error. No... It's a result."

stop music fadeout 1.0

z confused "Tri... texa..."

play music "Music/ms15.ogg" fadein 2.0

n oi "Qudratexadon. It's a toxin designed by the Raltin Empire. It's lethal to lupide and kitsune in nearly sixty five percent of direct contact cases."

n "Most symptoms include muscle paralysis, short-term memory loss, and, depending on the dose, rapid death. It works on a cellular level by preventing the exchange of oxygen and CO2."

n "Against non-lupide and non-kitsune, it had very little effect. Most people don't show any effects even after direct exposure of considerable quantities."

z "That seems like a strange thing for mutant desert fish to excrete."

n hmm "Perhaps not. Those cuts, they're too clean. Too clean to be natural. Computer, how many matches do I have for Raltin genetic weapons that match Lieutenant Zuri's descriptions?"

comp "Checking with database of known Raltin genetic weapons..."

comp "Description matches three potential candidates."

z surprised "The empire did this? Why would they attack scientists?"

n "They wanted the weapon for themselves, obviously. Still, something here doesn't make sense. Why would you attack the scientists with such strange weapons if you already knew the location?"

z thinking "One of the most important rules of warfare is to know your opponent. Whoever they wanted to kill was a lupide or a kitsune!"

n oi "...maybe we are thinking about this the wrong way. Nothing in the researcher's audio log suggested that the creatures who attacked him were fish-like."

n hmm "This is going out on a limb, but what if the Raltins arrived after the scientists. They could have killed the researchers and stolen their data. That would explain why we can't find any information."

n "The last researcher managed to escape with the weapon with the imperials in pursuit."

n "Our friendly little fishies were meant to prevent us from following them any further. They knew we were coming and made a move to stop us."

n htp "But how could they jam our attempts of understanding... if they didn't know we were coming?"

z "They knew?"

n irate "The spy... the spy on-board has been forwarding all of our information to allow the Raltins the chance to beat us to the punch."

n htp "I need to talk to Faye before our insidious foe can get to her! She knows something! Something so important that it was worth making sure she died on the planet instead of me."

z protest "Who would try to kill Faye? Faye's harmless! What sort of sick mind would attack the innocent?"

n "Someone who knew our coordinates, who had direct access to my lab at one point, who has never had an alibi, who could bait Faye into a trap."

z "But the only person who fits all of those conditions is Kika. She wouldn't try to kill her friend."

n irate "Would she? Pride can make people do terribly stupid things."

z confused "Don't you believe Kika?"

n "It's my job to question assumptions until I can determine the truth."

z sad "You must lead a really sad life, huh?"

nar "Sad... I guess it is a little sad. Trust is a commodity that I can't afford to have if I want to find the truth. Trust is something I can't have."

nar "I never thought about it like that. I always thought I would be fighting the legions of evil across the galaxy, finding the villains and thwarting them with ease."

nar "I never thought I'd have to think ill about heartbroken kitsunes who lost their parents. I never thought I'd look suspiciously at a man who ran every day with me to improve my fitness scores."

z smiles "Hey... I'm there for you. Don't look so sad."

n sad "I'm... not sad."

z sad "Okay, but if you are, you can always talk to me. I might not understand everything, but I can

always be there to give you a sympathetic shoulder."

n smile "It's nice to know. Let's get you back to your room before the commander starts asking."

z cheery "Yell if you need me. No door will stop me from helping you thwart the true culprit."

n laugh "Thanks, Zuri."

nar "Her soft green eyes twinkle with happiness and I can feel a little bubble of joy bloom in my heart. Knowing I have someone supporting me, even if she's got crazy misconceptions of honor and pride, gives me hope."

nar "If I can find the culprit, find the researcher and his weapon, stop everything, nobody will need to suspect her anymore."

nar "It's weird... I'm considering Zuri's happiness more important of a priority than my promotion. I must be feeling sick or too tired to evaluate the situation better."

nar "Still, I like this warm, fuzzy feeling in my heart."

stop music fadeout 4.0

jump solAndFaye1

label solAndFaye1:

scene bg 02 with fade

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "Posting guard over the entrance to the auxiliary lab where Stan resides is a vigilant Sol. His eyes are sharp, but his gaze seems to be staring at something more than the metallic door of the lab."

show sol grumpy at center

n smile "How is she doing?"

s "The dog or the housecat?"

n irate "..."

s "Kika says she's fine, but you can see it in her eyes. The cat is skiddish, jumping at every little noise, and barely focusing on her instruments. Al had to take over."

n hmm "Do you think she knew?"

s "That she was walking into a hive of dangerous creatures or that she was going to get her best friend nearly killed?"

n "Both."

show sol regret

nar "Sol gives me a sad look of understanding. Does he know of my suspicions? Does he know of that foul job I must perform?"

s "If she did, those tears are rather convincing."

n huh "Kika? Crying?"

s smile "Strange, right? It turns out the little kitten can mew loudly when she thinks nobody is around."

n irate "Don't look so happy at her sorrow."

s "Sorry, I just like seeing the hero knocked down a peg."

n angry "You're a monster."

s regret "If you knew her like I did, you'd be happy to see that she has a humble side."

n "Is that why you are here? So you could rejoice in the pain of that mutt you hate so much."

s annoyed "..."

n yare "How is she doing? Do you care?"

s "She woke up for a couple minutes, screaming in pain and terror, crying for someone to make it stop before she passed out again."

s regret "The bastard ran a test to try and find what she had been poisoned with, but couldn't come up with anything."

n huh "What?"

s "That's what I said. I swear that thing's medical license has to be from some dinky backwater university. He was having trouble just trying to patch up the cuts."

n "Did he say there was anything strange about them?"

s "The cuts themselves? No. I'm telling you, Natalie, that colonel is an absolutely worthless doctor."

nar "Worthless or something far worse?"

s "In the end I had to force him to use 'his precious resources' to try and test known antidotes for a cure. At the threat of reporting his undocumented cupboards, he finally found one."

s sad "She's still unconscious though. The 'doctor' says she is currently in a coma induced by the chemicals and isn't responding to outside stimuli."

n hmm "So if I wanted to ask her a question...?"

s "I'm not sure when, if ever, you'll be able to talk with her."

nar "That is not reassuring. What am I going to do...? Find the culprit, I suppose."

n htp "Why are you here? You hate Faye."

s regret "...clearly not strong enough."

n huh "What does that mean?"

s "I don't trust him. I don't trust that bastard and I don't want him left alone with my dog."

n irate "She's not a dog and she's not yours."

s "Fine. My wolf."

n "Not better."

s "When Lenna left me, all I was left with was my memories and our dog. Forgive me if I want to protect something precious to me."

n angry "Faye, the girl I hear you call a mutt on a daily basis, the woman who you treat like garbage, is precious to you? You have a strange way of showing it."

s sad "You should head to bed. You're still spun-up over what happened out there."

n "I guess it's my turn to yell 'whatever' and storm off."

s "I'm sorry about that. I'm just stressed out about my family. I've lost too many people important to me, I don't want to lose more to something I could prevent."

n huh "..."

n sad "I understand, Sol. We're both tired. There's a lot more in play here than a radar station in the middle of nowhere or a battle between two squadrons of starfighters."

s "But it's not right. I don't want to hurt my only friend here. I don't care if the rest of them hate me, that's just part of my job. But you..."

n doori "Just... try to be nicer to them. If you could, my job would be easier, you'd be happier, and we'd both not be a hair away from snapping."

s regret "I'll try, but no promises."

n "I'll try to thank you, but no promises."

s smile "Hah hah. Good night, Natalie."

n smile "Don't stay here all-night."

s "I'll stay as long as I'm needed."

hide sol

nar "He slips back into a resting position, leaning against the wall parallel to the door. Knowing him, he won't be leaving that spot until Faye gets better."

nar "Sol never once asked about my suspicions, never tried to pry information from me. He told me all of his thoughts and concerns about Colonel Nelson being suspicious, but asked for nothing in return."

nar "I want to trust him. For now, I will. I will give my old friend the benefit of the doubt. I don't want to keep being angry at him."

nar "But the way he wants to protect Faye... Actions speak louder than words. I think I'll trust him to watch over her. He says such mean things about her, but then he does something like this."

nar "Bleh... why doesn't he just be honest with himself. Either he hates or he likes her. Clean and

simple. Why can't things be clean and simple...?"

nar "Stan Nelson... hiding medicine, not knowing the basics of medicine, being unable to correctly identify the chemical agent... is he a colonel who just doesn't really practice medicine much or something more sinister?"

nar "I didn't even give Kylie much thought until now. What is she bringing on this ship that we don't know about? I should have been more concerned when Sol mentioned getting those Quin steaks."

nar "My eyelids feel heavy. Today has been far too long..."

scene bg black with fade

jump kikaDebrief

label kikaDebrief:

scene bg 05 with fade

nar "Bed... bed... I try to keep my mind focused on it so the rampaging demons of my mind don't consume me right now."

nar "I almost pull myself into the embrace of my warm sheets, but quiet sobbing pulls me from my focus."

n huh "Kika?"

nar "In almost a heartbeat, the sobbing stops. The mask of the hero is pulled back on and Kika drops down from her top bunk."

show kika sad at center

kk "...oh. Hey."

kk "What are you doing here? I thought you'd be up thinking about the recording."

n "I could ask you the same question. I thought you were on the bridge doing the navigation."

kk "Rasoonna threw me out. She seems to think that I'm not emotionally stable enough right now to do basic navigation into uncharted space. Please!"

n sad "Are you?"

kk tsun "Of course I am! Why bother asking such a stupid question?"

n "Are you?"

kk sad "...Yeah. I'm just fine. I wasn't the one who was attacked after all."

kk "How's wolfie doing? For someone who spends most of her time on uncharted planets, I'm sure she's just fine! I doubt this was the first time she's been attacked by monsters."

nar "I don't have the heart to tell her that Faye was poisoned... then again, she may already know."

n "She's sleeping right now. Doctor Nelson is doing his best to patch her up, good as new."

kk fufufu "I knew it. That's why I chose her to be my minion! I wouldn't choose someone who was a weakling."

n yare "You have others?"

kk "Of course, but she's the only one who had orders with me. Blade had to stay behind. Serves him right for not working harder!"

kk "I still would have liked to send him a message before we made the shift to deep space. We won't be able to communicate out there."

n smile "It sounds like you miss him."

kk embarrassed "I don't miss him, idiot! I just wanted to make sure that he was taking care of himself. He's a mess without me watching over him."

n "Are you sure you aren't the one who is a mess without him?"

kk "..."

kk fufufu "No. I'm just fine. Things are tough right now, but I'm tougher."

kk sad "..."

kk "Are you sure she's okay?"

n laugh "Why don't you go down there and check? Sol is down there now."

kk "Hmph. Now you've got me worried again."

n "Worried about your friend?"

kk please "I'm not worried about anything! I'm just concerned that my minion is not getting the same care that I would be afforded."

nar "By either a sub-par doctor or a secret smuggler? You've got low standards for yourself, lieutenant."

kk sad "..."

nar "Try as she might, that mask just can't seem to stay up. Kika's hurt emotionally just like Faye was mauled physically. If I let my heart decide, I would exonerate Kika right now."

nar "But I have to maintain my suspicion while the evidence points to her. I can't just let my emotions blind me."

nar "...maybe, just for tonight, I can let everyone be innocent and be the trusting comrade Kika needs."

nar "As I pull myself into my bed, the words on my heart finally let themselves be heard."

n smile "Don't worry, Kika. We'll find the artifact and go home heroes. Everyone will cheer for us and nobody will need to be sad or in pain anymore."

kk "Right. That's the only logical outcome after all. Well, I'm going to bed. I'm going to need to be in

top form tomorrow!"

n "Good night."

nar "Good night, and good luck to us all."

stop music fadeout 3.0

jump natalieBirthday

label natalieBirthday:

scene bg 01 with fade

nar "I can't help but stare out the window, my thoughts lost in space."

nar "I'm letting my heart and hopes get blended into the mission. Each day that passes, I'm letting myself care about more than just the results."

nar "It's scaring me."

nar "They said that Faye is still sleeping twenty three hours a day. Sol jokes that her sleeping every waking minute of the day is nothing new, but it hurts me to think I may have been responsible."

nar "A SITO shouldn't let herself care about the people in the case. If something like this happens, I'm supposed to just brush it aside and keep working."

nar "But out here, in the depths of space, my armor has been stripped away. My soul faces reality and the questions of my actions are starting to mount up."

nar "There's only one time-tested thing I can do to recover from this decent into darkness! Time for some Marino's Quest!"

nar "I reach for my datapad, but the familiar weight on my hip isn' there. That's right... the crook smashed it. The criminal who escapes my grasp."

nar "I guess... I can just keep staring out into space..."

nar "Even now, as my mind slips further into insanity, the tune of the greatest game in all of history plays through my mind. I can hear its melody, so calming and relaxing."

nar "Wait... This may be eroding my sanity, but I'm pretty confident that the music is playing in more than just my head. It is permeating around the bridge."

nar "The only person on the bridge is Kika, who has been huddled over her station for a while now."

if (gameQuestion>1):

nar "Now that I think about it, Sol mentioned something about Kika being an avid gamer during my questioning session with the commander. I never got a chance to talk with her about it."

nar "No time better than now to get my hands on some games!"

else:

nar "What's the likelihood that the princess likes playing electronic games? It doesn't seem like it would be her style to play 'fake' games."

nar "Still, there's no harm in asking."

n "Hey, Kika?"

kk "W-w-w-w-what? I didn't do anything, nobody saw me do anything! You can't prove anything!"

n "Relax, I just wanted to ask if that was Marino's Quest you were playing?"

kk "Who said I was playing anything? That was the sound of my navigation equipment! It sounds musical to the untrained ear."

n "You're on the spider boss."

kk "...alright, what's your price?"

n "My price?"

kk "Not to rat me out. Rasoona always makes me do push-ups, Sol yells at me for a few minutes, and Al makes me cover a shift of his. What's your price?"

n "That's called punishment."

kk "Call it what you will. What's the price?"

n "Can I play with you?"

kk "No. Nobody plays on my save file."

n "...I understand. I'd do the same thing in your shoes."

kk "But, just for today, I will let you watch me."

nar "I'm about to tell her where she can stick that boring idea when I remember there's an enemy agent running around. Getting close to one of the suspects might help me."

n "Fine. I'll settle."

nar "I walk over to where Kika is sheltering her datapad. Sure enough, there is Marino's Quest staring back at me."

n "I hate the spider boss."

kk "You and me both. At least it is better than the flying fish boss."

n "Flying fish boss? I don't remember that one."

kk "Sure you do. We had to fight it just a couple days ago."

nar "I stifle a laugh."

n "We should have leveled up outside first."

kk "Maybe if you would have shared the strategy guide with the rest of us, things would have gone better."

n "We did the best we could with what we had."

kk "Whatever. Stop distracting me."

nar "Not wishing to continue a pointless argument, I fall silent and commit to just watching her play my game."

nar "Kika isn't bad at the game, her finger movements are deft and her strategies are precise. However, her fighting style is driving me crazy within seconds."

n "You know you could just use Fire Blast Two instead of wasting all of your ability power on spamming fireballs."

kk "Yes, but this takes care of the little spiderlings as well."

n "They aren't your biggest concern. You need to burn the boss off before it tries to use Websling."

kk "I know that! I like this plan better."

n "But Fire Blast Two has splash damage as well."

kk "Not nearly big enough!"

n "It is if you hit it just right."

kk "My accuracy is fine, thank you!"

n "You're wasting your potions!"

kk "I have plenty! See? This is why I can't go home! You know nothing about good tactics!"

n "Yours are wasteful!"

s "It's just a game."

kk "Stop saying that!"

n "You just don't understand, Sol."

s "I understand that Lieutenant Starr is playing games on her watch again."

kk "I think I'd rather pay Sol's price than Miss Chatty's."

s "As much as I'd love reminding you again and again about your job while on-duty, I'm only here to get Natalie."

n "What's wrong? Is it Faye?"

s "No, you haven't had anything to eat in two days."

n "Has it really been that long?"

s "Come on, Natalie."

n "Alright, Sol, alright. Kika, consider what I said about the Fire Blast Two."

kk "No."

nar "Some people are hopeless when it comes to the best ways to win games..."

scene bg black with fade

jump introAct2

label introAct2:

scene bg black with fade

play music "Music/ms17.ogg" fadein 5.0

nar "My thoughts drift to a quote that has stuck with me from a young age."

nar "It is only a step from boredom to disillusionment, which leads naturally to self-pity, which in turn ends in chaos."

nar "Despite our sense of urgency, our trails after the elusive ship and any potential pursuers have again been thwarted by several red herring ion trails."

nar "I fear that boredom and a feeling of being downtrodden is taking hold through the crew. I wish I did not secretly agree with them."

nar "How could I best explain the past few days? We'd drop in, find absolutely nothing, and have to return to our starting point to try again. Our choices in this maze have lead us nowhere other than empty tracts of the void."

scene bg 04 with fade

show kika annoyed at innerRight

show alphonse serious at allLeft behind kika

nar "Our food seems to be disappearing faster than we estimated. Everything from our oxygen scrubbers to our engines seem to be on the fritz. Kylie looks worse and worse by the hour."

nar "The commander seems to be holding strong, thankfully. She isn't allowing us to abandon our search just yet. Everyone else, however..."

kk "This is stupid!"

e "You've said that for the fifteenth time this meal, Kika."

kk "Meal? This is rice with soy sauce! That's no meal! That's borderline starvation!"

n smile "At least it is still two solid meals a day."

nar "Even though it isn't very tasty, at least it is filling. More filling than this blind search in the dark."

nar "All I've been able to do lately is look for clues that might tip me off to who is working against me on this ship. Word seems to have spread that I'm on the watch, however, and they seem content to just lie in wait."

nar "Urgggggghhhh..."

kk "I think we have two very different ideas of what constitutes a meal."

e "It has to last. Otherwise we won't be eating anything."

kk "That's the point I'm arguing! Geez, open your ears! We don't need to be out here!"

n irate "What would you suggest we do? Just let the Empire get their hands on the weapon?"

kk "First off, we don't even know if there really is a weapon! What proof is there other than the ramblings from some datapad we found? They could have left that there to derail us!"

n "My initial briefing said there was an important artifact out there."

kk "Right. Intelligence has never been wrong before!"

n "I don't like that attitude."

kk "And I don't like this whole situation. My second point is why us? Why don't we just go back and get more help? If this thing exists and is such a threat, we should be gathering as much help as possible!"

n "There is no time."

kk "Oh, but there is plenty of time to chase our tails blindly!"

show kika annoyed at center with move

show sol annoyed at solRight

s "Some of us don't have tails to chase."

kk please "You know what I mean!"

n smile "Good morning, Sol."

s "Morning. Lieutenant Starr, you've been ordered to complete this mission. That should be enough."

kk thinking "And if I think my life is worth a little bit more?"

s grumpy "Then you are in the wrong profession. It's no place for a timid housecat."

kk "Geh..."

e "What brings you here this morning, Sol? Not just to torment poor Kika, I hope."

s angry2 "I'm getting some food for Faye. The doctor couldn't be bothered to provide to his patient."

e "Because she shouldn't be eating solid food yet."

s "Because he's a lazy good-for-nothing."

n hmm "How is she doing? Asking for solid food is a good sign."

s regret "She's still not ready for the interrogation I think you have planned."

n huh "Who said anything about an interrogation?"

s "I know you too well."

kk angry "You better not be trying to grill my minion!"

n hmm "I'll do what my job demands of me."

s "Sorry, Natalie, but I have to agree with Kika on this one. When she isn't sleeping most of the day is when you can ask your questions."

n "So... never?"

kk excited "Pretty much."

n sigh "I might as well go bring Zuri her breakfast. You all are depressing me."

kk "The truth sucks. That's why we should just accept it and go home."

s irritated "Abandoning your duty in the moment of need? And I was starting to think better of you."

kk smirk "Hmph. I'm going with you to visit my minion."

s "Fine. If it stops your mindless babble, you can come along."

kk "It's not mindless. You both just don't understand the necessities of going home."

s "You're just as big of a pig as Faye."

kk annoyed "..."

s "Come on."

hide kika

hide sol

show alphonse smile at center with move

n smile "Want to come with me, Alphonse? I think Zuri would like the company."

e "Thank you for your kind offer, but I visited her when I woke up. I gathered the impression that she wanted to spend some time alone with you."

n "Oh? What for?"

e wink "She has something she wants to show you. It's quite special to her."

n hmm "Is it something that can tie up some of these loose threads?"

e "No, but I think you will enjoy it just the same."

n smile "I might as well. Listening to everyone complain about how this is a waste of time is eating at my patience. Sol might have no problem breaking it out, but I would rather not play the rank card over the devotion to duty one."

e laugh "Once we find it, I'm sure Kika's tune will change. She's just trying to hide her sorrow right now and venting her frustrations on the mission is the easiest way for her."

n sigh "At the cost of driving me crazy..."

nar "Alphonse laughs at my sorrow, but I don't hold it against him. This whole operation is feeling like a joke right now. The blind leading the blind through a minefield..."

nar "I hope Zuri has something pleasant to get my mind off of this nightmare...."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black with fade

jump zuriFamily

label zuriFamily:

scene bg 05 with fade

n smile "Hey, Zuri! I'm here with lunch... breakfast... brunch... whatever time of the day it is."

nar "I hold back for a second, to make sure no flying moves are about to remove my head from my shoulders. Once my safety measures ensure a clear field to enter, I step in."

nar "Curled on the bed with her tail wrapping around her is my friendly dreamon. A sad smile tugs at her lips as she stares at her datapad forlornly."

n htp "Is something wrong? I can stop back later."

nar "She pulls herself up, patting the spot on the bed next to her."

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

show zuri sad at center

z "I was looking at some old pictures of when I was still a wildling."

n "A what?"

z smiles "When we aren't really hatchlings anymore, but not quite old enough to join society and be named, a dreamon is considered to be a wildling."

n hmm "I've been meaning to ask you about that. Is your first and last name both Zuri?"

z "Nope. Zuri is Zuri."

n "You only have one name? That sounds like it could be confusing."

z "Not at all. When we become adults, we are given a name that is ours and ours alone. I'm the one and only Zuri."

n "You must have a very small population."

z "We are a lot older and less spawnny than humans, that's for sure."

n happy "I can't help it that my species are a bunch of rabbits."

z confused "Huh?"

n huh "Small mammals that breed incredibly quickly. Small, fluffy, cute?"

z "Nope. Doesn't ring a bell."

n smile "I guess it doesn't matter much. The point is that humans breed quickly in the grand scheme of things and there are a lot of us out there."

z happy "You all are weird. Anyway, I wanted to show you some of the pictures I found."

nar "She hands me her datapad. It's almost remarkable the amount of scuffing on the screen, the dings in the case, and the way the screen seems to flicker."

n doori "Zuri, this datapad is ancient. Where did you find it?"

z cheery "I found it in a bush when I was wandering through a trader camp years ago. Negiz fixed it up and got it working for me. He's that one!"

nar "She changes the image to a scrawny dreamon with thick, dark blue hair and a thick, stubby tail. His gaze seems to be staring past the camera, even though he is looking straight at it."

z sad "Negiz was always really good at making broken things work. He'd tinker with any sort of abandoned electronics he found. I suppose it was fate."

n huh "What was?"

z "Someone had wired a bomb inside a supply crate of food we found. He barely had time to scream for everyone to run before it went off."

n angry "That's awful! Who would do something like that?"

z complain "Warlords thought it was a fun game to play. It was rather common and we were usually careful, but we hadn't had anything to eat in days. If Negiz hadn't talked us out of it, we all would have died when we went for it."

n "This sounds like horrible child rearing. No guiding authority, no protection, no education..."

z serious "But we are a lot tougher and determined for it. Those who can't survive, don't. It's sad, it's depressing, but it is our traditions."

n sigh "..."

z uneasy "It's not like it was all bad. You learn a lot about trading, survival, and working as a team. Even when my stomach was growling, the others were there to help me carry on."

z happy "Here it is! This is the only one that has most of our clutch in it."

nar "A group of five dreamon crowd together in a picture taken in beautiful grassy hills. All but the one I think is Negiz are barely half my height."

nar "They look... happy. Their clothes are rugged leather, their faces are covered in dirt and grime, the diminished amount of food evident in their bodies, but all of them share the same hopeful smile I see on Zuri's face today."

z "That's Eiril. He was our clutch's fighter. Whenever we were in danger, he would fling himself head first into it. Eiril caused us a lot of problems, but there never was a truer friend."

nar "She points to the smallest of the group, a fiery redhead with a body marred with scars and bits of his tail and broad wings missing. Even from the picture, I can see the energy and fight pouring from him."

n huh "What happened to his ear?"

z "Funny story about that one, but I promised him I'd never tell it again. He's now a diplomat to the Ryu'llian Republic. I still can't picture him wearing anything other than that tunic."

z "In the back with the pale green hair is Jedion. He rarely spoke much, but he always seemed to have the right words to defuse a situation. Jedion was our diplomat, not Eiril."

z smiles "He used to make these really yummy wheat biscuits. Jedion didn't make them very often, but he always made me one to celebrate our hatching day."

n "Used to?"

z defeated "He disappeared a few weeks after this was taken. Jedion had a contact who used to trade us wheat for scrap we'd find in old ruins. One day he went to make the trade and never came back."

n smile "I'm sure he's still out there somewhere."

z "I like to think so. This was during a time when there was a fashion on Celestia for bags made from the wings of dreamons, so... we suspected..."

z sad "I'm sure he's fine. Maybe he got kidnapped by a slave trader or something."

n laugh "Y-y-yeah. I'm sure he's still out there, thinking about his friends."

nar "What am I supposed to say other than weak platitudes? Realistically, he probably was killed to make some snobby rich lady a nice handbag, disgusting as that thought is. What sort of jerk would I be to say that?"

z smiles "Can you guess who this is?"

n happy "Kylie?"

z happy "Nope. I might have been small, but I wasn't that small."

nar "Guessing Kylie would be a better guess than Zuri. The girl in the picture doesn't strike me as the Zuri I know today."

nar "For starters, her stature really is smaller than Kylie. Her tail is thin and whip-like. Zuri's cropped hair is much longer, falling almost to her knees. I can count the number of ribs in her chest, so prominent they stick out."

nar "But the strangest thing of all is that she looks so... meek. Timid. She's clutching to a taller girl with long golden hair and air of grace and nobility. Zuri, on the other hand, looks like a scared mouse."

z "What do you think? I was cute, right?"

n "You look so... so..."

z "Weak."

n "I was thinking timid and meek. Little Zuri is adorable though."

z complain "She was happy, but absolutely worthless."

n hmm "I don't know what part of that sentence worries me more. Aren't you happy?"

z "If I could get out of this cramped room again, I'd be a lot happier."

n htp "I'll go yell at the commander again. What else?"

z "...when I picked up the mantle of being a warrior, I realized that the universe isn't as black and white as I thought it would be. Good and evil are hard to distinguish sometimes. I worry if we are doing the right thing."

z "I'm not unhappy, I'm just... confused."

z "...I want to go home."

n sad "Not you as well..."

z sad "It took a lot of courage for me to finally admit that. I've been thinking about it since we got back from the camp."

z "I'm... proud that I was able to say it. Little Zuri there would never have had the courage to admit it. She'd just have cowered and had to be pulled along."

n "Why? You know we have to do this."

z thinking "It's just something I feel in my gut. It's telling me that we should just go home now and forget about this."

nar "Kika gave me the logical standpoint, Zuri is giving me the spiritual side of it. This is going to be dangerous, I feel it. I'm putting the lives of this crew into hardship and risk."

nar "But there is no way I'm letting this mystery go unsolved. If this device turns out to be a superweapon, then it will be worth it. The lives of a few versus the lives of entire worlds."

nar "If it isn't, if this is a wild goose chase..."

n doori "We have to do this. It's our duty to do whatever we can to protect the innocent people of the Katajion Directorship from any and all threats to their safety."

n "I'm a little unsure of myself, to be honest, but I am sure of that. When I was commissioned, I swore to protect the citizens of my homeland and the troops under my command."

n sad "I've got a bad feeling about this as well, but that doesn't mean I can shirk my duty in our hour of need."

z sad "..."

n "I'll need you there with me, Zuri. I can't do this without you."

z "Don't lie. You could do this without me."

n laugh "No. I need you because..."

menu:

"You're my security officer.":

\$answeredSecurityOfficer=True

n "Who'd protect me if you weren't there? I need my security officer!"

show zuri happy

nar "For a moment, Zuri's face lights up like the twin suns of Azora."

nar "But, like the entrance of the night, it fades away."

"You're my partner.":

n "Because we are friends. We're in this together, thick or thin."

nar "But my effort to cheer her up falls flat. Try as I might, Zuri seems to have lost that flicker of happiness."

z "You sound just like her."

nar "Even though she doesn't say it, her eyes tell me who she's talking about. Zuri's emerald green eyes are dim as she goes back to staring at the picture."

n hmm "Who was she?"

z sad "Akurel. She was our leader. She was the most important person in my life. She made me happy and whole..."

nar "I want to ask more to help me understand Zuri's past a little more, but the hurt in her eyes wards me away. No, what Zuri needs now isn't an interrogator, but someone to just be there for her."

nar "The food is growing cold, but we don't move for it. Minutes tick by as Zuri fights tears and sniffles."

z "I miss her."

n smile "Tell me about her."

z "You would have liked her. Definitely liked her more than me. Where I was useless and weak, she was steadfast and strong. With her protecting me, I always felt safe."

z "I was so weak. So pitiful. Monsters would come for us and all I could ever do was hide. She and Eiril would go out there and beat them to a pulp. She would make the bandits leave us alone."

z defeated "Once I got kidnapped by a bunch of slavers. They threw me into this small cage where I couldn't even see the light. I thought I was going to die in that hell until I saw the sun and her face again."

z "She was a true warrior when I was nothing but a burden. I was so stupid... I was happy with it."

n "You weren't worthless."

z "All I could do was patch up our stuff and... she loved my flute. Every night, she'd always have me play songs on it for everyone. It made the night not feel quite so long or dark."

z sad "I'd see her beautiful smile and cheery laugh, and I really thought that I was helping everyone. I thought I..."

n htp "What happened?"

z "...I got her killed."

n sad "Zuri... I'm so sorry."

z "If I wouldn't have been such a coward, if I would have stopped and stayed with her..."

n "You don't know that? What happened?"

z "I was gathering berries one day when I stumbled into a pack of these flesh-eating spiders. I screamed for help and she came running. If I would have just kept my big mouth shut..."

z "She told me to run, to let her fight and protect them from me... and I let her. I just ran away because I couldn't do anything."

z angry "Never again. I'm never going to run away again when somebody needs help. That's why... I'm staying here, even though I want to run."

if (answeredSecurityOfficer):

z smiles "Like you said, I'm your security officer. I have a purpose! I have something I have to protect. I'm not running away again!"

else:

z "You might be my friend, but I have more than just you to protect. Everyone on this ship needs my protection, just like Akurel always fought for the well-being of our clutch."

n htp "Zuri, your music didn't kill her. Not being a 'real warrior' didn't kill her. She died trying to protect you."

z sad "I knew you wouldn't understand."

n "Because it is absolutely bonkers."

z thinking "You're bonkers."

nar "Her best friend... I can't imagine the amount of pain and loss that Zuri went through. Akurel was her sister, if not in blood but in name."

nar "Still, that's no reason for her to blame herself for what was essentially an accident. Akurel cared for Zuri as much as Zuri cared for Akurel. I wouldn't let my family die if I could have protected them."

nar "But Zuri can't see that..."

nar "Maybe I can't see that either. If we don't find something soon, there might be nothing left of my family. I need to find this stupid researcher ship!"

n smile "Let's agree that we are both crazy. Do you have any other pictures?"

z smiles "Sure. There's an amazing one I took of the Emerald City in here somewhere."

nar "Zuri flips through pictures of her homeworld without a second of nostalgia. I can't blame her, the dry world seems pretty bland."

nar "One picture of what I think is a ruined wall catches my eye."

stop music fadeout 5.0

n "What's that one?"

z confused "I dunno. Grafitti of some sort. Who knows, who cares?"

nar "The glowing blue scribbles look really familiar though... as does the person standing beside it. He's not a dreamon... he looks more like a human researcher..."

z "I don't remember taking this one. Negiz must have, he always liked to take those weird scenery pictures."

play music "Music/ms03.ogg" fadein 3.0

n huh "No, I don't think so! Zuri, when we were breaking out that undergraduate's datapad, did we see a picture that looked just like this? Those markings look like the runes."

z surprised "...hey wait! You gave me this picture! Remember, remember, remember?! You were clutching yours so tight that I couldn't see it, so you gave me a copy!"

n angry "I did, didn't I?! To the lab!"

z "Ummmm... I'm still-"

n "Make copies of that picture then! I'm going to get Rasoono to let you out of this cage!"

z cheery "No... take it. You need to get cracking on this now."

n sigh "You're right. But..."

z "I think I'm done reminiscing for now. As long as you bail me out after you're done, you can borrow it."

n doori "Nothing bad is going to happen to this one. I give you my word!"

z happy "That's good enough for me. Now go! Shoo!"

n "And Zuri? Let's keep this a secret for now."

z smiles "...alright."

nar "I'm not going to risk my adversary getting a step ahead of me. I am once again in the lead of this operation! I have the truth in my hands!"

nar "But as I walk out, I can see that forlorn look return to Zuri's face. I'm going to get her out of this cage. She might want to protect others, but I do as well."

scene bg black with fade

jump confrontKika

label confrontKika:

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "I can't believe it! I can't believe I got my clue back! Maybe not all of them, but at least I have something to validate my existence!"

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 4.0

nar "Hmmm...? My lab door is unlocked... again. Now I'm positive I locked it last night. Well, well, well... My clue given back to me and the culprit returning to the scene of the crime. Today is a good day."

scene bg 03 with fade

n yare "Ah-hah! I caught you!"

show kika annoyed at center

kk "Could you not yell so loudly? I can hear you perfectly fine without the volume increase."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

n "Kika... I should have known."

kk "Perhaps because we've met before and I've told you my name? What's wrong with you?"

n "What's wrong with me? How did you get into my lab?"

kk "The door?"

n angry "Was it unlocked when you got here?"

kk "No."

n yare "So you broke into my lab? Is that a question that you can answer without an attitude?"

kk excited "This is why we need to go home. Rice isn't good for your temperament."

n angry "You are going to explain how you unlocked my door and what the hell you are doing in here! I want an answer now."

kk "Not in a week? You seem perfectly content with making us wait with no information for that long."

nar "She's dodging my questions left and right. Still, she can't leave this lab without getting past me. I will get my answers."

kk fufufu "Whatever, spy. I've got what I wanted anyway."

n yare "And whatever it is isn't leaving here."

kk "Unless you can pry my brain out, too bad. I wanted the truth for myself and I found it."

n "..."

kk please "You're not seriously going to pry my brain out. That's murder, in case you forgot, idiot."

n "...where is the recording?"

kk smirk "Your precious recording is on the table. I didn't break it like Zuri did."

n angry "Zuri didn't break anything. Someone else did."

kk "Of course Zuri broke it! Stop lying to yourself, the evidence all points to her!"

kk surprised "Oh, is that it? You think I broke it?"

n "You broke into my lab and are avoiding simple inquiries about your methods and your purpose.

Yeah, I'm a tad bit suspicious."

kk annoyed "I don't have to explain myself to you."

n "Yes, you do."

kk angry "Fine then. I knew you have been holding information from us, like the real wording of that recording. I came in here to do a little investigating of my own."

n "Without my permission."

kk "Duh, you idiot. Really? Why would I ask permission from the person I suspect is hiding critical details?"

n "Because those details are above your clearance. If I choose not to share them, that's my prerogative."

kk "That's how you kill people. I bet you knew about those monsters in the sand!"

n yare "You've crossed the line, lieutenant! Do you think I'd put you all in danger without a proper warning?"

kk "You SITO's are all alike. Father used to tell me stories about corruption in your organization. I'm starting to see you are the same."

nar "My temper is flaring and I can see the reprimand paperwork in my mind. To think I felt bad for the girl just a few days ago."

n "Your hunger is getting the better of you. Start minding your-"

kk "What does it matter? You're going to kill us. You almost killed Faye and you haven't shown a single bit of remorse."

n irate "How was I supposed to know that we were walking into a pack of sand piranhas?"

kk "By doing your job."

n "I did my job!"

kk smirk "I'm sure you did. With these clues, I'm starting to see what your job really is."

n yare "..."

kk excited "What are you going to do when we find this thing? Are you going to just hand it over or

are you going to use it? Are you going to keep it for your own purposes?"

n irate "..."

kk smirk "Nothing to defend yourself?"

n "I'm trying to understand how you could possibly be this dense! I've been honest since the start!

