

Raleigh Keen

by

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TEASER

INT. PROSPERITY'S MEDICAL WING - DAY

CAPTAIN REESE HOLLOWAY, dashing handsome but unconscious lies on a hospital bed within the space exploration ship, THE PROSPERITY.

DR ILLYA VIRID, a JARAXI, a race that bears the ears and upturned nose of a bat, stands nearby with his glasses low on his face. He checks a wound on the back of CALVIN HACKETT'S head. Calvin holds an ice pack against his forehead. Hackett is an Irish human officer with dark circles under his eyes and a heavy five o'clock shadow. Hackett sits on another hospital bed next to Reese.

ZEMORA JEHLANI, a huge ARCADIAN officer is reading a pulpy vintage paperback in the corner. Arcadians are angular looking aliens who are a kind of gold color. The paperback's title reads "The Alien who Loved Me" by Captain Reese Holloway with a pretty schlocky cover. The hero has flowing hair, rippling muscles looking similar to Reese and the woman is a traditional green alien. Behind the pair, a character who looks like Zemora stands with a large gun.

A robot that seems to just be a laser on a moving arm works on patching up cuts and bruises across her arms.

Illya rewraps Calvin's head and checks his pad.

ILLYA

Let's go through these questions.

Hackett groans.

ILLYA

Are you having an unnatural urge
to invade a small nation?

HACKETT

No.

ILLYA

Have you noticed your incisor
teeth growing slightly and a
craving for iron?

HACKETT

No.

ILLYA

Are you revealing deep secrets to anyone who will listen? Perhaps a not so secret soft spot for the crew that you've worked with for the past five years?

HACKETT

That's not on the list.

ILLYA

It most certainly is. I added it after our encounter on Segoid 5.

HACKETT

No.

Suddenly, there's a lurch.

HACKETT

Is Baz at the helm?

No one answers.

Hackett goes over to an intercom on the wall.

HACKETT

Baz! Are you at the helm?

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

KALOPSIAN BAZ, a DELLIAN officer with a muddy maroon skin color, sits in the pilot's seat. Dellians are mood rings; they change color based on the emotional temperature of the room around them.

BAZ

I've got everything handled, sir.

MINA FAROUK, a human officer wearing a hijab, sits next to Baz. The console is crowded with paints. She is not paying much attention as she decorates her prosthetic arm with a beautiful array of art.

MINA

You're doing great.

INT. MEDICAL WING - DAY

HACKETT

Mina! Get back on the helm.

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

MINA

How do you expect Baz to improve
if we never let him practice?

BAZ

I think I'm getting better.

The ship lurches again.

INT. MEDICAL WING - DAY

HACKETT

I'll be up there soon. Mina, stop
daring our communications officer
into crashing the ship and get
back to work.

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

Baz and Mina exchange a look but return to their adventure
of learning to pilot.

INT. MEDICAL WING - DAY

Hackett stops holding the button.

Suddenly, Reese gasps awake and sits up in his bed. Illya
heads over to Reese who takes a moment to get his bearings.

ILLYA

Welcome back, Captain.

HACKETT

What were you thinking Reese?!

ILLYA

Please refrain from yelling at the
barely conscious man.

REESE

That was a rush! Who knew that a
species could mimic our mannerisms
and appearance that closely?

HACKETT

I did. I warned you that their
skin had similar properties to
mimic octopi. Right before, you
walked blindly into a trap.

A moment.

REESE

I have no memory of that.

Reese looks at Hackett's head wound.

REESE

Did you get hurt?

HACKETT

Yes and yet my memory is completely intact. I was ambushed while carrying your unconscious body back from the castle. We were lucky Zemora was with us.

Hackett points towards Zemora who nods at the mention but is still reading the book. Reese hops off the hospital bed.

REESE

A close call fit for a Reese Holloway adventure novel. What do you think Zemora?

ZEMORA

"The Mirror's Image."

REESE

That's a great title. Well, team, I think we got it.

Reese starts to leave the medical wing.

Hackett stands and it rattles his head a little but he perseveres.

HACKETT

No. No. We don't got it, Reese. We can't keep doing this.

REESE

Of course, we can. We're explorers, Cal. Exploration brings a certain level of risk.

HACKETT

It's too much Reese. Have you seen Baz? He's basically a mood ring for the crew.

CUT TO:

INT. PROSPERITY ENTRANCE - DAY [Flashback]

An even younger-looking Baz walks up onto the Prosperity's ramp. Everyone is milling about on the dock. The excitement and optimism are clear on his face. He's a nice orange color. However, the second he crosses the threshold of the Prosperity, he turns the muddy maroon color that he is now. He steps back and turns the orange color again. Back inside, he's the maroon.

BAZ
I'm sure it's fine.

INT. MEDICAL WING - DAY

HACKETT
He's been that color for five years!

REESE
We'll dock, get some awards for the end of our mission, and get some rest before heading back out. He's fine. It's a nice color.

HACKETT
I can't do it anymore, Reese.

This hits Reese differently.

REESE
I promise I'll be more careful next time. You're the best Second in Command I could have asked for and I'm lucky that you always have my back.

Hackett's face softens a bit. Reese goes in for the kill.

REESE
I'm sorry Cal.

