

Prospectors

By

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1 INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - DAY

1

ISAAC, a thin and pale man, lies in his bed looking at a HOLOTABLET. On it is the face of his MOTHER. Isaac taps the screen and watches a video play.

ISAAC'S MOTHER

Hey Isaac, I hope this gets to you all the way in Proxima Centauri. Just wanted to say I'm proud of you for becoming a teacher at the colony. Hope to see you soon! Maybe with a nice bonus or two... things aren't going so well at home.

Isaac gives a slight frown and taps the screen to stop the video. He pulls up a messaging app and starts typing when a shadow crawls across the screen. Isaac looks up.

2 EXT. SPACE - DAY

2

A gigantic, brick-shaped spaceship approaches a tiny, pod-shaped space shuttle. The large spaceship stops and extends a docking tube to the shuttle.

3 INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - DAY

3

ISAAC, is startled by the sound of the docking tube connecting with his shuttle. He sets down the tablet and puts on his GRAY JUMPSUIT right as the airlock hisses open. SEAN, a taller man with darker skin, enters the shuttle.

SEAN

You're Isaac Normand, yes?

Isaac nods.

ISAAC

Hi! Yeah, that's me. Who're you contracted with?

SEAN

XTP Corp. My name's Sean. I'm a level 2. This is your first prospect, yes?

ISAAC

Yeah. Been waiting here for a while for someone to pick me up.

SEAN

Alright. Get your stuff and follow me. We'll keep your shuttle docked until our mission's done.

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC
Anything in particular I should
bring?

Sean shrugs.

SEAN
Whatever's most important to you.

Sean turns and walks back into the ship, leaving Isaac to look around his messy shuttle. He walks over to his tablet and picks it up. He looks at the screen, which shows the words 'I'll be home in a year' typed in the messaging app. Isaac hits 'Send' and puts the tablet in a bag.

4 INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

4

Isaac, dressed in a GRAY JUMPSUIT, steps through the airlock and into the larger ship carrying the bag. He sees Sean leaning against the wall holding a tablet. Sean looks up to Isaac.

SEAN
Got everything?

Isaac nods.

ISAAC
Think so. When can I bring the rest
of my stuff onto the ship?

SEAN
Later. We've got work to do. Come
meet Alicia, she's our level 3.

Isaac frowns as Sean walks off towards the bridge. Isaac glances around and quickly follows.

ISAAC
What's the mission?

SEAN
I don't know, just be patient and
we'll find out soon.

ISAAC
How much are we gonna get paid? A
lot, right?

SEAN
As I said, I don't know. We'll get
the details soon.

5 INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

5

They enter a large room with a viewport at one end. Standing in front of the viewport is ALICIA. She holds a tablet and a MUG OF COFFEE. She looks up as Sean and Isaac enter. Isaac stops and looks around while Sean walks around the room to a seat.

ALICIA
You must be Isaac.

Isaac sets his bag down next to the door.

ISAAC
Yes ma'am. You're Alicia?

Alicia nods.

ALICIA
No need to call me 'ma'am'. I'm no captain or anything.

Alicia puts her mug down and stares at her tablet.

ALICIA
How was your trip into the system?

Isaac frowns

ISAAC
Pretty uneventful. Went into cryo-sleep for a few months and woke up a day ago when I entered the system.

Alicia chuckles and looks up at Isaac.

ALICIA
Prospecting is just as uneventful with twice the boredom.

Sean nods in agreement and types on the console in front of his seat. Alicia looks back down at her tablet while Isaac continues to look around the spacious bridge.

Alicia hums as she looks at a dossier of Isaac on her tablet.

ALICIA
So. Isaac Normand. Twenty-six years old, graduated from Proxima Prospecting School in 2326. That correct?

(CONTINUED)

Isaac nods.

ISAAC

Yeah. Wasn't easy, but I got through.

Alicia continues to scan Isaac's dossier, then frowns and sets down her mug.