You haven't bothered telling me what I want to know!"

kk "It sucks when the shoe is on the other foot, doesn't it?"

n "Except I can have you court-martialed for disrupting my operations."

kk "For keeping the rest of the crew informed of what you are doing?"

n angry "Just because the commander chooses not to share my reports with you doesn't mean I'm trying to kill anyone!"

kk annoyed "Whatever. Fine. Court-marshal me, major."

n huh "W-w-what?"

kk "Go ahead. Do it."

n "Are you trying to challenge me?"

kk smirk "Yep. Do it."

nar "Why can't she just go ahead and apologize for her disrespect? Why does she want to make this a fight? I caught her breaking into my lab. End of story."

nar "If she thinks I'm unafraid to bring any sort of secret into the light, Lieutenant Starr is sorely mistaken! There is nothing!"

nar "I'll take her back and have her stripped of her rank... wait..."

n irate "Nice try. We're not going home."

kk surprised "..."

kk smirk "You're not as dumb as you look."

n "Why are you so bent on ending our search for a potentially world-destroying artifact? Do you not care?"

kk angry "I care a helluva lot more than you do, which is why I want to leave the stupid thing lost. That researcher is clearly trying to lose it in uncharted space, why don't we let him?"

n angry "Do you think someone else is going to get it for us?"

kk "Yeah! The voids of space!"

nar "My blood is boiling. She deserves to be locked up in a room, far away from a place where she could interfere with my operation. This delinquency is inexcusable!"

kk "Oh, and Idiotly?"

hide kika with hpunch

kk angry "Kylie let me in. Everyone wants to know the truth you're hiding from us."

nar "Kylie... let her in? But why? She doesn't strike me as the type who would wantonly break rules. Unprofessional, but clean and squeaky. Sol supports her..."

st "My dear, you mustn't let the curious lieutenant bother you so."

play music "Music/ms10.ogg" fadein 4.0

show stan sly at center

show kylie smile at innerRight

n irate "Oh, Colonel Nelson. Can I help you with something?"

st "I would like to extend my hand to you, if you wouldn't mind."

k "W-w-w-we would..."

st "That's right. We would."

n "I think I've had enough of the flight officer's help. Officer Migi, did you illegally grant Lieutenant Starr access to my lab?"

k scared "..."

n yare "I need an answer."

nar "Try as I might, I just can't keep the bitterness out of my tone. This operation didn't need any more wrenches chucked in."

st laugh "It's alright, little one. Just tell her exactly what you told me."

k "..."

st "Now, now. You must be brave or you will be the one who is punished."

k sad "Kika forced me. She threatened to hurt me if I didn't help her."

nar "That's not conduct of a self-proclaimed hero. That's sick and disgusting."

n "What about when my datapad got destroyed? Did you let her in then as well?"

k "...mhhh."

nar "I rack my brain for some evidence to counter this statement. It seems legitimate from the trembling hands and frightened bunny rabbit look, but it seems too convenient."

nar "Kika had no alibi for the first event. Her sour attitude and clear attempts at forcing an early termination to this mission don't do much to clear her name."

nar "Still... Kylie didn't have an alibi either. As enraged at Lieutenant Starr's conduct as I am right, emotions shouldn't convict her. This could be a situation of bad circumstances."

nar "Do I trust the hostile kitsune who just lost her family or the adorable mechanic who has even Sol's support, even though she's under the wing of a corrupted officer?"

n hmm "I'll look into it. There's something suspicious with Kika anyway. I think she may have

known more about the attack in the desert than she is letting on."

show kylie smile

st bored "She did have a very nasty fight with our sweet Faye as soon as Faye woke up."

n huh "Really?"

st smile "Oh, yes. Quite nasty. Their relationship has been strained for a very long time."

nar "Perhaps Faye grew tired of being the kitsune's minion? Faye never seemed too happy with the title; the pale haired lupide always strikes me as more of a lone wolf."

nar "All the more reason I need to talk with Faye. Could Kika be looking to score some revenge? That would be the motive. An unverified one, but a potential motive for working with the Raltins."

nar "But they'd need time to develop a relationship. Whoever laid that trap had to be working closely with the Raltins for a while. That doesn't fit Kika... without some more evidence."

st "Is something the matter?"

n hmm "No... just thinking."

st sly "Perhaps you should take a break. You don't wish to get premature wrinkles in those lovely cheeks of yours, do you?"

k happy "He's right, major! You're really pretty."

n smile "Thanks. You are adorable yourself, Officer Migi."

st "What do you say? We have barely had a chance to talk since your arrival."

nar "While I enjoy his flattery, I have a mission and the chance of a lifetime. I don't know what dark future awaits my clue, so I need to be hasty."

n htp "I'm afraid not. I'm..."

nar "I can't say busy. He'll pry and question what I am up to. If he is the culprit, he'll try to raid my lab. If he isn't, he could spill the beans to my other suspect, Kika."

st "What would you say if I offered you a nice, juicy steak instead of that dry rice you had for dinner? You look quite famished, if you don't mind me saying so."

n huh "You have what?"

st hmm "Surely you grow weary of meager rice and limited amounts of synth food. Would you not care to partake in a real meal with myself and my little friend?"

k "The colonel cooks really good food, Natalie! Join us!"

n "But aren't we rationing food right now? I don't recall seeing anything of the sort on the menu."

st "Of course you wouldn't. We wouldn't have it if it were."

n irate "So you are stealing from ship stores...?"

k surprised "N-n-n-no! They just... never made it onto the inventory sheet."

st sly "Nobody will miss them, except for you if you refuse this generous offer. Come, you could use a good meal."

n "Is this what happened to the medicine Captain Moonfallow needed? It just never made the 'official numbers'?"

st "I don't know what you are talking about, my dear. Little Faye got her medicine and is recovering from that venom."

n hmm "...yeah, the venom."

nar "Don't tip your hand, Natalie. You can't trust him. He's just as suspect as Kika right now. More so, since Kika seems to at least have positive motives."

n sigh "You expect me to turn a blind eye to this in exchange for food?"

st laugh "I expect nothing. I would not offer this to you if I did not think you were an amicable SITO."

n "So it is a bribe? For what?"

st "Bribe is such a nasty word. We just want to be your friend."

k smile "It was my idea. We wanted to spend some time hanging out and thought this would be a good present to break the ice."

st "It's very rude to turn down a gift. Please, won't you join us?"

n "I've got to go visit Faye. I can't stay for a meal."

st sly "That's alright, we brought our gift with us. Kylie?"

stop music fadeout 2.0

nar "Kylie extends a small container full of cubed steak bits. The meat is basted in herbs and what I assume is steak sauce of some kind. My stomach gurgles in anticipation."

nar "But... to accept a bribe... I swore when I started this to be an officer who has morals. I can't swing my stance when my stomach dictates!"

jump cantTake

label cantTake:

nar "I have my pride and honor to think about. Maybe some other SITO would take it, but I'm an officer with a sense of pride in her duty."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

n htp "I must decline this. Theft of government goods, especially when we are rationing, is wrong."

k sad "But-"

n irate "But nothing. If you wanted to give me a gift, you would take what you have and put it in the ship stores. After all of the praises from Sol, I expected better of you."

k "I'm sorry..."

nar "I turn to chew out the colonel for his part in this, but I stop short when I see the icy glare and sick smile on his face. He's a predator ready to strike."

st "I'm sorry, Kylie, my dear."

k "Why?"

st "You intend to report this, don't you, major? Your honor dictates it."

n smile "That's right."

st bored "Then I am very sorry, my compassionate mechanic."

k scared "W-w-w-why?"

st "Because your sweet gift to the major is technically fraud and theft. You've been stealing from the state and smuggling unauthorized goods aboard a military craft."

st "The Katajion Space Force highly frowns upon that, even if you did it with the best intentions."

k "B-b-b-b-b-b-but..."

st "No buts I am afraid. What you have done is highly illegal. When Natalie reports you, you could be looking at years in Maxwell Prison."

k "But everyone was so happy... I was doing good for everyone."

st lazy "I know, my sweet girl, but those who follow the rules do not have compassion for those who would break them even for the best of reasons."

n oi "Best of reasons? Everyone else is suffering."

st "Is everyone? It pains me to say, but I think everyone on this ship has profited from Kylie's smuggling."

n huh "...what are you threatening?"

st lazy "Oh, no threat. I'm just stating that should our young hobban go to jail, others might be investigated as well. I know one person on this ship who loved receiving gifts of Quin steaks from Kylie."

st "This investigation might put more than one person in jail..."

nar "The bastard..."

k "Please... I don't want to go to jail. I just wanted to help people. Everyone was so happy..."

st lazy "They were happy, Kylie. They were."

st sly "And they still can be. Isn't that right, Major Puccile?"

nar "Put the blame on Kylie and send Sol to prison. Do the right thing and put an honest officer in prison for doing nothing more than thinking his quartermaster was on the level."

nar "Sol isn't the only one either. Zuri, Alphonse, and the others..."

n oi "Fine, you bastard. I'll keep quiet."

st smile "Tut tut, that's not a good attitude to have. Here, have some steak to cheer you up."

k "Major..."

st "Don't worry, little one. The major was just overreacting. She's not going to send you to jail and will be happy to have your gift."

k happy "Really?"

n sad "..."

st "Let's get back to our lab. I promised to spend some special time with you."

k "Hehe. Bye!"

hide kylie

hide stan

play music "Music/ms17.ogg" fadein 4.0

nar "I couldn't send Sol to prison... He looks out for me and I look out for him. We are a team. But... I should have. My job means I have to do things like this."

nar "I can't even do this one simple job right. Those idiots back at the academy are probably laughing their heads off right now. I should never have allowed emotions into my equations."

nar "But I was happier here... I don't want to keep my distance..."

show zuri excited at center

z "Nat, Nat, Nat!"

n sad "Please, not another emergency today."

z "Guess what? Commander Rasoona stopped by and said she was lifting my punishment! I have to get a reprimand, but I'm free of confinement!"

n sad "That's great."

z confused "What's wrong? You don't seem happy about it."

n "Nothing. I'm really happy for you."

z "I was happy. It's really hard to stay happy when you seem so sad. Is it because of that?"

nar "Zuri points at the foul food left behind, the package to bind me to this whole underground smuggling ring."

n "Yeah."

nar "I proceed to tell her in painful detail about my attempts to do the right thing and how it was

smashed back into my face by a cute quartermaster and foul doctor."

z serious "Can I see it?"

n "Go for it."

nar "Zuri nimbly picks it from my hands, cracking open the lid to let the tantalizing aroma leak out."

z "It smells really good. I think it would taste that way as well."

n "Probably."

z "It's a very nice gesture, especially after today's lovely meal of crunchy rice."

n "Yeah..."

z "There's just one problem."

n "There are a lot of problems with it. Which one are you thinking of?"

z angry "This."

nar "Zuri slams the container onto the ground, raises her taloned boots, and smashes the container, giving my lab floor a layer of plastic bits and chunks of meat."

z "We're warriors and we don't permit ourselves to partake in the corruption of scholars!"

n laugh "I'm a warrior now?"

z "A warrior-in-training under my wing! Even if you don't have the body yet, you have the heart!"

n "You don't have to have the body to be a warrior, but... you're right. We are warriors loyal to our people. We can't accept this."

n oh "But... I can't do it. I cannot put Sol behind bars because Kylie withheld the truth about where she got things."

z serious "Doing what is right for those under our protection sometimes means doing what is wrong in the eyes of our command. You can reject the bribe and still protect your charges."

n doori "You're right. I can't beat myself up over this. I have to stay strong and solve the mystery. Afterward, I can try to get that snake arrested in a way that will protect Sol."

z excited "That's the spirit."

n sigh "But what am I going to do about the mess you've made...?"

z uneasy "Eh heh heh..."

n irate "Since she likes breaking in without my permission and I'm not letting this datapad out of my sight, let's have dear sweet Kika clean it up."

z confused "Wait... Kika broke in here?"

n "Yep. She might also have been the one who framed you. Too bad she doesn't know we have

the real clue. Let's have her clean everything up while we pay Faye a quick visit."

z happy "That's mean. I like it."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 5.0

jump fayeAndSol1

label fayeAndSol1:

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "With the search program working on decrypting the picture on Zuri's datapad, I have a moment to investigate another lead. Time to interrogate Faye for reasons the Raltins might want her dead."

nar "But outside her door, I can hear voices. Loud voices talking about things I can't quite make out through the sliding door. Did the culprit get to her before I did?"

show zuri smiles at center

n htp "Back me up."

z confused "Huh? Okay."

scene bg 03 with fade

show sol smile at solRight

show faye smile at innerRight2

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 3.0

f "It's so cute, Sol. Thank you!"

s "I remembered how you like karnafor pigs, so I gathered up materials to stitch you one. It isn't one of my better ones."

show zuri happy at zuriLeft behind faye

n smile "That's sweet, Sol."

s surprised "Oh. Natalie. Hey."

z "Could I get one?"

s smile "Sure. Get put into a hospital bed on one of our missions, start acting somewhat professional, and maybe I'll think about it."

z complain "Bleh."

show zuri smiles

s grumpy "You should be happy with me convincing Rasoona to let you out early. Only good little pups get gifts."

f aru "I'm not a pup!"

s smile "If you aren't, I'm going to have to take it back. I'm a man of my word."

n laugh "Don't torment the girl."

s "Fine. As long as you start feeling better, you can keep it. I also brought you some documentaries by Lillian Harthford to keep you sane in here."

f surprised "Is it the panda bear special?"

s "Yep."

f smile "Thank you so much, Sol!"

nar "I give Sol an approving smile. He really did take to heart my request to stop making trouble with the crew. I knew I could count on him."

nar "Still, making her a little pig doll as a get well present might be a bit over the top. He never settles for doing simple things, like just apologizing."

f "And thank you all for visiting me. I really-"

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 5.0

f sad "Ughhhh..."

show zuri confused

n huh "What's wrong?"

s angry2 "It's the damn antidote. Whatever our worthless doctor is giving her has more symptoms than the poison."

f sheepish "It's okay. I'll be fine. My chest just hurts every now and then."

n oh "Do you think you are alright enough to answer a few questions for me?"

f "I'll be fine. Really."

show sol quiet

nar "I glance at Sol, who gives me the smallest of supporting nods."

n smile "Do you remember my sketches of the runes?"

f sad "I do, but I still can't think of anything those squiggly lines might match up with."

n "What about... have you seen anything suspicious lately? Strange? Out of the ordinary?"

f sheepish "Sol made me a stuffed animal and is trying to make me feel better."

n happy "That is quite strange, I agree."

s annoyed "See if I do it again..."

f smile "It's sweet though. Sol hasn't been this nice to me since before..."

n huh "Before?"

s regret "Don't worry. It has nothing to do with this line of questioning."

z excited "Suspicious... What could you two be hiding?"

s "Don't ask questions about things you wouldn't understand."

n hmm "Does it have nothing to do with suspicious things involving my case, Faye?"

f sad "Lenna..."

n smile "Say no more. I'll ask Sol about it later."

s "And you will get the same answer as before."

n "You know I'm not going to give up on this."

s quiet "Perhaps. That does not mean I am going to make embarrassing private moments public for all to know."

z "I knew it!"

s "Knew... what...?"

z "Al told me some veeeeeeeeery interesting rumors about how they broke up and how he had an-"

s angry2 "If you spill one more word, I'll have you locked up in that room for the rest of your life!"

z "I thought you tried really hard to keep it a secret, but-"

s "Natalie, Faye, please look the other way while I punch Zuri in her big fat mouth!"

z "Bring it!"

n laugh "This must be good if it would spur Sol to violence."

z "Well, Sol and Faye-"

f exasperated "Please don't."

z confused "Huh?"

f "I don't want to hurt any more people. Please don't say anything, Zuri."

z "..."

show zuri complain

extend "alright. I won't say anything."

n hmm "Who is it going to hurt?"

z "This is one of those things that Sol should say for himself anyway. A honorable warrior admits his faults and failings."

s "A failing it was..."

f sad "Mine..."

s "While that may be true, as the ranking officer, I held responsibility."

n oi "I'm starting to hate you all."

s smile "I forgot how much you love it when people talk around you."

n "You all are speaking gibberish, it is annoying. If you aren't going to speak sense, don't keep saying things to drive my curiosity further!"

z smiles "Then I get to ask a question next, Faye!"

f aru "What is it?"

z "What do you know that would cause someone to sic biological weapons on you?"

show faye surprised

show sol surprised

n irate "..."

s "..."

f "..."

nar "I need to have a talk with Zuri about what it means to keep your hand hidden during a questioning session."

s serious "I can answer that one. It wasn't what Faye knew, but that she didn't know that was an area inhabited by mutant fish."

f exasperated "They weren't fish."

s surprised "What do you mean?"

f "Studying fauna and flora is my job. They were too streamlined, too well-designed to be natural born."

s "Nature is a mysterious thing."

f "I could also hear a very faint humming from them. I think they were machines."

s irritated "Preposterous. Who would use a field of robot attackers as a trap?"

n nervous "..."

s surprised "Natalie?"

n "..."

s "Zuri?"

z uneasy "..."

s serious "Ah. It's above my need-to-know. I see."

n "Sol, that's not-"

s "Excuse me. I clearly shouldn't be here for this."

hide sol

n huh "Sol, wait!"

f sad "I'm sorry, I don't know anything about them."

n sad "...Sol."

z smiles "It's okay, Faye. As long as you are feeling better, that's good enough for us."

f smile "Thank you. It makes me happy to have visitors. I wasn't expecting anybody."

z excited "We're a crew! Of course we were gonna come see you."

z protest "And speaking of being a crew, what are you still doing here, Nat? You need to talk to Sol before he gets away."

f sheepish "She's right. He tends to misinterpret things."

nar "As true as that may be, he didn't misinterpret this one. He knew that I withheld information despite claiming to trust him and be his friend."

nar "What am I supposed to say?"

n smile "I'm glad you weren't hurt any worse, Faye... it won't happen again. Nobody will be hurt again on my mission."

stop music fadeout 4.0

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "I'm going to go back to my lab and lock the door. Nobody comes in, my horrible ideas don't come out."

nar "I'll have to jam it so Kylie can't let anybody inside. Right now, I just want to be alone. I don't want to hurt more people. I just want to solve this case."

nar "...what's that noise?"

show zuri confused at center

n sad "Aren't you supposed to be with Faye? What are you doing?"

z "Walking."

n "Leave me alone before I end up getting you hurt as well."

hide zuri

nar "Silence. No more clinking of boots. Zuri must be smart enough not to follow me. She must know I'm not worth protecting."

nar "Or she is being clever and using her wings to keep her from making telltale sounds."

show zuri confused at center

n angry "Just because I can't hear you clinking doesn't mean I don't know you are still following me!"

z protest "I'm not following you. I'm just going in your general direction."

n "I'm not that stupid!"

z serious "You must be. You think telling me to not do my job is going to stop me from protecting you."

n "Everyone else needs the protection from me! You got confined, Sol doesn't see me as a friend anymore, Faye got hospitalized..."

z "The person who needs the most protection from you is yourself. I'm not going to sit idly by while you hurt yourself!"

n sad "..."

z "It's not you, Natalie. Nobody blames you. We are all just on-edge."

z "Being a true warrior means being able to-"

n angry "I don't care!"

scene bg 02 with fade

n sad "Is she... gone?"

show sol grumpy at center

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

s "I told you that you'd one day run away screaming from that lizard. What did I tell you?"

Noooooooooo, nobody listens to Sol."

n "..."

s "Because I'm always right."

n "..."

s regret "This is the part where you laugh at me and say I only get to claim that once I beat you."

n "..."

s quiet "Natalie?"

nar "I want to say something. I want to apologize for forcing him to the side. I want to admit that... that..."

s "What's that thing?"

n "Zuri's datapad."

s smile "It looks like something you'd find on one of those ancient civilization shows. I told you to just use the one from the storage. It's not the latest model, but at least it-"

n htp "We found a copy of one of the pictures. I gave it to Zuri to look at."

s quiet "...oh."

n "Faye was poisoned by a Raltin poison. Those creatures were genetic weapons designed by the empire. I think they are the ones who have been stealing evidence at the scene before we arrived."

s surprised "...huh."

n sad "I've... been failing at everything. We should have found them long before now."

s "Have you been confiding this in Zuri?"

n laugh "She's the one who has been helping me. I wouldn't have even this little progress without her."

s serious "Is that so? Who would have thought lizard brain would be beating us both in this game of mysteries."

s regret "...I need to confess something to you. I've been withholding secrets from you as well."

n huh "What?"

s "I've been trying to find evidence to pin this on Doctor Nelson. I was so sure that he was the one trying to thwart you."

n "But it was Kika who broke into my lab."

s "You know even that..."

n irate "She confessed it. The girl laughed at me and rubbed it in my face."

s "I really am worthless in the case to you."

n "That is not true! You can't think that!"

s "It's true, Natalie. Even you admitted that lizard brain is more helpful."

n oi "Stop saying that! Both of you are helping! Aren't you supposed to be helping me keep order and protect the others?"

n "Knowing you are there to keep the homefront protected is important to me. You are important to me."

s "What about Zuri?"

n "Both of you are important to me!"

s quiet "Well, I know you are very important to Zuri. Where is she, anyway? She told me the first thing she was going to do after getting her freedom was teaching you her special moves."

n sad "...I yelled at her and ran away."

s regret "Like what I did to you?"

nar "How can I explain all of the stress that is eating away at me? Every moment of my life is getting worse and worse. Looking at a picture of Zuri's family seems so far away."

s "I see. I'm still your friend, right?"

n "Of course."

s "And you still value my help?"

n laugh "Duh."

s "Because I'm about to upset you."

n oi "Then don't."

s serious "Being the ship's executive officer has led me to believe that doing the right thing often means angering people."

s "Stop worrying about what we think of you, stop worrying about how this mission is going to turn

out, and keep on helping those you care about."

s "You cared enough about me not to run off, though I could see it in your eyes. You cared enough to risk me going after your last lead. You cared enough to try to improve my feelings."

s quiet "So go care for Zuri's feelings. If she's that important to solving this case to you, telling her your feelings and apologizing shouldn't be a problem."

n laugh "When did you learn to care for other people?"

s regret "Blame the job. I'm tired of losing friends to this war and themselves."

n "Sol... thanks."

s "Let's just skip to talking it out next time. I should get back to the bridge. Alphonse has been covering for me."

hide sol

stop music fadeout 4.0

nar "I should go find Zuri and apologize for yelling at her and running away. She wanted to be there for me..."

nar "But I... I..."

nar "I'm going back to my lab. I don't have the courage to admit I was an idiot and ask for forgiveness. How I managed it with Sol is a mystery."

nar "Zuri's right... I'm no warrior. I'm not worthy of being an admiral someday. I'm starting to see why they stuck me on that backwater planet in the first place."

nar "...but I want to change. I'm going to change. If I really believe in everything I've said, I have to be brave."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "After nearly an hour of searching, I find her standing in front of my lab with a dejected look on her face."

show zuri defeated at center

n smile "Zuri!"

z "Nat? Where have you been? I've been worried that your criminal tried to kill you!"

n "I've been trying to find you. I want to say something."

z "I'm a lizard brain who doesn't understand when enough is enough?"

play music "Music/ms03.ogg" fadein 3.0

n sad "I'm the lizard brain who needs to stop abusing her friends. I'm sorry."

z serious "Apology not accepted."

n nervous "W-w-w-what?"

z "Nope. I'm not letting you off the hook that easily. You can't crush my feelings and expect me to just forgive you."

z "But there is a way to make it up to me. If you agree to one thing, I may just be willing to let everything slide."

n "Participate in your daily workouts?"

z excited "That's an amazing guess. We'd have to practice a lot first, shape you into a real warrior."

n smile "If you just want to hang out, Zuri, just say so. I like being with you. I don't... feel quite as cowardly. I see your strength of purpose and I know I have to be better."

n "Akurel would be proud of the dreamon you've become."

z smiles "That's sweet. I'm not nearly strong enough yet, but... someday."

n "You're stronger than you know, even if you won't ever play me a song."

z sad "I miss it. I miss playing those soft melodies and seeing everyone's mood lift after a tough day."

z "But I don't get that luxury now. I have to be strong and be a protector. I don't get that luxury anymore."

n sigh "Just like I don't get the luxury of questioning myself when I've still got a job to do."

n smile "The timer on the translator program still has almost a day on it. Why don't you show me a few moves?"

z excited "That's more like it! Let's go do it on the bridge and get everyone involved."

n "That sounds dangerous."

z "Bleh."

show sol irritated at solRight

s "Natalie!"

n "Hey, Sol. Zuri was going to teach me some of her special fighting stances. Why don't you come with?"

z happy "I don't think he has the footwork to pull them off."

s "I can move around better than you and your massive wings, but we have a crisis to deal with first!"

n oi "There's always another crisis..."

s "Kika found our missing ship."

nar "I'm past Sol and sprinting down the hall before any other words come out his mouth. I can still salvage this. I can still become an admiral."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump wreckage

label wreckage:

scene bg 01 with fade

show kika smirk at innerRight

show azaia neutral at center

show kylie smile at innerLeft behind azaia

show sol grumpy at solRight behind kika

show stan bored at stanLeft behind kylie

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

n doori "Talk to me!"

kk "Guess who found it? It certainly wasn't Miss Mystery."

n irate "Shut up, lieutenant! What did we find?"

kk "I'm the one who found the wreckage, not we."

n "...I'm sorry, I must have misheard you. I could have sworn that you said wreckage."

kk annoyed "I know human hearing is poor, but I said it perfectly clear! Look!"

nar "Despite my willing for her words to be false, the drifting remains of twisted metal and debris tell the truth of the situation. This cold, dead wreckage is nothing more than a floating junkyard."

nar "My heart falls silent, my brain unable to process the chaos in front of me. Only one word can pierce the frozen synapses. Failure."

nar "I failed. I got here second. I should have known destruction of the ship would be the Empire's goal. I should have tried harder to find it before them."

nar "Those days where I just sat around and stared at the wall... I could have used them better. How, I do not know, but I should have."

nar "There's no positive way to spin this report. Sorry, command, I dallied and the Raltins got there first. They may have a weapon that the research teams thought could end the universe. My bad!"

nar "I'll be lucky if they settle for just demoting me to flight officer. I could see prison time for negligence depending on the presiding official."

nar "There has to be something I can do! I have to be able to salvage this situation somehow!"

n htp "Are there any sort of distress beacons? Try all of the standard emergency frequencies, military and civilian."

hide stan

show alphonse serious at stanLeft behind kylie

e "Radios are dead."

n "Try again."

e "Sure, Natalie."

kk "There's not going to be any. It was a self-destruct."

hide alphonse

show stan bored at stanLeft behind kylie

st "That does seem to be the most likely cause of the devastation before us. Tis a great shame."

kk tsun "This is why I had to break into the lab to hear the recording! Did you not hear the man? Are all humans deaf? He said he was going to do this!"

kk annoyed "I swear..."

s irritated "Were you asleep at the during the battle aboard the Xeon? That's plasma burns along the ship. Somebody fired upon this ship."

nar "Sol gives me a faint smile, trying to make me feel better. It does nothing to soothe the pain in my heart. If I had trusted my friend more, maybe we could have found a way to get here first."

st "You seek to blame others when you cannot accept the truth. My dear Kylie, what are your thoughts on the matter? As a pretty, smart engineer, does this not say self-destruct?"

show kylie surprised

k "The researcher could have overloaded the engines. They might have caused markings like that."

s "Bullshit! It was the damn Raltins!"

st lazy "You seek to blame boogeymen. Do you have proof?"

s annoyed "..."

st "Then we must conclude that the facts are correct. This was a self-destruct by a potentially delusional researcher, torn at the loss of his people. Could you not understand his painful decision?"

nar "I need to be strong. Now is the time to play my hand before the truth is lost forever."

n htp "At the desert camp, Zuri was also attacked when she rescued Lieutenant Starr and Captain Moonfallow. I gathered a sample of the toxin and checked it against my database."

n "It was a known Raltin nerve agent."

st sly "That would be a convincing, convenient counter to me. Do you happen to have the proof?"

n "Of course I do. Computer, tell us the results of the chemical scan performed in the past week by me."

comp "Processing... no entries found."

n nervous "Run all scans of any type by me."

comp "Processing... no entries found."

hide sol

show zuri angry at alRight behind kika

z "But I was there!"

kk "Because you aren't totally biased towards your crush."

nar "This can't be happening! I know it was done! I know it! Am I losing my mind?"

hide zuri

show sol angry2 at solRight behind kika

show stan sly

s "What did you do to it, you bastard?"

st "Mind your rank. Isn't that what you always are screaming at poor Kylie?"

a "The colonel is correct, major. Just because you do not like the facts presented to you does not give you reason to be unprofessional."

s "But he tampered with Natalie's data."

e "But how could he have, Sol?"

kk "In case you forgot in your desire to be Natalie's white knight, nobody, and I mean nobody, has access privileges to the central computer."

s "...I'm sorry, Natalie."

n smile "Thanks for trying, Sol."

show kylie smile

a "It would seem like this case is closed. Unless you have any objections, Major Puccile, we should make for Katajion space and report what has transpired here."

nar "Can it end so easily...?"

menu:

"No... let's head home.":

#Bad end #1

stop music fadeout 5.0

nar "I guess... this is where the story ends. Even though the evidence points towards Raltin involvement, the spy has sabotaged any chance I had at convincing them to stay."

n "No objections."

st "Heh."

hide kylie

hide stan

show zuri sad at zuriLeft

z "Natalie... We can't give up."

n sad "They beat us to the punch. Maybe if I would have been better..."

z "Don't give up! Us warriors can't give in when the going gets tough."

n "I guess I'm not really a warrior after all."

a "Major Hackett, make course for Duster Station."

s regret "Are you positive, Natalie? You know this isn't right!"

n "What is right and what I am capable of doing are two different things, Sol."

s "...aye aye, ma'am. Kika, set our course."

kk excited "Finally! We don't have to waste our time with this worthless mission anymore!"

nar "Worthless... it was all a waste of time. I nearly killed a woman for nothing. This was a grand waste of government resources."

nar "All because I choked in the moment. I didn't keep spares of my records, even though I knew there was a saboteur. I didn't move with a sense of purpose. I just did everything half-hearted."

nar "Everything seems so clear in hindsight..."

n "I'm going to start writing my report. If anyone needs me, I'll be in the lab."

z smiles "I'll come with."

n "You want to stay with a failed scholar."

z "Even if today is a failure, we have to believe that tomorrow will be better."

n laugh "..."

z soft "I'm not abandoning my charge because things turned out bad. That's not a warrior's creed!"

n sad "..."

z surprised "Nat, are you crying?"

n laugh "No, just something in my eyes. Let's go write the operations report."

nar "I just hope there is a tomorrow for us..."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg CGEnd1 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

"There has to be something we can do!":

nar "I can't just give up now! The universe is in danger and everyone is counting on me! I can't let the sacrifices made to get me here be wasted."

nar "My mind drifts to Faye, alone in her room, clutching her gut from the burning pangs of agony. I think of Kika, hiding the pain of her lost family. Do the needs of the few outweigh the needs of the many?"

nar "Is it my place to make that call? Either way, I must."

n doori "We haven't even done a survey of the wreckage! Of course I am going to object to this!"

kk angry "Can't you just accept reality without fighting so much?"

n "That's not my job."

kk "So... what? Your job is wasting our time and limited resources."

k sad "We're running low on food, commander. We should go home."

st complaining "They are quite right. Wreckage surveys can take days to do a proper search. It would be folly to waste our resources."

s angry2 "You just don't want her to find the truth of what happened!"

st irate "Temper, temper."

hide stan

hide kylie

show zuri excited at zuriLeft behind azaia

z "Sol's right! We have scanners and stuff! Searching for waves and particles and things!"

kk "Do you even hear yourself talk?"

hide zuri

show alphonse smile at alLeft behind azaia

e "If I may, the lieutenant has a point. Doing scans won't take more than a few hours, nor will an initial run with the recovery drone. Do you want to give up on the truth so easily, Kika?"

s "This is the first time I've seen you wimp out on proving yourself correct, housecat."

a "Major-"

s grumpy "It's a term of affection."

kk tsun "Fine. We'll do your scans, I'll prove you wrong, and then we can go home! Deal?"

a "This is acceptable to me. Major Puccile?"

n "Alright. Let's do it."

nar "If there is the slightest chance of being able to get a positive end to this, I need to give it my all!"

nar "I just have to put my faith in my crew, even if some of them are turning against me."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump waitingGame

label waitingGame:

scene bg 01 with fade

show stan smile at innerRight2

show kylie smile at innerLeft2

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "Tick tock, tick tock. Every second of waiting makes the anxiety increase by a thousand fold. My two best friends and their idle chat aren't making it any better."

k "What are we going to do when we get back to Duster Station?"

st "I'm going to take you to the nicest restaurant they have, my adorable little engineer."

k "Yay!"

nar "I need to get away from them. I need to do something. I can't just sit idly by!"

#Player gets to pick two. As per all the other scenes, this is written assuming the player is doing Zuri's route.

menu:

"Talk to Sol and Alphonse.":

hide stan

hide kylie

show alphonse smile at innerLeft

show sol quiet at innerRight

\$stalkedtoSol=True

n hmm "Any luck?"

s "..."

e "Shhhhhh. Sol is driving the drone around."

n "So he's off in a land of his own."

s "That."

e "Looks like part of the upper right engine booster."

s "Moving on."

n smile "Al... do you think we are going to find something?"

e wink "Now I know you are scared. This is the first time you've called me Al."

n hmm "Is it? Whatever. I'm not scared."

e thought "It's alright to be scared. It's natural. What matters is that you are still fighting to go forward despite that fear. That is how you gain the blessing of the spirits."

n "I hope they are with me today."

e "Fear not. Sol refuses to let you down."

n laugh "He's very reliable, isn't he?"

e "I've had to owe him my life several times. That is why I try to help him, though he bears hatred for my actions."

s "That."

e smile "Foodstuffs. Likely radiated."

s "Moving on."

n smile "What did you do?"

e sad "That is a curse I must bear silently. Especially now, when Sol needs his focus."

n laugh "What? Did you burn all of his mementos of Lenna?"

e "..."

n huh "You didn't!"

e "We should be quiet. He needs to concentrate."

nar "I... I should go. This conversation just got awkward."

"Talk to Kika.":

hide stan

hide kylie

if (kikaPositive):

n smile "Hello."

show kika annoyed at center

kk "Ugh. What? I'm busy doing your demands already."

n htp "Orders are orders."

kk annoyed "...I hate to admit this, but I think you made the right call."

n huh "That's a change of heart."

kk "I barely think that. Like fifty one percent support."

n smile "I'll take it."

kk tsun "You better. The great Kika doesn't lend her support lightly."

n "I'm grateful. Still, why the change of heart?"

kk thinking "Things just feel wrong. My gut is telling me that we stand on the cusp of a major disaster waiting to happen. I want to go home."

kk "But this won't be a clean, indisputable sweep if we don't verify all of the potential holes as false. Otherwise they'll send more adventurers on this pointless quest."

kk excited "I want this done perfect, just like me."

n oh "I doubt you'd believe me, but I want it done just the same."

kk smirk "Of course I believe you. You aren't that dumb of a SITO. You didn't pin the blame on Zuri. You took the time to dig deeper."

kk "Consider this repaying the favor."

n laugh "I didn't know you cared about Zuri."

kk excited "I don't. She's annoying. What I care about is the truth."

kk thinking "Why don't you sit down? If I find anything, I'll yell for you."

n "Thanks."

kk "Just doing my job."

else:

n smile "Hello."

show kika annoyed

kk "Go away."

n irate "That's not the tone to have with your superior officer."

kk "You aren't my superior in any way. You are an annoying gnat who is preventing me from doing the stupid job I have been assigned."

kk "Once we get the answers we need to prove that I was right and you were wrong, we are going home. I want your word."

n "If I've been wrong, then I'll confess to it. It's my name on the report."

kk "That's the best I'm going to get. Whatever gets me home to my dead family sooner..."

kk "Go sit down. I'll tell you when I find nothing."

n "Thank you, lieutenant."

kk "Whatever."