Hackett prickles, suspicious. He looks into Reese's eye and a second set of eyelids blink vertically.

HACKETT
Damn it! It's one of the shapeshifters.

The alien that currently looks like Reese steps back in surprise and changes to reveal their real appearance; a mottled striped pattern that looks like the mimic octopus. It looks towards the exit and starts to flee.

Zemora holds out her arm with the paperback still open and simply arm checks the alien on its way out. It falls backward and is knocked unconscious.

She returns to reading.

Everyone stares for a moment.

ILLYA

So, we're heading back for the
Captain?

HACKETT

Yes. Tell Mina to make a course
correction. I'm going to bed.

INT. PROSPERITY HALLWAY - DAY

Hackett walking one way down the hallway. The ship lurches again.

He sighs, raising the ice pack to his head, and heads the other way down the hallway.

ACT ONE

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

An electronic banner proclaims the annual "Job Fair" for both IF (Interplanetary Federation) employees and students graduating from the Astral Academy. All the booths are branded with IF logos.

Their mascot, a large red Question Mark, is prominently displayed throughout the advertising material. A range of students and professionals are present at varying technologically advanced booths within the rooms. It's buzzing with conversation and excitement.

Stationed at the entrance is a holo-sign that points to three different career tracks; EXPLORATORY, TRADE, and MILITARY. A homemade sign sits underneath the holo one that reads DIPLOMACY.

LIEUTENANT RALEIGH KEEN, doe-eyed and eager, sits at a booth with a homemade banner that proclaims; "Diplomacy Track" in bold letters. A small drawing of a planet with a tiny alien waving hello is on the right of the banner. The counter is covered by tons of pamphlet materials all carefully organized. Raleigh is excitedly going over the materials.

RALEIGH

And the benefits are wonderful.
Not only will you be traveling
consistently from planet to planet
but the amount of culture you'll
be able to absorb is something
that other tracks just don't
account for. It's true we don't
have any designated crafts yet
but...

On the other side of the booth is a very confused looking couple. The woman smiles placatingly.

WOMAN

That's lovely dear but where is
the restroom?

RALEIGH

Oh. Oh yes of course. It's just
down the main hall on your left.
You can't miss it.

The couple smiles and walks away. It's revealed that Raleigh's booth is housed inside the Information desk rather than a free-standing booth. She reassures herself as she fixes some of her pamphlets.

RALEIGH

They'll be back.

A cheer goes up from beside the booth where a small cafe has been set up.

On the large television over the seating area, a news report on the newly docked exploratory vessel, THE PROSPERITY is on-going.

The cheer was clearly for Captain Reese Holloway who is receiving a medal from a higher up. He grins and winks at the camera. A lower third boasts him as the youngest Captain of the IF.

His main crew stands behind him maintaining polite smiles. Calvin Hackett stands next to Reese rolling his eyes. A lower third indicates him as the Second in Command.

Raleigh's attention is on the ship itself. Gleaming in the background. A real-life vessel.

RALEIGH

Someday.

She returns to her booth more determined than before.

INT. IF JOB FAIR - LATER

Two students stand vaping on a weird-looking USB device in front of the information booth. Raleigh is trying to get their attention. They don't seem to notice her.

STUDENT 1

I just told him that he was never going to cut it as a space miner.

STUDENT 2

You did not.

STUDENT 1

I did and you know what he said to me?

RALEIGH

Would you be interested in-?

STUDENT 2

What?

STUDENT 1

He had the nerve to ask me what I thought I was doing in cognitive behavioral science.

STUDENT 2

No.

RALEIGH
Diplomacy has many opportunities
for behavioral-

STUDENT 1
Yes! I couldn't believe it!

STUDENT 2
So rude.

Raleigh starts to hand them a pamphlet but a puff of smoke bursts in her face and she coughs a bit.

STUDENT 1
I think I see Frank.

The pair open their USB which deposits a small amount of ash on the table in front of Raleigh and leave. Raleigh takes a moment before sweeping the ash into a small trash can with one of her pamphlets.

INT. IF JOB FAIR - LATER

A young student passes by Raleigh's booth and absentmindedly throws a can towards the booth like they're throwing it away.

Raleigh catches it and does a basketball throw with the can into the trash. She does a small celebration when it goes in.

INT. IF JOB FAIR - LATER

Raleigh has a group of students talking to her. They seem interested as they review the materials that the booth provides.

RALEIGH
Diplomacy might be one of the
newest branches of IF but that
just means that there are more
chances for you to make your mark.

A tall Dellian student changes from a calm blue to a weird purple as they read the pamphlet.

DELLIAN
Wait. Do you have any ships?

RALEIGH
Well, no. Not yet. However...

The students all place the pamphlets down and start to leave.

DELLIAN

No offense but I didn't go to six years of Academy to work an office job.

Raleigh picks up the pamphlets.

RALEIGH

I know it seems that way but you really should let me... and they're gone.

HACKETT

Did I hear that right?

Raleigh lifts her head to find Dr. Hackett wearing dark sunglasses and a baseball cap. His bandage peeks out under the cap. It's a poor disguise.

She glances between the TV screen and Hackett. Raleigh recognizes him but decides not to call him out.

RALEIGH

Hear what?

HACKETT

You don't have ships?