ALICIA

I don't see anything about previous missions on here, even training ones. Did you forget to put them down?

Isaac shakes his head.

ISAAC

I... haven't been on any prospecting missions before. I do have a geology degree that I got from school though.

Alicia snorts, crosses her arms and stares at Isaac.

ALICIA

A geology degree is worthless when computers can scan the rocks better than a human can. Look, I like taking on new prospectors, but you don't have any experience? Any?

Isaac frowns and shakes his head. Alicia sighs and looks back at the tablet.

ALICIA

Your skills aren't any better. I'd like to see at least "good with people", but you listed "Introvert" instead.

Alicia looks back up at Isaac and scowls.

ALICIA

What makes you think you can be a useful Prospector if you can't do anything?

Isaac pauses and opens his mouth to respond.

The main COMPUTER CONSOLE behind Alicia beeps loudly. Alicia turns away from Isaac.

(CONTINUED)

ALICIA
Corporate better explain themselves
about this.

Alicia taps the computer console.

ALICIA
Prospecting ship Fortitude here.
This is level three prospector
Alicia, serial
three-one-alpha-tango-foxtrot-seven-two.
Go ahead.

Static come through the consoles for a few seconds before it
clears up.

NARED
Greetings, Fortitude. My name is
Nared. I'm from the XTP
Corporation; I'll be your corporate
ambassador and advisor for the
mission. I assume you've all met
Isaac?

Alicia and Sean look to Isaac then back to the console.

ALICIA
Yeah. Why is he here? His file says
he can't do shit.

NARED
XTP is an inclusive company,
Alicia. We need new prospectors
like Isaac so we can expand into
other systems for more resources.
He'll do his job correctly, right
Isaac?

Isaac nods.

ISAAC
Yes sir. I'll do my best.

NARED
That remains to be seen.

Isaac frowns.

ALICIA
So, what's our mission? Big,
medium, or small asteroid?

NARED

I have orders from my higher-ups not to tell you over the comm, sorry. I'm uploading the mission coordinates to your ship now. Head to them and call me when you reach the asteroid.

The console goes static again as the call ends. Alicia taps the screen and watches a progress bar fill up.

SEAN

Sean, get the ship underway once the upload is done.

Sean nods and taps several buttons on the console. A high-pitched whine fills the bridge. Alicia turns to Isaac and smirks.

ALICIA

Well, can't go against corporate. I guess we're stuck with you till the mission's done. Think you're ready?

Isaac shrugs and nods.

ISAAC

Yeah, I think so.

ALICIA

Then sit down and buckle up. Let's hope this doesn't end in disaster.

Isaac grabs the railing as the ship rumbles and starts to move. He scrambles into a seat and watches the viewscreen as the ship turns and accelerates.

6 INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

6

The large prospecting ship approaches a gigantic asteroid. Isaac looks at it through the viewport of the ship and his eyes widen.

ISAAC

Holy shit. That's the asteroid?
It's more like a small moon.

Alicia stares at the asteroid as well and nods.

ALICIA

If I had to guess I'd say it's about ten to fifteen kilometers in length.

(CONTINUED)

Alicia looks over at Isaac.

ALICIA

First asteroid you've seen up close?

Isaac nods.

ALICIA

I've worked on a couple of asteroids this big before. Usually a pain in the ass. So much rock and shit it can clog up the drill.

SEAN

Makes you wonder why XTP's being so secret about it.

Alicia shrugs. The room is silent for a few moments before an alarm blares and startles Isaac. Alicia looks around before staring at the viewport where a large BUOY drifts in front of the ship. Several console screens around the bridge turn red. Isaac looks at one.

ISAAC

It's a warning. This asteroid is property of FarOut Industries. Unauthorized prospecting ships will be subject to legal action. I don't think we should be doing this.

Alicia laughs. Isaac looks at her with a confused look.

ALICIA

No wonder Nared didn't want to talk about it over comms. Those buoys are practically useless, Isaac. As long as we aren't caught by one of their prospecting ships we'll be fine.