"Talk to Commander Rasoona.":

hide stan

hide kylie

n smile "Ma'am."

show azaia neutral at center

a "Yes? Can I help you?"

n "I just wanted to thank you for giving me this last chance to pursue my leads."

a "I wouldn't want our SITO to feel like the regular navy was trying to thwart her."

n "I wouldn't dream of it, vice commander."

a "Vice commander... Did you know I used to be Commander of the Wings for the First Fleet?"

nar "Commander of the Wings is only a single step down from the admiral ranks. Being in-charge of the fighters for our command fleet isn't a shabby title."

n huh "How did you end up here?"

a "You're smart, you can guess."

n oh "The SITO-"

a patronizing "The SITO I was tasked with helping, some kid named Rogers. He felt that the level of support I was giving his mission was inadequate. He had as much information as you had."

a "I did my best to help him, but his negativity had the ears of Admiral Trigin and Space Director Tsuku."

a "That is why you are getting this chance. I hope your report of the Nimross will be stellar, despite Lieutenant Zuri's earlier fumbles."

nar "You mean except for the spy who keeps thwarting me or perhaps you mean the colonel trying to blackmail me?"

n "Yes, ma'am."

a neutral "Good. Carry on."

"Talk to Zuri.":

hide stan

hide kylie

n smile "Hey, Zuri?"

z "..."

nar "Her emerald eyes are closed, her body lax. How she managed to fall asleep at a time like this boggles the mind."

nar "It'd upset her if she knew this, but watching her sleep reminds me of the little dreamon from the picture. Kind, sweet, innocent... Her youthful adorableness hasn't faded a bit."

nar "Though I'd like to see her with her hair grown out, Zuri has a very soft and unique charm to her."

n "Zuri..."

show zuri surprised at center

z "Eh... Oh. Hey, Nat."

n laugh "Oh! Ummmm... sorry to wake you."

z "...is there something on my face?"

n "No, I was just... you seemed to have escaped your youth without being marred by scars.

Physical ones, anyway."

z smiles "Eiril and Akurel were really good at keeping me out of trouble. Still, there are a few nasty ones under my uniform."

n oh "Oh."

z "Even if you do all the right things, Nat, you can't prevent all of the injuries. Sometimes bad things happen that we can't control. You just have to accept that."

n laugh "Like blaming yourself for Akurel's love of you and desire to protect you."

z happy "Low blow. Yeah, like that."

n smile "I can see why she'd want to protect you with everything she had. That's why I don't want to give up here. If we walk away, you and everyone I love could get hurt with more than simple scratches."

z "And that's why I'm not going to run away either. We'll find something, Natalie. I know we will."

scene bg 01

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 4.0

e "Natalie, Commander Rasoon! I think Sol found something!"

show alphonse serious at alLeft

show sol serious at solRight

show kika surprised at innerRight

show azaia neutral at center

n htp "What is it?"

s "Some sort of crystal. Too perfect to be natural."

nar "On the screen is a small turquoise crystal in the shape of a diamond, barely larger than my thumb. Sol's right, it is perfect, smooth, the coloring unblemished. At both ends are ornamental caps, like the casings for a necklace."

kk tsun "Oh, look. You found their jewelry. Congratulations. Are we scavengers now?"

s "I'm getting a strange reading from it."

kk annoyed "From jewelry? What sort of signal?"

s "It is very faint, but it is clearly trying to transmit something."

hide alphonse

show stan irate at alLeft behind azaia

st "Perhaps the drone's sensors are malfunctioning."

k nervous "Oh, no! I check the sensors as part of my weekly check! They check good every week!"

st "Could your scanner machine be broken?"

k "Maybe..."

n "Then we have all the more reason to bring it in! If we cannot verify anything, we need to do an on-board check."

st "I do not think it is our place to raid graves for trinkets."

n "I need to verify that this is just a trinket. Sol, record that signal and bring the crystal in."

st panic "Commander, this is a horrible idea."

a "I don't see any particular reason not to let the major have her way. Is there any sort of radiation emanating from it?"

s "Nothing out of acceptable limits."

a "Bring it in."

n doori "Down to the engineering bay!"

kk excited "I'm coming with."

k smile "Me too."

a "Major Hackett, you have the controls. I suspect all of us want a closer look at this odd gem."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 06 with fade

show stan panic at stanLeft

show kylie smile at innerLeft

show zuri excited at zuriRight

show kika thinking at innerRight

show azaia neutral at center

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "There it is!"

kk "Let me take it. You'll end up smashing this one as well."

n hmm "If it survived the destruction of the ship without so much as a scratch, I doubt anyone here is going to anything to it."

kk "It was probably in a case. Better safe than sorry before she somehow finds a way."

st "We shouldn't be touching it with our hands. Kylie, go get the-"

kk excited "Got it."

nar "Old Doc Stan nearly jumps out of his skin as Kika plucks the crystal out of the drone by the tips of the metal casing."

st complaining "Lieutenant!"

kk "What? It's just jewelry."

n oi "Do you know something that we don't? Information I should be privy to hearing? It's just jewelry, right?"

nar "Could you be the one who stole my research data? From the frightened, angry look on his face, I'm confident he knows more than he is letting on."

st "I know the basics of safety. You don't take weird things found from destroyed spaceships bearing superweapons and play around with them!"

kk smirk "The only thing weird about this is why some old crusty researcher had such a pretty necklace piece. It takes all kinds to make a galaxy, I suppose."

kk "Here, major. Catch."

nar "With complete disregard for protocol, Kika tosses me the gem. Its weight couldn't be more than a few grams."

nar "It's pleasant to look at, the way it sparkles in the light of the engineering bay. I could see why it might be nothing more than a gem in some piece of gaudy necklace."

nar "Still... it is strange. There should be some sign of damage to it. My gut tells me that this isn't an ordinary gem."

nar "But if I am right about the ship being pursued and destroyed by Raltins, why would they leave this behind? They've been cleaning their trails very well. Leaving the weapon behind would be silly."

k "It's so pretty. Could I have it? It would look perfect with my dress uniform."

n hmm "Not until I've had my time at investigating it. For being blasted by a destroyed spaceship, it's remarkably smooth."

st irate "Do not touch it! You may destroy the evidence you seek!"

nar "True. I rub my finger along the side of the blue crystal, expecting it to be as cold as ice. Instead, I feel a slight tickle and the warmth of the sun radiating through."

st panic "You fool!"

a "Colonel?"

nar "A small light shines from inside the crystal. It seems to be showing a slight chemical reaction to my-"

stop music fadeout 5.0

scene bg black

e "What happened to the lights?"

a "Flight Officer Migi, did you do something?"

k "WAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

st "We are doomed..."

scene bg 06

show stan panic at stanLeft

show kylie surprised at innerLeft

show zuri surprised at zuriRight

show kika surprised at innerRight

show azaia shocked at center

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 2.0

a "Flight Officer Migi, what happened? I want answers."

s "Ma'am, Bridge. Our primary and secondary engine generators just went offline. Did someone bump the emergency shutoff?"

n yare "What happened, colonel?"

st "Why are you asking me?"

n "What. Happened. Colonel?"

st bored "I assure you that I know not what caused the engines to shutoff. I am a doctor, not an engineer."

n "I don't believe you."

k scared "Commander! The crystals! They... they..."

a "What about the bellino crystals?"

k "They're supposed to be all white and shiny, but the ones in the primary engines have all gone clear and dull. They're all cracked as well!"

kk thinking "Whatever. Put in a distress message and have someone bring us out new ones. I can't imagine this is the first time bellino crystals went out."

k "But they went out in the primary and the secondaries! At the same time!"

kk "So?"

k "In tech school, we were told that it had never happened before. Nothing should cause crystal damage!"

kk smirk "Well, well, well. Another universe record has been set with Kika Starr."

st irate "You stupid, ignorant, asinine girl! Do you not understand what has just happened?"

kk angry "We can't make the shift jump until somebody brings us a new one. We're stuck here for a week. It sucks, but that's the risk you take when you travel in space."

st "The bellino crystals do more than just make the shift jump. They are the focal points for power generation, as well as critical parts of our long-distance radio gear!"

k "Without them, the engines won't generate power."

kk "We have backup generators."

k "They use the crystals as well. If every single one of them went out..."

n nervous "Kylie... please finish that statement."

a "Major Hackett, attempt to bring all generators back online."

s "I've been trying. They are refusing to accept restart commands. Battery power is at ninety eight percent."

kk embarrassed "...we have stuff that doesn't require the crystals, right? We really don't absolutely need them, right?"

k "..."

a "..."

hide azaia

kk "W-w-w-where is she going?"

st "Major Hackett, do you have the signal recording from the crystal?"

s "Is now the time?"

st "Cross check it against those of a normal bellino crystal."

s "...checking. Computer says that it is identical, but it is opposite-phase. One-eighty degree phase shift."

st "My brilliant, but ignorant SITO... what happens when two signals that-"

n hmm "Superposition of two opposite direction wave pulses. It causes destructive interference. But they are just stones, ordinary rocks we use as focal points."

k sad "You're wrong! They're living stones that have souls!"

kk "Rocks don't have souls!"

z "Souls reside in more than just mortal shells. Kylie, are you suggesting that this opposing wave generated by the recovered crystal created a wave that killed ours?"

k "Uh-huh."

kk "Damn your mysticism! I want the truth in goddamn plain English!"

st "She's saying the only things capable of generating power to keep things like life support and thrust are now permanently offline."

z thinking "But we kinda need those things."

k "The batteries we use for dry dock situations should keep the ship powered for another twenty four hours."

z "But we kinda need power after that. What then?"

stop music fadeout 1.0

kk angry "I'll tell you what happens then. We die. We die because someone just couldn't accept leaving well-enough alone and going home! No, now we get to stay here. Forever!"

n sad "Just like the researcher said... We have the key to the entire universe."

kk "And we just locked ourselves out of it. Great job, Natalie. You killed us all."

scene bg black with fade

jump doomsday

label doomsday:

scene bg 06 with fade

play music "Music/ms17.ogg"

nar "I don't know how long I stood there, eyes glazed, mind numbed by Kika's horrible revelation. By the time I can get the thoughts running again, the room is empty."

show zuri thinking at center

z "..."

n sad "I... killed... us..."

z smiles "Does that make me a zombie?"

n oi "Now is not the time for lame jokes! Did you hear them?"

z happy "Uh-huh. Gonna die in a day. I heard them loud and clear."

n sad "It is all my fault. If I... If I would have known what that thing was from the start, if I would have thought things out better... we'd have futures as something other than corpses."

z "But you are going to fix it. "

n "You say that with so much confidence."

z "Because I know you scholar types. When the going gets tough, you get clever. I bet you have a solution brewing already!"

n "Does dying count as a solution?"

z thinking "I'm not much of a fan of that one. Let's try your second plan."

n "..."

z sad "You do have a second plan, right? You are the special investigations and tactics officer. You

have to have a secret plan to get us out of this."

nar "Zuri's pleading eyes betray the fear I know she shares with me. As strong as any soul is, acceptance of death is something that doesn't come easy."

nar "But being an officer means that sometimes you have to put your own fears aside to keep everyone else's in check. I have to be strong for Zuri."

n oh "Not yet, but I'll think up something. We don't know anything about that crystal, and the first step in our plan to save ourselves is to rectify that situation."

n htp "...actually, I think I may have an idea! The picture, Zuri. What if it contained instructions on operation of the crystal?"

show zuri excited

n "If worst come to worst, we can try testing on the crystal. What's the worst that could happen at this point?"

z confused "Ummmm... we could start a chain reaction that ends all space travel as we know?"

n sad "..."

z complain "I'm being silly. Don't look at me like that."

n "The problem is we don't know if we haven't already done that."

z confused "But all you did was touch it. There's no way any civilization, even if they were really old, would be stupid enough to have something so unsafe."

n smile "We can only hope, Zuri. Let's go back to the lab and see if we can work our way out of this pit I've dug."

z defeated "...but what can I do? This is all above dumb Zuri's head."

n laugh "You can support me. I'll feel much better if I know I have you watching over me and preventing me from possibly killing us all."

nar "Even though I suspect it may be too late for that."

z "What was it all for if I still can't protect anyone when we are all in danger?"

n sad "But I want you there with me, Zuri. I don't want to risk anyone deciding they want some revenge on me before I have a chance to make things right."

z "Thanks for thinking of me, but I'll just smash up your lab and make things worse. I'm going to bed."

hide zuri

n surprised "Wait! Zuri!"

nar "Slowly, the clinking of her footsteps fades away, leaving me alone in the engineering bay."

nar "Alone. Forsaken. The same way I entered this ship, and probably the same way I'm going to

leave it."

nar "Zuri might not have been able to have helped me with the translation or potential experimentation, but just having her around gave me confidence, a meaning to keep fighting."

nar "For the first time, I feel weak. Not sick or tired, but lacking the strength to keep up the fight. Knowing you just killed eight other people... it drives a stake through the heart."

nar "But... I can't give up now. Even if I must do it alone, then I have to at least keep trying. Not for promotion, but for what I owe the people of this ship."

nar "I look at the blue crystal in my hand, ensuring not to touch its surface. Such a beautiful gem that brings such unbridled destruction. I see why the researcher wanted you left to the depths of space."

scene bg black with fade

jump discovery

label discovery:

scene bg 03 with fade

nar "I bring up the datapad with a detached sense of nostalgia. If Zuri was here, I'd have to chide her for not securing her datapad with a password."

nar "As the program kicks on, I glance at the old picture of the little dreamons. I guess that will soon be us. Nothing more than memories in someone's datapad."

nar "Regrets fill my head. I never got to see the Emerald City. I never got to see a real space battle. I never got to go exploring the Caves of Rya'shaka with mom..."

nar "Mom... she'll go on thinking that I'm still somewhere out there, forgetting to call again. When they find us, she'll know that her daughter didn't live up to her potential."

nar "And it won't be just my parents. I remember meeting Sol's family when we visited Directorship row together. I was the daughter he never had, the old man said."

nar "Even if I get us home, I can't imagine the report ending in my favor. They'll all look at me with such shame..."

nar "But... that's my burden to bear. The translator program is finished and it is time to face my fate."

nar "The red 'No entries found' crushes what little remains of my heart. The limited database I have to work with couldn't determine what the runes on the rock were."

nar "So much for that..."

show kika thinking at center

kk "Idiotly, are you in?"

n sad "That's Major Idiotly."

kk "You are a major idiot, but you can still help me."

n "I think I've done enough helping for the day."

kk smirk "Not quite. I need your permission to take over priority with the central computer and see if I can figure out a way to redesign our engines."

n sigh "You are going to redesign our engines... without the use of bellino crystals... in less than twenty four hours?"

kk thinking "And? Do you have some better idea?"

n "You aren't accepting death lightly, are you?"

if (kikaPositive):

kk "It's not like I don't want to die. I'd be free of the burden of my name and I'd get to see my family again. If this is the day I die, fine. I welcome it."

n huh "Kika...?"

kk sad "People never understand the weight on my shoulders. Lady Starr doesn't get to have normal, everything has to be extraordinary."

kk "The weight, day in and day out, eats at you. It makes you loathe your very existence."

kk "I saw that desire for power in your eyes. Guess what? I have to hold that power every day. It corrodes your soul from the inside out."

kk "I wake up every morning and ask myself, 'What's the point anymore?'"

n sad "Then why do you keep at it?"

kk angry "Because it is my duty. Nobody else can take this weight, so I can't give up and call it quits. Atlas has to hold that world on his shoulders!"

kk "That's why I can't accept death here, even if it would free me from my burdens and let me see my papa again..."

n "I miss my family as well."

kk sad "...idiot."

kk embarrassed "W-w-w-whatever! Can I have the access or not?"

n htp "Sure. Let me just turn off the database link this datapad has."

kk "What was that?"

n huh "The picture?"

kk excited "No, the tumbleweed bouncing around the inside of your head. Yes, the picture! More secrets?"

n sigh "Here. Have the look you so desperately desire. It doesn't matter at this point."

kk "Chazari."

n smile "Bless you."

kk smirk "It wasn't a sneeze, Idiotly. That's Chazari."

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 2.0

n huh "You know what it is?"

kk fufufu "Of course I do! I am part of the upper class."

n oi "I came from the lower. Details, Kika, details!"

kk excited "Chazari was an ancient language from millennium ago. There's little remaining record of their galactic civilization except that they were highly advanced. One day, their civilization simply vanished."

kk "What little we have left were found from records at what was named the Chazari Royal Library. It was to hold cultural records, except that it didn't stand the test of time."

n "Why couldn't my translator crack it?"

kk smirk "Two reasons, Idiotly. It's very flowery, computers have problems breaking out the unique strokes. Two, the only people who can read it nowadays are the 'royal' families."

kk "We've been using it as a secret code amongst ourselves for years to keep messages safe."

kk thinking "So why do you have it on some rusty datapad?"

n shocked "My god... they weren't trying to shut Faye up. Don't you see?"

kk "What?"

n oi "They were trying to kill you, Kika."

kk fufufu "Such is the burden of being a hero."

n sigh "No, they were trying to kill you because you are the only person I can contact to translate this! You can give me the answers I need."

kk annoyed "If you would have just shared this with the crew from the start-"

n oh "Whoever has been trying to shut down my operation would have gone to more drastic measure to prevent you from assisting."

kk "Like what?"

n "Probably a laser to the brain."

kk surprised "They wouldn't! Besides... there is a low likelihood of..."

n oi "You're not telling me something, are you?"

kk thinking "..."

n "I shared my data, you share yours."

kk "Fine. I may have found information that indicated other ships that could have possibly, maybe, feasibly, conceivably... blew up the research ship."

n sigh "But if we have the crystal, what did they make away with?"

kk "Who cares? They detonated an ion bomb, which is what tipped them away. I have no idea where they went."

n sigh "Why didn't you tell me this sooner?"

kk please "I was thinking about it..."

n "Kika..."

kk annoyed "So I got upset at you for constantly putting the hero of this mission off? So what?"

n "...sigh. So you just wanted to see me squirm in front of the commander. Damn it, Kika."

kk "It's not like that information was going to help us out anyway."

n smile "That's for me to decide."

kk "Whatever. You have it now. I'll translate this thing out for you as an apology gift and you can let me start redesigning our engine."

n sigh "Sure. Whatever makes your final moments better."

kk smirk "Sol said he wanted to see you on the bridge. Go make him happy and then get back here. I should be done by then."

n irate "I'm not taking orders from you."

kk thinking "Hush. Less talky, more walky."

n sigh "..."

nar "I can't give up hope yet..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump chaosOnBridge

label chaosOnBridge:

scene bg 01 with fade

show sol regret at innerRight

show alphonse thought at innerLeft behind sol

play music "Music/ms12.ogg" fadein 3.0

n smile "You called for me?"

s "Finally. Someone who still has a working brain has arrived."

n "What's going on?"

s "Between wingy doing his voodoo 'preparing for death' ceremony and the commander staring off into space, I'm up shit creek without a paddle."

n happy "I hate to tell you this, but we've already sailed up the creek before they stopped working."
s grumpy "I'm aware, I was listening. Natalie, we need to have a talk after all of this is resolved about your safety procedures."

n sad "I know, I know. I wasn't thinking. It was incredibly stupid and I'm sorry."

s "..."

s regret "As long as you are more careful next time, I forgive you."

n "Is there going to be another time?"

s "There is, if I have anything to say about it and if I can get someone to listen to my orders and rally!"

s irritated "Slimeball and Kylie went off and aren't answering comms either. How are we supposed to do anything if nobody is willing to take the initiative and fight?"

n smile "Kika is. I am."

s serious "Hmph. I knew the housecat would rise to the occasion. She spends all day basking in the light of her own glow, but she'll catch the mouse when needed."

n "Was that a compliment?"

s sad "It was. Don't look so skeptical. Kika is always there when we need her, no matter how desperate. Alphonse, however..."

e "I told you. I am praying right now for the spirits to guide our souls to the afterlife."

s "Could you pray for a solution to our problem instead?"

e "If the spirits have deemed this our time to die, so we shall. Such is the fate of those bound by the mortal coil."

s regret "Absolutely useless."

e "My friend, you never see beyond the physical."

s irritated "Because, in case you forgot, it is the physical that is trying to kill me! Damn it, Alphonse..."

e "Though I appreciate your looking to me for aid in these dark times, I do question what good I could do. The spirits have given us many to aid our plight, including one who stands before us."

s quiet "You could have just stopped worrying, trusted your people. For your information, I do trust them. I trust Natalie with my life."

e smile "As we all do."

show alphonse thought

nar "They trust me with their lives... even though I have no clue how to save them. They trust me, even though my folly was what put us in this situation in the first place..."

n sad "Idiots..."

s "Maybe we are, maybe we aren't. I'd like to think that we are going to be able to survive this, but we are going to need to get everyone off this self-defeating attitude and back to work."

s serious "You included, Natalie. We need leaders now who look like they are in control. There's only so much I can do alone."

n "..."

s annoyed "The good news is that little burst didn't get past five meters. The signal it shot was incredibly weak."

n oh "How do you know?"

s "The radios are still fine. I can get a distress message out and let the universe know of our plight."

nar "For a moment, my heart dances with joy at the thought of being rescued. The dream of the space force riding in with the cavalry and fixing my mistake is just that... a dream..."

n "The transmission time for this deep in unknown space is more than twenty four hours by itself. Add in travel time... we'd be dead for a week before anyone arrived."

s serious "I know. I'm not going to be our silver bullet to slay this problem. I figured that you might feel better if you know you didn't cause a universal disaster."

n smile "...thanks."

s quiet "Also... once I can get in contact with everyone, I'm going to allow everyone to use the radio to send final messages to their loved ones."

nar "Final messages... despite his constant words of reassurance, his actions tell me the real truth behind his feelings. We are dead. I killed us. No amount of hope is going to save us."

nar "That little boon of hope is ripped from my bosom and tossed to the depths of space. Sol, my friend and competition in this universe, has declared us finished."

s "I'm going to let the junior officers use it first, but I think you should use it after them, Natalie."

n sad "What could I tell my mother? Goodbye?"

nar "Sol moves close to me, close enough that I can feel his warm breath on my ear as he leans in."

s irritated "Rasoona sent a report about what happened already. I didn't read much of it, but let's say that long ears wasn't quite glowing about her review of your actions throughout our time."

n "She's blaming me..."

s "I think she's trying to have you brought up on charges of criminal negligence."

n oi "She's trying to put me in jail? We are on the cusp of death, and the commander wants to drag my name through the mud?"

s "She's never liked SITOs. The mutant freak thinks this is the last chance she'll ever get her revenge

on your organization."

n sad "...but she's right. This is all my fault. I'm the one who screwed up. I... deserve it."

s regret "Natalie, let me be perfectly clear with you. You screwed up. Yes, yes, you did. Big time. If you would have waited until you were in your lab, none of this would have happened."

s serious "But that was then and this is now. Hindsight is always perfect. Blaming ourselves for what we have done doesn't fix anything. It keeps us focused on the unchangeable."

s "I trust you, Natalie. Do you trust me?"

n smile "Of course I do!"

s "Write your report. Be honest about it. However, don't blame yourself. You couldn't have seen this coming."

s smile "After that, keep fighting. I'm counting on you."

nar "Bottle up your feelings, Natalie. Even though he may be wrong and you are to blame for this, you are a major in the Katajion Space Force."

nar "If these are your final hours, let everyone see you as being the strong leader they need... even if your heart is crushed into pieces."

n "Alright, Sol. I'll write it."

s "Good. Also, don't forget to send something to your mom. You always forget to let her know what you are up to."

nar "Yeah. Dear mom, your daughter screwed up and is now about to die alongside her crew because of it. That's why I won't be home for leave after this tour. Whoops."

n laugh "I should send something. She always worries so much about me."

s "Because she loves you. You should be glad to have a mother who cares so much."

n "I think I am going to send that letter. Even though she never wanted me to do this, she was always there supporting me."

s "Just like all of us. Natalie, do you remember when you almost failed your fitness test in the academy?"

n yare "I try to forget that."

s serious "You never told us that how close you cut it. You tried half a dozen training plans in secret, none of which worked for you. Natalie, how did you finally bring your score up?"

n sad "..."

s "Tell me."

n "I asked you for help."

s smile "You asked me and I asked our entire squad. We all started training together and what

happened?"

n sigh "I get it."

s serious "Do you? Because I'm watching it happen all over again."

s "You don't have to bear this burden alone. Myself, Zuri, Alphonse, Faye, even the housecat are pulling for you and want to help take the world off your shoulders, Atlas."

s grumpy "Even the slimeball and Kylie would, if they'd ever answer their summons."

n "We pass or fail as a team."

s "That lesson is as true today as it was when Brumford first told us it."

nar "And the reverse holds true as well... I let Zuri walk away, even though I know she isn't holding up well."

e smile "Why don't you go get a couple hours of rest, Natalie? You look exhausted."

s serious "He's right. You look like you are about to pass out."

n "I've been up for coming up on twenty four hours now, but I can't rest yet."

s grumpy "You aren't going to help anyone in that shape. Take a break, get a nap."

n sad "But-"

s "Kika is hard at work on a solution. Let kitty take care of the situation for now, get a few winks, and then take over our miraculous victory from there."

nar "Exhaustion is about to overtake me, my legs and spirit almost refusing to go on, but there is one thing I have to do before I can take a short rest."

nar "Because if death is to take us, I don't want to die with this regret on my shoulders."

n doori "Okay, but I need to do something first."

s annoyed "Natalie-"

n "Thanks, Sol. Thanks for everything."

s quiet "No problem. Just take care of yourself, write that report, and we'll come out of this on top."

n "Thanks as well, Al."

e "May the spirits guide us all this day."

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black with fade

jump songOfZuri

label songOfZuri:

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "Hopefully, Zuri is in her room. I can hear the faint noise of music resonating through from

inside."

nar "I knock on the door several times, putting more and more muscle behind it, but Zuri refuses to comply."

nar "I can't deny to myself that I'm growing more concerned by the moment. It never occurred to me that my cheery shield could be vulnerable."

nar "I need to be there for Zuri as both a confident leader and a supporting friend. Zuri has been there for me on this mission, and I need to be there for her."

n smile "I'm coming in."

scene bg 05 with fade

scene bg CG06 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG06 = True

play music "Music/ms21.ogg"

nar "A soft, beautiful melody radiates out as I slide the door open."

nar "Inside, tears streaming down her face, is our guardian, my newest friend and confidant. Zuri's fingers slide up and down the small, dull flute as the music plays."

nar "Any doubt in my mind at her honesty is gone. She really was a flute player for the Emerald City. No mere musician could make such a heart-rendering performance."

nar "Every note feels like it is being pulled from Zuri's soul. Every tear being played out for the world to hear. Each note telling the story of a girl facing the darkness."

nar "Her song is soft and tender, hopeful yet sad. The real Zuri, the shy young girl that thought she was the one who caused her friends to die. The one who dreamed of being a hero."

nar "I'm... envious. She's a warrior who fights with all of her heart."

nar "Even though her eyes are red and swollen with tears, I can still see the strength behind them. I can see the strength I wish I had."

nar "Maybe she was right. I'm not a warrior, I'm a soldier. I fight for duty and country, she fights for what she believes in."

nar "Her song makes me wonder, truly wonder, if I could ever stand up for that; if I could be the officer I want to be and fight for what I want to be."

nar "Slowly, her song begins to fade. Zuri lowers the instrument and looks at me with a forlorn smile."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg 05 with fade

show zuri sad at center

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 2.0

z "I guess I never became the warrior I thought I could be."

n smile "Zuri, that was beautiful. Why aren't you proud of it?"

z "Because I'm weak."

n sigh "Nobody who could play as touching of a song as you did is weak."

z "I never changed. I'm still the same pathetic dreamon. I can't protect anyone."

z "Here we are, facing death and danger straight in the eyes, and there's nothing I can do! No bad guy to thwart, no bomb to defuse, no monsters to shoot."

z "It's just like before! I'm powerless to save anyone I care about! My family is going to die again and I can't do anything!"

nar "Family... Sisters and brothers in arms, sworn to fight and uphold peace and justice in the universe. The thoughts are crazy... peace and justice doesn't get you promotions."

nar "But I know what she means. I know what she is feeling. I don't want to solve this mystery for some promotion anymore... I want to protect Zuri. I want to protect Sol. I want to save my crew."

nar "Sol's words come back to me."

n sigh "Zuri, you aren't entirely right."

z complain "I never am..."

n doori "You protected me. You're giving me a reason to fight, a reason not to give up and let myself die here."

z "Natalie, you don't get it. For being a scholar, you just don't get it. I've never played my music because I wanted to become a famous musician."

z defeated "I played it because I'm a coward who can't face the world. For someone who has to be a warrior and guard those she loves with her life, I still tremble when danger lurks."

z "I kept training and training, but it never fixed anything. I couldn't stand up when the big moment came and I couldn't stand alongside you. I fled back to my music again."

z sad "I just wanted to be a warrior like Akurel was..."

n sad "You really loved her, didn't you?"

z "Mhm. If she was here instead of me, she probably could find a solution. Even if she couldn't, she'd be able to do more than just play the flute to calm herself down."

n doori "When Kika and Faye were in danger-"

z "I was scared. Frightened. My knees were quaking at the thought of going to save them."

n "But what did you do, no matter the danger?"

z defeated "...I saved them."

n "You did. When I thought everything was over in the engine room, you helped me get back up again. After listening to you play, I feel like I could take on the universe."

n laugh "I don't want any harm coming to anyone here and as long as I know you are here, I don't have to worry. Even though danger lurks even on this ship, I can feel safe knowing you're there."

z "..."

n smile "Zuri, brute strength alone isn't power. We need you. I need you."

n doori "We're a team, Zuri. No matter how weak we are individually, we all pull together to make everything better."

z sad "..."

nar "We're a team... Even if I am just a SITO assigned here temporarily, we are a team."

nar "For the first time in years, I don't feel the constant tug of loneliness driving me off the edge of sanity. I feel... safe."

nar "Maybe there is more to life than making that next promotion..."

nar "If I would have cared back when I was a cadet, maybe they wouldn't have tried dumping me in the middle of nowhere... maybe I could have helped people, defended the Directorship like I always said I would."

nar "Maybe..."

z soft "Here. Lay down, you wordy scholar. You're wobbling more than my heart."

n smile "Thanks, Zuri. Wake me in a couple hours, alright?"

z "Sure thing."

nar "I lay down on the rough cotton sheets next to Zuri. Even though I am mere hours for my demise... I truly do feel safe knowing that she's here, watching over me just as I am watching over her."

z "My family used to love this lullaby. I hope you do, too..."

n laugh "If you keep playing it from the heart like you always do, I'll love it no matter what."

z "..."

nar "The soft tunes of the dreamon's flute play on as I finally lay my head to rest, my heart still and peaceful for the first time..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump kikaDiscovery

label kikaDiscovery:

scene bg 03 with fade

show zuri cheery at zuriLeft

show kika smirk at center

show sol regret at solRight

play music "Music/ms10.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "Good morning!"

s "Stow the cheeriness, for my sake..."

kk "Hmph! I see plenty of reason for cheerfulness. If anything, we should be throwing a party for me."

s "Don't listen to her. We are no closer to finding a way to fix the engines than we are to inventing teleportation."

kk annoyed "Teleportation is impossible, idiot. Fixing our engines is not."

s "Does the concept of a comparison evade you?"

z confused "Don't fight! We need to work together. Where's Kylie?"

s annoyed "Disobeying direct orders with that bastard demon. I wish the commander would listen and finally do something about it!"

n hmm "Despite all of that drama earlier, he isn't doing anything to help save us? I find that odd."

s "I dunno. After he had his turn with the radio, that whole angry, bitter facade disappeared and he went back to being his usual dirtbag self."

n "Odd... very, very odd."

z "Maybe he finally is at peace with something?"

s irritated "Spirituality? Him? No, he is up to something again. I know it."

n "Who did he send a message to on the radio? What did he say?"

s "He asked for privacy, just like Alphonse and Faye did."

kk sad "How is my minion doing? I was going to go check up on her, but I've been tail-deep in wiring diagrams."

s sad "She's... not taking it very well. She let out a very, very depressing howl and buried herself in her datapad."

z sad "..."

kk "..."

n htp "Sol, could you go check up on her again?"

s "I already planned on it once Kika tells me why she wanted all of us here."

kk excited "To throw me my party, duh."

show zuri happy

s grumpy "I'm going to throw you out the aft hatch if you don't have a good reason for this."

kk "Can I tell them?"

nar "Kika's inquisitive eyes bore into me, looking to confirm the trust I need to place in my friends and crew."

n "Go ahead. I told Sol after we talked anyway."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk smirk "I've made headway on translating the runes from that photo. I'm not all the way there yet, but it is only a matter of time."

show zuri surprised

s surprised "Runes? What photo?"

n "Remember? I told you on the bridge that Kika was translating a photo we managed to rediscover."

s "Noooooooo... you told me Kika was working on a solution to our problem, which was the engine thing."

n sigh "I know I did."

s quiet "You were exhausted. I doubt your memories are accurate."

n "No, I'm pretty sure I told you."

s grumpy "I'm pretty sure you didn't."

kk annoyed "I'm pretty sure that Sol's knowledge of the existence of the photo has no bearing on the rest of this conversation."

s "Fine."

n irate "Okay."

kk "Good. Now as I was saying-"

s annoyed "But she never told me anything."

kk tsun "Both of you are the stupidest pair of majors I've met! Shut up, let me talk!"

nar "...he's just forgetful."

show zuri smiles

kk annoyed "Like I was trying to say, despite this being a bad photo of sloppy carvings, I've managed to translate some of it."

s serious "This was taken at the original site?"

kk excited "Correct. If I had to guess, I suspect there was one in the desert as well. Somebody took them before we got there."

z serious "No way those wimpy scholars could have moved that big rock."

kk thinking "No. I suspect that our SITO is correct in assuming a third party is ahead of us. With the

information they gleaned from the rocks, I'm beginning to understand why they left the crystal behind."

n hmm "They didn't want to risk themselves until a proper recovery team was in position."

kk "Precisely."

s "What did the rock say?"

kk "It was a warning!"

s regret "Oh. Good. You translated the ancient warning label. Thank you for telling us stuff that is absolutely useless to us now."

n "If I would have focused on solving that mystery..."

kk angry "You'd still be idiotly. Don't interrupt me when I'm trying to do my big reveal!"

s "You just did it."

kk tsun "No! That was just the build-up! You have to do the reveal properly or it loses all impact!