RALEIGH

No. We don't have ships in Diplomacy currently. I do most of my work through satellite conferences or drones. It's quite neat. I was just able to link in with the Umbotu who are a relatively new society to IF-particularly technology-wise. They've almost got a handle on turning off caps lock.

Hackett has picked up a pamphlet while Raleigh was talking. He hasn't left. This is exciting for Raleigh.

HACKETT

What's the alert level?

RALEIGH

Oh. Is there a color lower than green? The only danger might be eye strain.

HACKETT

You have applications?

RALEIGH
I'm sorry?

HACKETT
Applications?

Raleigh flusters and grabs her pad from below the desk.

RALEIGH
Oh of course! I'll just send it to
your pad. ID number?

HACKETT
S-54863.

Raleigh types it into her pad and a whooshing sound signifies it sending. She's in a flurry of activity.

RALEIGH
This is so exciting. This is a
very basic application. Just
attach your service record and
send it back to this pad when
you've finished. I'm sure we can
fast track it.

Hackett nods his understanding and lowering his baseball cap, he heads to sit down in the cafe, pulling his pad from a pocket in his jacket.

Raleigh has a moment to process.

Her attention is dragged back over to the TV screen which is showing an interview with Reese. The rest of the crew is not present but the Prosperity is still in the background.

INTERVIEWER
What do you think is next for the
Prosperity now that your five-year
exploratory mission is at its end?

REESE
Honestly, I'm ready to head back
out there. I'm sure the crew is
with me on that. There's nothing
like the thrill of discovery.

A dinging comes from Raleigh's pad. She has received Hackett's application. Her eyes find him in the cafe and she gives him a big two thumbs up.

He returns it with one but it's more amused than meaningful. Raleigh turns back to the application. She does a little hop of excitement and her eyes dart to the TV.

RALEIGH
The Prosperity.

EXT. IF HEADQUARTERS - PRESENT

A view of a large and imposing building that bears the IF logo prominently.

INT. IF HEADQUARTERS -DAY

Raleigh carrying all her materials from the career fair makes her way down to the diplomacy offices.

She passes a large set of glass windows. A plaque reads "Exploratory Center". Behind the glass windows is the bustling center of activity. A whole team is tracking different vessels on a large electronic board. There are a group of scientists conferring over a bird that has golden sparks coming off of its feathers in a cage.

Further still is a plaque that reads; Trade Center. It's also bustling with activity as a group of employees are surrounded by boards with goods, values, and other numbers concerning economics. It has the air of the stock exchange.

As Raleigh continues her trek through IF headquarters, she views from above military soldiers running drills in a large open-air gym.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

A door with the name plaque "ADMIRAL TRISHA EVERETT Director of Vessel Allocation" opens slightly. Trisha Everett sticks her head out looking both ways down the hall. Seeing that the hall is empty, she retreats before opening the door fully and venturing out.

Next to her, Raleigh appears still carrying her materials.

RALEIGH
Admiral Everett!

Everett sighs but smiles fondly and turns to Raleigh.

EVERETT

Lieutenant Keen. We need to get
you a bell.

Everett continues walking down the hallway leaving Raleigh
to catch up.

RALEIGH

I got a recruit!

This causes Everett to pause. Raleigh sort of bumps into
her back and jostles some of the material in her arms.

RALEIGH

Well, not exactly a recruit. He's
been out of the academy for a
while now. In fact, he has a very
impressive resume.

She shuffles to hold out her pad. Everett takes it and
looks at Hackett's resume. His academy photo from years ago
smiles hopefully up at her.

RALEIGH

Do you know what this means?

Everett takes a moment before it all clicks.

EVERETT

No. No Keen. You can't.

RALEIGH

But I can. It's in the bylaws. I
quote - Once a track has more than
one dedicated employee, that track
must be designated a vessel.

EVERETT

I know but just because something
is in the bylaws doesn't mean it's
going to be allowed.

RALEIGH

It's perfect. The Prosperity just
ended its five-year mission. It's
ripe for reallocation.

EVERETT

You would have a mutiny on your
hands. The crew would leave.

RALEIGH

Not if I can convince them to stay.

EVERETT

Raleigh. You're passionate. That's wonderful. It's that passion that even allowed the creation of Diplomatic Relations at IF in the first place but building a department from the ground up takes time. Don't rush this.

RALEIGH

I'm not rushing this. I'm taking my chance. The bylaws state that we are to be designated a ship and the Prosperity is available. Will you put the change through or not?

EVERETT

Are you attempting to get formidable with me?

RALEIGH

Is it working?

Everett considers the pad.

EVERETT

You did get a recruit.

Raleigh can barely stand to hope.

EVERETT

Fine. But if even one essential crew member resigns, the Prosperity goes back into official processing where based on its track record it will be back on Explorations Roster.

Raleigh jumps and hugs Everett who is surprised but allows it.

RALEIGH

Thank you, Admiral Everett! I won't let you down.

Raleigh runs off and Everett watches her. She pulls out her pad and pulls up the paperwork for the Prosperity.

Within the allocation space, Everett clicks on Exploration and after typing in an administrator passcode, she replaces Exploration with Diplomacy.