Isaac frowns.

ISAAC

It's not right though. They got the asteroid first. We can't just go prospecting asteroids that don't belong to whatever company we're contracted with.

Alicia sighs and walks to the viewport console. She presses a few buttons on the holographic screen.

(CONTINUED)

NARED

I assume you've reached the
asteroid?

ALICIA

We have, but mister goody two shoes
thinks we shouldn't prospect it.

NARED

Every major prospecting corporation
prospects the asteroids of other
corporations. Most asteroids are
simply too far out to patrol. If
you're still uncomfortable with it
I'll find someone else who will,
and you'll have a hard time finding
another corporation that will
contract you.

Isaac shakes his head and sits down.

ISAAC

Still not right.

Alicia and Sean ignore Isaac.

NARED

Orbit the asteroid at a safe
distance and begin your prospect.
I'm eager to see the results.

Sean nods and taps his console.

7 EXT. SPACE - DAY 7

The prospecting ship slows down and orbits the asteroid.

8 INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY 8

The viewport is filled by the asteroid and Isaac stares at
it again.

SEAN

Activating prospecting drill in
three, two, one.

Sean taps his console and the ship rumbles again. Isaac
looks at his console which shows the drill extending from
the ship. In a few seconds it reaches the surface of the
asteroid and turns on. A loud whine echoes throughout the
ship as the drill spins up.

9

INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

9

Isaac looks up from his console and sees Alicia pacing back and forth in front of the viewport. Sean concentrates on the drill readouts.

ISAAC

So, I guess I'll just...

Alicia looks over at Isaac.

ALICIA

Hmm?

ISAAC

Nothing.

Isaac looks around at the various consoles and their readouts. The console in front of him warbles, and Isaac leans in to read it. He watches the screen before his eyes widen and he smiles.

ISAAC

The computer's detecting traces of gold and titanium, and some other stuff that's unidentified.

Alicia chuckles.

ALICIA

Well, guess this prospect isn't a total bust. Good job looking at your console, Isaac.

Isaac frowns.

NARED

Maybe you'll earn your keep after all, Isaac.

Isaac grits his teeth and looks over at Alicia and the console. He opens his mouth.

10

INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

10

A sudden, powerful jolt rocks through the ship, which flings Isaac and Sean from the seats. Alicia is thrown to the floor as a loud grinding sound echoes throughout the ship. The ship begins to list.

Isaac scrambles back to his seat with wide eyes and hysterical breathing.

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC
What's going on?!

Sean pulls himself into his seat and checks the console.

SEAN
The drill jammed on something!

The ship lists even more and starts to spin. It creaks and moans and rumbles as Isaac looks around in fear. Sean looks between several consoles as he grips his seat.

ALICIA
What the fuck's happening?

SEAN
The drill is stuck, so the motor's causing us to spin. It's going to tear our superstructure apart!

ALICIA
Then fucking turn it off!

Sean taps at his console and the noises and rumbling fade away. The ship stops spinning and Isaac gets back into his seat. He breathes a sigh of relief.

11 INT. PROSPECTING SHIP - DAY

11

NARED
Are you all idiots?

The three crew members stare at the main console.

NARED
This was supposed to be a quick in and out and you fucked that up!

ALICIA
This wasn't our fault! Everything was fine up here. The drill jammed on something inside the asteroid!

NARED
I don't care about what happened. You get the drill fixed, finish your prospecting, and get the hell out of there before you get caught!

Static fills the comm as Nared disconnects. Alicia sighs and looks over at Sean.

(CONTINUED)

ALICIA

Pull the drill back up and let's get to fixing it.

SEAN

Can't. It's really stuck in there, and the torque has probably damaged some of the collapsing segments.

Alicia hits the wall and grits her teeth.

ALICIA

Looks like we'll have to manually unjam it. Isaac, suit up in EVA gear and meet me at the airlock to your shuttle. We're going down there.

ISAAC

Why me? Sean would be a better pick.