Haven't you ever seen an action-packed holovid?"

s "Kika. This. Is. Real. Life."

kk annoyed "You have no flair for the dramatic."

z smiles "I like it. Keep going, Kika."

kk smirk "That's better. It wasn't a warning that touching the thing is dangerous, but that it was the weapon that ended the Chazari civilization."

n "The key to the universe. If I had to make an educated guess, the researcher knew he was being chased, so he ran out here to hide it where nobody could ever find or use it."

kk thinking "That would be a logical conclusion. Rather boring, though."

n htp "Do you have a better proposition about what is going on?"

kk "No, but since I'm obligated to give a counterview..."

kk excited "This is just the first piece of the real superweapon. He ran out here to put it in the rest of the superweapon and blow up all of the bellino crystals in the entire universe."

show sol surprised

show zuri surprised

n huh "..."

s "..."

z "..."

kk embarrassed "W-w-w-what? It was a joke."

n yare "Kika... is there something you know that you aren't telling us?"

kk "No."

s angry2 "Housecat, now is really not the time to be holding information back."

kk "I'm telling the truth. Every word out of my mouth has been honest!"

n "What about the rest of the words you aren't telling us?"

kk uneasy "...after I finish deciphering it, I'll be able to tell you that it wasn't a joke and there really is a superweapon out there that could do this."

s regret "This day just keeps getting better and better."

z protest "What... what if people get their hands on this? What if the Raltins come back for it..."

s "Assuming we aren't dead by that point, it would be safe to presume that they would ensure we were."

kk annoyed "I bet they are out there right now, laughing their heads off. We did their risk management for them."

s irritated "That's why they've been letting us continue ahead, but doing everything they could to thwart our intelligence efforts. They knew of the dangers, but what better way than to see them firsthand."

n hmm "Sol... you said that Stan seemed considerably happier when he got to use the radio in private."

s "Think the bastard has been more than just a corrupt misogynistic pervert?"

n "He has never had an alibi, he attempted to bribe me to gain favor, his behavior has been suspect, and he failed to identify the toxin that Faye was poisoned with after the attack."

kk "That's all circumstantial evidence."

n "Do you have more evidence that would suggest someone else as the leak?"

kk please "There's no solid proof there even is a leak. Your entire story is solely dependent on Zuri's word that she was innocent."

z angry "I am!"

kk angry "Where is the proof?"

n doori "You are the proof. You are the only person who could translate that photo. If Zuri was the Raltin infiltrator, you and Faye would have been left to die in the desert."

n irate "Zuri risked her life to save you. Does that mean nothing?"

kk uneasy "I'm not trying to be evil here, I'm just trying to make sure all of our bases are covered. You made your point, Zuri is not likely to be the leak."

show zuri smiles

s quiet "As much as I would love to confront the good doctor about this, the fact of the matter is we are either going to die when the power gives out or we are going to die when the imperials show up."

s "I doubt we have much time left to prevent either demise. What is our next action?"

z excited "There's only one thing we can do that will protect the most people. We have to smash the crystal."

kk angry "Have you gone mad?"

z "I'm serious. Nobody can be allowed to have this crystal. Even if there isn't some superweapon out there, this thing could be used as one!"

z serious "Sol, do you want your family to live in constant fear of a Raltin weapon that could strand them on Quin?"

s serious "She has a point, Natalie. If just the energy from your fingers was enough to detonate a burst to short out our engine room, they could use it to fry much more. Quin wouldn't stand a chance."

z "None of the Directorship would. Too much of our technology is dependent on bellino crystals!"

kk tsun "Shut up, shut up, shut up! We don't know a damn thing about this crystal! If we smash it now, we may never know what secrets it may hold."

z protest "But nobody else will either."

kk angry "I haven't even finished translating the runes! We don't know for certain if this crystal poses any real threat!"

s annoyed "The effects are plain to see, you stubborn housecat."

z "We don't have the time! They could be on top of us at any moment."

kk sad "...please, Major Puccile. I just want a little more time. Finding a way to smash this thing won't take very long. We can risk a little more time."

z excited "Nat, just let me smash it. One or two good hits from my tail will make sure this thing won't harm another person ever again!"

s serious "Let her destroy it. It's for the best."

kk "But..."

kk crying "Do whatever you want to do. What does my opinion matter?"

s "We're running out of time. Natalie, your operation, your decision."

nar "If I leave this stone intact, it is likely that it could fall into the wrong hands. Almost certainly. Even if the Raltins aren't preparing to swoop in, the Katajions will."

nar "Do I trust this rock in anyone's hands?"

nar "But there is so much more that could be learned from it. Is it my place to say what is and is not right?"

nar "Kika is in tears over this. All she wants is a little more time. Are we truly that hard-pressed that I cannot give an inquisitive mind just a few more minutes?"

nar "I trust Sol and Zuri with my life, but Kika's advice hasn't been wrong very often..."

n sad "We... we..."

menu:

"We keep the crystal intact.":

jump wayHome

"We smash the crystal.":

jump finalMinutes

label finalMinutes:

stop music fadeout 8.0

n "We have to smash this thing. It is our sworn duty to stop these sorts of things from falling into enemy hands."

kk "Fine! Whatever!"

hide kika with fade

nar "Kika shoves her way past me, running from the room with tears streaming down her face."

s regret "I guess we aren't getting our revolutionary new engine design now. Not that there was much hope for that in the first place."

z excited "Can I see the crystal, Natalie?"

n htp "Here. Make it quick."

nar "She takes the glittering rock of death and sets it down on the counter."

z "Take aim and... HIYAAAAAH!"

nar "Zuri spins around, throwing as much force as she can behind her tail and slams it down on the crystal."

z complain "Owwww..."

nar "As she lifts her tail up, I confirm that nothing remains other than blue powder and pebbles embedded in Zuri's thick tail."

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

s annoyed "You know we could have just used this hammer, right?"

z happy "Consider it petty, but I wanted to at least defeat something in this fight."

n happy "You certainly beat the crystal. Good job, Zuri."

z "Thanks. Did our crystals come back to life?"

s sad "...no."

z complain "It was worth a wish."

z smiles "At least nobody will ever be able to use this thing against innocent civilians."

s smile "Damn right."

n smile "That others may live..."

z "What now?"

s quiet "Let's go down to the lounge and have a drink."

n "I think it would be a better idea to go find out what our doctor has been doing in his spare time."

s "...I don't think that really matters now."

stop music fadeout 3.0

show zuri confused

n huh "Why not? Pouring the victory drinks now is a bit premature."

s sad "..."

n yare "Sol... are you playing 'I have a secret' with me again? Right after I yelled at Kika, too."

s "Let's go get those drinks."

n "No! Not until you tell me what-"

s "Kylie's estimations were dependent on us being in drydock configuration, not operational. The battery drain was significantly higher than she estimated."

z angry "Then why the hell didn't you turn everything off?"

s regret "Ship safety settings prevent us from doing that while operational. The central computer has control over everything, including life support."

z "That's dumb..."

s "This sort of situation was never supposed to occur. Nobody ever thought a cheap command ship would lose all power generators in deep space, so safety hardwires were installed."

n irate "The kind of safety that kills."

s "I thought you'd appreciate that."

z sad "...so ...we are gonna die soon?"

s "Power cuts off in ten minutes."

z "Then we freeze to death and explode."

s "Not quite. The shield keeping pressurization in the docking bay will fail. Based on the size of the bay and the inability to properly seal the ship, we'll quickly lose air. Hypoxia and loss of consciousness will follow."

z "..."

nar "Maybe... it is better not knowing the time of your demise. What seemed so far away was something that couldn't hurt me."

nar "But I think it is time to accept it. Time to accept death."

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

s smile "How about that drink?"

z smiles "Yeah. Sure."

n smile "A toast to your victory over the most dangerous of foes, Zuri."

z excited "It was a really good hit, wasn't it?"

s "The best I've seen from you so far. You'd have taken my head off with that one."

z cheery "Want me to try one more time? For old time's sake?"

s grumpy "Let's not go too far, lizard-brain."

n happy "Heh heh."

n laugh "It might be cliched to say it, but it was an honor serving with you both."

s smile "Same."

z surprised "Even me?"

s "Even you, when you aren't acting like a total spaz."

s "Well, time is wasting. Let's go get that drink."

n doori "Wait, I haven't finished my report."

z happy "You're still writing that thing?"

n "I just have a few last minute additions."

s regret "Natalie, have you ever filed your paperwork on time?"

n laugh "It's not late just yet. Besides... this is important."

nar "All of us are laughing, trying to keep the terror from breaking us down. We're afraid of death, afraid of the afterlife, but we all are trying to keep strong for our friends."

nar "If either of them broke down and started crying, I doubt I could hold all of this pain and anguish in."

nar "But we aren't. We're being strong, because we have to be strong. We had to do the right thing."

nar "If these are to be my final moments, Mom, I think I can be strong to the end with my friends at my side."

nar "I hope this final record of our tale doesn't disappear. I hope that you know your daughter died trying to protect everyone. That I didn't fade into the abyss for naught."

nar "I did everything I could. I have to trust that it will be enough."

nar "I love you and I'm sorry I couldn't make it home, but I'll rest easy knowing there is still a home."

n doori "Okay... I'm ready. Let's go."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg CGEnd2 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

label wayHome:

n sad "We keep it intact."

z angry "What?"

s angry2 "Natalie, you cannot be serious! We have to destroy that thing while we have a chance."

kk annoyed "What's your deal? We have time left. Keep an eye on the sensors and watch for any approaching ships. Smashing this thing won't take more than a minute."

s quiet "..."

kk angry "Unless there is something you aren't telling us. Deciding to keep secrets of your own, Sol?"

s angry2 "That's Major Hackett!"

n irate "Major Hackett, what aren't you telling us? Why can't Lieutenant Starr have her extra time to make sure there is no way out of this?"

s grumpy "..."

n angry "Tell me, Sol!"

s regret "Kylie's estimates didn't figure in our ship being in operational mode instead of drydock mode."

show zuri confused

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 2.0

kk uneasy "Are you telling me you didn't turn off non-essential equipment?"

s angry2 "You stupid cat, I can't turn even the lights off! Everything is automated. Safety regulations dictate that they stay on."

n "Regulations for lighting at a time like this? Sol, that's awful, even for you!"

s "Natalie, do you really think I didn't try to turn them off? Our system is hardwired since nobody ever expected a cheap command ship to lose all generators and be stranded in deep space alone!"

z sad "Then... how much time do we have?"

s regret "Maybe fifteen minutes."

kk angry "Did you think that wasn't important information for us to know? What the hell! What sort

of crappy executive officer are you?"

s "What does it matter? You had your shot and you blew it."

kk "I wouldn't have given the photo any attention if you would have told me this! You doomed us all!"

s "I didn't want you all dreading that moment. Having it quick and painless would have been merciful."

z thinking "Then... we have to do it now."

kk uneasy "It's a shot in the dark, but maybe a brainstorm session one more time might give us a fix."

z angry "No! No! No! We have to smash the crystal! Nat, why would you want to let anyone have such a dangerous thing?"

n irate "I don't want them to have it, but we have to use every minute we have to try and find a solution to our problem."

z "No! If you aren't going to be a warrior and do what has to be done to protect the innocent, then I will!"

kk angry "Get back!"

z "I'm going to smash it!"

kk "You are not going to smash it!"

nar "Zuri starts thrashing wildly, tail and arms flailing wildly like a tornado. Kika, the brave kitsune, is holding her ground against the chaotic onslaught, but it is only a matter of time before Zuri pushes past."

n angry "Calm down, Zuri!"

z "Why won't you stand-up for what's right? I thought you were a warrior!"

kk "Stop gawking and help me stop her, Idiotly!"

nar "In this cramped room, that tail is already doing more damage to equipment that costs more than I make in a year. She wants me to get past that thing and stop Zuri?"

nar "No time left to fret! I have to stop Zuri! Friend or not, she's posing a danger to this mission and that crystal!"

n "Stop it-"

stop music

#play knockout

scene bg black with vpunch

nar "Holy crap, Sol is right about the force of Zuri and her tail! A glancing blow to the side of the head and the ceiling is spinning like a vortex. Unending agony spikes through my head."

nar "Hold it together, Natalie! Lose consciousness now and you'll never get it back again."

s "Zuri! Look what you did!"

z "You mean what I'm trying to do!"

s "No, you scaly git! Natalie!"

nar "I feel someone grab my hand. The pressure gives me an anchor, a focus to keep me tied to this reality."

scene bg 03

show zuri protest at zuriLeft

show kika angry at center

show sol quiet at solRight

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

s "Are you alright?"

n sad "Owwwww..."

z "Natalie!"

s angry2 "Stay away! I told you. I told you time and time again! One day you were going to end up hurting someone! Guess what?"

z "Let me help!"

s "Don't you think you've done enough?"

z uneasy "She's bleeding! Let me help."

kk smirk "I know first aid."

s "We don't care, Kika! We all know first aid! It was part of everyone's training!"

kk annoyed "...I still know it."

nar "Slowly, the world begins to return to focus. The spiking pain isn't going away and my shoulder feels damp for some reason, but I can at least maneuver again."

n "Is it alright?"

s serious "It just looks like you cut yourself on a test tube when you fell. You'll be just fine."

n angry "No, the crystal. Zuri didn't smash it, did she?"

z sad "Why won't you let me do the only thing I'm good at? I only can hurt those I care about, so just let me hurt the thing hurting them!"

z "I want to be a warrior..."

n "Sometimes, we have to do things we don't like. I want to smash the cursed thing as much as you, but Kika still needs time to work on it."

n smile "Being a warrior means you have to put faith in your comrades, even if you think what they

are doing isn't always right."

n "Zuri... you're my friend, right?"

s grumpy "If she is, she's a lousy one. And stop struggling while I bandage this up."

n oi "She's not a lousy one, Sol! If Zuri didn't follow her heart, she wouldn't be my friend!"

z defeated "..."

n sad "So... please. Have faith in me. Have faith in Kika. We'll do the right thing."

z "...okay. I trust you, Nat."

z "And I'm sorry for losing it there. You're okay, right? I didn't hurt you too badly."

n sigh "Maybe if I would have spent more training time with you, I could have taken that hit better or dodged it. It felt like you knocked me back to Earth."

z "..."

n smile "Even if you might have fractured my skull a bit, I forgive you."

z "I think I should go. You all don't need me messing things up any worse..."

#start to hide Zuri but bring her back

n angry "Where do you think you're going?"

z protest "Let go of my tail!"

n "We're in this together!"

nar "She's thrashing back and forth again, but Zuri is showing better self-control this time. I'm still having a helluva time holding on to the thick, scaly tail, but I'm not in danger of going through the bulkhead."

z "Let go! Let go! Let go!"

n "Sol, Kika!"

show kika angry at allLeft

show sol angry at innerLeft

with move

s angry "Damn it, Zuri! Don't make us drag you back in here!"

kk "We don't have time for melodrama!"

z "Then just let me go!"

n "If these are going to be my final moments, I want to spend them with friends!"

z "Friends who hurt you?"

n "Friends who care."

nar "Slowly, the swinging subsides."

show sol annoyed at solRight

show kika annoyed at center

with move

z sad "...I don't know what to do anymore."

s "None of us do, lizard brain, but we stick together nevertheless."

z "..."

z "I don't want to abandon my friends, I just... I just... I just don't know what to do."

n smile "That's why we have Kika."

kk smirk "That's right!"

s grumpy "Do you actually have any ideas right now or are you back to bluffing?"

kk annoyed "Bluffing, if you must know. I was hoping one of you might have ideas."

nar "After all of that... Kika has nothing? I thought she had a plan... something that could be gleaned from the crystal."

n sigh "If only there was some way to resurrect our engine crystal with this one."

kk "Rocks with souls is a stupid idea! All they are is amplifiers and transmitters that hold and focus."

s "Well, perhaps there is a way that we can do a reverse energy transfer to restore our crystal."

kk "Sol, if you have no idea what you are talking about, just don't talk. Better yet, read a book on energy."

n "Do you have a better solution?"

kk thinking "...we could cross-compare the wave output and see if we can alter the crystal's composition to restore the original bellino crystal's signal output."

s "Do we have the time for that? Time is ticking."

kk tsun "I don't have any ideas that could be done in ten minutes! Maybe if you hadn't tried concealing the truth from everyone and let us know how much time we really had left!"

s irritated "I didn't want everyone counting down the minutes to their deaths!"

n oi "Stop it! Both of you! This is no time to fight!"

s "Natalie, please stay out of this!"

z confused "...what if we just stuck the crystal in the engine?"

n huh "Huh?"

kk angry "What? You mean just stuck this thing in our engine and fired it up? That is the most... stupid... thing..."

stop music

show kika thinking

s "Kika?"

z "Sorry. I just wanted to contribute something."

n smile "It's okay, Zuri. Any idea is good at this point."

kk excited "Especially one that is so remarkably obvious that a brilliant genius like myself completely overlooked it."

z "Wait? I had a good idea?"

play music "Music/ms18.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "A brilliant one. I knew keeping idiots around was a good idea."

z protest "That's mean."

kk "It's a compliment. You might have just saved us all."

s angry2 "And doomed the rest of the galaxy. You puffed-up housecat, if the energy from Natalie's rubbing was enough to destroy, do you really want us pushing primary generator-level power through it?"

kk annoyed "Hear me out before you try to shut me down. The phase shift isn't going to matter much to the engine, it really just needs the primary focus. We should be able to hardwire the places that needed the small crystals."

s "Kika-"

kk tsun "Hush!"

s "Did you just tell a major to hush, lieutenant!"

kk "Yes! Time is short!"

kk excited "As I was saying, that should be able to get us into shift. We don't have to worry about frying anyone's engines out here and I doubt the energy input is enough to reach known space."

s "We still have to travel through that space."

kk annoyed "You really don't do hush very well. We'll be in shift, outside interaction with regular space. We shutdown the engine before we shift out and do an emergency exit."

kk smirk "Problem solved, problem staying solved."

z cheery "This won't hurt anyone?"

kk "Just our friendly Raltins, if they are out there. Personally, I don't care what happens to them. They didn't come try rescuing us."

z "The innocent people will be spared and we can go home."

kk "Most likely."

s grumpy "Most likely?"

kk annoyed "Do I look like an engineer with a degree in ancient technology? I'm working on presumptions here."

n "It's better than nothing. Kika and Zuri, you start getting everything setup for the swap. Sol, go get Kylie. I don't want anyone working on engines who isn't certified. I'll get the repair kit from the bridge."

s serious "And if this fails?"

n oh "There's a small chance we've made everything worse in the rest of the universe and we die."

kk smirk "No risk, no reward."

z sad "...have faith, right?"

menu:

"Refuse to let it get put into the drive.":

n "We can't take the risk. Keep studying it until the last second, Kika."

kk "Logical."

z "It was a pretty stupid idea..."

jump waitingGame2

"Stick it in the drive.":

n smile "Have faith. Let's do it."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump bridgeTools

label bridgeTools:

scene bg 01 with fade

play music "Music/ms06.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "If I were a box of emergency wiring tools, where would I be...?"

show alphonse smile at center

e "Natalie? What are you doing here?"

n smile "Hello. Still up here praying?"

e "You are correct. Have you come to pray with me? The spirits welcome all souls willing to seek their guidance."

n "As tempting as that is, I think your prayers might have already been answered."

e surprised "How so?"

n "Our navigator thinks she might have found a way to get one of the engines working again. We might be able to go home! I just came up to get the tools."

e laugh "Exciting to hear, but didn't you destroy all of the crystals?"

n "Not all of them. Kika thinks she can use the one we found in place of the others."

e smile "Interesting. I wish you the best of luck."

n "Thanks. Where is the wiring kit?"

e "Under Zuri's seat."

n happy "Thanks! Want to come with and see our last glorious charge?"

e thought "I will stop by shortly. I still need to use the radio quickly to send out a message... should this not be successful."

n "I understand. Thanks for the help, Alphonse."

e "My pleasure."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump fixingTheEngine

label fixingTheEngine:

scene bg 06 with fade

show stan panic at stanLeft

show kylie surprised at innerLeft

show zuri protest at zuriRight

show kika angry at innerRight2

show sol irritated at solRight

n doori "I've got them! Let's get this thing moving!"

s "We have a bit of a snafu here, Natalie."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "And with that one little sentence, my heart plummets into the depths of Hades."

n oh "There was collateral damage? It won't fit?"

s "Oh, if only it were that simple. Why don't you tell her, dear doctor?"

nar "Doctor... oh no."

st irate "I refuse to let you do this! This is absolute madness! You've seen the power of that stone, yet you would use it anyway?"

kk "Yes. Stop thwarting us and get out of the way."

st "I'm thwarting, as you so elegantly put it, the destruction of space travel! Isn't that right, Kylie?"

k sad "...I dunno."

s angry2 "Kylie, don't let that monster pollute your mind any further! Have I ever led you astray?"

Have I ever done anything that has not been in support of our great nation?"

st "Shall I answer that question?"

s "I'd rather you just stand there silently."

st complaining "How many times has he been cruel to you? How many times has he laughed at you for your size and stature?"

s "Personal feelings have no place in this matter!"

st "See? He doesn't care for you. He doesn't care for the non-humans of the universe. Major Hackett only cares for himself and his own survival."

s annoyed "That's not what I said!"

st bored "Actions speak louder than words, my barbarian major."

kk "A touching speech, but this isn't Sol's idea."

st sly "The power-hungry daughter of the most inept president in Earth's history. Another person who does not care for those around her, but for her own personal gain."

kk "So? My personal gain helps those around me. Capitalism makes the galaxy go around."

k "But..."

z "It was my idea anyway!"

st bored "Tell me, lieutenant, but do you even know how this particular engine works? Do you know how any engines work?"

z "...well, no."

st hmm "But you do, don't you, my dear? You've always been marvelous at making things run so smoothly. Even the commander is always complimenting you."

k laugh "She always tells me that! I even got awarded maintenance officer of the quarter for First Fleet."

st "That's right. You are one of the best maintenance people in the space sector. So... what do you think about putting dangerous things into our engine?"

k "Well... the regulations say we-"

s angry2 "Damn the regulations!"

st laugh "Rules are for others, is that it?"

s "Rules have their place, but we are minutes away from death here! We need to stop this whole charade, you bastard, and get this thing working."

st lazy "So that others may die?"

s "This is safe, I promise you."

st "You wish to ignore the advice of a decorated technician whom I have heard you compliment so

many times in place of your friends and a woman who is barely literate."

z angry "Y-y-you promised you wouldn't tell anyone!"

n angry "Don't let him get a rise out of you."

s serious "I see where this is going. If you will excuse me..."

hide sol

show kylie nervous

st "Where is he going?"

kk "To get the commander, logically."

show alphonse serious at solRight behind zuri

show kika angry at innerRight

show azaia patronizing at center

nar "A half-second later, the commander walks in with a different major in tow."

a "What is this about using that foul weapon?"

e "Forgive me, Natalie."

a "You have nothing to be sorry over. That Major Puccile would attempt to alter my ship without my notification is unacceptable. That she would put others in danger doing so..."

a "You SITO are all alike. You and your mission first, everyone else does not even register."

n "This has nothing to do with me being a SITO! You are letting your hatred cloud your judgment."

a "If I were to say that I planned on ending trillions of lives traveling through space, you would call me a madwoman, would you not?"

kk "That's not what we are doing! I know I'm right!"

a "Stay out of this lieutenant or you will be flight officer by day's end."

n "You will not talk to her that way, commander! She's the only person who has never let her eyes drift from the objective of getting home!"

a "Major Hackett spoke so much of your professionalism. Show some of it."

a "I know accepting death is hard, but killing everyone else is not the way to do it! Officer Migi, I order you not to do anything with our engines."

k laugh "Yes, ma'am!"

a "And you... beast... you can spend the remaining time in your quarters. Lieutenant Zuri, take her away."

z protest "...no."

a shocked "Excuse me?"

z angry "I said no! I trust her! She's doing what is right! Natalie is a warrior..."

n smile "Thanks to you, Zuri."

z "I told you I'd protect you no matter what. I meant that."

a patronizing "Then you both can be put on charges!"

show sol angry2 at solRight

hide kika

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 3.0

s "I'm afraid not, commander."

a "Do not make this a fight, Major Hackett. I know you have strong feelings for Puccile, but I know you are true to your duty as well."

s "I am. Here, Zuri."

z surprised "My rifle?"

s "Natalie, you know what we have to do."

st panic "Are you suggesting a coup?!"

s "Suggesting nothing. Coups are illegal. Natalie, you have the last card to play here."

nar "The trump card of a SITO... the one that will ensure Rasoona never forgives my actions here today."

nar "But... if commandeering command of this ship entirely means being able to get everyone home alive, then I'll find some way to make this sound better in my final report."

n http "By sixteen point seven point eight point one one five of the Katajion Space Sector charter, I hereby exercise my power as a Special Investigations and Tactics Officer and hereby assume direct command of this vessel."

n "Commander Rasoona, you are hereby relieved of your command. Major Hackett, the ship is yours. Computer, remove the commander's privileged access."

comp "Access terminated."

a "You... It isn't enough to take my rank, but you monsters want my command as well?!"

st "You bully the real heroes of this-"

n irate "Shut up. Colonel Nelson, you are under arrest on suspicion of treason and corruption."

show zuri happy

st "Do you forget our conversation?"

nar "Sol..."

s "Don't worry about me, Natalie. We all have to own up to our mistakes one day. If I have to come down, I don't mind taking that monster with me."

n doori "Zuri... take them away and lock them up in their quarters."

z cheery "Roger!"

a "When the galaxy finds out what you've done, I hope your punishment is vengeful."

st complaining "...this isn't over yet."

z "No more one-liners from you! Come on!"

hide azaia

hide stan

hide zuri

show sol serious at center with move

show alphonse serious at right

show kylie scared

show kika smirk at left behind kylie

kk "As much fun as it was seeing them get what they deserve, we still are almost out of time."

s "Kylie-"

k "Don't hurt me!"

s "It's okay-"

k "Leave me alone! I'll do it, just don't shoot me!"

s quiet "..."

n huh "Kylie, we aren't-"

k "Stan was right! You just want to send me to prison! I didn't do anything to hurt anyone!"

kk annoyed "Just put the damn crystal in and stop blubbering! I don't want to die here!"

k "But what about everyone else...?"

kk "Just do it!"

k "O-o-o-o-o-okay!"

hide kylie

s "Don't be so rough on her."

kk "I'll be nice when I'm not on the brink of death!"

e "..."

s annoyed "I completely forgot you were here. Stop doing that annoying sigh."

e "Pardon me."

s "Are you going to try and stop as well, Alphonse? I'd love to finally have a reason to shoot you."

e thought "Your pictures meant that much to you?"

s "I'm not kidding. Don't give me a reason."

n sigh "Sol, calm down. It's over."

e serious "She's right. I mean no harm to anyone. I do not wish to join the spirits today either."

s "..."

s regret "Sorry. Staging a legal coup has me on edge right now."

e "It's understandable."

show kylie scared at innerLeft

k "There. All done."

kk annoyed "You installed it correctly? Not trying to sabotage us?"

k "No."

kk "Because if you did, Sol might not have any restraint left on letting you stay free or alive anymore."

k "I'll double check!"

kk "That's what I thought."

s sad "...I'm sorry, Kylie."

k "There. All set. Let me go."

kk "Get out of here."

n htp "How do we do an emergency restart?"

s "I'll do it. We'll need to be back on the bridge though."

kk excited "There isn't a moment to waste! Hurry!"

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 01 with fade

show kika excited at innerLeft

show sol serious at innerRight

show alphonse smile at allLeft behind kika

show zuri smiles at zuriRight behind sol

kk "Where is the start-up switch? Where is it?"

s "Kika?"

kk "What?"

s "If you ever try to sit in my chair again, I'm going to eat your entire hidden stash of truffles."

kk uneasy "I wouldn't want to sit in your chair anyway. It smells funny."

s "That's my cologne."

n laugh "Is it still that Redwood musk?"

s "Why change what works?"

kk excited "This is not chit chat time!"

e "I worry about your blood pressure sometimes, Kika."

kk "I worry about my oxygen consumption in two minutes!"

s "She's got a point. Ready, Alphonse?"

e serious "Standing by."

s "Emergency engine checklist start. Pilot shows negative power in both engines."

e "Two de-energized, co-pilot."

s "Emergency safety switch set to off, pilot."

e "Co-pilot."

nar "Even in the heart of emergency, Sol is still following his checklists to the letter. Professional to the end."

s "Applying emergency restart switch in three... two... one... applied."

stop music

scene bg black

n "Ummmmm... Sol?"

kk "Well, this is the worst possible moment for my foolproof plans to fail."

s "Well, restarting the engine is going to take all remaining power. Either we are going to quickly die of hypoxia as air escapes our now-offline environmental shield or-

scene bg 01

show kika excited at innerLeft

show sol serious at innerRight

show alphonse smile at allLeft behind kika

show zuri smiles at zuriRight behind sol

s "-or the lights are going to come back on and all of our systems will power back up."

z cheery "Does that mean what I think it means?"

play music "Music/ms07.ogg" fadein 3.0

s smile "The power reading is barely within limits, but power has been restored to all propulsion and life support system."

scene bg CG05 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG05 = True

z "You did it!"

kk "Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

z "You really did it! I knew you would!"

kk "Stop attacking me!"

z "We're gonna make it home."

s "Measuring the signal radiation from engine... Well, well, well. Looks like the housecat was right. Measurements are saying that it isn't breaking more than 100 kilometers. That crystal can't end the galaxy on its own, it would seem."

z "You didn't end all transportation and interstellar life as we know it! You did it, Kika!"

kk "Let me go!"

z "Yay!"

s "Oh, let her express her happiness, you grumpy housecat. Even I'm impressed with you right now."

kk "A-a-alright. You can keep hugging me just this once..."

nar "Home... we can make it home... but the root question still remains. Can I hand over this crystal, this potential technology...?"

nar "Is it my place to make that call?"

nar "But... for now... I just want to let myself get swept up in the festivities of the bridge. I don't want to think about the decisions I must face later."

nar "Zuri gives me a brief hug as she keeps bouncing around the bridge. Seeing her out of that dark, depressing funk gives me hope once more."

n "Kika, put us on a course for Duster Station. Stay outside the one hundred thousand klick range please."

kk "I told you that we won't be able to affect it while in shift, but fine. I'll play it safe this time."

z "We're going home!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump decisionsOfThePast

label decisionsOfThePast:

scene bg 04 with fade

nar "Hours later, as the party begins to wind down, I find myself still unable to shake the concerns over the future."

nar "I had fun toasting Kika, though we had no alcohol to do so, and 'redistributing' Stan's hidden stash to make for a feast. Everyone smiling, trying to forget how close we came..."

nar "But seeing Faye constantly grimace from the pain and the haunted look in Kylie's eyes remind me of the burden I have to carry. This is not a flawless victory. It's not much of a victory at all."

show zuri confused at center

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "You haven't even touched your steak, Nat. What's wrong?"

n huh "Nothing."

z smiles "Sol made it way too done, didn't he? I told him that all they needed was a light heat, but he kept thinking they were too bloody!"

n smile "No, the steak is fine. I don't like it bloody myself."

z confused "Then what's wrong?"

n laugh "Really, there isn't anything wrong."

z sad "...I'm worried about what's going to happen when we get home, too."

n "I can't really lie to you, can I?"

z excited "You proved you were a real warrior back there. You faced danger right in the eye and you didn't budge, even when we thought you were wrong."

n laugh "All I need to do is work on my fighting skills, don't I?"

z "Well... since I'm here beside you, you don't need to worry about them too much."

n smile "I do feel a lot safer with you around, Zuri."

z soft "It warms my heart to know that, but I want you to depend on me more than just for safety."

n nervous "W-w-w-what do you mean by that?"

z "Are you blushing?"

n "..."

z happy "I was just thinking about how Akurel wouldn't be proud of me if she could see me today."

n smile "Oh."

n yare "Wait, what?"

z uneasy "I've been thinking... maybe there is more to protecting others than just kicking the butts of bad guys. It's a critical skill to being a warrior, but..."

z excited "I want to be more. I want to be that type of warrior all of the elders talked about. Someone who can be wise and strong."

z soft "More importantly... I want to be someone who can walk alongside you. When I'm around you, I feel like I can be a better dreamon, a better warrior."

nar "In the past, I would have taken her words with a chuckle. Of course she'd want to be with me, I was the best and brightest the universe has to offer."

nar "Now... maybe I'm not. Zuri feels strong in my presence... but I feel weak. Like I can see past the shine I've touted for so long to see the rust that has been growing underneath."

nar "My heart is racing like I had just run a marathon, my brain is muddled from mental

exhaustion..."

z "I want to stay with you... and... what I'm trying to say is that..."

n huh "..."

z uneasy "See? That's why I want to be with you. I don't even know how to speak the words on my mind and heart."

n laugh "I can't teach you that. I can't do it either."

z soft "We can learn together."

n "I'd like that."

z uneasy "...do you think we're going to get in trouble?"

n htp "We haven't done anything illegal. They have those rules for just these sorts of circumstances. Too many power-hunger officers who wouldn't help SITO's on official missions."

z sad "But... she's right. That thing is incredibly dangerous. We can't just go home and hand it back over to the authorities."

n "Is it our place to decide that? We both took the oath to follow orders and our orders were to find out what happened to the researchers and report our findings."

z "We also swore to protect the people. Can you think of any use of this sort of information that doesn't result in the suffering of innocents?"

n oh "..."

z thinking "Which is more important? Protecting the state or protecting the people?"

n hmm "But why can't we do both? Why must they be separate?"

z "If you can find a way to stop the corruption of power, let me know."

n "Let's ask Kika. I'm sure she can find a way."

z happy "First I have to think up an idea, then we can ask her."

n laugh "Heh."

n smile "I'm glad we didn't let you go."

z "It was nice being able to protect people with more than my tail. I want to keep doing it."

n "You've got a bright future ahead of you, Zuri."

z "We have a bright future ahead of us."

n laugh "Right."

z "Orders might someday tear us apart, but..."

z sad "..."

z smiles "Hey, if you aren't going to eat that, can I have it?"

n "Sure. It's a bit cold though."

z "That's okay. As long as it isn't more mushy rice, I'll take it!"

nar "The future... what does it hold for me... for us?"

stop music fadeout 5.0

nar "Zuri doesn't want to look at the darker aspects of it, but they still lurk there. In my mind, in my heart."

scene bg black with fade

jump uneasyPresent

label uneasyPresent:

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "I wish I could stop time... or at least slow it down. Our full speed return to friendly space is going too fast. Far too fast. The time when I am going to be held accountable for everything is close at hand."

nar "Every time I walk past the locked rooms of the commander and the traitor, I can't help but think about the future of darkness that awaits me."

nar "What if they think I did things wrong? What if they expected me to die honorably by smashing the crystal? What if Zuri's fears are right and I am handing over the tool of destruction to corrupt politicians?"

nar "Every hour of every day is consumed by those fears. If command decides that I screwed up, it might not even be Flight Officer Puccile by the time they're done."

nar "Rasoon and Nelson are already going to paint me as the villain. If my report and evidence doesn't swing them to my side, I just illegally arrested two senior officers and used a weapon of mass destruction."

nar "I need proof. I need evidence. I need..."

scene bg 01 with fade

show alphonse smile at zuriLeft

show faye smile at innerLeft

show zuri smiles at zuriRight

show sol annoyed at innerRight

show kika excited at center

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "Finally! Do you know how long I've been waiting for you to show up?"

n sigh "Five minutes?"

kk "Five minutes!"

s "Is it that important?"

kk "More than you could possibly ever know. We have a major, major, major problem! One that might be even too big for me alone!"

f "We can do it, Kika."

kk tsun "Bigger than this entire ship combined."

e serious "Pray tell."

kk thinking "I finished translating the text of the photo Major Puccile recovered. Most of it anyway. There were a few horrible runes that I couldn't get, but I patched it together as best as I could."

nar "That does not bode well..."

kk "My original assumption was spot on. It was an ancient warning label about not touching the crystal."

s grumpy "Like I said before, that information is a little too late to be useful to us."

kk annoyed "Like I said before, it isn't like that! Do you even listen to me?"

s irritated "It's hard to pay attention when you feel the need to dramatically build things up."

kk tsun "Shut up! How I tell my exploits is none of your business!"

kk smirk "Ahem. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, the onilleb crystal is only one piece of a weapon that was used to destroy the Chazari."

s regret "The what? Did you really just name it the reverse of bellino?"

z happy "Oh! That's clever."

kk smirk "Right? The original name those boring charlatans named it was 'dark crystal'. Seriously, how unimaginative can you get?"

s "So the dark crystal is only a piece in a greater threat?"

kk annoyed "Onilleb. I'd say it poses a substantial threat by itself, but the flowery language of armageddon and mass destruction of planets rates a pretty significant threat as well."

n huh "Excuse me?"

kk thinking "It was amazingly sparse on the details, but... let's see..."

kk "Armed with the Hammer of Something or Other, couldn't really translate this, no infidels could stand in our path. Righteous fury cast this corrupt planet into the oblivion with a wrath that knows no mercy."

kk "Should the heretics rise from the ashes once more, we leave the tool of the gods scattered at the temples. Seek them out with the heart of a true believer and the universe will be yours."

show sol quiet

z thinking "The key of the universe..."

kk "It wasn't the stone, it was the whole contraption."

show kylie scared at zuriRight

z protest "We've just brought back... no..."

n hmm "Zuri, we don't know what threat this may pose to the universe. If anything, we should seek help from those that may know where to find the other pieces."

z "You want to seek out a weapon to 'purge the heathens'?"

k "..."

hide kylie

n oi "Finding this sort of thing is the exact reason that SITO's exist."

z "But who will wield it at the end of the day?"

n "Nobody! Especially not the Raltins!"

e serious "But is our own government any more trustworthy? Sol, you remember your little operation a few years ago."

s serious "...there are some good people in the government, but there are some real scumbags as well."

e "Can we trust that the power of the good will be able to overcome the power of the evil? Who is righteous, who is villainous?"

z "We can't take that risk! For the good of the nation, we can't hand over any piece of the device."

kk "We are still operating on a photo of a rock found in a jungle. I think we might need to gather more evidence before we say this is a weapon or not."

z thinking "Were you sleeping when we almost died?"

kk tsun "No. I didn't get an ounce of sleep the whole time. I was too busy trying to save us!"

z "Then you know how hard it was! Can we stop it a second time? A third? A fourth? We have to stop evil at its roots!"

s smile "Surprisingly insightful, Zuri."

n oh "..."

s grumpy "But this is not our place to decide. You are a security officer, not someone with the rank and responsibility to make such decisions. None of us are."

z cheery "Natalie is! Like she said, this is her job!"

nar "While she is technically correct and I do have the authority to make such decisions, I don't think command assumed that I would be making such a colossal decision."

nar "None of the stories in training ever mentioned what to do after you've arrested leadership over a

crystal that could potentially end planets and intergalactic travel."

nar "Maybe I slept through that lesson, but I think the correct lesson they would want me to implement was the one on the chain of command."

n hmm "If I return without the crystal, nobody is going to believe my story for an instant. The only evidence of anything I'll have is a bunch of shorted out bellino crystals, the commander's report against me, and a picture of a rock."

n sad "...I bet the food in prison tastes the same as ship food."

z protest "Don't say that!"

s sad "It's true, Zuri. They'll see any action that isn't handing over the crystal to them as traitorous. That vaunted SITO freedom only lasts as long as their favor with command does."

e "You can't fight the ones with the power."

z "We can't give them more! Think of the innocent people!"

z sad "What if one day the alliance between the Katajion Directorship and the Ryu'llian Republic ends... they might use it on my home..."

z angry "You want to see the Emerald City, but there might not be one by the time they are done, Nat!"

s annoyed "You don't know that! You have to have faith in the directors!"

e "But even you said yourself that they have both strong and weak-willed men and women. Director Tsuku and Doichu might keep them in line now, but will that last forever?"

s "...ughhhhhh."

e "But... what do you think, Natalie? Can we trust command?"

n "...I need to think about this for a little bit. I'm heading to my lab."

z "I'm coming, too!"