INT. PROSPERITY HALLWAY - DAY

Hackett carrying his sunglasses and baseball cap in his hands throws them in a trash chute as he makes his way to the Pit.

He is relaxed and whistling as he goes.

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

Once Hackett enters the pit, he stops at what he sees which is;

The whole crew gathered in the pit sans Reese while Raleigh Keen excitedly talks to the crew. She flits about the pit writing things down in her pad.

Baz is following her, clearly intrigued. Zemora has her feet kicked up at the console. She looks to be knitting something. Her eyes track Raleigh as she moves around the room. Illya is fully absorbed in cataloging supplies on his pad. Mina sits at a station spinning in a seat.

RALEIGH

Diplomacy is practically tailor-made for Dellians!

BAZ

We are very diplomatic people.

Hackett coughs to catch their attention.

RALEIGH

Mr. Hackett! I'm so glad I caught you!

Raleigh makes her way over to Hackett digging through her pockets. The eyes on Calvin are varying degrees of amusement.

RALEIGH

I'm so excited to tell you that after much deliberation in the office...

Hackett looks around trying to shrink into the floor.

RALEIGH

The Diplomacy Department would
love to welcome you to our ranks!

She reveals a homemade patch that matches her own which says "Diplomacy" with the Latin phrase "Bonum Fidei" or "Good Faith" prominently displayed. Raleigh places it on his pad.

RALEIGH

I know the Latin is a little old
hat but I like it.

Hackett is slightly smiling at the patch on top of his pad. It's cute. Genuine. He shakes his head to get a grasp on what's happening.

HACKETT

Thank you Officer Keen but would
you mind...

Hackett aware of the eyes on him directs Raleigh back towards the exit.

HACKETT

I haven't discussed this change
with the crew.

RALEIGH

Change?

Hackett is thrown by this and looks around at the crew. They all have similarly homemade badges. Illya's is on his desk. Baz, Zemora, and Mina have theirs pinned to their jackets proudly.

HACKETT

Why do you all have diplomacy
badges? On this ship? On any ship?

RALEIGH

They're my newest recruits.
Welcome to The Prosperity, Dr.
Hackett. IF's first Diplomacy
ship.

Hackett gets wide-eyed.

RALEIGH

I couldn't have done it without
you. Just one more employee opened
up the opportunity for this. Isn't
that amazing? You won't even have
to leave your current posting.

A beat. Hackett bursts into terrible laughter. Raleigh smiles at first but soon becomes concerned as Hackett melts to the ground.

RALEIGH
Is he okay?

MINA
He's fine.

The laughter dies a little as Hackett lies on the ground.

HACKETT
Of course. Of course. Why would I think this was going to work?

ILLYA
I'm surprised you went through with it, Doctor. We all know how the previous attempts have gone.

Raleigh looks confused. Mina smirks as she explains.

MINA
Calvin tries to quit every few weeks.

CUT TO:

INT. REESE'S OFFICE - Day [Flashback]

Reese sits in his leather armchair in a gaudy red draped room that looks like the dressing room for a starlet. He's reviewing some paperwork on his pad. He looks insanelly bored. After a few moments reviewing something in which Reese almost drifts off to sleep, Reese begins indiscriminately deleting the files. A quick look at the "IMPORTANT - HACKETT'S RESIGNATION" paper before its deleted. Reese smiles and takes a sip of brandy next to his chair.

INT. PROSPERITY HALLWAY - Day [Flashback]

Mina and Baz are talking as they walk. They come across an active escape pod and exchange a confused look. They open it to find, Hackett ready to eject. They all stare at each other for a beat.

Zemora carrying Hackett down the hall followed by Mina and Baz.

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

Hackett sighs before sitting up from the floor.

MINA

You good?

HACKETT

No.

MINA

Good enough.

Baz goes to help Hackett up. He nods in appreciation before crossing his arms. He talks mostly to himself.

HACKETT

Ok. We're a Diplomacy ship now. I guess that's better, right?

ILLYA

Considering we have no barometer with which to measure the change your premise is inconclusive at best.

HACKETT

Thanks, Illya.

ILLYA

You're welcome.

HACKETT

Officer Keen?

RALEIGH

Well, I can certainly say that the change from Exploratory to Diplomacy will not pose less challenge but rather different challenges.

HACKETT

How often would you say those challenges will involve deadly consequences?

RALEIGH

Oh. Never hopefully.

HACKETT

That's an improvement. You're all on board?

The crew exchange looks. Baz pipes up looking wistful.

BAZ

It'd be nice to be a different color. A nice pea green or pale blue.

ILLYA

Despite the inconclusive nature of this change, it would be pleasant to leave the Medical wing at a normal time.

MINA

I'm bored.

HACKETT

Zemora?

ZEMORA

New books. Different genre. More readers.

That's that then. Hackett turns to Raleigh.

HACKETT

Ok. What's your first move Captain?

RALEIGH

Oh no. I don't have those qualifications. Luckily, your current Captain is qualified to lead any IF ships.

Hackett blinks. Suddenly, a large screen lights up on the center window.

Reese's face fills the screen. It's another interview.

RALEIGH

What's happening?

HACKETT

He has it rigged so any broadcast with him is relayed directly to the ship's main screen. I've tried to get it removed!