ALICIA

You're the perfect man for the job, inexperienced as you are. You want experience? This is your best opportunity.

Isaac pauses for a moment and slumps his shoulders.

ISAAC

Alright. Where do I put the gear on?

ALICIA

Follow me.

12 INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

12

Isaac and Alicia, wearing bulky SPACESUITS, pick up their helmets. Isaac spins his helmet and admires it before he puts it on his head and seals it.

ALICIA

Don't forget your prospector tag. If something goes wrong we'll need it for identity confirmation and family benefits.

Isaac grabs his prospector tag and almost drops it when he tries to pick it up.

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC

Shit this thing's heavy.

ALICIA

Yeah. I don't know why. Probably so you realize how much of a burden you carry if someone dies

ISAAC

You ever had a mission that went wrong?

ALICIA

Once. Botched missions are rare but they do happen. I had a mission go wrong once before, and I lost a crew member.

Isaac frowns and looks at Alicia.

ALICIA

Hey, you'll do fine. Just stick with me and follow my instructions and we'll be out of here soon enough.

Alicia pats Isaac's shoulder and walks past him to a LOCKER, where she opens the door and pulls out two LARGE BAGS. She grunts as she sets them down on the floor.

ALICIA

Rappel gear. We'll use it to get down to the drill.

ISAAC

Never rappelled into an asteroid before.

ALICIA

Me neither. Sean, you hear us on the comm?

SEAN

I do. Heading down now?

ALICIA

Yep. We'll take Isaac's shuttle.

SEAN

Alright. Be careful in there. We might lose comm signal the deeper you go.

(CONTINUED)

ALICIA

We will.

Alicia nods to Isaac, and the two of them pick up their bags and exit the room.

13

EXT. ASTEROID - DAY

13

Isaac and Alicia exit the shuttle with their large bags.

ALICIA

We'll anchor at the edge.

The two anchor their rappel lines into the asteroid and clip the lines onto their belts. They turn on their suit lights and begin rappelling down the hole.

14

INT. ASTEROID - DAY

14

Isaac and Alicia look around the hole as they venture deeper.

ISAAC

So, what happened on that mission?
The one you said went wrong?

ALICIA

Something kind of like this one.
The drill wouldn't fold into the ship properly. I went EVA with another crew member and tried to fix. We fixed the drill, but as it began folding back up into the ship a micrometeoroid zipped right through his oxygen supply. He suffocated in seconds.

Isaac is silent for a few moments.

ISAAC

I'm sorry.

ALICIA

Don't be. Prospecting can be a dangerous business Isaac, no matter what the recruiters may tell you.

Alicia looks over at Isaac.

ALICIA

Look, I'm sorry for what I said earlier. You just struck me as the type that acts before thinking. But

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALICIA (cont'd)
hey, you're down here without too
much complaining, so I guess you've
actually got the nerve to do this
job.

Alicia smiles at Isaac, who raises the corners of his mouth
in a half-smile.

15

INT. ASTEROID - DAY

15

On the next drop, Isaac's foot touches a METAL STRUT. He
looks down and sees thick CABLES and the remains of a
hallway beneath him.

ISAAC
Huh, that's strange. Who builds a
facility inside an asteroid?

Alicia stops her descent and follows Isaac's gaze.

ISAAC
Ever seen something like this
before?

Alicia shakes her head, and the two of them start descending
again.

ALICIA
Nope. Though I've heard of
corporations that find valuable
asteroids but their mining ships
can't reach all the resources. So,
they build a mining plant inside
the asteroid itself and extract
everything that way.

Isaac pauses.

ISAAC
Nared? Did you know about this?

Static fills Isaac's radio.

NARED
I don't know anything about it.
I've only relayed the information
given to me by my superiors.

Nared disconnects again.

ISAAC

I don't trust him. I think he's
hiding something from us.

Alicia laughs.

ALICIA

Trust me, all corporate ambassadors
are like that. You'll get used to
it eventually. Anyway, we should be
near the drill head now.