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri sad at center

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

n sad "..."

z "..."

n sigh "Sigh..."

show kylie scared at innerLeft

k "M-m-m-m-major Puccile?"

n "Hmmm?"

k "You aren't evil, are you?"

n oi "What is evil but someone disagreeing with your decision?"

k "But-"

n "Leave me alone right now."

hide kylie

z thinking "Just because you are upset doesn't mean you have to be mean to Kylie."

n sad "Sorry... I'm just scared. If I turn it over, I might doom the universe. If I don't turn it over, I'm going to jail for treason."

z smiles "The fates of warriors who have to decide between what is right and what is wrong."

n "Zuri, this isn't some philosophical moment when we can reflect on what makes a warrior. Either I do my job and hand the dark crystal over or I just arrested a vice commander and a colonel without substantial evidence."

z protest "But we know Stan is evil!"

n "By what? A bribe attempt I have no proof of? General misconduct that nobody is admitting? My strongly rooted suspicion that he has been interfering with my operations?"

z soft "Don't sound so depressed... even if nobody believes you, I'm still there."

n laugh "Why do you think I haven't broke down under the pressure of it all? My friends have been helping every step of the way."

z sad "I should have been a better security officer. Even with Sol's help, there were too many times that your lab was unprotected."

n huh "Y-y-you asked Sol for help?"

z "Since I don't have any security cameras and I was falsely charged... I had to find other ways to protect you."

z "You were so passionate and devoted... you reminded me a lot of Akurel and I..."

z soft "Natalie, I like you. A lot."

n smile "Zuri-"

z "I know you are wrapped up with all of the craziness, but... I just wanted you to know."

st "As touching as your little crush is, Zuri, it isn't going to last long when you both get executed for treason."

z surprised "What are you-"

stop music

scene bg black

nar "Before I have a chance to react, a blasting pain erupts from the back of my head and the world disappears."

nar "..."

nar "... ..."

nar "..."

jump lockedAway

label lockedAway:

nar "Banging. Violent banging. Like a ship rattling itself apart..."

nar "Is it finally happening... did the crystal break and now my nightmare has become my reality?"

nar "Is this just a nightmare...? I try to remember what was going on, but all I can feel is a constant throbbing in my head. Pain. Agony. Suffering."

nar "I remember Zuri was telling me she... liked me... I didn't know how I felt and was trying to compose an answer, then..."

nar "Stan!"

scene bg 05 with fade

show zuri angry at center

play music "Music/ms17.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "Let us out of here! Let us out!"

n sad "Owwwww..."

z thinking "Natalie! You're alright!"

n "I think I might need to see a doctor after all of this. I can't imagine constant blows to the head is good for my health."

z angry "I need to see a doctor before that and send him to the hospital. How dare he attack you! It was a sneak attack no less."

n huh "He got you?"

z "The commander got me with a sedative. Fighting with drugs... That's unfair and dishonorable!"

n "What happened?"

z "I couldn't really focus, but she mentioned something about stopping you from destroying the universe."

n "She thinks... she thinks I'm trying to destroy it?"

nar "I overthrew her and used a potential weapon as a power source. I can see why she might think that, no matter how incorrect it may be."

n "But how did they escape? You locked them up and I revoked their access."

z confused "I dunno. They should be as trapped as we are."

kk "You two are a pair of idiots if you can't figure out how they pulled it off."

n "Kika! Where are you?"

kk "Next to you. I've been trying to take a nap, but that damn banging kept me up."

nar "I glance under the bed and see a small vent linking the rooms."

z complain "If the door would just open, I wouldn't have to keep trying to knock it down."

kk "Idiot. You aren't going to be able to get out that way."

z confused "Then how did they get out?!"

kk "Who in the crew thinks we did the wrong thing, is being manipulated by the pervy doctor, and has computer access?"

n "Kylie? She took the initiative to do this?"

kk "With some motivation, but I know she did it. Little midget tripped me up when I was trying to talk to you after you ran off. Our lovely commander then decided to arrest me as well."

z "But Kylie... she's an innocent. She wouldn't help them."

kk "You underestimate her. Kylie might be a shade dim and clumsy, but she's dangerous."

n htp "Look, we need to have a group meeting and talk this out. We did what we had to do, they escalated it, and now we need to deescalate it before this ends with us in prison."

n "Computer, unlock the door."

comp "Door is currently in maintenance mode. Please authenticate to unlock."

n "Major Natalie Puccile, Special Investigations and Tactics."

comp "User not recognized."

n huh "What?"

comp "Unable to connect to external authentication database. Currently using internal authentication database."

z angry "Unlock it! Lieutenant Zuri, security officer!"

comp "User lacks privilege mode. User access limited to User level."

kk "You both think that they wouldn't have thought about that already? The only person who's privileged access she can't tamper with is Sol's because he's currently the shipmaster."

z "Then call up Sol and get him to unlock the door!"

kk "I already tried. They must have gotten to him already."

n sad "He's alright... right?"

nar "The thought of losing a friend to this madness hurts more than my head. I need to do

something!"

show zuri sad

kk "Don't worry, Rasoona would rather bring him up on charges than hurt him."

n "Sol has to suffer again because of me."

kk "Hey! I'm currently suffering because of you. Feel bad for me!"

n "I'm sorry, everyone..."

kk "...okay, don't. You're making me feel bad now."

z angry "I'm not going to just sit here! Let me out!"

kk "Stop banging your tail against the door! It's driving me crazy!"

n hmm "She's right, banging your tail against the door isn't going to get us through it."

z "It makes me feel better though."

n "What we need is a plan and quickly. Give me a second..."

kk "I couldn't think of anything."

n "Time to see if I can put some of those special tactics to use."

nar "Okay, let's review the situation. The door is locked and there are no other exits. There are some ventilation grates between the rooms to help ease airflow, but they aren't nearly big enough to fit through."

nar "The computer isn't recognizing my privileges because Kylie took the external database module offline. I'd have to be able to get to it to turn it back on."

nar "Attempts to call Sol aren't going anywhere. Odds are that after they took us out, they jumped the bridge. Sol would likely do whatever it took to defend the bridge. He's probably..."

nar "Out of commission... I refuse to think that he may have been killed."

n "Zuri, are there any weak points on the doors or walls?"

z thinking "I was looking, but they all seem sturdy."

kk "They'd have to be. We don't want to shake ourselves apart during shift."

n htp "The door lock. That's the only weak point in this whole situation. Zuri, can you get this panel off so I can get to the wiring."

z "Roger!"

kk "If you start tampering with the lock, you are going to trip the central computer."

n "Hmmm... Do you still have Zuri's datapad?"

kk "Yeah. So?"

n hmm "The software I used to translate the photo has an authentication database. If I hardwire a bypass, I should be able to trick the door lock into thinking that it is communicating with the central

server."

kk "Which would give you authority to remove the door from maintenance mode. Not bad, though I see a problem with it."

n "What's that?"

kk "You'd have to leave the datapad behind. If you pulled it to try and bust me out, the computer would notice that the door wasn't secured anymore and might put out an alert."

n oh "We'd have to leave you behind..."

kk "As much as I'd rather be the one to be freed, you need Zuri's strength more than you need my brilliance. Here."

nar "Through one of the gaps in the ventilation slides the worn datapad and my tool to freedom."

z smiles "The panel is off."

n smile "Good. Let me get to work on setting this up..."

z "What are we going to do after we open the door? We need a plan."

kk "Duh. Get to the bridge, retake the ship from the mutineers."

z confused "Who? Us mutineers or them mutineers?"

kk "Them!"

nar "I run the connector wire to the external junction port. Finally, something we practiced in SITO training has some practical use. I shouldn't have laughed at the instructors so much..."

n "Running security program... and... computer, unlock this door from maintenance mode."

comp "Please authenticate to unlock."

n "Major Natalie Puccile, Special Investigations and Tactics."

comp "User verified. Returning door to normal operations."

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 2.0

n doori "Kika, we're going to retake the ship."

kk "Wake me up when you do it."

z excited "Stay behind me. I'll protect you."

n "I'm in good hands. Let's go."

scene bg black with fade

jump retakingTheBridge

label retakingTheBridge:

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "We move as fast as our stealth will take us. After someone getting the jump on us once, Zuri has

shifted herself into high alert. Every creak shifts her steps."

nar "Once again, the physical side of things hinders me. I know the layout of the ship well enough to know where we are likely to get jumped, but any ambusher is going to hear my boots clanging."

show zuri surprised at center

z "Stop!"

nar "Zuri hisses sharply and I immediately stop moving. We're almost to the bridge now, just outside the lounge."

show zuri thinking at zuriFarRight with move

show kylie happy at alLeft

nar "I glance around the corner and see a very relaxed Kylie gathering up some of the remaining bottled beverages to take to the bridge."

z "She can't hold on to all of them... She's going to be there for a while."

n hmm "This is the only way to the bridge. We are going to have get past her without her raising an alarm."

z "What do you want me to do?"

n "We are gonna have to take her out quickly and quietly."

z sad "Do we have to? Kylie was always really nice to me and she's so adorable..."

n oh "I don't want to kill her either... can you think of a way to just get her out of our way for a while?"

z thinking "HmMMMMMM..."

z excited "Got it! Stand back!"

show zuri excited at alLeft2 with move

nar "In the blink of an eye, Zuri is blitzing towards the unsuspecting Kylie. My request that she remain silent seems to have gone to the wayside and her boots might as well be ringing gongs."

z "Gotcha!"

show kylie surprised

k "Huh? WAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

hide kylie

nar "With a swift motion, Zuri grabs the frozen hobban by the scruff of her collar and punts her straight into the lounge. As soon as the flailing Kylie clears the door, Zuri finishes it up with a spin, smashing her tail against the door controls."

z "Heh heh. I've always wanted to boot a hobban!"

n oi "What did I say about stealth?"

z "Meh. I thought being quick would be easier."

n "Let's get to the bridge before Rasoona or the doctor comes to investigate."

scene bg 01 with fade

nar "With the utmost delicacy, we slowly creep into the bridge. Nobody was paying any attention to the door... except Commander Rasoona, laying next to the door."

nar "A pool of blood surrounds her body, a clean bullet hole having torn through her face. My stomach feels queasy and I turn away. I knew Sol wouldn't surrender, but seeing her dead..."

show zuri sad at center

z "Commander..."

z "W-w-w-well... she never liked me anyway..."

n sad "What happened?"

st "I'm not going to ask you again! Hand over the command of the console!"

n htp "Come on, we need to get closer."

scene bg CG03 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG03 = True

s "..."

st "Hand over the code now! Do you want to end up the same way as the commander?!"

s "As shipmaster, you must understand that I am unable to surrender this ship to a mutiny."

st "Do you want to die? Is that it?"

s "You kill me, you can't change course or regain control over the security systems. You're not stupid enough to try, mongrel."

st "Do you know what awaits you at our destination? Give me the ship and the crystal! If you come with me, you might spend more of your life outside a jail cell."

s "I've done nothing wrong."

st "You're a murderer!"

s "Self-defense. Just like when I kill you."

st "The only person who is going to die is you, should you not surrender!"

s "Then we are at an impasse."

st "You arrogant, racist prick!"

n "Zuri, we need to do something!"

z "You're right. As mean as he is to me, I don't want Sol to die."

z "Besides, he's your friend. I don't want to see you cry."

n "Thanks, Zuri."

st "Fine. You don't want to talk. How about I give you some proper motivation?"

s "..."

nar "Stan pulls the gun away from Sol and levels it straight towards my hiding spot. Crap..."

st "How about I kill your little crush? Maybe you'll be more receptive then."

z "Move!"

scene bg 01

nar "My body feels like it was hit by a train as Zuri grabs me and dives for the cover of the navigator console."

nar "I can hear the telling zing of a near miss from the shots being fired at us, follow by a cry of pain from Zuri. Hatred and anger rip through my heart with more ferocity than any bullet."

nar "I hear a meaty thud, followed by the clank of metal hitting metal. I glance out of my cover for a second and see Sol on top of Stan, fists swinging."

nar "Not knowing what sort of state Zuri is in, I know that I'm going to have to leap into action. The pistol is mere feet from me and in my hands a second later."

n angry "Freeze!"

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 3.0

show stan panic at center

show sol serious at solRight

show zuri excited at zuriLeft behind stan

nar "The pair of fighters stop struggling, Sol pulling away from a fearful Stan."

n htp "Zuri, are you alright?"

z "Yeah. He just grazed my tail. The doctor is a bad shot."

st "Of course I am, I'm not a monster. I'm not a murderer, like our executive officer."

s "I warned her that if she attempted to take the ship by force, I would be forced to defend myself."

st "All we have ever tried to do, Natalie, is help protect everyone. Don't you see where this madness is taking you? A warrior of Katajia is dead because of you."

n sad "..."

s quiet "I'm the one who has Rasoona's blood on my hands."

st "Protecting the crystal, protecting your little girlfriend."

s grumpy "Watch out, Natalie, Kylie is still out there."

z "Already taken care of."

st complaining "...cold, uncaring monsters."

z smiles "We just threw her in the lounge and broke the controls."

st "..."

n oi "Was it you? Was it you who broke my datapad? Destroyed my research material and all of those hours I put into Vicount Tales?"

z confused "What's that?"

n smile "An awesome role-playing game."

z "There's more than just puzzle games?"

st "You care more about your games than the people of the universe?"

nar "I level the gun perfectly between his eyes."

st sly "...it was I."

n oi "You've been working with the Raltins, haven't you?"

st "They offered me a very lucrative deal to thwart your operations."

s annoyed "How much money is it worth to sell out your nation, you horned devil?"

st "Enough that we could live as kings and queens on our own planet. Wouldn't that be perfect? You could trade that crystal away for more money than you have ever dreamed of."

z protest "We are warriors! We don't compromise our honor to protect the innocent for personal gain!"

s serious "We are professionals. We do our duty, something you never quite understood."

st "Heh... hehehehehe... you think this will end here? Do you think I've made it this far without help? If I go down, you all are going down with me."

s smile "Heh. Now you are proving just how stupid you are."

st complaining "What do you mean?"

s "Do you think after you tried to kill us several times that we are going to let you walk away? After you nearly killed Faye?"

st "Nearly killed? Oh, no. Your precious wolf isn't going to survive the month. Her internal organs are already tearing themselves apart."

s "Oh?"

st hmm "Heh. She's as good as dead."

z "You tried to kill Natalie. I can never forgive you."

st "Ah, the useless one talks. The leech of the group."

z angry "..."

n "Don't listen to him, Zuri."

st "All you can ever do is survive under the protection of your betters. Why don't you take that weapon away from the major and I show you who the better one here is?"

z "Drop dead."

n angry "All of the crimes you've committed... Nobody would have been put in danger if we would have had the information from the start."

st irate "..."

nar "If I let him go, he will probably escape justice again. I can end his smuggling, his villainy, right here, right now. I can ensure he will never pose a threat to the Directorship again."

n "Sol?"

s "For Faye's sake... kill the bastard."

show stan surprised

n "Zuri?"

z "...he tried to kill you. I can't forgive that. But..."

st "..."

z "I... I..."

z sad "Do it."

st panic "...okay, enough of this charade. Lock me back up again."

s "What charade? Today, you pay for your crimes."

st surprised "I am unarmed and have surrendered! You can't do it."

z "..."

st "I-I-I-Isn't it the SITO way to try and bring suspects in alive? I know more, but I'm not talking!"

s "We'll get it from Kylie."

st "Stop this! Stop this madness! Zuri, you know this is wrong! Didn't you swear to protect the weak? How could I be weaker?"

z "..."

s "Finish him, Natalie. End this."

menu:

"Shoot Stan.":

jump shotStan

"Spare Stan.":

jump sparedStan

label shotStan:

n oi "There is only one sure way to make sure you see justice."

st panic "Wait! Please! I don't want to die."

n "Neither does Captain Moonfallow."

st "Please..."

z "..."

hide zuri

stop music fadeout 2.0

n "I hope you find redemption in the afterlife."

scene bg black with fade

nar "The shot rings out. Even though my accuracy was bad in training, I don't miss from this range."

nar "The man who threatened my friends... who tried to kill us... who almost succeeded... he's dead."

nar "I killed him... I killed a man in cold blood..."

nar "No matter how this turns out, I will forever bear the mark of a murderer in my soul. But... I did what had to be done."

nar "After we secured the bridge, I went looking for Zuri. For being such a small ship, she was able to find many ways to avoid seeing me."

nar "I don't blame her... I don't even want to look in a mirror right now. I'm afraid of what I will see."

nar "Every now and then, I can hear Kylie crying in the lounge. I didn't have the heart to tell her what had happened. I don't think I would be the right person to say it."

nar "I wouldn't have suspected that Kylie genuinely cared for the slimeball traitor. The damage I've done on her heart... is it irreparable?"

nar "What could I tell her...? Sorry, but letting him stay with the living was only inviting another potential mutiny? He might have never had to pay for his crimes?"

nar "Are my crimes any less...?"

nar "As we dock with Duster Station, I... don't feel like the same person I was when we left a month ago. Is this the burden of sorrow that the old timers said I'd develop?"

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri defeated at center

nar "It isn't until I'm walking towards the docking port that I finally see Zuri again."

nar "Her eyes are hollow, her form drooping. She looks like she hasn't slept a wink since I did it..."

n huh "Zuri! Where have you been?"

z "..."

n "Zuri... are you alright?"

z "..."

n laugh "A-a-aren't you excited to be back? We can go get a good meal for once."

z "I... won't be able to."

n huh "Why not? If you're worried about getting in trouble, then you shouldn't be afraid. If they think we were in the wrong, I am the one who will be blamed."

z "They might blame you, but I'm the one who didn't do anything. Someone needed my help... I just turned away."

z sad "It was in that instant that I realized... I'll never be a real warrior."

n sigh "That's not true!"

z "It is... I knew that it was wrong. I knew that I had to stand up to you, but I just stood there and said nothing. I'm a coward..."

n oi "We had to do justice... we couldn't let him potentially escape."

z "..."

n smile "Let's go get some food before I report in. That will help clear our heads. I heard the deck officer's chow hall here is really good."

z "I can't."

n "Not hungry?"

z "I'm not a deck officer anymore."

nar "I know each of the words individually, but my brain can't wrap around the whole sentence."

n surprised "W-w-what? Did you get promoted to vice commander or something?"

z "I resigned my commission. I'm heading back home on the first shuttle."

n sad "Why...? Didn't you promise that we were going to be a team? We were going to be warriors together."

z defeated "I told you... I'm not a warrior. Every time I had to rise to the occasion, I failed."

z "Your lab got broken into, Faye got hurt, the government is getting the crystal, and I let you murder Doctor Nelson. Every time I tried to be a warrior, I failed."

z "All I could do was sit in my room and play my stupid, stupid flute."

n "..."

z "I told you... Akurel would be ashamed of me. Now I'm ashamed of myself."

n "Please... don't go."

z "I just wanted to say goodbye before I left. I know I wasn't the best role model, but... maybe you can be a real warrior someday."

z "...goodbye."

hide zuri

nar "Goodbye, Zuri..."

nar "I think... I think I want to go back to that backwater planet. I don't want to face what I've done... I don't want to face the commission who will make me relive every moment of this."

nar "I've destroyed so many lives... That crystal... will destroy even more."

\$persistent.codex_CG14 = True

nar "I'm... I'm going to go home as well. Back to the smelly swamp... back to the bad connections... I don't want to destroy more lives."

nar "I've done my part. I avenged Faye... I've done my job. I was a good SITO..."

nar "I made a difference, just like I wanted. I just wish it would have been a good one."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg CG14 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG14 = True

"Duty... what does that even mean anymore...?"

scene bg CGEnd3 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

label sparedStan:

n oi "There is only one sure way to make sure you see justice."

stop music fadeout 2.0

st panic "Wait! Please! I don't want to die."

n "Neither does Captain Moonfallow."

st "Please..."

z defeated "..."

n "That's why you are going to be held for treason in the capital. Let them send you to the hell you so rightfully deserve."

z surprised "Natalie..."

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 2.0

n irate "I don't want this worthless man's blood on my hands."

s annoyed "Hmph. Consider yourself lucky, colonel, that Natalie is a better person than I."

n "Let's take him back to his room, Zuri."

z excited "Okay."

n sad "Sol... could you...?"

s "Take ownership for what I was forced to do? Certainly. I'll take the body back to the engineering

bay until we can get a proper honor guard here."

n "Sol... I wish you hadn't killed her."

s "I wished the same, but I was not going to relinquish my duty to you so easily."

st sly "Hmph. When the courts judge what you've done here today, you'll wish you had just died out in space."

s "You would have died right along side me."

st "Heh. Would I?"

s "Yeah, because nobody would have been left to stop me from ending your miserable existence.

Your buddies wouldn't have arrived in time to save you."

st "...I'm ready to return to my room."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri sad at center

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 2.0

n doori "All secure."

z "...I'm such a failure. Some warrior I am."

n sad "It's my fault. I didn't think that Kylie would rise against us. I thought she'd be upset, but remember her duties."

z defeated "Not that... I wasn't going to stop you. I was going to let you murder an unarmed foe who had surrendered."

n htp "We all get wrapped up in our emotions sometimes. I almost shot him myself. If I would have... I'm not sure how I would have lived with myself."

n "He deserves justice, but that's why we have courts. That's why we have the legal system. If you don't believe the system works, it never will."

z "You're a lot stronger than I. I'm such a coward."

n oi "Would a coward have thrown herself in harm's way to protect me?"

z "I didn't even think. My body was moving before my brain realized what was going on."

n oh "My body was frozen. If you hadn't done what you did, I would have died."

z "But-"

n smile "Zuri... I owe my life to you. I owe it to you several times over. Even if you aren't the warrior you dream of being, you're still a heroic warrior to me."

\$persistent.codex_CG13 = True

scene bg CG13 with fade

z "It wasn't because I was a hero, it was because the thought of you dying before my eyes was more than I could take."

n "You're a hero to me..."

nar "The awkwardness is so thick that I'm amazed it hasn't formed a cloud around us. I can't look her in the eyes..."

nar "I feel her tail wrap around my legs, her warm breath on the side of my cheek, the soft pressure of her lips on my face. My heart is beating harder than when I had the gun pointed at me."

nar "What is this...? Why does my heart ache so? The moment seems to last forever, yet ended in a heartbeat."

z "I'm not the warrior I want to be yet, but I know that as long as I have you to fight for, I can be there one day."

nar "Just like that, it is over. She steps back with a sheepish grin on her face."

z "Ummmm... we probably should go let Kika out and check up on Faye."

n "Y-y-y-yeah..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump decisionHour

label decisionHour:

scene bg 01 with fade

show alphonse smile at zuriLeft

show faye smile at innerLeft

show zuri smiles at zuriRight

show sol serious at innerRight

show kika excited at center

play music "Music/ms04.ogg" fadein 3.0

e "Receiving tractor beam light signals from KSS Carpenter. They want to drag us back into station."

s "Granted. It's over..."

e "We made it. The spirits have shown us the way home from our endeavor."

kk "Like we were going to die out there! Hah!"

e serious "One of us did, Kika."

kk fufufu "The commander should have just stayed safely in her room and let us fight it out with

command! She brought it upon herself!"

z sad "..."

s irritated "Stow it, Lieutenant Starr. Prepare us for docking."

kk annoyed "How?"

s "I dunno. Look productive."

nar "We made it back. Soon, I will have to reestablish contact with command and tell them what happened. I'll have to hand over the key."

nar "Zuri's fears still haunt me. This rock indirectly led to the death of Commander Rasoona. How many more deaths will it lead to before everything is done?"

nar "Zuri keeps glancing at me with worried eyes. Even though she isn't saying it, I know the worries run through her mind. The warrior wants it smashed into a billion pieces."

nar "But... I'm an officer in the Katajion Directorship. I have to take responsibility for the mission."

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "Nat... we need to talk."

kk "Stop trying to talk her out of it!"

z protest "I just don't want to risk letting those with the wrong hands take it from us."

s "We know."

z "You don't like this either, Sol! Why aren't you being a little more vocal about it with me?"

s "Because you're vocal enough for the two of us, lizard brain. Natalie knows me feelings on the matter, she doesn't need to keep hearing them."

n oh "I... I don't know what I should do."

s serious "Well, you have roughly five minutes before they pull us in. Add another thirty for them to replace our outbound communication crystals."

z "Nat, I just want to say one last thing."

z sad "I put my faith and trust in you when everything looked dark and bleak. If you trusted me, you'd do the same."

nar "Talk about pulling out the heavy guilt hit. Those pleading eyes are looking for the reassurance of the bond between us."

nar "What do I do? What can I do?"

n sad "I'm going back to my room for a moment."

s "I'll send Kika to retrieve you when we get docked up."

kk surprised "Why me?"

s "Because I have to start getting the maintenance team working and the honor guard ready for

Rasoona. Not having radios is making this challenging."

kk thinking "Whatever."

z "Nat... I love you. Please be the warrior I know you are."

n "Zuri... I need to go."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 06 with fade

play music "Music/ms15.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "My feet, unguided by my lost brain, take me to the site of my biggest folly. Just a few distant days ago, I put us a heartbeat away from death."

nar "In the corner, covered up by a clean black sheet, is the body of Vice Commander Rasoona. I guess she would be the first casualty of my actions."

nar "My thoughts drift to our Raltin trailers. Rasoona probably isn't the only person I've killed. Odds are we fried their crystals when we started our engine up."

nar "Their friends and family will think that they'll be home one day. They have mothers, just like me, who were hoping they'd be home for the holidays."

nar "I killed them as well."

nar "Pulling myself into the engine, I see the small crystal that has caused so much pain. It is hard to imagine that such a small, sparkly rock could do so much damage."

nar "If Kika's translation was correct, it isn't even the worst piece of it. Out there is something that could do infinitely more damage."

nar "Zuri is right, nobody should have that sort of power. Power corrupts, especially ill-gained power. Though I trust my leaders to make the right decisions, that body in the corner tells me..."

nar "Everyone thinks they are doing the right thing. Everyone thinks that what they are doing is for the good of those they represent."

nar "Is it my place to play judge? All I am is a major in the space force. I'm not a director in charge of one of the fifteen sectors. I'm not the admiral of a fleet. I'm just a SITO."

nar "If I don't hand this 'dark crystal' over, am I no different than Stan? If I don't follow my own laws, I am nothing more than a traitor myself."

nar "But is doing the right thing worth taking that branding?"

nar "The ship jostles as we make contact with the extension arm of the station. I'm out of time. I need to resolve my indecision and make the necessary choice."

menu:

"Hand over the crystal to command.":

jump neutralZuriEnd

"Keep the crystal.":

jump bestZuriEnd

label neutralZuriEnd:

nar "I'm sorry, Zuri, but when I took my oath to support and defend the directorship, I also swore to follow my superior's orders. They want this crystal, I have to trust them to do the right thing with it."

nar "Besides... I need to own up to my failings on this operation. If I come straight with command, perhaps they won't be too hard on me. I did complete my objective and discover the risk to the universe."

nar "That has to count for something, right? My dream of becoming an admiral might still be able to come true."

nar "I'll convince Zuri to see it my way after I file my report. She'll understand, I'm sure of it. She saw the light when we had to use it for the engine, I'm sure she'll understand now."

nar "I feel a pang of guilt as I walk past the commander, but, like her, I've made my choice and I won't back down."

scene bg 02 with fade

show kika thinking

kk "Oh. There you are."

n sad "Sorry. I just wanted to look at the crystal again."

kk "Uh-huh. Did you make up your mind?"

n "I'm going back to my lab to wait for the radios to come back up."

kk fufufu "Filing the report and the crystal. I knew it."

n huh "You knew I'd do it?"

kk "Of course! No matter what Zuri thinks, you don't have the power alone to fight back. A major can't do anything by herself, but with the rest of the SITO's, you stand a chance."

kk smirk "Relying on the chain of command is difficult sometimes, but I knew you still believed in the force!"

n htp "Yeah. We're soldiers. We don't just circumvent the chain because we think we know better."

kk excited "Exactly. That's how we end up with lawlessness."

n "I hope Zuri understands."

kk "She's far too set in her ways to understand that rugged individualism doesn't get you places in

the military."

n oh "Do you think she will forgive me?"

kk sad "After begging you to put the same trust in her that she put in you? What do you think?"

n "...she said she cared for me. She wouldn't turn away so easily."

kk "If you violate everything she stands for? How naive are you?"

kk fufufu "Still, you are doing the right thing. Don't let her get to you."

n sad "..."

kk "Oh, and don't forget to mention my role in this. You better not steal all of the glory!"

n sigh "I won't. I'll be honest and detailed with my report to command."

kk excited "I did have to make a few liberties with your written report, but it was overall acceptable to my tastes."

n "I'm not surprised you still haven't developed any respect for your superior's things."

kk "I have to be sure. You might have tried to take all the accolades that are sure to come from this discovery."

n "Trust command, but don't trust me?"

kk smirk "Trust nobody where power is concerned."

n sad "..."

kk annoyed "I'm going to go get some food on the station. I've had enough of this steel tube for a long time."

n "Goodbye, Kika."

kk sad "Good luck, Natalie."

stop music fadeout 3.0

hide kika

nar "Good luck indeed..."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 03 with fade

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

col "You did a good job out there, Major Puccile. You rose to the occasion and we are impressed with your first true assignment."

n smile "Thank you, sir."

nar "After an hour of explaining everything, Colonel Pitterman finally says the words that sweep the fear from my mind. Good job."

col "Many of us thought that your idealism and independence were unfitting for a Special Tactics

and Investigations Officer, but I'm proud to say you rose to the occasion."

n huh "Sir?"

col "Never mind, major, never mind. We will dispatch Kilo Team to continue your investigation."

n surprised "K-k-kilo Team? The elites?"

col "That's right. If the Raltins are attempting to find this weapon, we have to beat them to the punch."

nar "They get it! They get the dangers! I have to struggle to keep back the tears of job."

n "What about me, sir?"

col "Why pull our new rising star off the case? I'm lining up a shuttle to bring you back to Central Command to debrief the Board of Directors before we send you back out."

n "T-t-the board?!"

col "Clean yourself up, Natalie. You're going to meet some of the most influential men and women in the galaxy."

n hmm "What about the Nimross?"

col "Let Fleet Command take care of them. They'll probably return to chasing local pirates and the like. But you... you've got bigger fish to fry."

n smile "Thank you, sir."

col "That's all. Standby on Duster Station for further orders."

n "Sir!"

nar "The communication line flashes red as the colonel disconnects. They aren't blaming me for Rasoon's death... They think I did the right thing."

nar "I get to work with one of the best SITO teams and chase after the remaining pieces of the device! Everything works for the best."

nar "I can tell the Board of Directors just how dangerous this thing is. They'll have to listen to me and destroy it. We can do all of the right things now with official backing!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri thinking at center

play music "Music/ms12.ogg" fadein 3.0

nar "I'm almost skipping as I step out of my lab. I'm so high on success that I almost don't even notice Zuri glaring at me in the hallway."

z "Hey."

n happy "Zuri! Command believes us! Nobody is getting in trouble! Colonel Nelson is getting arrested! I get to debrief the Board of Directors on this!"

z "..."

n "Zuri, we still get to do the right thing."

z sad "No, you already did the wrong thing."

n oh "We can't fight against the government! We don't have the power."

z "A real warrior doesn't care about power. They fight for the right anyway."

n "We need help."

z "We? What we? There's just you, Nat."

n oi "They're dispatching some of the best SITO's in the universe to help me locate the other pieces! Why aren't you happy?"

z protest "Happy? Happy that a bunch of people you don't know if you can trust are helping you? Happy that you side with people who only see you as valuable as what you deliver?"

z angry "Happy that you just sold out the universe? No. I'm not happy. I thought you knew right from wrong."

n "I thought you'd know when you couldn't keep struggling and had to get help."

z complain "I thought I was help enough. I thought we made a good team."

n sad "We do... but..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

z "A dreamon lieutenant isn't nearly as useful as your friends on the board."

n "..."

play music "Music/ms17.ogg" fadein 3.0

z sad "You're just like me, Nat. You aren't a warrior yet."

n oi "Then why are you so mad?"

z "Because I thought you were at least trying to be one. I had faith in you."

n "Then put it in me now."

z "Just like you put faith in me?"

n irate "You can't just ask that of me! Do you know what would happen if I disobeyed them?"

z protest "You wouldn't have sold your soul for something you knew was wrong."

n "You won't ever understand, will you?"

z "Just like you won't understand why you have to sacrifice to do the right thing."

scene bg CG07 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG07 = True

n "I guess this is as far as our partnership goes."

z "I guess so."

n "Zuri... you know I care a lot about you. This last month..."

z "Please don't say it. I won't be able to hold back the tears. I don't like this, but I can't follow you on this road."

n "But it is the only road I can walk. I had to do this."

z "Natalie... stay safe, okay?"

n "I will. You stay safe as well."

z "I will..."

nar "With each step away, that aura of invulnerability I've felt slips away. Each step is like walking further into a minefield of pain and heartache."

nar "But I had to do what was right... maybe one day, I can be the independent warrior that Zuri wishes I was, but today is not that day."

nar "Someday... when I have the power to make things right... I'll show her my path was not wrong."

nar "I'll hear her songs radiate through the Emerald City and know... we were both right."

nar "Until then... I need to keep walking. Even if it means I have to return to this path..."

nar "Alone."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg CGEnd4 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

label bestZuriEnd:

nar "I can't... I just can't risk handing over something that could spell doom for billions. It would be irresponsible of me to trust that power to anyone."

nar "Even though my duty requires me to hand this stone over to my leadership, my duty to the people tells me that I cannot."

nar "My heart... my heart tells me that I need to be spurred to action. This crystal, this weapon, that civilization... I know so very little about any of this."

nar "I know the what, but not the who, when, where, or how. If I blindly smash this crystal, I could destroy all hopes of understanding the truth. If I hand it over, I do not know what will happen."

nar "The only responsible thing to do as a officer of the people is to find out the truth for myself. Before anyone else has to pointlessly die, I need to find out the truth."

nar "I don't have much time... If I am going to continue pursuing the truth, I will need to move quickly. With Rasoonah having already filed her report, as well as mine, they will expect to hear from me soon. They know I have it."

nar "There's only one thing I can do. I'll have to run. I'll have to throw away my commission, throw away the life I've known. I'll have to be a fugitive from the law I'm trying to protect."

nar "A traitor. Not something minor like accepting a bribe, but a full-fledged AWOL deserter. If I do this, any hopes of fulfilling my dreams of being an admiral are shot."

nar "With a heavy heart, I pluck the crystal from the engine. There's no need to be safe now, just expedient. I slide it into a small carrying case of iron and stuff it in my pocket."

nar "I wish I could say goodbye to Zuri, to tell her that I'm putting my faith in her. I'm putting faith in myself to find the truth. I wish..."

nar "..."

nar "No. This is a burden I have to carry alone. Putting myself in the gunsights of the law is one thing. I care for my protector. I don't want her to suffer for me anymore."

stop music fadeout 3.0

n sad "Goodbye, Zuri..."

scene bg 02 with fade

show kika thinking at center

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "Oh. There you are."

n sad "Sorry. I just wanted to look at the crystal again."

kk "Uh-huh. Did you make up your mind?"

n "I'm going to go take a moment, hit one of the burger places, and think it over some more."

kk sad "So, you're running."

n sigh "That obvious?"

kk annoyed "I knew you were going to flee with the crystal. You think you're brilliant, but you are incredibly easy to read."

n sad "Then you know why I'm doing this."

kk "Zuri might think that you'd do this to protect the innocent, but I know you better. This is something that you can't trust to others. This is something Natalie has to solve."

n "Why can't it be both?"

kk sad "I never said it wasn't. I just said which was the bigger factor."

n "I should be going."

kk tsun "Wait! Stop running off or interrupting me when I'm in mid-speech!"

n oi "If you know what I'm doing, you know I don't have the time."

kk sad "I knew what you were doing, so I wanted to wish you luck before you left."

n huh "Huh?"

kk excited "Even though I think you'd be better off getting help from the government, I can't help but want to root for you. You remind me a lot of me."

kk sad "And... well... I wish I could go with you."

n htp "This is something I have to do alone."

kk annoyed "You're an idiot. At what point in your career did you ever do something alone and have overwhelming success?"

kk "Even I'm not stupid enough to think I can do everything by myself. What an idiot."

n hmm "..."

kk tsun "You're making me want to come with even more now. How can I leave such an important task in your hands?"

n laugh "..."

kk sad "But... I don't want to give up my titles... I don't want to give up my inheritance. Everything that makes Kika Starr amazing..."

n "Kika, you were amazing out there without any of that stuff."

kk "To throw it all away to chase you on an adventure that could end with me in prison... I just can't do it."

n smile "You've already done more for me than I could ever ask for. We all owe our lives to you. I owe understanding as much as I do to you."

n "You've done your part. I can take it from here."

kk "..."

n sad "I have to go. See ya."

kk crying "..."

kk embarrassed "Wait!"

n "What's wrong?"

kk excited "Be safe! Don't do anything stupid, alright, Idiotly! You have to solve this! I'm counting on you."

show kika sad

nar "I give her a wave, trying to keep a smile on my face. If I can barely say goodbye to Kika, how could I say it to Sol or Zuri?"

nar "No... I need to go now."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

nar "As I walk down the hall, I hastily consider my next move. The Marakia Institute has to know more about this. There had to have been a reason for that expedition in the first place."

nar "I can take a shuttle to unaligned space and then go from there. Celestia will be my first port of call."

nar "I'll have to hang up my uniform soon... but I want to wear it for now... just a little longer."

nar "I'm really doing it. I'm really giving up on my dreams for my duty. I guess... I'm more of a warrior than a soldier now."

nar "Zuri... it feels so quiet without her here. Like I have to constantly watch over my shoulder for the security team that will try to arrest me."

nar "Just like that, I feel a hand clasp on my shoulder, causing me to jump and almost hit my head on a bulkhead."

show zuri angry at center

z "And where are you going?"

n surprised "Zuri?"