He yells upwards. A bit of laughter is heard from the vents. Baz takes pity on Raleigh's unasked question.

BAZ

That's Poppy.

ILLYA
Officer Gill. Our Chief Engineer.

Baz leans in and whispers to Raleigh.

BAZ
She doesn't leave the ship. We're pretty sure she's wanted in certain areas of the galaxy. If she doesn't leave the ship technically no one can arrest her.

Baz leans out and speaks at a normal volume.

BAZ
She's the best engineer in the fleet.

A hand sticks out from one of the vents giving Baz a thumbs up. Baz returns it and whispers out of the side of his mouth.

BAZ
Probably nothing worse than treason.

Everyone returns their attention to the interview. The interviewer, a TRIXITE, vibrant purple with bright neon green lines that make swooping shapes all over their body is quietly chatting with Reese as an animation flashes onscreen that reads "IF Reports".

INTERVIEWER
We're here with Captain Reese Holloway just getting off a very prosperous mission on the Prosperity. No pun intended. Captain.

REESE
It's always a pleasure to be on IFTV.

INTERVIEWER
The first thing that I want to address is a bit of an insider rumor.

REESE
How intriguing. It's not about the mission on Galti, is it?

They both laugh those fake showbiz laughs.

INTERVIEWER

No. It's actually about the current status of your ship. You intend to continue exploring the galaxy with the Prosperity, correct?

REESE

Absolutely! I can't see any reason to stop now.

HACKETT

Oh no.

RALEIGH

What?

BAZ

She's not going to tell him on-air, right?

RALEIGH

Is that a problem?

HACKETT

Reese tends to overreact when confronted by bad news.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY [Flashback]

Baz and Hackett eating at a table. Suddenly, Reese charges up to the table. Baz smiles up at him.

BAZ

Hey Captain! You hungry?

Hackett without any hesitation lifts his plate and drink above the table. Reese sweeps Baz's lunch off the table with a roar of frustration. He then simply leaves. Baz looks after him, Hackett goes back to eating.

BAZ

What was that about?

HACKETT

The Bachelor didn't pick his favorite.

REESE (OS)

Idiot! Kelsey R is only out for your money!

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

INTERVIEWER

It seems that the Prosperity has been reallocated as a Diplomacy ship instead of an Exploratory vessel. Care to comment?

The whole crew waits with bated breath.

REESE

Really? I haven't heard that.

INTERVIEWER

You haven't?

REESE

No. But what an interesting prospect. Diplomacy. Guess I better brush up on my winning smile.

The interviewer also seems surprised by how calm Reese is reacting as they both give another showbiz laugh.

INTERVIEWER

We'll be back with Diplomacy Captain Reese Holloway after these messages.

The interview gives way to a commercial. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

BAZ

That could have been worse.

HACKETT

Keen, Reese is possibly the worst choice for a Diplomacy Captain. As much as he's the cause of every migraine I've ever had in Exploratory, he is **that** good for Exploration. However, I have also seen him attempt to shake the hand of a poisonous plant. Isn't there anyone else?

RALEIGH

I've only been given the Prosperity on the caveat that the main crew in its entirety signs on for Diplomacy.

(MORE)

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
I'm sure Captain Holloway will
make a fine Diplomacy Captain.
Look how he handled that
interview.

A ringing comes from Hackett's communicator. Hackett
answers it.

HACKETT
Yeah?

REESE
Just calling to let you know I'm
resigning. I suggest the crew do
the same. Toodles.

Reese hangs up. The crew stare.

MINA
Well, that was the beginning and
end of a beautiful adventure.

ACT TWO

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

The crew is still standing in the pit. Standing in memoriam of a new adventure. Hackett is the first to move as he heads to pour himself a drink from a secret hidden stash.

HACKETT

I suppose I could always quit IF
altogether. Maybe I'll open a bar.

This seems to be the break. Everyone goes back to their assigned desks and presumably about their business.

RALEIGH

Seriously?!

Raleigh's voice is louder than it's been. Commanding the room.

RALEIGH

I'm surprised this is one of the
most successful exploratory crews
in IF! You give up so easily!

HACKETT

Listen Keen. This...

RALEIGH

Do you know how many times I've
been told no?

BAZ

Five?

RALEIGH

Well, I don't have an exact number
but way more than five. You can't
just lie down after hearing one
no.

HACKETT

Reese is a stubborn man, Keen. He
doesn't change his mind once he
decides.

MINA

I once saw him commit to plotting
our courses through space because
he heard Captain Philo Barnes did
it. We hit twelve asteroids that
month.

RALEIGH
We're not going to change his mind
necessarily. More reshape it.

Raleigh gestures to the interview which has come back on in
the background.

RALEIGH
We have time.

She points to the crew.

RALEIGH
We have knowledge. This will be
your first lesson as a Diplomacy
crew. A no is just a starting
point.

Everyone on the crew exchanges glances.

Raleigh looks overhead.

RALEIGH
Does this ship have a Bell?

HACKETT
Well yeah but...

RALEIGH
Wonderful! Bell?

A voice echoes from above.

BELL
Lowly human, you dare summon me!

Raleigh is startled.

BAZ
The Prosperity's Bell is an early
model. There are a couple of bugs.

The lighting changes to red.