16

INT. ASTEROID - DAY

16

Isaac looks down. His suit lights illuminate the drill head.

ISAAC

Yep. I see the problem too.

He points to the mess of ELECTRICAL CABLES and support
struts tangled around the drill head.

ALICIA

No wonder it got jammed. There's so
much shit running through here.
Sean? Nared? We've found the cause
of the jamming. There's a whole
mess of heavy cables and metal
supports jamming the thing.

Some static fills the radio.

SEAN

If the cables got into the feed
tube then it's too tangled to
unjam. If we remove the drill from
the ship we can come back later
with a new drill and a team that
can dismantle this one.

NARED

Another suggestion like that, Sean,
and I'm ripping your contract up.
Both that drill and your ship are
corporate property. Failing to
bring both back in operational
condition means you three have to
pay for a replacement. Destroying
company property is a line you
don't want to cross.

Alicia sighs.

(CONTINUED)

ALICIA

This is going to take several days
at a minimum.

NARED

Then you'd best get started.

17

INT. ASTEROID - DAY

17

Alicia hands Isaac a tablet.

ALICIA

Remote controls for the drill. I
need you to deactivate the magnetic
plating so I can see how far inside
the cables got.

Isaac takes the tablet as Alicia swings out to the drill
head and begins to remove the cables that entangle it. Isaac
frowns as he looks at the tablet. He taps random buttons but
doesn't find the one to release the drill plating.

ISAAC

Which button deactivates the
plating?

ALICIA

Second menu, third button on-

Isaac taps the tablet again, and the drill starts to spin
up. Alicia yelps as the drill gets further entangled in the
wires and struts. A stray cable snags on Alicia's rappel
line, which starts to pull her towards the drill head.

ALICIA

Shit!

Alicia frantically attempts to undo the clip on the cable.

ALICIA

Isaac! Turn off the fucking drill!

ISAAC

I'm trying!

Isaac taps the tablet to turn the drill off but can't find
the right button.

ALICIA

Hurry up Isaac!

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC

It's not turning off! Dammit!

Isaac lets go of the tablet, grabs his line, and jumps out to Alicia. Both of them reach out for each other, but they're too far away.

ISAAC

Sean! Turn the drill off!

SEAN

I'm trying but it's not responding!

Isaac tries to unclip himself from his line but is unable to. He looks over at Alicia as she gets dragged into the drill.

ALICIA

Isaac!

Alicia screams as she is crushed. Isaac looks away and tightly closes his eyes. The drill soon grinds to a halt, and Isaac chokes back a sob. He looks at the drill and sees part of Alicia's mangled corpse hanging out the side of the drill head. Her cable is completely tangled in the drill, and it whirs as it tries to continue spinning.

ISAAC

(Whispering)

Sean? You there?

Static fills Isaac's helmet.

ISAAC

Dammit.

He looks up and sees the hole blocked by the drill and large chunks of rock.

ISAAC

No way I'm getting out of here.

Isaac swings out and grabs onto the drill. He stares at Alicia's crushed body then removes her heavy prospecting tag from her chest.

ISAAC

I'm so sorry.

He rappels down onto a stray catwalk and unclips the rappel cable from his belt. A door with a SIGN above it reads 'STORAGE'.

Isaac enters the storage area. He looks around the gigantic room and sees tall stacks of hundreds of labeled CRATES. Several are already open on the floor, and Isaac walks over to the closest one. He looks inside and sees thousands of fragments of metal. Isaac stuffs his pockets with fragments.

Isaac sees another crate and starts to walk to it, but the increase in the weight of his suit causes him to stumble and fall against a stack of crates.

Isaac tries to push himself up but struggles with the added weight. He breathes heavily when a glow begins to fill his visor. Isaac looks up to see a mass of glowing material crawl towards him. He glimpses the label on one of the fallen crates and sees the symbol for radioactive material on the side.

ISAAC

Oh shit.