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "I can't believe it! Kika told me what you are doing! I can't believe it."

n htp "You were right, Zuri. I can't hand this crystal over nor can I let this mystery be someone else's problem."

z "Uh-huh. I understood that. What didn't make sense was why you didn't tell me?"

n irate "I'm not dragging you into this, Zuri!"

z "I'm coming with you!"

n "Do you know what you are getting into?"

z "Nope."

n yare "Then-"

z "Do you know what we are getting into?"

n "Yes-"

z excited "Then that's all I need to know."

n angry "I'm becoming a wanted fugitive! I'm going to be chased by my former colleagues who may

or may not attempt to kill me. I'm running off with a piece of a superweapon, attempting to find the other pieces."

z "Uh-huh."

n "I have limited money, no idea where to find the other pieces, and the Raltins are probably several steps ahead of me."

z "Uh-huh."

n "Then why the hell do you want to come with me? No sane person would!"

z happy "We're a team, me and you. I have faith that what you are doing is for the good of the universe, so I have to help."

z soft "Besides... when I said that I loved you, it didn't mean selectively. It didn't mean if you loved me back or only in the best of times. If anything, it means more now."

n huh"..."

z "So... I'm not going back. I'm going to stay by your side and do whatever I can to protect you. I might not be able to do much, but what little I can is yours."

z smiles "That's what being a warrior means. It means standing up for what you care about and fighting with all your strength."

z cheery "I don't want to be a warrior now to make up for Akurel's death. I want to be one because I have something I want to protect."

n sad "Zuri... I... I..."

show zuri soft

nar "I wrap my arms around Zuri's waist, pulling her close to me. Words escape me, but I hope my actions can speak louder."

nar "I know I'm not alone. With Zuri by my side, I'm safe. Both my heart and soul feel calm, feel peaceful."

n sad "Zuri, I-"

s "I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

nar "Zuri pulls away, a sheepish grin on her face."

show sol grumpy at innerRight

show kika fufufu at innerLeft

play music "Music/ms18.ogg" fadein 5.0

z "You are. Could you go away for a bit?"

kk "I told you. It would have been hotter if we waited a few more moments."

z "..."

n nervous "T-T-T-That's not... I mean."

s smile "You get so spun up when it has to do with matters of the heart, Natalie."

kk "I totally should have taken a picture."

n irate "What are you doing here?"

s "Do you think I'm letting one of my last remaining friends do this alone?"

kk "You need us."

n huh "What about your wealth and status?"

kk annoyed "There's always more money out there for the brilliant, but there is only one universe."

s irritated "That's not technically correct."

kk "Hush. It's the concept that matters. Besides, my friends are a much more rare asset."

z "See? You're not alone, Nat. We all care for you. We all are here for you."

kk excited "Even Faye wanted to come with, but she's going to see a real doctor first."

n huh "Everyone..."

nar "I brush the tears out of my eyes."

n happy "Thank you. Thank you so much..."

scene bg CG04 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG04 = True

nar "Even though I don't know what my future holds anymore, I know I'm not alone."

nar "Together, we can stop this threat to the universe. We can make it a safe place again."

nar "Maybe... maybe this can be my dream. Maybe this can be my hope."

nar "For the future that yet awaits... we go together."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg CGEnd5 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

label waitingGame2:

stop music fadeout 3.0

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 5.0

"The last remaining minutes of my life tick by as Kika continues running the most basic of tests to ascertain the composition of the crystal. Tests I'm sure the Raltins will be thankful we ran when they get our data."

"Zuri is pacing back and forth, her tail being held still. I can tell that she's ready to swing it at a moment's notice. Every minute, on the minute, she gives me a worried glance before resuming her pacing."

show zuri uneasy

show sol grumpy

show kika thinking

s "Natalie, don't look so grim. You're making the rest of us worry."

n irate "It's hard to maintain a smile when you are minutes from death."

s "Any minute you step on-board a spaceship, you are minutes away from possible death."

n "Yeah, but it is never this assured."

z "Then we need to stop studying this thing and smash it! It's our duty!"

s "We're giving Kika what remaining time we have. That's an order, Zuri."

z "Sigh..."

kk excited "Good news! I can verify one thing."

z cheery "You really found a way to fix our ship?"

kk "Not that good. This crystal, while very durable, isn't immortal. I don't think Zuri could break it with her tail, but we should be able to safely dispose of it after my next few tests are done."

s "I estimate we have less than ten minutes left. How many more tests can you run?"

kk "As many as I can. Any bit of data we gather now might mean worlds of difference to whoever faces this threat next."

kk sad "I know getting home is impossible, but I don't want to die for nothing."

z sad "..."

"Zuri softly pats Kika on the back and props herself up against the wall."

z "I understand, Kika. Just as long as you agree that we smash it in the end."

kk tsun "Y-y-y-you didn't think I was just going to hand over something this dangerous to some random stranger who found it, did you?"

z "Yeah."

kk "Give me some credit!"

z "Sorry."

s quiet "I wonder if that researcher thought the same thing. He even blew up his only chance of survival to prevent anyone from ever finding it again."

kk thinking "Fat lot of good it did him. Stupid idiot probably didn't even bother realizing that blowing up his ship would do little damage to something designed to handle high amounts of energy."

kk "And if, a very big if, his ship was destroyed by some other force, then whatever he did to hide the crystal only managed to work once! He should have just dumped it into some random star."

n hmm "I wonder how this one managed to survive."

kk "I just told you that bellino crystals are durable. Even if it hadn't been in some sort of protective case, there is a chance it might have survived anyway."

n "All bellino crystals are durable? Not just your dark crystal here, but even ones you'd find in engines and radios?"

kk "Yeah. Unless they got smashed by some sort of direct kinetic force, there's a low chance of destruction."

show sol surprised

show kika please

"An idea slowly begins to form in my mind. A crazy one, but one where the option of survival is still a notch above certain death."

"I turn to Sol and can see the wheels turning behind those soft brown eyes."

n "Think we can pull it off, Sol?"

s "I'd be a fool to say no. I'm heading to the bridge now!"

z surprised "Huh? Where's he going?"

n doori "Maybe that curse isn't the only crystal our mysterious researcher left behind. Zuri, I need you to get Kylie down to the engineering bay. Knock out Stan if that's what it takes, but get her down there now!"

z thinking "Can I knock him out even if he doesn't resist?"

n "As tempting as that is, no."

z excited "I don't understand, but I'm glad to see you aren't going down without a fight!"

n "Kika-"

kk "You understand that the odds of finding a large enough crystal for our modified engines is next to impossible."

n "Maybe we can get our generators online long enough to for a rescue ship to save us."

kk smirk "Then I'll leave that to you while I work on the mystery of this crystal. Fixing long-term problems is my specialty anyway."

n "Thanks, Kika. Keep the bolt lock in place until I get back."

"Even if it is no larger than a speck, the feeling of hope is finally starting to burn inside me again. All we have to do is survive long enough to get help out here."

"Hope... it's all I have left."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 3.0

jump searching

label searching:

scene bg 01 with fade

show azaia shocked at center

show sol serious at solRight

show alphonse serious at alLeft behind azaia

play music "Music/Endless Rain.ogg" fadein 3.0

a "Puccile! What is the meaning of this?"

n doori "Commander, I think we might have a way out. It just occurred to me that there is a sizeable chance that we can retrieve a crystal from the wreckage."

a patronizing "It just occurred to you minutes before we died. What have you been doing for the last several hours?"

n irate "That doesn't matter! We have a chance at survival! Why are you being difficult?"

a "Do not take me as ungrateful for a solution. I just wanted a reason why you took so long to find such a simple solution."

"You didn't think of it..."

n "A simple solution is often the most overlooked."

a "While I will be adding this to my report, I agree that it has the greatest chance for our continued existence. Major Hackett, have you found anything?"

s "No, ma'am."

a "Continue your search, but be expedient."

s regret "Copy, ma'am. But... Commander Rasoona, wouldn't it be proper to at least thank Major Puccile?"

a neutral "Should this idea manage to save us, I will consider it. However, you would be wise to remember who put us in this situation."

s "Roger, commander."

hide azaia with dissolve

s "Sorry, I tried."

n htp "She's right though. I did mess up and trigger this. It's my duty to do whatever I can to fix it."

s smile "I'm right behind you, Natalie."

e sad "Though we are blessed by the spirits, death is a part of life. We should be prepared to accept our fate."

n sigh "I'm accepting nothing. Not until the last possible second."

s grumpy "Scanners on the droid are live. That pulse messed up some of the communications, but I have acceptable levels of scanning. Alphonse?"

e serious "Scanners running."

n "Do you know where the engine room might be?"

e "I keep telling him that he's searching the wrong area, but-"

s "You aren't factoring in the potential blast radius! Any engine component is going to be blasted out and away from the original location!"

if (talkedtoSol):

"Their behavior is so different than it was before. Sol's unfocused, Al is angry, and my nerves are shot."

"We found the crystal last time by everyone keeping cool, calm, and collected. Even if we are minutes from doom, we still need to maintain that."

else:

"I've never seen them act like this to each other. Is this how their relationship was before I entered the picture?"

"This is madness. It doesn't matter how close we are to death or how low our chances of finding, we need to stay focused and be decisive!"

"I boot up the drawing program on the spare datapad from storage."

"Now I don't know much about this particular brand of shuttle, but I know a bit from my studies in the lab. The engines are located here and here."

"The plasma markings were located on a piece of engine plating floating out here. Based on the scarring, the shot that destroyed the engines landed right..."

"Here. With the blast, it would have thrown the crystal... right where Alphonse is motioning."

"Ugh. I don't want to undercut Sol, but Al has the right idea."

menu:

"Tell Sol that he's wrong.":

"Friend or not, I have to correct Sol before we all die in this tin can!"

n smile "Sol, I just ran the problem and I think Al is right. You need to turn it around and bring it towards-"

s angry "It's Major Hackett and both of you need to shut the hell up while I'm dodging debris!"

"His words are painful, but I need to remain professional."

e "Calm down. Don't vent your frustrations on her."

s "I'm sick and tired of your mightier-than-thou attitude, Al. Both of you need to shut up and let me do my job!"

n yare "You can't do your job when you are in the wrong hemisphere!"

s "Then what the hell would you call that?"

"Hanging in front of us like a tantalizing dream sits a white crystal. It's almost large enough to be a handball."

n huh "But..."

e surprised "That makes no sense... did the spirits guide him in ways we could not see?"

s "You both were working on the right engine while I was working on the left. You're right, but there was no way to get that crystal back in time before we lost all power."

n "Then why didn't you say so?"

s "Because I need to concentrate, not give speeches. If you'll excuse me... prepare for retrieval."

n nervous "Yeah... I'll just get the repair kit and get down to the engineering bay."

s annoyed "Thank you."

hide sol with dissolve

e sad "It's not your fault."

n "I know. It is my duty to question him, but that doesn't make what just happened any less painful."

e "Talk with him later about it. For now, we all need to cooperate and utilize the gift the spirits have given us."

n sad "You're right. Good luck."

e "I need no luck for we have the blessings."

"Just got to shake that one off, Natalie. You were right, he was right. Of course both of you would fight to the death when you were both right..."

"To the death..."

"Stand back and let things unfold.":

"It's not my duty to interrupt operators of their equipment, even if I think they are searching in the wrong area."

"I can already hear Zuri yelling at me for not being assertive enough, but I'm not the only one with good ideas."

e "Natalie, could you do more than just hover over our shoulders? What is your opinion on this?"

n htp "Sol said he needs silence to concentrate, so that's what I'm giving him."

e "I do not think he meant the silence of the grave."

n "Major Tenzin, you've worked with him for a very long time. You know just as well as I do that when Major Hackett has a plan, he's going to stick to it."

n "It's your duty as co-pilot not to question him and my duty as SITO to see how things pan out and act from there."

e "Indecisiveness is not a plan. You've always been one step behind, yet you choose to surrender the key moment when you could get ahead."

"I try to brush off his remark, but Al has a point. I have just let things happen without trying to stop them. Even now... on the moment of likely death..."

"Ugh..."

n "Sol... Are you sure you have something?"

s annoyed "What the hell would you call that?"

"Hanging in front of us like a tantalizing dream sits a white crystal. It's almost large enough to be a handball."

n "But..."

e surprised "That makes no sense... did the spirits guide him in ways we could not see?"

s "You both were working on the right engine while I was working on the left. You're right, but there was no way to get that crystal back in time before we lost all power."

n "Then why didn't you say so?"

s "Because I need to concentrate, not give speeches. If you'll excuse me... prepare for retrieval."

n nervous "Yeah... I'll just get the repair kit and get down to the engineering bay."

s "Thank you."

hide sol with dissolve

e serious "I know it is hard to question friends, but you know just as well as I do that our ideas were not wrong ones."

n sad "I know. It is my duty to question him, but that doesn't make what just happened any less painful."

e "Talk with him later about it. For now, we all need to cooperate and utilize the gift the spirits have given us."

n "You're right. Good luck."

e "I need no luck for we have the blessings."

"Just got to shake that one off, Natalie. You were right in trusting Sol, Al was right that indecisiveness could have led everyone to their deaths."

"To their deaths..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 06 with fade

show zuri excited at zuriRight

show stan complaining at allLeft

show kylie sad at center

z "Hey, Nat. I got Kylie!"

k "Owwwww..."

st "Aggressively kidnapped would be a more proper term."

n hmm "She's not a kid though. I distinctly remember her telling me that."

st "The concept remains, if you wish to disagree on terminology."

n htp "It doesn't matter. Officer Migi, we might have found a way to save the ship."

k laugh "Huh?! Really?!"

n "Yep. The only person who can do the most important touch to the plan is you."

k happy "Why didn't you say so? Zuri didn't have to bang me up and down the halls if it means fixing the ship."

z uneasy "Eh heh heh... sorry. I got a little carried away."

"I head a clunk from the docking bay for the recon drone. Without a moment to waste, I pluck the last hope I have from the bay. It's heavy, almost requiring two hands to carry."

z surprised "Woah! Grumpy Sol really did manage to find something in that wreckage."

st surprised "You managed to find a bellino crystal? Preposterous."

n "We did. Kylie, we don't have a moment to spare. Can you get this installed?"

k surprised "It's not the right size to fit in our engine, so I'd have to rewire a lot of things to get it to fit."

n nervous "But it would work?"

k "It's not properly calibrated to our system either. It'd produce energy, but it would probably short circuit most of the systems on our ship."

z uneasy "But it'd work?"

k nervous "I dunno..."

st hmm "If you don't think this fool-hearty idea is possible, just say so. I will stand behind you until the end."

n angry "What? For the next two minutes of our lives?"

"I drop down to my knees, facing her eye to eye."

n "Kylie... I keep hearing that you are one of the best engineers we have. We need you now. Even if

it is impossible, we need you to try. Our lives are in your hands."

n sad "I'm begging you... try."

k "..."

k "Colonel... I..."

st bored "Hmph."

z angry "If I have to remove you from the room, I will, colonel."

st "Is that a threat?"

z "I'm just saying I'll do my job as security officer."

st "..."

k smile "I can do this! I just need my repair kit."

"I breathe a sigh of relief as I hand her the kit from the bridge. I was worried for a moment that foul beast's influence had weighted to heavily on her, but the little hobban remembered her job in the end."

"When we get the generator back online, I am going to grill Doctor Nelson until he cracks. He's tried to indirectly kill us for the last time."

"I don't know if he is the saboteur or not, but I'm going to get to the bottom of his actions one way or another."

k "Okie dokie. I need tool thirty six and forty four."

st irate "Here you are, my dear."

k "Thanks. I just need some help moving the bogie out of place so I can get to main compensator line."

st laugh "Allow me."

"He's being strangely cooperative all of a sudden. Maybe the threat of a tail to the back of the head got some motivation through his head."

"Still, I need to be prepared for him to try and stop us from keeping him alive."

k "I need 50 gauge transfer wire. I'll have to extend this connector around the new crystal mass."

st "The green or the blue one?"

k surprised "Huh? They're different colors?"

st "I forgot, my dear, you're color blind. I will need you to find the proper wire in this tangle yourself."

n smile "Let me."

st lazy "I'm afraid your technical application experience-"

n "Here you go, Kylie."

k happy "Yay! That's it."

st panic "But-"

n sigh "It takes some basic mechanical and electrical knowledge to run a radar station with nothing but robots, doctor. Why don't you step aside and let me help?"

st "..."

"I can see the hatred flowing from his eyes, but I'm not going to allow this to be sabotaged in front of me. If I could remove him without possibly turning Kylie against me, I asked Zuri to do it in a heartbeat."

"Kylie is swift with her hands. Each movement is calculated, precise. While I may know a few things when it comes to basic repair, my skills can't compare to a master in her element."

"We might have a chance at getting-"

scene bg black

z "Huh? What happened to the lights?"

"Just like that... the final buzzer has rung. One point short of saving the day."

k "Don't worry, I can still see in the dark with my goggles! Hand me the tool in your right hand, Natalie."

n "Sure..."

"Stay calm. Stay calm. Don't imagine how right now air is rushing out from the defunct environmental shield and all of the small leaks this floating trash can has."

k "And... there!"

n "You got it?"

k "It'll probably blow out untold systems that will take me forever to fix, but most of the non-delicate electrics should come back online."

n "Would life support be one of those?"

k "It should."

"Should... I love that word."

z "But why aren't the lights back on and all the engines making that annoying humming noise?"

k "You can't restart the engines from here alone. The generator restart has to come from the bridge."

n "Then call Major Hackett up. It's already getting hard to breathe here."

k "I can't. There's no power-"

n "-to the intercom system, duh. We need to send a runner who navigate the dark hallways."

z "I'm just as blind as you are, Nat."

k "I need to stay here to stabilize the generator when it comes back online."

"Please... don't tell me..."

st "I would be happy to guide you back to the bridge, my sweet SITO. Afriks are masters at navigating the abyss."

z "Natalie, I could go instead."

n "No. I need you to stay here and watch over Kylie. She might need your help."

z "I don't like this."

st "I give you my word that I will lead you to the bridge in haste."

"For the first time, I wish I didn't leave my sidearm locked up in the lab at all times. He's going to try something, I know it. I'll just have to turn this into an opportunity for me."

"Zuri can't see in the dark, and I'm sure that the first thing I'd hear once we turned the corner would be the thump of her body as he murdered her in his element."

"No, I have to do this alone. I'm just going to have make sure that my internal compass doesn't lead me astray. We don't have time to waste."

n "Let's go."

scene bg black with fade

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 3.0

"It's only two minutes before he stops us in the middle of the hall. I think we're near my lab, though I can't be sure."

st "My dear, you're smart. You know this trip isn't free."

n "You picked a helluva time to try and get your jollies off, colonel."

st "Oh, I don't care about your pathetic human figure. I care about what's in your mind and in your possession."

n "The data on the crystal."

st "Precisely. Though you may question my qualifications, I do know about human physiology and how long you can operate in a low oxygen environment."

"Though I can feel the fog slowly beginning to cloud my mind, I am still focused enough to know his words."

n "You think you can threaten me for my research data. It's mutually assured destruction."

"I feel cold metal pressed against my temple. Flashbacks to resistance training come flooding back. He's got a gun."

n "I'm still not impressed. My body turns up with brain matter missing, they'll figure out it was probably you."

st "But that's not all."

"His voice is muffled, distorted. I can hear a small hissing noise that sounds like a balloon leaking

air."

st "I can just let you all die of asphyxiation, but I'm not that cold. Have Kika open the door to your lab, give me your data, and I let you all go home. Is that not a fair trade?"

n "I don't negotiate with terrorists."

st "Even if it means the ones you love die? People are going to die if you keep to this course."

"Zuri... Sol... I don't want my friends to die here..."

"So close, but this madman wants to make it end here."

menu:

"Have Kika open the door.":

"Maybe if I just give him what he wants, he'll keep his word. I can always get the crystal back from him at a later time."

"How stupid that sounds in my mind, but I have no other options where there is the slightest chance I make it out alive."

n "Kika, open the door! I need to get inside immediately!"

kk "Give me a second."

"With regret in my heart, I hear the safeties of my laboratory's mechanical door lock unseal."

kk "Why haven't you-"

"A single shot rings out. Though I can't see what happened, I know immediately that I made a wrong bet."

"The beast throws me in, causing me to stumble over Kika's fresh corpse. I'm breathing hard, too hard. I can't focus, I need to do something."

st "There you are, my little meal ticket."

n "You bastard... you said that-"

stop music fadeout 3.0

"A second shot rings out. A blinding pain rips through my stomach. I scream in pain, praying someone with night vision hears the commotion."

st "Such a weak SITO. Good night, my precious investigator."

"The door seals behind him as he leaves me here in a pool of warm blood. In the distance, I can hear a third shot, another comrade paying the price of my incompetence."

"My legs feel so heavy. I'm trying to get them back in motion, but my body doesn't seem to want to respond to my commands."

"I need to get back up... I... need to... save..."

"I... can't... die... here..."

"So... close..."

"Mom... Sis..."

"..."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg CGEnd7 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

"Jump Stan.":

"My only hope is to attempt to jump an armed afrik in pitch darkness while slowly losing my abilities from oxygen depletion."

"Guess I'm gonna learn to be a warrior like Zuri through fire and flame."

n "Hey, doc?"

st "Get her to open the door. Now."

n "I just have one thing to say."

st "Kika, open the door, perhaps?"

n "HOOYA!"

"With a scream, I fling myself against Stan. Though I can't see him, I can feel his flesh under my fingernails as I claw like a rabid beast. He screams as I tear at his wings."

"But he's too strong for my weak fighting skills and I'm thrown from his body. I'm trying to get to my feet again, but I know that shot is going to ring out before I can tackle him again."

f "What's going on out here?"

"That momentary distraction is all I need to beat foot across the deck and flying headbutt Stan. The hit nearly knocked me out as well, but I've got him back down on the floor."

n "Faye! Get to the bridge and tell Sol that Stan's trying to kill me and that he need to restart the secondary generator now!"

"She seemed the type to be indecisive, but Faye doesn't question my strange order. I can hear her running at full speed down the hall."

stop music fadeout 3.0

"A shot rings out from Stan's pistol, buzzing past my shoulder. I stomp on his hand, finally managing to kick the gun away with boot."

"But... my strength is gone... I can't keep the wooziness in my head out. Once again, I am unable to do much more than get hurled away by his superior strength."

"I hear boots... noises all around me... yelling... screaming..."

"I... just... need..."

"I..."

"..."

scene bg black

jump survivalWake

label survivalWake:

play music "Music/ms22.ogg" fadein 3.0

"Am I dead?"

"Maybe not. Maybe this is just the last dying gasps of my brain as the light slowly flickers out in the darkness."

"I've always wondered what awaited me after I made that final journey into the realm that so many before me have crossed into. I never wanted to take that journey though, just to know what awaited at the end."

"Nobody wants to die, I know, but I can't help but feel a little selfish and say that it wasn't my time. I had finally made a bit of progress... I was going to save the universe..."

"I'm scared. I don't want to die. Not here. Not like this."

z "A true warrior isn't scared of death, but accepts it with honor."

show zuri serious at center with dissolve

n irate "I know you want me to be your concept of a warrior, but I can't. I can't be like you."

z "You tried to save the lives of everyone. You gave everything to save us. Maybe you aren't as much of a scholar as I once though."

z happy "I'm proud of you, Natalie. I'm starting to think there's a lot I could learn from you."

n "Too bad being dead is a bit of a detriment to me teaching you things."

z "You'll always be alive in my heart."

"The world is slowing dimming around me. My last light is fading into unending darkness. My precious time is fading away."

n "Zuri... can you promise me one thing?"

z "A last request? Of course!"

n sad "Protect everyone. Do what I couldn't do and discover the truth behind the crystal."

z "Is that it?"

n oh "Tell my mom and sister that I love them."

z "Pretty emotional final request."

n "Don't laugh."

z "I won't."

n sad "And... don't leave me... I don't want to die alone."

z soft "Good night, Nat. See you on the other side."

"Good... night..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

"..."

"... .."

"... .. ."

scene bg 05 with fade

show zuri surprised at alRight

show faye surprised at center

show kika surprised at left

with dissolve

n angry "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

z "WAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

f aru "My ears..."

play music "Music/ms10.ogg" fadein 3.0

"I'm panting heavily, my chest hurts like hell from my clearly working heart beating a thousand miles an hour."

n huh "Zuri? Faye?"

f exasperated "Uh-huh."

n "Is this the afterworld?"

f "Afterworld?"

z thinking "I knew Kika needed to do a much better check on you. Nat, my name is Zuri. I'm your security officer. We're friends. Try to remember."

n smile "I know who you are, Zuri."

z excited "Yay! I was so worried that you suffered horrible brain damage and weren't going to be the same. Kika said you'd be fine with rest, but I wasn't sure."

z serious "I mean, I wasn't worried about it. I knew you were tough enough to pull through."

f smile "It's okay to be worried, Zuri. We all were."

kk fufufu "I wasn't worried. I knew she'd be just fine."

n angry "Stan! Where is he? He tried to kill me! And Faye as well."

show faye sad

show kika annoyed

z angry "I know. I knew he was looking at you suspiciously, but I didn't think he'd try to kill you."

n "We need to stop him!"

z complain "That's... a long story. The good news is that I was tailing you when he made his move. I didn't like the idea of leaving you alone with that weird aura around him."

z "I'm glad I trained in night fighting. I thought it was worthless, but it was worth it!"

n oh "What's the bad news?"

z "He managed to get away from me and lock himself in the auxiliary lab. It's got one of those bolt locks like yours and Sol wasn't able to remove the lock mechanism."

z confused "What happened out there, Natalie? Faye said there was loud noises and screaming outside her door."

n "It happened fast. He demanded that I let him into the lab or he was going to kill us all by stopping me from getting Sol to restart the engines."

n oi "I told him no, he threatened to kill me, so I defended myself as best as I could. I knew he was going to try something to stop me, but it wasn't until he demanded the crystal that I knew exactly what he was after."

z "...you knew he was going to try something and used yourself as bait."

n "Not exactly, but I did take advantage of a situation I knew he couldn't refuse."

z serious "Then why did you leave me behind?! I should have been with you!"

n "And done what, exactly? Zuri, he would have killed you in the dark because you wouldn't have been able to see his gun!"

z "No way! I would have been fine."

n "No, you wouldn't have! This was the only way I could protect you!"

z "I'm the security officer! It's my duty to protect you!"

n "You keep telling me to be a real warrior! I did what I had to do to protect those I care about."

z confused "..."

kk "It was a pretty stupid plan, I agree, but at least she didn't let him into the lab."

z defeated "..."

n "Don't look at me like that. I practiced what you preached."

z "Natalie, you don't understand. I'm expendable. The universe isn't going to miss another dumb

draemon, but it is going to miss the lead investigator pursuing a doomsday weapon!"

n sad "But I'd miss you..."

z "Then you know what I would have felt if I hadn't made it there in time..."

f "Cheer up. Everything turned out mostly for the best."

"I want to rebuttal that it could have turned out a lot worse for all participants, but my head is still a tad bit foggy and... maybe I just want to be happy that things did turn out fine."

"We won... but the battle isn't over yet."

z "Sol wanted to see you the second you woke up. You probably should get going."

kk "You shouldn't be going anywhere!"

n htp "Yeah. I'll go see him."

kk tsun "Fine! Don't listen to your trained medical professional!"

z "..."

if (zuriHP):

"I lean forward and give a light kiss on the cheek."

n laugh "A gift for my heroine. Thanks for saving me."

z soft "Hehe. Just be more careful next time you have to put yourself in danger without me."

z "I'm gonna get some sleep while you talk to Sol. It's been a tiring couple of hours waiting for you to wake."

n "Sweet dreams."

else:

n laugh "Thanks for saving me."

f "We're a crew, aren't we?"

kk smirk "Exactly! We all have our role to play in keeping the rest of the group alive."

z "Yeah, I guess so."

kk uneasy "Hey... After you're done with Sol, I want to talk to you privately, Natalie."

n "Sure."

z "I'm gonna get some sleep while you talk. It's been a tiring couple of hours waiting for you to wake."

n "Sweet dreams."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 3.0

"Propped in front of the medical bay door, just like he was a couple days ago, is Sol. The grim look on his face and the sidearm strapped to his ankle tells the story of the last few days."

"It's unreal. Seeing him there... the stalwart guardian I've known for so long. Seeing him there, keeping watch, makes the stress die a little more."

show sol grumpy at center

n happy "Sol!"

s surprised "Natalie!"

"He rushes over, grasping me tightly. His hands stroke my hair softly."

s regret "Thank god you are alright. I was so worried that the monster did irreparable damage."

n "I'm fine. We're all fine, right?"

s "I think I had a heart attack when Faye broke into the bridge howling about Doctor Dirtbag was attacking you and I couldn't ride to the rescue until I restarted the engine."

"I brace myself for another round of guilt tripping that I went alone with Stan. There's no way Sol is going to not rub it in my face."

s "What's that face for?"

n irate "Go on. I can take it. I screwed up going with Stan is what you're going to say."

s sad "I left that job for Zuri. She was furious when she found out you left her behind."

n "I-"

s "-had to protect her. Trust me, I know. I would have done the same thing in your shoes."

n surprised "You would?"

s "I don't like what you did, but I understood why."

n smile "Oh."

s serious "Give me some credit, Natalie. I know how you think."

n "Then what-"

s "-are you thinking now?"

n yare "..."

s smile "Glad to see oxygen deprivation hasn't harmed you."

n irate "Whatever. It doesn't matter. What matters is our plan. Just remove his privileges from the computer, electrically lock the door, and let him rot in there until we get back to friendly space."

s annoyed "How I wish..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

play music "Music/ms05.ogg" fadein 5.0

n "Sol... why are you standing guard out here? I guess that question needs to be asked first."

s "Good news or bad news first?"

n oi "How about just the good news for now?"

s "Bad news is that Kylie was right about the power fluctuations disrupting our systems."

n irate "So no good news? How bad?"

s "Central computer is on the fritz and randomly drops components offline. What little this ship had for computer security is hit or miss because the authentication database is corrupted. I had Officer Migi attempt to restore the defaults, so you won't be able to override things until that gets fixed."

s "The safety subsystems misread a fire in the main fuel tanks and decided that the best course of action was to fuel dump the main tanks. Our auxiliary tanks are fine though, so you don't need to worry about being trapped out here."

s "Even if we had fuel, our navigation computer dumped all its crypto. Now it won't accept user commands."

n smile "That's not so bad. It's why we keep a navigator, right? Kika seemed to be a really sharp navigator."

s "She just plots the route. The computer does all of the delicate calculations. The backup works, but takes forever."

s "The power problems also fried a fair number of fuses and overloaded some wiring. The extent of the damage to our subsystems is completely unknown until she finishes her system survey."

s angry "And the worst part out of all of this is that it broke the synthesizer. Now Faye's cooking again because I'm on door watch duty."

n oi "You know... she saved our lives."

s regret "I'm grateful, but I don't want to have to worry that she might accidentally take them back with her cooking."

n sad "...it was pretty nasty."

s serious "Yet, despite all of these terrible things, the good news outweighs all the bad."

n "Oh?"

s "We're all still alive."

n smile "That we are. As soon as we can, we can make our way back home."

s "We just have to hold on until then. What's your plan?"

n laugh "Take a shower, get a bite to eat, celebrate that we survived, and then discover every tidbit of information on that crystal.."

s smile "A solid plan. If I can get the commander to rotate with me, I'll join you."

n hmm "How did the commander take... this?"

"I motion to the door protecting my adversary."

s irritated "She's not pleased. Rasoon might hate your guts, but she is willing to accept that you may be possibly right that the winged nightmare is a threat to us."

n irate "Yay."

s "You seem pleased."

n "I was hoping she'd be a little more receptive to SITO's after I saved her ship and her life."

s "After you endangered both."

n oh "...she at least owes me a thank you. She promised that much on the bridge."

n "If you'll excuse me, I'm going to see about that celebration."

stop music fadeout 3.0

jump kylieRepairs

label kylieRepairs:

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

"A celebration needs to be executed. We survived the great trial, but I don't think our morale is holding up. We came so close to death. I almost killed us all."

"This steel tube could have been a coffin. If Zuri hadn't disobeyed me and snuck along behind us, I could have been shot. It wouldn't been a clean kill, but I have no illusions about my survival odds."

"This is what I wanted, right? To be put in charge of tactics and missions where I got to fight stupid spies and stop the forces of evil from harming my troops."

"It feels so long ago that I stepped foot onto this vessel. Like it was a different Natalie. One who only saw the world in glitter and majestic glory. Everything was mine for the taking."

"Everything happened exactly as I dreamed it would. Once we get this crystal back and turn over Doctor Nelson, my promotion is assured. There's no way command is going to ignore this."

"This is my dream... why do I feel so melancholy?"

"A thousand different possible outcomes are playing in my head. Most of them I don't survive. Some I don't walk away with my rank or dignity."

"They aren't true. They aren't going to happen anymore. I played the deck as it was deal and revealed a winning hand. These stupid illusion of endings I dodged just won't go away!"