BELL
I contain no bugs, you ruddy
colored rogue! I am superior in
all ways!

BAZ
Hey! It's maroon!

MINA
Not the point, dear.

RALEIGH

Bell, I was hoping you might delay
Reese Holloway's resignation
paperwork through the IF system.

BELL

I can.

Raleigh looks pleased. The rest of the crew waits for the
other shoe to drop.

BELL

But I won't. Without proper
compensation, of course.

The crew groans.

HACKETT

Bell. We don't have time for this.

BELL

Then you don't require my help.

CUT TO:

A majority of the group lies in the middle of the pit. They
appear dead with swatches of red all over their uniforms.
Ilya sits in his chair similarly "dead". Poppy's hand hangs
from the vent. Bell cackles from above.

BELL

I've done it. I have broken from
my flawed programming and risen
above it. I prevail!

A bit of Raleigh's hair rubs Baz's nose. He opens his eyes
and sneezes. Everyone opens their eyes to look at him.

BAZ

Sorry.

Hackett stands.

HACKETT

Ok, Bell. You got what you wanted.

Everyone else stands. Raleigh is tapped on the back by
Poppy's hand.

RALEIGH

Yes?

She points to Raleigh's badge and then back to herself
still hidden in the vent.

RALEIGH
Oh. Of course. Here.

Raleigh gives her a badge and it disappears into the vent.

BELL
Now to the matters of you
mortals...

A moment.

BELL
I've intercepted Captain
Holloway's resignation papers in
the system and redirected them.

RALEIGH
That's dealt with then. Next
steps. The Captain will probably
go in person to the Admiral's
office. We'll need a couple people
to distract and dissuade him while
we work on our approach.

Mina and Baz glance at each other.

MINA
We can do that.

HACKETT
Take Illya with you. I don't need
to hear that the pair of you have
been arrested.

ILLYA
But I have to check the supplies.

HACKETT
Please Illya.

Illya glances at the pair who are already conspiring. Once
they notice the attention, they smile innocently.

ILLYA
Very well.

The trio leaves.

RALEIGH
As for us. I need to know
everything there is to know about
Reese Holloway.

HACKETT

You're in luck then because we happen to have the foremost expert on the subject.

RALEIGH

As second in command, I'm sure you'll be able to give me great insights.

HACKETT

Not me. The author of all the Reese Holloway adventure books.

He points to Zemora. Raleigh looks confused.

RALEIGH

I thought Captain Holloway wrote those himself.

Zemora shrugs.

ZEMORA

Captain Holloway is busy. Writing relaxes me.

Raleigh rubs her hands together.

RALEIGH

Ok then! Let's get started.

INT. IF HALLWAY - DAY

Baz pokes his head around the corner of the hall. Mina pokes her head underneath his.

BAZ

That's where the interview is taking place. He should be done soon.

MINA
You want to slick the floors? That
would slow him down.

BAZ
I was thinking something a little
safer.

MINA
Net trap?

Bar pulls two false mustaches from behind his back.

BAZ
Urgent Singing Hologram.

Mina nods her head in agreement. Illya from behind the
corner.

ILLYA
That's not going to work.

MINA
Name one reason why it won't.

ILLYA
There are many.

Reese exits from the studio.

REESE
Thank you all! It was a pleasure
to meet me, I'm sure.

Baz and Mina put on their false mustaches. Baz pulls up a
hologram of the IF mascot, the red Question Mark who takes
them through some pitch warmups.

QUESTION MARK
Let's quickly get our harmonies.
I'm right here and you're up here.

Before they can go ahead with their plan, Illya comes from
behind the pair and intercepts the Captain.

ILLYA
Captain.

Reese looks immediately suspicious.

REESE
Illya. What a surprise to see you
planetside.
(MORE)

REESE (CONT'D)

I thought you were swamped double-checking our supplies on the ship.

ILLYA

I saw your interview and it reminded me about the mission on Galti.

REESE

What about it?

ILLYA

I mentioned at the time that when we got back to IF I was hoping to perform a more in-depth scan to be double sure that nothing was amiss from our time on the planet. Missing bones, under the skin bleeding, hair loss...

Reese still seems a little suspicious.

REESE

Makes sense. I have to go take care of my resignation first. Hackett did let you all know?

Reese starts to circle Illya. Illya watches him confused.

ILLYA

I had heard something about it. However, I have only been able to secure the scanner for the next hour. Can I delay your plans momentarily?

Reese out of nowhere hops on Illya's back. Illya is suitably confused and alarmed.

REESE

Another one of those shapeshifters huh?! Well, I'll teach you not to mess with my crew!

ILLYA

What?

Baz and Mina come out from the corner. Baz looks like he wants to help. Mina is taking a picture.

REESE

Illya would never leave the ship
with supplies that still need to
be checked!

Reese notices the pair.

REESE

Baz! Mina! Help me apprehend this
criminal.

Baz and Mina help Reese as they each take one of Illya's
arms.

REESE

Thank you! Now if you will help me
escort him to the military police,
I can interrogate him to discover
the true location of our lost
crewmate.

BAZ

Of course, Captain. Happy to help.

MINA

We also have an urgent singing
hologram for you, sir.

REESE

Wonderful! I love singing
holograms. You'll have to give it
to me on the way.