Isaac struggles to push himself up but the added weight still hampers him.

ISAAC

Shit shit shit!

As the radioactive material gets closer, Isaac looks down at his enlarged pockets and empties one of them. He removes enough to stand up and slowly jog away as the material creeps closer towards him.

Isaac stumbles against another crate and falls to the floor again. He attempts to get up again but fails. He glances down at his pockets again when Alicia's prospector tag grabs his eye. He glances between it, his pockets, and the quickly approaching radioactive material, and sighs.

ISAAC

Sorry Alicia.

Isaac pulls her tag off his arm and stands and runs to a door. He exits the room and watches outside as the tag is swallowed by the radioactive material. Isaac takes a deep breath and walks off.

He finds a door with a sign above it that reads 'COMMUNICATION CENTER'.

Isaac enters and looks around the unlit room. He sees HOLOTABLES, DESKS, MONITORS, chairs, and random crates and CLIPBOARDS scattered around the room. In the back he sees a table with a faint glow. He walks over and lets out a sigh of relief. He taps the console and is prompted with the question to activate the communication array. Isaac presses the activation button and the lights in the room flicker on.

SEAN

Isaac? Isaac, is that you?

Isaac hears Sean's voice layered with static on the radio.

ISAAC

Yeah! I got the comm working! No idea how it's still online but I can hear you.

SEAN

I lost contact with you and Alicia after the drill briefly turned on. She there with you?

Isaac pauses at the question and stares at the console.

SEAN

Where's Alicia?

Isaac takes a deep breath.

ISAAC

She... She accidentally started the drill and got crushed by it. I tried to turn it off but it wouldn't respond. By the time I finally got the tablet to work...

Sean sighs.

SEAN

Did you get her tag at least?

Isaac looks at his arm.

SEAN

No. It was completely crushed by the drill.

Sean pauses.

(CONTINUED)

SEAN

Well without Alicia we don't have any chance of fixing the drill.

ISAAC

I'm sorry.

SEAN

There's nothing we can do about it now. As far as I'm concerned, it's better that at least you survived than both of you died.

ISAAC

Does Nared know?

SEAN

He knows something went wrong. I blocked his communications because he kept threatening me to come down there or I'd be fired.

ISAAC

So, what do we do now?

SEAN

Well we can't stay here. Find a way back to your shuttle. We can disconnect part of the drill down there so it's easier to remove up here. Once that's done we'll leave.

ISAAC

Sounds good. I'll be up soon.

Isaac looks around the room and spots an elevator. He smiles and walks toward it.

20

EXT. ASTEROID - DAY

20

Isaac steps out of the elevator and looks up at stars. He grimly smiles, now free of the oppressive interior. He spots the prospecting ship then looks down at the shuttle.

ISAAC

I'm out, Sean.

SEAN

Great. Get back to your shuttle and get the tools.

Isaac starts walking towards his shuttle.

21 EXT. ASTEROID - DAY 21

Isaac enters the shuttle and presses a button. The shuttle starts up and the lights come on. He finds a tool bag on the floor and exits the shuttle.

22 EXT. ASTEROID - DAY 22

Isaac stands in front of the drill and opens the tool bag.

ISAAC

Alright, what do you need me to do?

SEAN

Find the latch on the cover and open. That'll reveal the fold gears.

Isaac twists the latch and pulls the panel up. He looks inside and sees several twisted CABLES and broken GEARS.

ISAAC

Everything in here's either torn or broken.

SEAN

That's fine. You just need to disconnect the main pin for this joint.

ISAAC

I think I see it.

Isaac reaches in and unscrews the pin. He pulls it out and lets it float.

ISAAC

Now what?

SEAN

Pull out the largest gear on the top right and clamp the hydraulic beneath.

Isaac blinks and fiddles with one of the gears.

ISAAC

The largest one on the top right?

SEAN

I think so? Let me check the manual again.

