

CRADLE

by

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Shooting Draft 2nd December, 2013
Blue Revision 8th December, 2013

IN THE BLACK:

We hear the CLATTER of plastic on a hard surface. A SHARP SNAP is followed by RUSTLING clothes and several DEEP BREATHS, like those before a plunge.

1 INT. ALCOVE

1

We are CLOSE on EADE, 14. Her beautiful and delicate face is lined with worry, her hair is a mess - she's exhausted. She stares intently out of an alcove at a TRANSPARENT PLASTIC BOX lying on its side with its LID horizontal, propped open by a PEN.

A trail of COOKIE CRUMBS leads to the box. A line of string, tied to the pen, snakes its way to Eade's grasp. A classic chicken catcher setup. There's a short SCUTTling noise.

A beat. Then more scuttling as a FURRY hand sized, six legged, insect like creature creeps into view. It pauses above the first cookie crumb, lowers its torso and sucks it up using a VACUUM NOZZLE from its belly. This is a CLEANBOT, programmed to clean and keep out of the way - 'Clean and not seen'. It approaches the entrance to the box and pauses; it's slightly too tall to fit inside.

A beat. Eade's fingers are white, clenched around the string. The cleanbot lowers itself and crawls tentatively into the box. SNAP, Eade springs the trap. The cleanbot rushes from side to side then squats to watch Eade approach.

2 MARK'S QUARTERS

2

It's a cluttered room that MARK, Eade's Dad, lives in. Chaos is held at bay by rubber bands constraining overstuffed files that teeter on makeshift shelving. The walls are strewn with a multitude of paper on which are the scrawls of a hurried mind: radiation decay calculations, star maps and arcane scribbles. There's a gaping hole in the end wall where Eade has hacked out the WALL SAFE onto the floor.

Judging from the safe's scars and the items nearby it has been attacked with an AXE, a BLOWTORCH and ACID. A more subtle approach is underway. Eade has two of the cleanbot's legs attached above and below the safe's PAD, the remaining legs are curled just above the pad's surface.

The cleanbot's head has been unhinged and a plastic cable out of its neck connects it to a TABLET. Eade touches the last of its free legs to the pad's buttons - for positioning. She presses a few keys on the tablet and the cleanbot's legs tap 000000 and then the enter button on the pad.

Eade adjusts some settings on the tablet and the legs speed up until they become a blur in their task of trying every combination possible until the safe is cracked. Satisfied Eade puts down the tablet and leaves the room.

3 THE BRIDGE

3

We must be in a starship, albeit a dilapidated one. A billion points of light shine through the portholes.

The walls are tricked out with displays, half of which are on the blink or show visual gibberish. Mold and rust creep down the joints in the walls to form puddles on the gun barrel metal floor.

A couple of startled cleanbots scuttle adroitly into a service tunnel as Eade enters. She pauses briefly to look at a blinking display which reads 'ALERT: COOLANT PUMP FAILURE. MELTDOWN IN 10 HOURS 12 MINUTES' before she continues out into a corridor.

4 MEDICAL CENTER

4

MARK, 50, though his face is battered and bruised, is oddly handsome in a British rocker kind of way. He is comatose on a MEDICAL BED, in the center of a room that looks like a cross between a high tech graveyard and an operating theatre. A burnt out ID WRIST BAND with the name 'Mark Llewellyn' is draped over the console.

Eade enters and touches her id wrist band to the console. Her photograph appears on the screen along with a password prompt. Eade enters her password using a keyboard and is acknowledged by the computer SYSTEM in a lush, slightly monotone female voice.

SYSTEM

Passenger Eade Llewellyn identified

System is the voice interface for the ship's computer. More than just a spoken command line, System comes complete with a personality.

SYSTEM (CONT'D)

Hello Eade, how are you?

EADE

How's Dad?

A diagram of Mark is shown on the console. It rotates and magnifies to follow System's verbal diagnosis.