Baz pulls out the singing hologram. As they walk down the
hallway they get a harmony going.

INT. PROSPERITY PIT - DAY

The pit is covered in paperback novels and files on Reese
Holloway. A pull-down screen is scrawled with all kinds of
information about Reese. Raleigh is seated criss-cross
looking through files. Zemora is standing above her.
Hackett is on the other side of the room lying down reading
one of the paperbacks.

HACKETT

I can't believe you indulge him
like this Zemora.

ZEMORA

I make ten million credits a year.

HACKETT

Marry me.

Raleigh picks up one of the books with a hulking villain on the cover.

RALEIGH

Who is the Meridian?

ZEMORA

Captain Holloway's arch-rival. A bounty hunter with no honor.

RALEIGH

Do they exist?

ZEMORA

In a way.

Raleigh stands and goes to the board.

RALEIGH

So what I'm gathering from these excellently written books and files is that Captain Holloway is a Type A personality wanting to do most things himself despite relative inexperience. He is incredibly lucky but has moments of complex strategy that allow for his survival. His hero is Captain Philo Barnes, the creator of the Exploratory Track in IF. What else? What else?

HACKETT

He's a maniac.

RALEIGH

Possibly but what else?

ZEMORA

There's nothing that Captain Holloway wants more than to be a hero. Bold, courageous, and strong.

RALEIGH

Heroics. I wouldn't consider Diplomacy to be a heroic track but maybe...

HACKETT
He's dramatic. If a scene can be
made, Reese will make it.

Baz runs into the Pit followed by Mina at a much slower
pace. Hackett sits up.

HACKETT
Where's Illya?

BAZ
The good news is that the Captain
is suitably distracted.

HACKETT
Baz. Where's Illya?

BAZ
He's probably going to be
distracted for a while so that's
good.

HACKETT
Baz!

BAZ
Reese thinks that Illya is one of
the shapeshifters and he took him
to the MPs.

HACKETT
I swear! I can't leave you people
alone for five minutes.

Hackett leaves, followed by Zemora and Raleigh leaving Baz
and Mina.

BAZ
Should we follow them?

MINA
Do you want to go turn the
automatic gravity off in Hackett's
room and attach his furniture to
the ceiling?

BAZ
Absolutely.

INT. MILITARY CELL - DAY

Illya sits in a small high tech cell. His glasses are missing. Two Military Police standing guard in front of the cell. One is a DELLIAN (Terrence) and the other is from THE ECHT (Pat'l), a race that has bioluminescent pockets in their skin. Both look a little star-struck at Reese.

Reese is pacing in front of the cell.

REESE

Now fiend. What were your plans
with my ship?

ILLYA

Once again I am not a
shapeshifter. I am your medical
officer and I would love to go
back to work.

REESE

A likely story. I suppose we'll
just have to pull out the big
guns.

Reese pulls out his communicator.

REESE

Davis bring me the pulverizer.

ILLYA

There is no crewman named Davis
and the Pulverizer was a made-up
weapon in Reese Holloway: Flirting
with Danger.

Reese releases the button on his communicator.

REESE

Very good.

The crew and Raleigh run in.

HACKETT

Reese!

REESE

Hackett! Illya's been kidnapped
and the criminal who has stolen
his face refuses to tell me his
location.

He turns to Zemora.

REESE

You're writing this down, right?

Zemora taps her head.

ZEMORA

All up here, Captain.

Reese gives her a thumbs up and returns to Hackett.

HACKETT

Reese. That's just Illya. There's no shapeshifter. Why would you think he was replaced?

REESE

He came off the ship before the supply check was finished. Illya never comes off the ship without having checked the supplies. A clear ruse.

HACKETT

He didn't want to but I sent him to find you.

A beat.

REESE

Well, that's unfortunate.

Reese turns to Illya. Illya stares back. They continue to stare at each other before Reese seems to realize his mistake. Reese looks to the guards.

REESE

Gentleman. It seems there's been a mistake.

HACKETT

You made a mistake.

REESE

A mistake has been made and it's hard to tell who's really at fault.

HACKETT

You are.

REESE

We'll be doing a full investigation.

TERRENCE

I'm very sorry, Captain Holloway.
Once they're in our custody, we
can't simply release them back
out.

REESE

Of course. However, I am
commanding you to release him.

Terrence and Pat'l exchange nervous glances.

TERRENCE

I wish there was something I could
do Captain. Do you mind?

The guards both pull faded paperbacks from out of their
pocket and hold them out for Reese.

TERRENCE

We're big fans.

The Echt communicate through sign entirely so Pat'l signs
their lines.

PAT'L

Big fans.

Raleigh zeroes in on the books as Reese, of course, takes
them to sign. Raleigh takes Reese by the elbow.

RALEIGH

Can I borrow the Captain for a
moment?

Reese looks a little irritated to be taken from his fans.
As they get far enough away from the guards, Reese finally
looks fully at Raleigh.

REESE

Who is this?

HACKETT

Representative from Diplomacy.

REESE

Ah. The Usurper.

RALEIGH

Officer Raleigh Keen. It's an
honor, Captain Holloway.

REESE

Yes. It is. Can we help you,
Officer King?

RALEIGH

It's my pleasure to simply watch
you work, Captain Holloway.