(CONTINUED)

Isaac continues to fiddle with the gear and accidentally pulls it out of its socket. As it does the hydraulic starts to move and shudder. Another gear snaps and starts to spin, pulling a cable.

ISAAC

Is it supposed to spin like that Sean?

SEAN

Spin? Oh shit, that'll snap the cable. Isaac, get the hex-spanner and a microclamp and stop the hydraulic from over-compressing!

ISAAC

The what?

Isaac opens the bag and looks around.

ISAAC

What's a spanner?

Isaac looks over at the open area of the drill and watches as the cable suddenly snaps.

23

EXT. ASTEROID - DAY

23

ISAAC

Oh shit!

Isaac lets go of drill shaft as it begins to shake. He backs up towards the shuttle and watches as the drill starts to bend and crumble.

ISAAC

Sean, it's collapsing!

SEAN

I know! The folding mechanism won't shut off!

Isaac hurries back to his shuttle as the prospecting ship starts to fall towards the asteroid.

SEAN

Ah shit, I'm getting dragged towards the asteroid! Isaac, get back up here and get me!

24 INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - DAY

24

Isaac shakes and sweats. His eyes dart about, and a confused look is written across his face.

ISAAC

I-I-I-I can- I can- I can't get-
It's gon-It's gonna crash.

He presses random buttons and hits one that reads 'AUTO'. The shuttle goes past the prospecting ship and Isaac watches it grow smaller in the viewport.

SEAN

Isaac? Where are you going? Come
fucking help me! I don't want to
die out here!

Isaac, wide-eyed and frozen, stares out the viewport at the larger ship.

SEAN

Isaac!

The prospecting ship crashes into the asteroid and explodes. Sean's radio goes dead and erupts in static.

25 INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - DAY

25

Isaac stares at the wreckage and leans back in his seat. He pulls his helmet off as a tear drips down his face. He takes several deep breaths and starts to cry.

The shuttle's communication unit crackles with static.

NARED

(sarcastically)
Nicely done Isaac.

Isaac straightens in shock and looks down at the console.

NARED

(threatening)
You just destroyed a multi-billion
piece of property and damaged an
asteroid worth trillions. Then, you
let two crewman die. I hope you're
ready to pay those damages, while
spending the rest of your career in
prison for negligent manslaughter.

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC

(angry)

I didn't have a choice! Alicia died because she got tangled, and Sean died because he didn't tell me how to stop the gears! This could've been prevented if you gave us a legitimate asteroid to prospect! That thing in there ate the drill!

NARED

Yes. That is the problem, isn't it? If we make a big deal of this loss and word gets out that you were harvesting a quarantined asteroid, well...

ISAAC

Under your orders!

NARED

We are aware of that. Whether it was an illegal prospect or not, it would still cost us. The legal fees alone would be....

ISAAC

So, we're both screwed?

Nared is silent for a few moments.

NARED

(interested)

On the contrary. Maybe we can all come out of this with at least our pants on. Let's say this operation never happened, that it was a disastrous ship malfunction. Only you survived. XTP is willing to hire you as a level 1 prospector. There are a few conditions, of course.

ISAAC

(resentfully)

No. I'm done with XTP. You mega-corporations are all the same, just like back on Earth. You're all criminal, psychopathic companies whose profit is blood.

(CONTINUED)

NARED

(dismissive)

We're not the windmills your
looking for Isaac, the shining
knight. You're not so innocent. We
know about your faked grades and
bogus diploma. Don't you think we
check these things? You had to
Leave Earth. Everybody does.

Isaac takes a deep breath.

ISAAC

What's the deal, then?

NARED

You will never talk about this
incident and what happened here.
You'll have to stay contracted with
us for, at minimum, a decade. All
your profits will go towards paying
off part of the crashed ship. Do
this, and maybe you'll move up the
corporate ladder in a few years.
What do you say?

Isaac is silent for a few moments as he watches the asteroid
rotate, moving the crashed ship out of view. He picks up his
tablet and looks at his mom's video message.

ISAAC

Deal.

THE END.