"Please, brain. Just let me be. Just let me enjoy survival without thinking about what else happened."

"Please?"

show kylie smile at center with dissolve

k "Urgggggghhhh..."

"Dragging a massive bundle of wires down the hallway is poor Kylie. It's maybe fifty pounds of a tangled mess, but she's dutifully dragging it down the hall."

n smile "Here. Let me help."

k laugh "Oh! Major! It's okay, I've got it."

n "Are you sure? You look like you're struggling."

k happy "I am, but I enjoy it. There's so much that needs to be done around the ship to get us moving again!"

n "You really love your job, don't you?"

k "Uh-huh!"

n "That's good. You have to do what you love or you'll end up being grumpy like Sol."

k smile "But he works really hard, too."

n happy "He does indeed. We always joked that he was going to be director one day despite his protests."

k surprised "Huh?"

n doori "Too much responsibility and authority for his tastes. I'd love to be director myself and enjoy that prestige, but he just wants to have command of his own ship."

k smile "Major Hackett just wants to focus on protecting what he has in front of him. That's what he told me once."

n "Like how you protect the ship from breaking down on us?"

k "Yes, major! I love to listen to the engines humming happily when things are fine. I wish I could be just like him!"

k sad "Well... kind of. Stan used to tell me that he doesn't care about me or the Nimross, but I just can't let myself believe it."

n htp "What else did he say?"

k "..."

n "Kylie?"

stop music fadeout 5.0

k "Why did Sol arrest him? He's a good person."

n huh "Kylie, he tried to kill me. He tried to kill all of us, you included."

k "But he promised that he was going to save us! He had friends who were going to help. He was so confident, I knew in my heart that we were going to be rescued!"

n oi "Who? Who did he say was coming to rescue us?"

k scared "I-I-I don't know. He kept telling me that it was better if I didn't know who it was."

n "And that doesn't seem the least bit suspicious to you?"

k sad "Well..."

k nervous "No! Nuh-uh!"

n angry "Kylie, stop hiding yourself from the truth! Colonel Stan Nelson is a Raltin con man who is playing your naivety against you!"

k scared "Stop saying that."

n "Being able to stand up and accept the truth is a key principle of being a Katajion officer! If you aren't going to stand up for the truth, you don't deserve to be here!"

k "..."

play music "Music/ms16.ogg" fadein 2.0

k nervous "I get it now."

n "You do?"

k "When he said that he came here to stop evil from unleashing terror upon the universe, he meant you!"

n yare "...what?"

k "I mean..."

n "That little emotional outburst was interesting. What do you mean he came here to stop evil?"

k "..."

n "Officer Migi, what else do you know? What else did he tell you?"

k "..."

n angry "I'm going to have to have Lieutenant Zuri arrest you on charges of treason if you don't speak up. This is critical information."

k "..."

n "Please, Kylie. You know how bad of shape the ship is in. The truth almost died once. I can't let it disappear without making sure that the galaxy is safe."

n sad "I just want to make sure my family and friends are safe. Isn't that what you want as well? If the colonel is up to no good, I need to know what he was trying to do and stop it."

n "Do you think that's evil...?"

k sad "No..."

n oi "If he tried to kill me for a good reason, then now would be the time to let me know."

n "Kylie, hunting the truth is my job. Now is the time to stand up and help me protect the universe!"

Show that uniform you wear the honor in your heart!"

k "..."

"She's not going to tell me anything. I should have guessed from the start that she was too far under the slimeball's influence."

"But what do I do with her? Letting her roam free could be dangerous. Traitors are... well, traitorous."

"Let a marked target go free and hope I can use her later or bring her in now?"

show zuri serious at allLeft behind kylie

z "Hey, I heard yelling. What's going on?"

menu:

"Have Zuri apprehend Kylie.":

\$kylieSuspect=True

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 2.0

n sad "I'm sorry, Kylie. Until we can get this whole situation cleared up, I'm going to have to place you under arrest for suspected treason against the Katajion Directorship."

k scared "Y-y-y-you can't do that!"

n "I'm afraid I must."

k "You're a monster!"

n yare "Maybe I am, but I'm not going to be the one to let you get a second chance at killing everyone on this ship."

k "I never did anything like that! I'm innocent!"

n angry "By keeping information to yourself, you were the most important part of his plan. Without you, he wouldn't have been able to get past digital locks and tamper with key pieces of evidence."

n "Through your inaction, you were just as important a player as him."

k "Stay away from me!"

n "Zuri! I need your help!"

z confused "You're coming with me, Kylie."

k "No! Stay back!"

hide kylie with dissolve

show zuri angry

n "After her!"

scene bg 02 with dissolve

show zuri angry at center

z "Kylie! Where'd you go?"

n angry "She's small. There are a lot of hiding places on this vessel to disappear into."

show zuri angry at alRight with move

show alphonse surprised at alLeft with dissolve

e "Is something wrong?"

z "Al! Did you see Kylie run this way?"

e "I'm afraid not. Is something wrong?"

z protest "Huh? You didn't hear the screaming and came running as well?"

e "I did not. Is something wrong?"

"I managed to wake Zuri with our exchange. How did he not hear it if he was walking down the hall?"

z serious "Then she must have gone a different direction. I think she might be heading for the engineering bay."

n oi "Are you sure you didn't see her, Al? She would have gone straight past you."

e wink "Kylie is small and knows this ship better than anyone. If you are playing hide and seek with her, she will win."

z confused "We're not playing hide and seek... I think. We're not, right, Natalie?"

"That path leads to the bridge. If I had to make an assumption, Kylie would have ran to someone she might have thought could protect her. That would mean Stan or Commander Rasoon." "

"She knows that Sol is blocking the door to Stan and would have had to ran past me to get to him. That makes the commander her best choice."

"Kylie went past Alphonse to get to the bridge, there's no doubt in my mind. Why is he lying to me? Would he protect Kylie from me?"

z "Natalie?"

n sigh "It was just a game, no need to worry, Al. Is the commander on the bridge?"

e "Indeed, she's been there since the incident with Colonel Nelson."

n "Incident? Is that what we are calling it? I call it attempted murder."

e serious "Forgive my verbiage. If you intend to speak with her, you should best hurry."

z "But what about Kylie?"

n smile "I'm sure we will find her sooner or later. I better debrief with the commander soon."

e "Do not let me slow you down. May the spirits bless your journey."

z "See ya, Al."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri confused at center with dissolve

z "Are we going to go into the bridge?"

n doori "Shhhh. One moment."

"Despite Zuri's pestering, I've ensured we walked this hallway in utter silence. If anyone was going to sneak past me, I had intentions to catch them."

"And hear a noise I did. A soft thud, like someone dropping a large sack on to the deck of a spaceship."

n angry "Gotcha!"

z excited "Wait for me!"

scene bg black

"By the time we get back to the location of the noise, everything is silent once more."

n sigh "Did she get away?"

z confused "We would have heard her boots on the deck, wouldn't we?"

n "True..."

z "The ship isn't holding together very well from what Kylie was saying. Maybe it was just something breaking down."

n "Perhaps..."

z smiles "How about I go check the engineering bay and you can go report in to the commander?"

n sad "Okay..."

z "Don't worry, we'll find her! You just have to stay strong!"

n sigh "I'm just disappointed that we didn't catch her jumping out of a panel. I know we'll catch her and figure out what she knows about Stan's motives."

z "Yeah!"

jump reportingIn

"Let Kylie go.":

stop music fadeout 3.0

n sigh "Nothing is going on."

z surprised "But I heard yelling."

n "We were just having a disagreement about something."

k surprised "Y-y-y-yeah."

n smile "Kylie, you are a Katajion Defense Force officer and I trust you to do the right thing. You did the right thing in the engineering bay by getting the engine working, I know you'll do the right thing in the future."

k sad "..."

n sigh "I wish you'd tell me the truth so I didn't have to keep running my investigation into it, but I'll consider this a trade for you getting the engines fixed."

k "..."

k laugh "Major... thank you. I'll get everything back in shape!"

n smile "I'm counting on you."

z happy "You're our hero, Kylie!"

k "I am?"

z "Sure! You're way too small to be a warrior, but we can't fight evil without your help."

k sad "Am I too small?"

n happy "For Zuri's definition, maybe."

k "I don't think I'm a hero. I just want to make the ship stop hurting."

n "That's pretty noble, Kylie."

k surprised "..."

n "What's wrong?"

k happy "N-n-n-nothing! I'll get back to work."

hide kylie

play music "Music/ms22.ogg" fadein 3.0

z serious "I heard what you were talking about. Why'd you let her go, Nat?"

n hmm "Because... well... I really doubt Stan would have told her anything important. She's just a henchman, so I'd have to do some deep interrogation to get any useful tidbits."

"Despite how fast and convincing that sounds, Zuri sees through my rouse and laughs."

n "Okay, I don't know why I let her go. I kept thinking she's a traitor and possibly dangerous, but..."

z "She might be small, but I think Kylie really does have the makings of a scholar in her. Not a warrior, but certainly a scholar."

n laugh "A scholar?"

z "Scholars are all brainy and weak-willed, but they all have a code of justice kind of like warriors. Kylie loves the Nimross and its crew with all of her heart."

z "That's why no matter how bad an influence Stan has on her, she'll always take care of the ship."

n "Do you think that's why she still fixed the engines? Stan made it clear that he didn't want things fixed."

z "Yeah."

n huh "Wait. I think we can use that to our advantage. If we can somehow convince her that Stan poses a direct threat to her love, maybe we can turn her against him."

z defeated "...isn't there another way?"

n "Why? What am I not thinking about?"

z "A real warrior would confront the problem directly. They wouldn't use such a foul method to turn friends against each other."

n irate "You saw how that went. Kylie wasn't going to talk."

z confused "Isn't Kylie your friend? Isn't that why you didn't arrest her?"

n "She's more of an acquaintance."

z sad "What about me? Would you ever consider using me like that? Am I a tool to you?"

n huh "No!"

z "How do I know that you aren't going to turn against me later if you aren't going to follow the way of the warrior when it matters?"

n oh "It's my... I mean..."

z "It's what?"

"I can't tell her that I'm just trying to do my job. Zuri refuses to understand where I'm coming from. I need to deflect this conversation."

n "I need to go report in to Commander Rasoona. Want to come with?"

z smiles "I'm going to go back to sleep, but if you need me, just yell, okay?"

n smile "No danger will arise as long as Zuri's on the case."

z "Nope! Good night!"

n "G'night, Zuri."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump reportingIn

label reportingIn:

scene bg 01 with fade

show azaia neutral at center with dissolve

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

n smile "And that's my report on the events that transpired, commander."

a "That certainly is an interesting tale, Major Puccile. If I hadn't seen how your kind operate, I would be loathe to believe it."

n huh "Excuse me?"

a "You say that Colonel Nelson took you hostage and attempted to steal the crystal for himself during the time the engine was offline."

if (kylieSuspect):

a "On top of that, you accuse Flight Officer Migi of assisting with his operation."

n hmm "That's correct, ma'am."

a "These are dangerous allegations. Though his action seem out of place, all I have to verify your story is your word. Am I to believe that you are not using this opportunity to take care of a close friend's personal grudge?"

n "Commander? I'm afraid I don't understand what you are getting at with this."

a "Major Hackett's hatred of Colonel Nelson is well-known. It would not be a leap of the imagination to assume that you are being the standard SITO and trying to use this to your advantage."

n irate "That makes no sense. I'm just trying to ensure the man who attempted to kill me is brought to justice."

a patronizing "Words again. I need proof."

show azaia patronizing at left with move

show kika thinking at right with dissolve

kk "Then our words should be enough, commander."

a "This conversation does not concern you, lieutenant."

kk "I finished running the tests on pistol found at the scene. The weapon ID confirms that it was last used by Colonel Nelson. The shots that both myself and Faye reported are in the weapon log."

kk "I also told you what I heard. I heard the colonel threaten the major before the shots were fired."

a shocked "..."

kk "You don't think I'm biased towards Idiotly, do you?"

"She's lying. That door is nearly soundproof, there's no way she would have heard anything unless I was yelling and banging on the door."

"Kika's... trying to protect me? The events she's telling are facts, but they are lies from her mouth."

a neutral "Major Puccile, let's say for a moment I believe you. You haven't answered one important

question."

a "Why would Colonel Nelson attempt to murder you, steal the crystal, and prevent the ship's power from being restored?"

menu:

"He was going to sell it to his black market contacts.":

n hmm "Colonel Nelson runs a black market of stolen goods through this ship. Something like this would be very valuable and worth more money than stolen supplies."

n "This greed drove him to this."

a "I am aware of Colonel Nelson's... activities. We have had discussions about this in the past."

n huh "You knew about this?"

kk "What are you both talking about?"

a "Unlike a SITO, I did not jump to conclusions. Do you really think I would permit the theft of goods on my ship?"

n "Well... if you didn't know about it."

a "A good shipmaster knows what happens on her ship."

n oi "Then what about the illegal food and other items he has pilfered from the crew you proclaim to care about so much?"

a "I traced Flight Officer Migi's dealings to the KSS Hammond, our sister ship. The items they acquired were legally purchased and transferred according to Space Sector regulations."

kk angry "Then why did the rest of us not know anything about it?"

a patronizing "You are a navigator, Starr. Do not think you are anything more than that."

kk "But it can't be that hard to forge an inventory report! Why are you being such an idiot?"

a "I understand you have just been through an ordeal, but I will bring you up on charges if you ever call a superior officer an idiot ever again."

kk please "..."

a "And you still can't explain how he was to get the crystal home. No mysterious Raltin ship has appeared, has it?"

n "If you're angry, don't take it out on her. I'm the one who is trying to understand your reasoning."

"He was going to hand it over to the Raltin ship.":

n hmm "Colonel Nelson planned to hand over the artifact to the Raltin ship. Once we had tested it, they had figured out its power and could safely handle it."

n "At that point, he didn't need us anymore. Once he had secured the crystal, we weren't needed

alive anymore."

a neutral "Ah, yes. The mysterious Raltin ship."

n "Yes, the Raltins who stole the data and destroyed the ship."

a "Hmph."

kk please "What's that attitude for?"

a "I asked for evidence. Can you not provide, Major Puccile?"

n huh "But-"

a "If there was a Raltin ship out there, would this not be the perfect time to get the drop on us?"

a "It's been several hours since we originally lost power, SITO. Logical battle tactics would have had them descend upon us."

a "Yet we remain unmolested."

kk "But-"

a "Lieutenant, I distinctly recall that you also doubted the presence of an enemy ship this deep in space."

kk annoyed "..."

n oi "So. You don't believe it."

a "No."

"I don't have a motive figured out yet.":

n hmm "I'm not sure yet why he wanted the crystal. All I can give is conjecture at this point."

n "But if I had your assistance, then I'm positive we could get to the bottom of this."

a shocked "You expect me to put what little remains of my career on the line when you can't even give me a shred of evidence?"

n doori "I can't get the evidence if you won't assist me, Commander Rasoona!"

"I'm trying to do my job, I'm trying to get the culprits who tried to kill me, and I'm trying to find out what is behind this crystal! Why can she not see this?"

"You'd think that preventing her death would have made her warm up to me."

a neutral "If I were a SITO, I would have tried to say that he was a Raltin. I would have tried to say that a mysterious Raltin ship blew up all of my other leads, yet never appeared despite our weakness."

a "Yes, that seems like a good line for you to take and report back to command."

kk "But that's what happened here."

a "Lieutenant, I distinctly recall that you also doubted the presence of an enemy ship this deep in space."

kk annoyed"..."

n oi "Ma'am, with all due respect, what do you have against my organization? You've been hindering my operations since I arrived."

a shocked "Hindered? I let you nearly lead my crew to a frozen grave in unknown territory because I thought that perhaps I was wrong about you all."

a neutral "You all haven't changed. SITO are nothing but the real scum of the Directorship."

if (kikaPositive):

kk "Natalie isn't. She isn't exactly as brilliant as yours truly, but she most certainly isn't scum."

"Hearing another complement from Kika is surprising, but reassuring."

a "Major, have you ever heard of the SITO team commanded by Anton Rogers."

stop music fadeout 3.0

n huh "No, ma'am."

a "They are an elite team that reports directly to the Board of Directors. Like you, they have no judicial oversight by the sector they claim to serve under."

a "Do you know what happens when rogues with power but no discipline are left to wander our ranks?"

n oi "They get people demoted, commander?"

a "They get people killed. They get good troopers killed because they think that their mission is more important than the lives of their comrades."

a "Instead of just leaving that crystal alone, you decided to bring it back with us. There was no Raltins, just a wise researcher who knew that this belonged in no SITO's hands."

a "You made friends on this ship. You nearly killed them without a second of hesitation. That's what SITO are."

n oh "How many died on your mission with Anton Rogers?"

a startled "My wing was used to cover their approach. We were told that a special agent and his team needed to infiltrate a Raltin military base. They were to be inserted in the base by a civilian shuttle."

a "I was sent in with faulty information. They flew my squadrons straight into a death trap. Do you know how many of my friends I had to watch die in the first thirty seconds?"

n "Umm-"

a "Twenty fighters. Thirty four pilots and weapons officers killed because the SITO didn't think that we needed to know what the safest approach vector was. Can you guess why we weren't told?"

n "I-I-I don't know."

a "Because their mission came first. Dying pilots meant more of their defenses were focused on that

approach vector. We were sacrificed as a distraction for them."

a "And the pathetic SITO still got himself shot down!"

n "Oh..."

a neutral "When we returned to command, guess who was blamed for the mission failure. Major, tell me who you think deserved to take the blame for all of those needless deaths?"

n sad "I'm sorry..."

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

a patronizing "Today, you almost came that close. You want my support? You want my assistance? Then don't ask me to sacrifice more of my friends and troops to your evidence-less ways!"

kk angry "This isn't her fault."

n sad "I... understand. If I brought you solid evidence, would you back what I've done here?"

a "I'm not unreasonable, I just need to know that you will do right by those people you've nearly killed here."

n doori "Then I'll find the truth. Thank you, commander."

a "...I am grateful you did manage to rectify your mistake in the end. Perhaps you may yet prove me wrong."

hide azaia with dissolve

show kika annoyed

a "Lieutenant Starr, I want you to assist getting this ship ready for jump. I want to be heading back to Duster Station within the day. Dismissed."

stop music fadeout 3.0

"I want to go back to bed after that. Is that all SITO are to her? Murderers who just use and abuse their fellow servicemembers?"

"I can deny some of it. I doubt that anyone other than myself will be taking the blame for not saving the researcher and nearly killing everyone."

"But other parts of it... maybe she's right about us. I'm dragging along an entire ship full of people. I haven't managed to catch Stan attacking my evidence, I tried to setup a situation to catch him and nearly died for it, and I've learned nothing about what is behind that crystal."

"I need to find a way to take care of this problem before we get home... I need to fix my mistakes before I also end up killing people."

"What would I tell my sister if I ended up killing everyone here and somehow survived? What would I tell Sol's family? Would his father still see me as his daughter?"

kk "I really hope you aren't letting her babbling get to you."

n "She wasn't completely wrong."

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 3.0

if (kikaPositive):

kk "I know one thing she was wrong about!"

kk sad "You... I..."

kk tsun "You saved my life and I'm thankful! There! I said it!"

n smile "Faye was the one who got the power turned on."

kk smirk "She's a good minion who saved us all by responding to danger, but she wasn't the one who saved me."

kk sad "If you were really the monster Rasoona thinks you were, you would have just had me open the door."

kk "He would have shot me and taken the crystal. Sacrificing me was your best chance at self-preservation."

kk crying "And..."

n doori "I wasn't going to let him harm you."

kk "I don't know too many people who would have chose me over themselves. Everyone loves me because I'm the president's daughter and rich, but... nobody would want to save Kika."

n "That's not true. Sol would have done it in my shoes and Zuri already saved you once."

kk sad "They would have done it out of a sense of duty. If she's to be believed, your duty would be to sacrifice me."

kk smirk "So... I'm happy to have you not be my minion, if it means that you can be my friend."

n "Of course we can be friends. As long as you admit that Fire Blast Two is better than spamming fireballs."

kk thinking "...fine. I'll consider it."

n "We'll have to compare our theories side-by-side when we get back."

kk smirk "Duh."

kk annoyed "But... Commander Rasoona was right about one critical thing. Where is the Raltin ship?"

n hmm "I've been thinking about that myself. Could we have been wrong about the Raltins being involved with this ship's destruction?"

kk "I questioned it a lot myself, but I think you could be possibly, slightly, somewhat accurate."

n "Then...?"

kk "Just because we don't see it out there doesn't make it not real."

n "Then why hasn't it moved in?"

kk thinking "You're the SITO! You tell me!"

n "If I was going to steal the crystal from a distressed Katajion ship, I would have done it right after they used it and couldn't escape."

n "What if they didn't intend to get the crystal from us here? I mean, we were able to beat Stan back. What if their team is just like us and lacks the physical ability to wrest control of it away?"

kk uneasy "So... we all suffocate. Then what?"

n "He probably had life support gear tucked away. He holds out, they leap in and rescue him."

"I'm feeling a little bit better about this. We thwarted their plans, if this theory is to be believed."

kk "Okay. We stopped them. What's their next move?"

n oi "It should have still been the same thing. We stopped Stan from sending a signal, but they'd have to assume he was able to get things up and running."

n "They still should have showed up."

kk thinking "Or they assumed we stopped him."

n huh "Then the next move would be the same. Stan takes control of the ship."

kk uneasy "..."

n "Kika?"

kk "Y-y-you better have someone there every moment of every minute of every hour!"

n "Are you scared, Kika?"

kk "No!"

kk annoyed "I mean, sure, it is a little worrisome to think that a possible murderer is going to try and steal something I'm supposed to protect."

n smile "Between Sol and Zuri, Stan doesn't stand a chance."

kk sad "Yeah... I guess. The racist and the spaz should be able to overpower him, if he isn't hiding any weapons."

kk smirk "A-a-anyway, you shouldn't be on your feet too long. As your doctor, I forbid it!"

n "But what about the party?"

kk uneasy "Party? What are you babbling about?"

n laugh "You just get the ship running and heading home, I'll worry about celebrating our success at survival."

kk smirk "Stupid SITOs, always leaving the real work to the professionals."

n "Hehe."

kk "You better have a special 'Kika is awesome' cake waiting for me!"

hide kika

scene bg black with fade

jump decisionsOfThePast2

label decisionsOfThePast2:

scene bg 04 with fade

"Hours later, as the party begins to wind down, I find myself still unable to shake the concerns over the future."

"I had fun toasting Kika, though we had no alcohol to do so, and 'redistributing' Stan's hidden stash to make for a feast. Everyone smiling, trying to forget how close we came..."

"But seeing Faye constantly grimace from the pain remind me of the burden I have to carry. This is not a flawless victory. It's not much of a victory at all."

show zuri confused at center

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "You haven't even touched your steak, Nat. What's wrong?"

n huh "Nothing."

z smiles "Sol made it way too done, didn't he? I told him that all they needed was a light heat, but he kept thinking they were too bloody!"

n smile "No, the steak is fine. I don't like it bloody myself."

z confused "Then what's wrong?"

n laugh "Really, there isn't anything wrong."

z sad "...I'm worried about what's going to happen when we get home, too."

n "I can't really lie to you, can I?"

z excited "You proved you were a real warrior back there. You faced danger right in the eye and you didn't budge, even when we thought you were wrong."

n laugh "All I need to do is work on my fighting skills, don't I?"

z "Well... since I'm here beside you, you don't need to worry about them too much."

n smile "I do feel a lot safer with you around, Zuri."

z soft "It warms my heart to know that, but I want you to depend on me more than just for safety."

n nervous "W-w-w-what do you mean by that?"

z "Are you blushing?"

n "..."

z happy "I was just thinking about how Akurel wouldn't be proud of me if she could see me today."

n smile "Oh."

n yare "Wait, what?"

z uneasy "I've been thinking... maybe there is more to protecting others than just kicking the butts of bad guys. It's a critical skill to being a warrior, but..."

z excited "I want to be more. I want to be that type of warrior all of the elders talked about. Someone who can be wise and strong."

z soft "More importantly... I want to be someone who can walk alongside you. When I'm around you, I feel like I can be a better draemon, a better warrior."

"In the past, I would have taken her words with a chuckle. Of course she'd want to be with me, I was the best and brightest the universe has to offer."

"Now... maybe I'm not. Zuri feels strong in my presence... but I feel weak. Like I can see past the shine I've touted for so long to see the rust that has been growing underneath."

"My heart is racing like I had just ran a marathon, my brain is muddled from mental exhaustion..."

z "I want to stay with you... and... what I'm trying to say is that..."

n huh "..."

z uneasy "See? That's why I want to be with you. I don't even know how to speak the words on my mind and heart."

n laugh "I can't teach you that. I can't do it either."

z soft "We can learn together."

n "I'd like that."

z uneasy "...do you think we're going to get in trouble?"

n htp "We haven't done anything illegal. They have those rules for just these sorts of circumstances. Too many power-hunger officers who wouldn't help SITO's on official missions."

z sad "But... she's right. That thing is incredibly dangerous. We can't just go home and hand it back over to the authorities."

n "Is it our place to decide that? We both took the oath to follow orders and our orders were to find out what happened to the researchers and report our findings."

z "We also swore to protect the people. Can you think of any use of this sort of information that

doesn't result in the suffering of innocents?"

n oh "..."

z thinking "Which is more important? Protecting the state or protecting the people?"

n hmm "But why can't we do both? Why must they be separate?"

z "If you can find a way to stop the corruption of power, let me know."

n "Let's ask Kika. I'm sure she can find a way."

z happy "First I have to think up an idea, then we can ask her."

n laugh "Heh."

n smile "I'm glad we didn't let you go."

z "It was nice being able to protect people with more than my tail. I want to keep doing it."

n "You've got a bright future ahead of you, Zuri."

z "We have a bright future ahead of us."

n laugh "Right."

z "Orders might someday tear us apart, but..."

z sad "..."

z smiles "Hey, if you aren't going to eat that, can I have it?"

n "Sure. It's a bit cold though."

z "That's okay. As long as it isn't more mushy rice, I'll take it!"

"The future... what does it hold for me... for us?"

stop music fadeout 5.0

"Zuri doesn't want to look at the darker aspects of it, but they still lurk there. In my mind, in my heart."

scene bg black with fade

jump uneasyPresent2

label uneasyPresent2:

scene bg 02 with fade

"I wish I could stop time... or at least slow it down. Our full speed return to friendly space is going too fast. Far too fast. The time when I am going to be held accountable for everything is close at hand."

"Every time I walk past the locked rooms of the commander and the traitor, I can't help but think about the future of darkness that awaits me."

"What if they think I did things wrong? What if they expected me to die honorably by smashing the crystal? What if Zuri's fears are right and I am handing over the tool of destruction to corrupt

politicians?"

"Every hour of every day is consumed by those fears. If command decides that I screwed up, it might not even be Flight Officer Puccile by the time they're done."

"Rasoon and Nelson are already going to paint me as the villain. If my report and evidence doesn't swing them to my side, I just illegally arrested two senior officers and used a weapon of mass destruction."

"I need proof. I need evidence. I need..."

scene bg 01 with fade

show alphonse smile at zuriLeft

show faye smile at innerLeft

show zuri smiles at zuriRight

show sol annoyed at innerRight

show kika excited at center

play music "Music/ms01.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "Finally! Do you know how long I've been waiting for you to show up?"

n sigh "Five minutes?"

kk "Five minutes!"

s "Is it that important?"

kk "More than you could possibly ever know. We have a major, major, major problem! One that might be even too big for me alone!"

f "We can do it, Kika."

kk tsun "Bigger than this entire ship combined."

e serious "Pray tell."

kk thinking "I finished translating the text of the photo Major Puccile recovered. Most of it anyway. There were a few horrible runes that I couldn't get, but I patched it together as best as I could."

"That does not bode well..."

kk "My original assumption was spot on. It was an ancient warning label about not touching the crystal."

s grumpy "Like I said before, that information is a little too late to be useful to us."

kk annoyed "Like I said before, it isn't like that! Do you even listen to me?"

s irritated "It's hard to pay attention when you feel the need to dramatically build things up."

kk tsun "Shut up! How I tell my exploits is none of your business!"

kk smirk "Ahem. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, the onilleb crystal is only one

piece of a weapon that was used to destroy the Chazari."

s regret "The what? Did you really just name it the reverse of bellino?"

z happy "Oh! That's clever."

kk smirk "Right? The original name those boring charlatans named it was 'dark crystal'. Seriously, how unimaginative can you get?"

s "So the dark crystal is only a piece in a greater threat?"

kk annoyed "Onilleb. I'd say it poses a substantial threat by itself, but the flowery language of armageddon and mass destruction of planets rates a pretty significant threat as well."

n huh "Excuse me?"

kk thinking "It was amazingly sparse on the details, but... let's see..."

kk "Armed with the Hammer of Something or Other, couldn't really translate this, no infidels could stand in our path. Righteous fury cast this corrupt planet into the oblivion with a wrath that knows no mercy."

kk "Should the heretics rise from the ashes once more, we leave the tool of the gods scattered at the temples. Seek them out with the heart of a true believer and the universe will be yours."

show sol quiet

z thinking "The key of the universe..."

kk "It wasn't the stone, it was the whole contraption."

z protest "We've just brought back... no..."

n hmm "Zuri, we don't know what threat this may pose to the universe. If anything, we should seek help from those that may know where to find the other pieces."

z "You want to seek out a weapon to 'purge the heathens'?"

n oi "Finding this sort of thing is the exact reason that SITO's exist."

z "But who will wield it at the end of the day?"

n "Nobody! Especially not the Raltins!"

e serious "But is our own government any more trustworthy? Sol, you remember your little operation a few years ago."

s serious "...there are some good people in the government, but there are some real scumbags as well."

e "Can we trust that the power of the good will be able to overcome the power of the evil? Who is righteous, who is villainous?"

z "We can't take that risk! For the good of the nation, we can't hand over any piece of the device."

kk "We are still operating on a photo of a rock found in a jungle. I think we might need to gather

more evidence before we say this is a weapon or not."

z thinking "Were you sleeping when we almost died?"

kk tsun "No. I didn't get an ounce of sleep the whole time. I was too busy trying to save us!"

z "Then you know how hard it was! Can we stop it a second time? A third? A fourth? We have to stop evil at its roots!"

s smile "Surprisingly insightful, Zuri."

n oh "..."

s grumpy "But this is not our place to decide. You are a security officer, not someone with the rank and responsibility to make such decisions. None of us are."

z cheery "Natalie is! Like she said, this is her job!"

"While she is technically correct and I do have the authority to make such decisions, I don't think command assumed that I would be making such a colossal decision."

"None of the stories in training ever mentioned what to do after you've arrested leadership over a crystal that could potentially end planets and intergalactic travel."

"Maybe I slept through that lesson, but I think the correct lesson they would want me to implement was the one on the chain of command."

n hmm "If I return without the crystal, nobody is going to believe my story of an instant. The only evidence of anything I'll have is a bunch of shorted out bellino crystals, the commander's report against me, and a picture of a rock."

n sad "...I bet the food in prison tastes the same as ship food."

z protest "Don't say that!"

s sad "It's true, Zuri. They'll see any action that isn't handing over the crystal to them as traitorous. That vaunted SITO freedom only lasts as long as their favor with command does."

e "You can't fight the ones with the power."

z "We can't give them more! Think of the innocent people!"

z sad "What if one day the alliance between the Katajion Directorship and the Ryu'llian Republic ends... they might use it on my home..."

z angry "You want to see the Emerald City, but there might not be one by the time they are done, Nat!"

s annoyed "You don't know that! You have to have faith in the directors!"

e "But even you said yourself that they have both strong and weak-willed men and women. Director Tsuku and Doichu might keep them in line now, but will that last forever?"

s "...ughhhhhh."

e "But... what do you think, Natalie? Can we trust command?"

n "...I need to think about this for a little bit. I'm heading to my lab."

z "I'm coming, too!"

n "Please don't, Zuri. I need to think about this one on my own."

z "Are you sure?"

n "Please."

z "Okay. Just don't forget that we're all behind you."

n "Of course not. "

stop music fadeout 5.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

"What am I going to do? They never taught us what to do when you find ancient warning labels."

kk "Wait! Stop walking so fast!"

show kika tsun at center with dissolve

play music "Music/ms08.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "You need to learn how to slow down!"

n "I'm sorry, Kika. I just need some time to process this."

kk smirk "Well, I just finished solving one mystery, so I decided now was the best time to finish solving another one."

n "I've had enough mystery for one day."

kk "I think you'll like this one. Sol once claimed that you were the best Horange's Huge Tower player."

n "I don't think I'd claim to be the best player, but I've routed more than my fair share of enemy forces."

kk "Heh heh. That sounds like a challenge!"

n "Are you saying you want to play a game with me?"

kk "Play a game? No, I want to smash your weak little army and prove my dominance as the better gamer."

n "This is about Fire Blast Two, isn't it?"

kk "I'm not admitting it might have worked. I most certainly am not admitting you might know your way around games."

n "I suppose I could teach you a few things. It might take my mind off of the doomsday problem."

kk "Like I care about your morale problems! Let's head back to the room and get this fight on!"

jump lockedAway2

label lockedAway2:

scene bg 05 with fade

show kika smirk at center with dissolve

kk "Are you ready?"

n doori "I'm always ready to put another tick on my win record."

stop music fadeout 3.0

comp "Warning! Warning! Warning! Emergency ship lockdown procedures have been initialized. All members are to shelter-in-place until further notice."

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 3.0

n huh "What's that?"

kk "Are you telling me that you never heard that stupid alarm go off before? What sort of ship did you work on?"

n irate "I worked at a radar site, remember?"

kk annoyed " Oh. I completely forgot this is your first ship posting. It's the ELS."

n "And that is...?"

kk "Do I have to explain everything to you?"

n yare "..."

kk "Fine. Whatever. The Emergency Lockdown System is a system that allows the commander to put the entire ship on lockdown if there is suspected intruders aboard."

kk "On big ships, it just locks down key decks and rooms. On small ships like ours, it just locks everything down until a command officer or security team member can unlock it."

n surprised "Then what are we doing sitting around?! If there is an intruder on board, we need to go help."

kk excited "Stop getting so excited. The system was buggy before that bad crystal messed up our security systems."

n htp "Then we're calling up the bridge to confirm it. Give me your datapad."

kk please "You can't just enjoy this free time to play games, can you?"

"I take the datapad from her and punch up the bridge frequency. I've a glacier moving through my insides as the line tries to connect."

e "Bridge reporting."

n "Al, it's Natalie. Is something wrong?"

e "False alarm, Major Puccile. We're working on getting it disconnected. It should be an hour or so."

n "Oh. Keep me informed if it is going to take longer."

e "Will do. Bridge out."

kk smirk "See?"

n hmm "That conversation didn't seem weird to you. Why would it take an hour to get the commander to disengage the system?"

kk "Probably because the system is locked up, Idiotly."

n oh "I'm not sure about this."

kk please "Great. Now Sol is trying to bother me. Do you want to take his call?"

n smile "Sure."

"I hit the red connect button on the screen, but nothing happens. A second later, the call from Sol drops from her pad."

n oh "I guess he didn't want to talk to us that bad."

kk "Good. I wasn't in the mood to be called a house cat."

"I hit the recall button on her datapad. Sol isn't the type to just randomly drop calls without a reason. Something must be going on."

"But he isn't responding now either. All I hear is the usual beep, beep, beep of when a call is trying to connect but the receiver isn't picking up."

"Did his datapad die mid-call or did something prevent him from getting his message across. He should have been on the bridge."

kk "Look, are we going to play games or are you just going to stare at a blank screen?"

"Is this really nothing more than a system failure?"

kk sad "Are you really trying to get out of playing with me that badly? I... don't care, just say so."

menu:

"Play games with Kika":

play music "Music/ms08.ogg" fadein 3.0

"If I keep chasing after every weird thing and every strange coincidence, I'll be wasting all of my free time. I promised to show Kika how to play, and I meant it."

n laugh "The lockdown won't last very long. We better get to playing."

kk smirk "You mean you better get to losing."

n doori "I'm not going to lose!"

kk "Confidence. I love crushing confidence."

n "Bring it."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 05 with fade

show kika fufufu at center with dissolve

"Thirty minutes into the game of world domination and I'm in trouble. Kika is jubilant about crushing my forces. She's just moving too fast to counter."