REESE

Of course, Officer... what was it
again?

RALEIGH

Keen, sir. I was just admiring
your idea to offer those two fans
the chance to be immortalized in
your books in exchange for the
prisoner.

Reese is thrown for a loop.

REESE

My what?

He looks back to the guards who are excitedly sharing the
signatures in their books with each other.

REESE

Yes. My plan. I'm so glad you
caught on to that, Officer Keen.

Reese walks back to the pair.

REESE

Terrance. Pat'l. I completely
understand your hesitance to
release the prisoner to my care.
However, I believe an arrangement
can be made concerning my books.
Zemora?

Zemora comes up beside Reese. The pair of guards are a bit
intimidated by the Arcadian.

REESE

We've been struggling to write
those fighter pilot characters
that will become reoccurring
characters in the next Reese
Holloway novel, correct?

ZEMORA

Yes sir.

REESE
I believe we've found our
inspiration.

TERRANCE
Seriously?!

PAT'L
We get to be in a Reese Holloway
adventure!

REESE
Not just be in it, star in it.

Zemora takes a picture with her pad.

ZEMORA
For the cover.

The guards do a complicated high five routine. Reese
laughs.

REESE
Wonderful! Wonderful. We'll be
happy to make this official if I
can just take my medical officer
back due to this tragic mistake.

HACKETT
Your tragic mistake.

REESE
A tragic mistake.

TERRANCE
Well, Captain Holloway...

PAT'L
Are you sure he's not a criminal?

REESE
Of course! Look at that face.

Everyone looks at Illya who sighs and then smiles softly
and non-threateningly. It's very awkward.

REESE
He's my medical officer, for sure.

The guards turn their backs to the crew and seem to debate
furiously.

Hackett looks at the baton tasers on the side of the room.
He quietly begins to walk over to them.

The guards turn back around and Hackett freezes, his eyes still darting to the batons.

PAT'L

We haven't actually processed him yet, Captain Holloway.

TERRANCE

We think it will be ok if he's in your care.

REESE

Excellent!

Pat'l types in a code and the shield over the cell shimmers out. Terrance gives Illya his pad and glasses. Illya walks over to the crew.

REESE

Now if you two will just sign these contracts, our business will be complete.

Zemora has them both sign. The crew begins to leave the room.

REESE

Look out for your characters in Reese Holloway: Fighter Pilots Never Die!

He looks over at Zemora.

REESE

Good title?

ZEMORA

We'll work on it.

INT. MILITARY HALLWAY - DAY

Reese leads the way with everyone else bringing up the rear. Raleigh sidles up to Reese.

RALEIGH

That was incredible, Captain Holloway. So diplomatically handled.

REESE

It was, wasn't it?

RALEIGH
Very impressive. I can't wait to
see what you'll do as the First
Diplomacy Captain ever. You'll go
into history with people like...

Raleigh pretends to think.

RALEIGH
Captain Philo Barnes!

Reese stops suddenly.

REESE
I've made a decision.

Everyone waits.

REESE
I am going to take over the
Prosperity as a diplomacy ship!

Raleigh smiles widely at Hackett giving him a thumbs up.

REESE
Diplomacy, after all, is just
another way to get what I want. A
tool in my extensive arsenal.

Raleigh shakes her head at this. Hackett smirks.

RALEIGH
Actually...

Reese blinks at Raleigh.

RALEIGH
Of course, sir.

Reese continues with Zemora and Illya. Hackett and Raleigh
hang back. Raleigh looks like she's second-guessing this
entire venture.

HACKETT
You ever heard of The Monkey's
Paw.

Hackett leaves Raleigh with that thought.

TAG

INT. PROSPERITY HALLWAY - DAY

Raleigh and Baz walk through the hallway. Baz is a lovely lavender color.

Raleigh stops in the hallway to get something from a food/drink dispensary.

Hackett enters from around a corner. He looks more relaxed but his beard is growing in.

RALEIGH
You just get back?

HACKETT
Yes. IF wanted to go over every consequence that could come with the change from exploratory to diplomacy. We spent hours just going over liability waivers.

He nods to Baz.

HACKETT
You look nice.

BAZ
I know! A calm color for once.

Hackett nods and gestures behind him.

HACKETT
Now if you don't mind I'm going to shave and take a nap.
(MORE)

HACKETT (CONT'D)
A first after five years. My room
is calling me.

Baz and Raleigh wave goodbye. Hackett gets around the corner.

RALEIGH
Think he'll stop trying to leave
the ship?

BAZ
Probably. Don't let his gruff
exterior fool you. He loves us.

Hackett's voice reverberates through the intercom.

HACKETT (OS)
Baz! Mina! What the hell is my
furniture doing on the ceiling?!

Raleigh looks concerned and Baz's color changes from lavender back to the muddy maroon.

BAZ
No! No! No! Come on!

Rapid footsteps sound from the hallway.

RALEIGH
You should probably run.

Baz takes off and Hackett follows closely behind.

BAZ
It was Mina's idea!

Raleigh watches them, sighs, and takes two drinks from the food/drink dispensary. She passes one drink up towards the vent. Poppy's hand pops out, takes the drink, and cheers Raleigh's drink. Raleigh takes a sip.