"I just can't focus. I keep trying to get my act together, but everything is so... so... I can't even think of a good word for it."

"Even my vision is getting blurry and foggy. I never knew defeat would be so painful... and murky..."

n oh "I'm not feeling so well. The ship isn't staying still."

kk "Duh, it's traveling. Take a nap. I'll be here to blow up your horsemen anytime!"

Muwahahahahaha!"

n "I... okay..."

"I drop onto my bed, feeling the weight of the universe weighing down on my suddenly fatigued body. Sleep. I just need a little sleep."

"After a quick nap, then I can ride through Kika's horses..."

"Yeah... sleep... just..."

stop music fadeout 6.0

kk annoyed "I'm starting to feel a little tingly and foggy as well..."

kk surprised "Wait! I know this feeling. It's hypoxia! Wake up, Natalie!"

n sad "Huh...?"

kk angry "Snap out of it!"

scene bg black

n "..."

kk "They're going to kill us... Natalie! Get up. Please...."

n "..."

kk "I don't want to die in a cage. I don't want to die like this! Help me..."

n "..."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg CGEnd6 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

"Call Zuri to make sure things are good":

n hmm "Let me try calling Zuri. If something's wrong, she should know."

kk fufufu "She can also get past the locked doors and join us. Though I'd rather play with just you."

n smile "That's sweet."

kk embarrassed "Not because I like you, idiot. You could just camp Zuri and bolster your forces. I doubt she knows how to play."

n sigh "I don't know Zuri's frequency. Do you?"

kk please "Why would I want to know that information? I got enough of her fighting practices when she used to live with me."

n "Well... There goes that option."

menu:

"Play games with Kika":

play music "Music/ms08.ogg" fadein 3.0

"If I keep chasing after every weird thing and every strange coincidence, I'll be wasting all of my free time. I promised to show Kika how to play, and I meant it."

n laugh "The lockdown won't last very long. We better get to playing."

kk smirk "You mean you better get to losing."

n doori "I'm not going to lose!"

kk "Confidence. I love crushing confidence."

n "Bring it."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 05 with fade

show kika fufufu at center with dissolve

"Thirty minutes into the game of world domination and I'm in trouble. Kika is jubilant about crushing my forces. She's just moving too fast to counter."

"I just can't focus. I keep trying to get my act together, but everything is so... so... I can't even think of a good word for it."

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n oh "I'm not feeling so well. The ship isn't staying still."

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"After a quick nap, then I can ride through Kika's horses..."

"Yeah... sleep... just..."

stop music fadeout 6.0

kk annoyed "I'm starting to feel a little tingly and foggy as well..."

kk surprised "Wait! I know this feeling. It's hypoxia! Wake up, Natalie!"

n sad "Huh...?"

kk angry "Snap out of it!"

scene bg black

n "..."

kk "They're going to kill us... Natalie! Get up. Please...."

n "..."

kk "I don't want to die in a cage. I don't want to die like this! Help me..."

n "..."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg CGEnd6 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

"Look for a way out.":

n hmm "There has to be a way out of here."

kk sad "..."

kk tsun "Fine! I didn't want to play with you anyway!"

n oi "Kika, I want to play with you more than anything right now. I just want to make sure we're safe."

kk "Whatever."

n irate "If anything happened to Faye or myself, you'd feel bad, right? You do care about us."

kk please "I know Faye is my friend. I don't know if you are right now."

n "With Kylie out there, I'm just a little paranoid."

kk "There isn't any way out of here except for the vents between rooms. There's no way either of us are fitting through those."

n sigh "My new datapad doesn't have any of my decryption software either. No real way to hack the door."

kk "Then all of this is pointless!"

if (kylieSuspect):

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 3.0

"If I keep chasing after every weird thing and every strange coincidence, I'll be wasting all of my free time. I promised to show Kika how to play, and I meant it."

n laugh "The lockdown won't last very long. We better get to playing."

kk smirk "You mean you better get to losing."

n doori "I'm not going to lose!"

kk "Confidence. I love crushing confidence."

n "Bring it."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 05 with fade

show kika fufufu at center with dissolve

"Thirty minutes into the game of world domination and I'm in trouble. Kika is jubilant about crushing my forces. She's just moving too fast to counter."

"I just can't focus. I keep trying to get my act together, but everything is so... so... I can't even think of a good word for it."

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kk "Duh, it's traveling. Take a nap. I'll be here to blow up your horsemen anytime!"

Muwahahahahaha!"

n "I... okay..."

"I drop onto my bed, feeling the weight of the universe weighing down on my suddenly fatigued body. Sleep. I just need a little sleep."

"After a quick nap, then I can ride through Kika's horses..."

"Yeah... sleep... just..."

stop music fadeout 6.0

kk annoyed "I'm starting to feel a little tingly and foggy as well..."

kk surprised "Wait! I know this feeling. It's hypoxia! Wake up, Natalie!"

n sad "Huh...?"

kk angry "Snap out of it!"

scene bg black

n "..."

kk "They're going to kill us... Natalie! Get up. Please...."

n "..."

kk "I don't want to die in a cage. I don't want to die like this! Help me..."

n "..."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 2.0

scene bg CGEnd6 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

else:

k "Major! Are you in there?"

n smile "I'm here, so is Kika."

show kylie scared at right with dissolve

k "Major! I'm so sorry!"

kk smirk "See? I told you that the security lockdown wasn't that serious if a non-security person can just open doors."

n sigh "I guess I should have just tried the door."

k "It's my fault..."

n smile "What's your fault? What's wrong?"

k "He promised me that nobody was going to get hurt... he promised me!"

"I knew it. I knew something bad was going down! Though pride is a bad thing, I can't help but feel just a tad bit proud that my danger sense was working just fine."

n oi "Who's hurt?"

k "He killed her... He said I just had to distract her, that nothing bad was going to happen..."

kk angry "Who the hell did you kill?"

k "..."

kk "If he so much as laid a finger on Faye, I'll end both of you!"

k "It's not my fault!"

kk "Just because you didn't deal the finishing blow doesn't make you clean!"

k "I know... I'm sorry."

kk "Sorry doesn't bring people back to life, you monster!"

k "I'm sorry!"

n "We don't have time to be giving life lessons. Who did the colonel kill?"

k "Commander Rasoona was guarding the door. I was supposed to just pull her away from it while he escaped."

kk annoyed "She trusted you..."

k "I'm sorry."

n angry "Stop it! We might all be sorry in a bit. At least the commander was able to lock down everything, so the bridge is safe from attack."

k "..."

n yare "The commander didn't do that, did she?"

k "He's in the bridge right now. I wouldn't give him control of the life support equipment, so he's threatening Sol to get them."

n angry "He's trying to suffocate us all again!"

kk thinking "Creativity was never his strong point."

"Creativity might not be his strong point, but the method would have been effective if Kylie hadn't let us out. The bastard is again trying to remove us without direct confrontation."

"Why not? Wouldn't it have made more sense to just kill Rasoona, break into the lab, steal the crystal, and then bring in the Raltin ships."

"Is he not working for them? Who the hell is he working for?"

"The ship... that's why we have to die. He wants the ship intact."

k "You have to stop him!"

n oi "Kika, take Kylie and send Zuri to the bridge. I'm heading there now."

kk angry "You better not get yourself shot until she gets there."

n "I won't. Now hurry!"

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump retakingTheBridge2

label retakingTheBridge2:

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri happy at center with dissolve

z "You're safe!"

n "Zuri! I'm so glad to see you!"

"We exchange a brief hug, just a quick physical reassurance that the other was just fine."

show zuri sad

z "Commander..."

z "W-w-w-well... she never liked me anyway..."

n sad "I'll never be able to let her see that SITO aren't demonic monsters."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 01 with fade

play music "Music/ms14.ogg" fadein 3.0

"With the utmost delicacy, we slowly creep into the bridge. Nobody was paying any attention to the door. Alphonse is stone-faced in his co-pilot seat, Sol knocked down in front of the navigator station."

st "I'm not going to ask you again! Hand over the command of the console!"

n htp "Come on, we need to get closer."

scene bg CG03 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG03 = True

s "..."

st "Hand over the code now! Do you want to end up the same way as the commander?!"

s "As shipmaster, you must understand that I am unable to surrender this ship to a mutiny."

st "Do you want to die? Is that it?"

s "You kill me, you can't change course or regain control over the security systems. You're not stupid enough to try, mongrel."

st "Do you know what awaits all of us at our destination, you fool? Give me the ship and the crystal and maybe they won't remember us as murderers on a grand scale!"

e "Lies."

s "We've done nothing wrong."

st "You're a fool!"

s "Well, I guess I will be a murderer when I kill you."

st "The only person who is going to die is you, should you not surrender!"

s "Then we are at an impasse."

st "You arrogant, racist prick!"

n "Zuri, we need to do something!"

z "You're right. As mean as he is to me, I don't want Sol to die."

z "Besides, he's your friend. I don't want to see you cry."

n "Thanks, Zuri."

st "Fine. You don't want to talk. How about I give you some proper motivation?"

s "..."

"Stan pulls the gun away from Sol and levels it straight towards my hiding spot. Crap..."

st "How about I kill your little crush? Maybe you'll be more receptive then."

z "Move!"

scene bg 01 with hpunch

"My body feels like I was hit by a train as Zuri grabs me and dives for the cover of the navigator console."

"I can hear the telling zing of a near miss from the shots being fired at us, follow by a cry of pain from Zuri. Hatred and anger rip through my heart with more ferocity than any bullet."

"I hear a meaty thud, followed by the clank of metal hitting metal. I glance out of my cover for a second and see Sol on top of Stan, fists swinging."

"Not knowing what sort of state Zuri is in, I know that I'm going to have to leap into action. The pistol is mere feet from me and in my hands a second later."

n angry "Freeze!"

play music "Music/ms19.ogg" fadein 3.0

show stan panic at center

show sol serious at solRight

show zuri excited at zuriLeft behind stan

"The pair of fighters stop struggling, Sol pulling away from a fearful Stan."

n htp "Zuri, are you alright?"

z "Yeah. He just grazed my tail. The doctor is a bad shot."

st "All I have ever tried to do, Natalie, is help protect everyone. Don't you see where this madness is taking you? A warrior of Katajia is dead because of you."

n sad "..."

s quiet "I'm the one who has Rasoona's blood on my hands. I never should have let anyone other than

myself guard you."

st "Protecting the crystal, protecting your little girlfriend."

s grumpy "Watch out, Natalie, Kylie is still out there."

n "She's the one who let me out. She understood what sort of monster you were, colonel."

st "..."

n oi "Was it you? Was it you who broke my datapad? Destroyed my research material and all of those hours I put into Vicount Tales?"

z confused "What's that?"

n smile "An awesome role-playing game."

z "There's more than just puzzle games?"

st "You care more about your games than the people of the universe?"

"I level the gun perfectly between his eyes."

st sly "...perhaps."

n oi "Who have you been working with? I somehow doubt it was the Raltins."

st "Perceptive. My employer offered me a very lucrative deal to thwart your operations."

e "Money is nothing but exploitative sins of mortals."

st "And what are you willing to do in service of the spirits?"

e "..."

s annoyed "How much money is it worth to sell out your nation, you horned devil?"

st "Enough that we could live as kings and queens on our own planet. Wouldn't that be perfect? You could trade that crystal away for more money than you have ever dreamed of."

z protest "We are warriors! We don't compromise our honor to protect the innocent for personal gain!"

s serious "We are professionals. We do our duty, something you never quite understood."

st "Heh... hehehehehe... you think this will end here? Do you think I've made it this far without help? If I go down, you all are going down with me."

s smile "Heh. Now you are proving just how stupid you are."

st complaining "What do you mean?"

s "Do you think after you tried to kill us several times that we are going to let you walk away? After you nearly killed Faye?"

st "Nearly killed? Oh, no. Your precious wolf isn't going to survive the month. Her internal organs are already tearing themselves apart."

s "Oh?"

st hmm "Heh. She's as good as dead."

kk "Gyaaaaaaaa!"

show kika angry at solRight

"From her hiding place outside the door, Kika sprints in bearing a box knife from the supply room. The blade is pointed out, she's ready to neutralize this threat to her friends."

"I barely manage to grab her wrist as she tries to sprint around me."

kk "Let me kill him! You can't attack my minions and get away with it!"

z "You tried to kill Natalie. I can never forgive you."

st "Ah, the useless one talks. The leech of the group."

z angry "..."

n "Don't listen to him, Zuri."

st "All you can ever do is survive under the protection of your betters. Why don't you take that weapon away from the major and I show you who the better one here is?"

z "Drop dead."

n angry "All of the crimes you've committed... Nobody would have been put in danger if we would have had the information from the start."

st irate "..."

"If I let him go, he will probably escape justice again. I can end his smuggling, his villainy, right here, right now. I can ensure he will never pose a threat to the Directorship again."

n "Sol?"

s "For Faye's sake... kill the bastard."

show stan surprised

n "Zuri?"

z "...he tried to kill you. I can't forgive that. But..."

st "..."

z "I... I..."

z sad "Do it."

n "I don't need to ask your opinion, Kika."

kk "An eye for an eye."

st panic "...okay, enough of this charade. Lock me back up again."

s "What charade? Today, you pay for your crimes."

st surprised "I am unarmed and have surrendered! You can't do it."

z "..."

st "I-I-I-Isn't it the SITO way to try and bring suspects in alive? I know more, but I'm not talking!"

s "We'll get it from Kylie."

st "Stop this! Stop this madness! Zuri, you know this is wrong! Didn't you swear to protect the weak? How could I be weaker?"

z "..."

s "Finish him, Natalie. End this."

menu:

"Shoot Stan.":

jump shotStan2

"Spare Stan.":

jump sparedStan2

label shotStan2:

n oi "There is only one sure way to make sure you see justice."

st panic "Wait! Please! I don't want to die."

n "Neither does Captain Moonfallow."

st "Please..."

z "..."

hide zuri

stop music fadeout 2.0

n "I hope you find redemption in the afterlife."

scene bg black with fade

play music "Music/ms22.ogg" fadein 3.0

"The shot rings out. Even though my accuracy was bad in training, I don't miss from this range."

"The man who threatened my friends... who tried to kill us... who almost succeeded... he's dead."

"I killed him... I killed a man in cold blood..."

"No matter how this turns out, I will forever bear the mark of a murderer in my soul. But... I did what had to be done."

"After we secured the bridge, I went looking for Zuri. For being such a small ship, she was able to find many ways to avoid seeing me."

"I don't blame her... I don't even want to look in a mirror right now. I'm afraid of what I will see."

"Every now and then, I can hear Kylie crying in the lounge. I didn't have the heart to tell her what had happened. I don't think I would be the right person to say it."

"I wouldn't have suspected that Kylie genuinely care for the slimeball traitor. The damage I've done on her heart... is it irreparable?"

"What could I tell her...? Sorry, but letting him stay with the living was only inviting another potential mutiny? He might have never had to pay for his crimes?"

"Are my crimes any less...?"

"As we dock with Duster Station, I... don't feel like the same person I was when we left a month ago. Is this the burden of sorrow that the old timers said I'd develop?"

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri defeated at center

"It isn't until I'm walking towards the docking port that I finally see Zuri again."

"Her eyes are hollow, her form drooping. She looks like she hasn't slept a wink since I did it..."

n huh "Zuri! Where have you been?"

z "..."

n "Zuri... are you alright?"

z "..."

n laugh "A-a-aren't you excited to be back? We can go get a good meal for once."

z "I... won't be able to."

n huh "Why not? If you're worried about getting in trouble, then you shouldn't be afraid. If they think we were in the wrong, I am the one who will be blamed."

z "They might blame you, but I'm the one who didn't do anything. Someone needed my help... I just turned away."

z sad "It was in that instant that I realized... I'll never be a real warrior."

n sigh "That's not true!"

z "It is... I knew that it was wrong. I knew that I had to stand up to you, but I just stood there and said nothing. I'm a coward..."

n oi "We had to do justice... we couldn't let him potentially escape."

z "..."

n smile "Let's go get some food before I report in. That will help clear our heads. I heard the deck officer's chow hall here is really good."

z "I can't."

n "Not hungry?"

z "I'm not a deck officer anymore."

"I know each of the words individually, but my brain can't wrap around the whole sentence."

n surprised "W-w-what? Did you get promoted to vice commander or something?"

z "I resigned my commission. I'm heading back home on the first shuttle."

n sad "Why...? Didn't you promise that we were going to be a team? We were going to be warriors together."

z defeated "I told you... I'm not a warrior. Every time I had to rise to the occasion, I failed."

z "Your lab got broken into, Faye got hurt, the government is getting the crystal, and I let you murder Doctor Nelson. Every time I tried to be a warrior, I failed."

z "All I could do was sit in my room and play my stupid, stupid flute."

n "..."

z "I told you... Akurel would be ashamed of me. Now I'm ashamed of myself."

n "Please... don't go."

z "I just wanted to say goodbye before I left. I know I wasn't the best role model, but... maybe you can be a real warrior someday."

z "...goodbye."

hide zuri

"Goodbye, Zuri..."

"I think... I think I want to go back to that backwater planet. I don't want to face what I've done... I don't want to face the commission who will make me relive every moment of this."

"I've destroyed so many lives... That crystal... will destroy even more."

"I'm... I'm going to go home as well. Back to the smell swamp... back to the bad connections... I don't want to destroy more lives."

"I've done my part. I avenged Faye... I've done my job. I was a good SITO..."

show kika smirk at center with dissolve

"I made a difference, just like I wanted. I just wish it would have been a good one."

kk "Sometimes you have to do what's wrong to make things right."

n sad "Hi, Kika."

kk "I heard what she told you. Don't worry, she'll understand why we did what we did someday."

n "It's not her who needs to understand."

kk tsun "You don't get the chance to mope. You don't get the chance to just walk off into the distance. You're a SITO."

n "Maybe Rasoonna was right about us."

kk smirk "Maybe she was right, maybe she was wrong. There are other people who are responsible for Faye's impending death. There are people out there with Rasoonna's blood on their hands."

kk annoyed "One dead monster doesn't mean that there aren't more in the shadows! We need you! I need... well... I need a good minion to help me."

kk sad "So... don't give up now."

n "A minion... maybe I'm not deserving enough to know why I must do what I must do."

n "If I can find whoever employed Stan, maybe I can make up for destroying four souls."

kk surprised "Four? I can see your idiotic train of logic counting Stan, Kylie, and Zuri's. Who's the fourth?"

n "My own. Come on, we've got work to do..."

"Maybe if I'm lucky... I won't have to let my family see the cold murderer I've become. Maybe I can just die in the line of duty..."

stop music fadeout 5.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg CG14 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG14 = True

"Duty... what does that even mean anymore...?"

scene bg CGEnd3 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

label sparedStan2:

if(kikaPositive):

n oi "There is only one sure way to make sure you see justice."

stop music fadeout 2.0

st panic "Wait! Please! I don't want to die."

n "Neither does Captain Moonfallow."

st "Please..."

z defeated "..."

n "That's why you are going to be held for treason in the capital. Let them send you to the hell you so rightfully deserve."

kk angry "What?!"

z surprised "Natalie..."

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 2.0

n irate "I don't want this worthless man's blood on my hands."

s annoyed "Hmph. Consider yourself lucky, colonel, that Natalie is a better person than I."

n "Let's take him back to his room, Zuri."

show kika thinking

z excited "Okay."

n sad "Sol... could you...?"

s "Take ownership for what the demon committed? Certainly. I'll take the body back to the engineering bay until we can get a proper honor guard here."

n "Sol... I wish he hadn't killed her."

s "I wished the same."

st sly "Hmph. When the courts judge what you've done here today, you'll wish you had just died out in space."

s "You would have died right along side me."

st "Heh. Would I?"

s "Yeah, because nobody would have been left to stop me from ending your miserable existence.

Your buddies wouldn't have arrived in time to save you."

st "...I'm ready to return to my room."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show kika sad at center

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 2.0

n doori "All secure."

kk "Idiot. We'll never get another chance to ensure he gets what he deserves."

kk "He tried to take everything from me. He tried to take all of my friends! He doesn't deserve anything other than death!"

n "Everything is okay now, Kika."

kk thinking "Nothing is okay now!"

n smile "We're on our way home. Once we get there..."

"Once we get there... then what? Do I just hand over the doctor, give my report, and then just... I don't even know what comes at that point."

kk annoyed "Life is so strange, isn't it. The more you make sense of the puzzle, the less you understand why you are putting it together."

n sigh "Fame and glory was what I started out seeking, but I don't know any more."

kk "When I was little, my parents were never around. They were always off doing this diplomatic mission or that public greeting."

kk "I never saw them much. Instead, I had tutors who wanted to help mold me into the best leader the galaxy needed."

kk "That's all I ever knew, and all I ever wanted. Then, one day after a rally for my father's party, we were walking to the next party when my father stopped in front of an ice cream parlor."

kk "I'd never had ice cream before. The dieticians told me it was bad for my health and never let me have any."

n smile "What flavor did you try?"

kk excited "Butter pecan. It was like pure vile in my mouth."

n "You should have tried chocolate."

kk please "That's what my mother said!"

n "It's true."

kk sad "But seeing my family happy, seeing what normal kids got to enjoy, I started wondering if there was other stupid things that would bring me happiness despite their apparent worthlessness."

kk "It was when I went to the academy that I discovered something else that was harmful to my health, but something that enticed me. Friends."

kk "All people want from others is what they can take. Caring for others is an exploitable weakness you can't have!"

kk "But having people you want to make happy makes the victory all the more sweet. I realized that I wanted a few friends who liked me for me. People like Faye... and you."

kk embarrassed "I mean... you're an idiot, but you're a nice idiot to have around. You understand my genius."

"I'm not sure if I should be happy that Kika sees me as the lovable idiot, but I feel the same. Having someone there who understands you has been nice."

"A rival, sure, but a rival you can trust."

kk sad "That's why I have to do everything to protect them. That's why Stan needed to die. He'll get away. I know he has friends who will get him off."

kk "He'll come back after you. And when you hand over the crystal... he'll find a way to get his hands on it and everything will be for nothing."

n htp "We won't allow that to happen."

kk annoyed "But that's the golden rule. Whoever has the gold, makes the rules."

n "You've got the gold, you can counter him."

kk sad "Maybe..."

n happy "I don't know what the future holds for us, but I promise you as a SITO, I'll protect everyone."

kk crying "..."

kk embarrassed "We need to go tell Faye what happened! None of my minions should be in the dark!"

n "Sure. Let's go see her."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump decisionHour2

else:

n oi "There is only one sure way to make sure you see justice."

stop music fadeout 2.0

st panic "Wait! Please! I don't want to die."

n "Neither does Captain Moonfallow."

st "Please..."

z defeated "..."

n "That's why you are going to be held for treason in the capital. Let them send you to the hell you so rightfully deserve."

kk angry "What?!"

z surprised "Natalie..."

play music "Music/ms09.ogg" fadein 2.0

n irate "I don't want this worthless man's blood on my hands."

s annoyed "Hmph. Consider yourself lucky, colonel, that Natalie is a better person than I."

n "Let's take him back to his room, Zuri."

show kika thinking

z excited "Okay."

n sad "Sol... could you...?"

s "Take ownership for what the demon committed? Certainly. I'll take the body back to the engineering bay until we can get a proper honor guard here."

n "Sol... I wish he hadn't killed her."

s "I wished the same."

st sly "Hmph. When the courts judge what you've done here today, you'll wish you had just died out

in space."

s "You would have died right along side me."

st "Heh. Would I?"

s "Yeah, because nobody would have been left to stop me from ending your miserable existence.

Your buddies wouldn't have arrived in time to save you."

st "...I'm ready to return to my room."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

show zuri sad at center

play music "Music/ms02.ogg" fadein 2.0

n doori "All secure."

z "...I'm such a failure. Some warrior I am."

n sad "It's my fault. I didn't think that Kylie would rise against us. I thought she'd be upset, but remember her duties."

z defeated "Not that... I wasn't going to stop you. I was going to let you murder an unarmed foe who had surrendered."

n htp "We all get wrapped up in our emotions sometimes. I almost shot him myself. If I would have... I'm not sure how I would have lived with myself."

n "He deserves justice, but that's why we have courts. That's why we have the legal system. If you don't believe the system works, it never will."

z "You're a lot stronger than I. I'm such a coward."

n oi "Would a coward have thrown herself in harm's way to protect me?"

z "I didn't even think. My body was moving before my brain realized what was going on."

n oh "My body was frozen. If you hadn't done what you did, I would have died."

z "But-"

n smile "Zuri... I owe my life to you. I owe it to you several times over. Even if you aren't the warrior you dream of being, you're still a heroic warrior to me."

\$persistent.codex_CG13 = True

scene bg CG13 with fade

z "It wasn't because I was a hero, it was because the thought of you dying before my eyes was more than I could take."

n "You're a hero to me..."

nar "The awkwardness is so thick that I'm amazed it hasn't formed a cloud around us. I can't look her in the eyes..."

nar "I feel her tail wrap around my legs, her warm breath on the side of my cheek, the soft pressure of her lips on my face. My heart is beating harder than when I had the gun pointed at me."

nar "What is this...? Why does my heart ache so? The moment seems to last forever, yet ended in a heartbeat."

z "I'm not the warrior I want to be yet, but I know that as long as I have you to fight for, I can be there one day."

nar "Just like that, it is over. She steps back with a sheepish grin on her face."

z "Ummmm... we probably should go let Kika out and check up on Faye."

n "Y-y-y-yeah..."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

jump decisionHour2

label decisionHour2:

scene bg 01 with fade

show alphonse smile at zuriLeft

show faye smile at innerLeft

show zuri smiles at zuriRight

show sol serious at innerRight

show kika excited at center

play music "Music/ms04.ogg" fadein 3.0

e "Receiving tractor beam light signals from KSS Carpenter. They want to drag us back into station."

s "Granted. It's over..."

e "We made it. The spirits have shown us the way home from our endeavor."

kk "Like we were going to die out there! Hah!"

e serious "One of us did, Kika."

z sad "..."

s irritated "Stow it, Lieutenant Starr. Prepare us for docking."

kk annoyed "With what working boosters?"

s "I dunno. Look productive."

"We made it back. Soon, I will have to reestablish contact with command and tell them what

happened. I'll have to hand over the key."

"Zuri's fears still haunt me. This rock indirectly lead to the death of Commander Rasoona. How many more deaths will it lead to before everything is done?"

"Zuri keeps glancing at me with worried eyes. Even though she isn't saying it, I know the worries run through her mind. The warrior wants it smashed into a billion pieces."

"But... I'm an officer in the Katajion Directorship. I have to take responsibility for the mission."

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

z "Nat... we need to talk."

kk "Stop trying to talk her out of it!"

z protest "I just don't want to risk letting those with the wrong hands take it from us."

s "We know."

z "You don't like this either, Sol! Why aren't you being a little more vocal about it with me?"

s "Because you're vocal enough for the two of us, lizard brain. Natalie knows my feelings on the matter, she doesn't need to keep hearing them."

n oh "I... I don't know what I should do."

s serious "Well, you have roughly five minutes before they pull us in. Add another thirty for them to replace our outbound communication crystals."

z "Nat, I just one to say one last thing."

z sad "I put my faith and trust in you when everything looked dark and bleak. If you trusted me, you'd do the same."

"Talk about pulling out the heavy guilt hit. Those pleading eyes are looking for the reassurance of the bond between us."

"What do I do? What can I do?"

n sad "I'm going back to my room for a moment."

s "I'll send Kika to retrieve you when we get docked up."

kk surprised "Why me?"

s "Because I have to start getting the maintenance team working and the honor guard ready for Rasoona. Not having radios is making this challenging."

kk thinking "Whatever."

if (zuriHP):

z "Nat... I love you. Please be the warrior I know you are."

else:

z "Nat... you're my best friend here. Please be the warrior I know you are."

n "Zuri... I need to go."

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 06 with fade

play music "Music/ms15.ogg" fadein 3.0

"My feet, unguided by my lost brain, take me to the site of my biggest folly. Just a few distant days ago, I put us a heartbeat away from death."

"In the corner, covered up by a clean black sheet, is the body of Vice Commander Rasoona. I guess she would be the first casualty of my actions."

"Pulling myself into the engine, I see the small crystal that has caused so much pain. It is hard to imagine that such a small, sparkly rock could do so much damage."

"If Kika's translation was correct, it isn't even the worst piece of it. Out there is something that could do infinitely more damage."

"Zuri is right, nobody should have that sort of power. Power corrupts, especially ill-gained power. Though I trust my leaders to make the right decisions, that body in the corner tells me..."

"Everyone thinks they are doing the right thing. Everyone thinks that what they are doing is for the good of those they represent."

"Is it my place to play judge? All I am is a major in the space force. I'm not a director in charge of one of the fifteen sectors. I'm not the admiral of a fleet. I'm just a SITO."

"If I don't hand this 'dark crystal' over, am I no different than Stan? If I don't follow my own laws, I am nothing more than a traitor myself."

"But is doing the right thing worth taking that branding?"

"The ship jostles as we make contact with the extension arm of the station. I'm out of time. I need to resolve my indecision and make the necessary choice."

menu:

"Hand over the crystal to command.":

jump neutralZuriEnd

"Keep the crystal.":

if (kikaPositive):

jump bestKikaEnd

else:

jump bestZuriEnd

label bestKikaEnd:

"I can't... I just can't risk handing over something that could spell doom for billions. It would be irresponsible of me to trust that power to anyone."

"Even though my duty requires me to hand this stone over to my leadership, my duty to the people tells me that I cannot."

"My heart... my heart tells me that I need to be spurred to action. This crystal, this weapon, that civilization... I know so very little about any of this."

"I know the what, but not the who, when, where, and how. If I blindly smash this crystal, I could destroy all hopes of understanding the truth. If I hand it over, I do not know what will happen."

"The only responsible thing to do as an officer of the people is to find out the truth for myself. Before anyone else has to pointlessly die, I need to find out the truth."

"I don't have much time... If I am going to continue pursuing the truth, I will need to move quickly. With Rasoonah having already filed her report, as well as mine, they will expect to hear from me soon. They know I have it."

"There's only one thing I can do. I'll have to run. I'll have to throw away my commission, throw away the life I've known. I'll have to be a fugitive from the law I'm trying to protect."

"A traitor. Not something minor like accepting a bribe, but a full-fledged AWOL deserter. If I do this, any hopes of fulfilling my dreams of being an admiral are shot."

"With a heavy heart, I pluck the crystal from the engine. There's no need to be safe now, just expedient. I slide it into a small carrying case of iron and stuff it in my pocket."

"I wish I could say goodbye to Zuri, to tell her that I'm putting my faith in her. I'm putting faith in myself to find the truth. I wish..."

"..."

"No. This is a burden I have to carry alone. Putting myself in the gun sights of the law is one thing. I care for my protector. I don't want her to suffer for me anymore."

stop music fadeout 3.0

n sad "Goodbye, Zuri..."

scene bg 02 with fade

show kika thinking at center

play music "Music/ms11.ogg" fadein 3.0

kk "Oh. There you are."

n sad "Sorry. I just wanted to look at the crystal again."

kk "Uh-huh. Did you make up your mind?"

n "I'm going to go take a moment, hit one of the burger places, and think it over some more."

kk sad "So, you're running."

n sigh "That obvious?"

kk annoyed "I knew you were going to flee with the crystal. You think you're brilliant, but you are incredibly easy to read."

n sad "Then you know why I'm doing this."

kk "Zuri might think that you'd do this to protect the innocent, but I know you better. This is something that you can't trust to others. This is something Natalie has to solve."

n "Why can't it be both?"

kk sad "I never said it wasn't. I just said which was the bigger factor."

n "I should be going."

kk tsun "Wait! Stop running off or interrupting me when I'm in mid-speech!"

n oi "If you know what I'm doing, you know I don't have the time."

kk sad "I knew what you were doing, so I wanted to wish you luck before you left."

n huh "Huh?"

kk excited "Even though I think you'd be better off getting help from the government, I can't help but want to root for you. You remind me a lot of me."

kk sad "And... well... I wish I could go with you."

n htp "This is something I have to do alone."

kk annoyed "You're an idiot. At what point in your career did you ever do something alone and have overwhelming success?"

kk "Even I'm not stupid enough to think I can do everything by myself. What an idiot."

n hmm "..."

kk tsun "You're making me want to come with even more now. How can I leave such an important task in your hands?"

n laugh "..."

kk sad "But... I don't want to give up my titles... I don't want to give up my inheritance. Everything that makes Kika Starr amazing..."

n "Kika, you were amazing out there without any of that stuff."

kk "To throw it all away to chase you on an adventure that could end with me in prison... I just can't

do it."

n smile "You've already done more for me than I could ever ask for. We all owe our lives to you. I owe understanding as much as I do to you."

n "You've done your part. I can take it from here."

kk "..."

n sad "I have to go. See ya."

kk crying "..."

kk embarrassed "Wait!"

n "What's wrong?"

kk excited "Be safe! Don't do anything stupid, alright, Idiotly! You have to solve this! I'm counting on you."

show kika sad

"I give her a wave, trying to keep a smile on my face. If I can barely say goodbye to Kika, how could I say it to Sol or Zuri?"

"No... I need to go now."

scene bg black with fade

scene bg 02 with fade

"As I walk down the hall, I hastily consider my next move. The Marakia Institute has to know more about this. There had to have been a reason for that expedition in the first place."

"I can take a shuttle to unaligned space and then go from there. Celestia will be my first port of call."

"I'll have to hang up my uniform soon... but I want to wear it for now... just a little longer."

"I'm really doing it. I'm really giving up on my dreams for my duty. I guess... I'm more of a warrior than a soldier now."

"Zuri... it feels so quiet without her here. Like I have to constantly watch over my shoulder for the security team that will try to arrest me."

"Just like that, I feel a hand clasp on my shoulder, causing me to jump and almost hit my head on a bulkhead."

show kika sad at center

n sad "What's wrong?"

kk "..."

n "I have to go, Kika."

scene bg CG12 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG12 = True

kk "What's wrong is that you are an idiot! A stupid, dumb, moronic idiot!"

kk "I... I don't want to be alone!"

n "It's alright."

kk "No, it isn't! Everyone is leaving me. My family left me. Blade left me. Faye's going to leave me. I don't want to lose the last person in my life."

kk "I swear I'll try to overlook your stupid moments. I'll stop calling you Idiotly! I'll even try Fire Blast Two! Please... just don't abandon me, too!"

"Seeing the tears of the proud kitsune tears my heart apart. I'm trying to keep a smile on my face, trying to keep spirits high, but... I don't want to see her cry."

n "I can't stay, Kika. You know that."

kk "You can! You can! Stop thinking that way."

kk "Stay with me. We'll find a way to save Faye. We'll figure this mystery out as a team!"

"Her arms wrap around me tighter. For someone so small, she has such strength. I stroke her soft hair, trying to calm her down just as much as myself."

"We're both scared of our futures. We both need a life raft in this storm."

n "Then... why don't you come with me?"

kk "With... you?"

n "It's going to be dangerous, but if I had a brilliant genius with me, I might be able to make it out of this alive."

n "I know I'm asking for you to give up so much..."

kk "I can always get more money! I can't get friends who care about Kika."

s "It's not like the rest of us don't care about you, Kika."

z "We care about both of you!"

play music "Music/ms18.ogg" fadein 3.0

scene bg 02 with fade

show sol grumpy at innerRight

show zuri smiles at left behind sol

show kika embarrassed at center

kk "What did you see?"

s "A cute scene."

kk thinking "Ughhhhhh..."

n irate "What are you doing here?"

s "Do you think I'm letting one of my last remaining friends do this alone?"

z "A warrior doesn't let her friends fight alone!."

n huh "Didn't you say you didn't want me to drag you into another conspiracy?"

s "Too late now."

show kika smirk

z "See? You're not alone, Nat. We all care for you. We all are here for you."

s "Even Faye tried to join us, but she's going to see a medical professional that actually knows medicine first."

n huh "Everyone..."

"I brush the tears out of my eyes."

n happy "Thank you. Thank you so much..."

scene bg CG04 with fade

\$persistent.codex_CG04 = True

"Even though I don't know what my future holds anymore, I know I'm not alone."

"Together, we can stop this threat to the universe. We can make it a safe place again."

"Maybe... maybe this can be my dream. Maybe this can be my hope."

"For the future that yet awaits... we go together."

scene bg black with fade

stop music fadeout 3.0

scene bg CGEnd5 with fade

\$renpy.pause(10.0)

return