SYSTEM

Slightly worse I'm afraid, the haemorrhage is increasing. Have you found a replacement ID?

Eade is angered by the update. It's obvious that there's been some prior conflict around this.

EADE

I'm working on it. How long do we have?

SYSTEM

Not long, his condition is critical.

EADE

What else can we do?

SYSTEM

Nothing with your clearance I'm afraid.

Eade strains not to go to berko level 10. She grabs Mark's damaged wrist ID and taps it repeatedly against the console. The console beeps and displays 'Corrupt ID' for every tap.

EADE

(bitingly)

So you'll just let him die?

SYSTEM

It's a high-risk procedure. I can't proceed without the correct authorisation.

EADE

You know it's him. You don't need an ID to tell you that.

SYSTEM

I'm sorry, but I can't override the security system.

EADE

Sorry? How can you be sorry, you're not alive? It doesn't even worry you that we're all going to die unless you do something.

SYSTEM

I'm Sorry, I

EADE

SHUT UP, SHUT UP, JUST SHUT UP.

Eade fights back tears of rage, leans over her Dad and grabs his hand fiercely before leaving.

5 MARK'S QUARTERS

5

Eade is at the console which is in communication mode. The display reads 'ANTENNA ALIGNMENT EARTH'

EADE

Mayday. Mayday. Mayday. This is Eade Llewellyn from the spaceship Cradle. We are Earthbound 30 million kilometers from Mars. Mark Llewellyn has been injured and our coolant system is damaged. Requesting an emergency system override.

'MESSAGE SENT' appears on the screen for a couple of seconds before it's replaced with 'ALERT: COOLANT PUMP FAILURE. MELTDOWN IN 8 HOURS 3 MINUTES.' Angrily she brushes it aside.

EADE (CONT'D)

System, bring up CCTV, BRIDGE yesterday oh five hundred hours.

SYSTEM

Playing down.

CUT TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK: BRIDGE

6 THE BRIDGE - ONE DAY AGO

6

The lights are off. Eade stands with her hands pressed against a porthole - gazing out - a silhouette against the stars.

A holographic projection of earth expands behind her. Little flags of facts are speckled around it.

SYSTEM

Good Morning Eade. Would you like to continue your lesson?

Eade tears herself from the porthole and trudges over to concentrate on a cyclone over the gulf of Mexico.

SYSTEM (CONT'D)

How would you account for its rotation?

EADE

(this is easy)
The Coriolis Effect.
 $f=2 \text{ omega sine latitude.}$

*
*

The formula appears in a pop up tag over the cyclone as she speaks.

SYSTEM
How would you define omega?

*

EADE
Where was Mum born?

A beat.

SYSTEM
Cloudy Bay. New Zealand.

Earth suddenly expands – Eade flies through clouds, skips over twinkling cities before coming to a halt, floating above the crescent of Cloudy Bay. The rush of it all makes her grin with heady delight.

EADE
(in wonder)
What's it like down there?

SYSTEM
Average temperature 14.3 Degrees
Celsius. Average rainfall

EADE
No, what's it feel like to be
there?

A beat.

SYSTEM
Love is around me like that hidden
ocean.
And I, inland, forget I have a
shore.
It needs the breakers of your anger
to remind me
That I am yours and yours
forevermore.

A beat. Eade is stunned.

SYSTEM (CONT'D)
Your Mother read that poem a lot.

Mark enters from the corridor. He pauses taking in the sight.

MARK
Morning honey

Eade, startled spins around. She collapses the projection and turns on the bridge lights.

MARK (CONT'D)
I found what was blocking the
intake valve.

He holds up a modified cleanbot. Its legs have been replaced by flippers. It's paddling feebly with two flippers entangled. Eade grimaces.

EADE
(hopefully)
I name it aqua-bot.

MARK
(slightly amused)
Can't you just leave them alone?
(off her look)
No matter, I've programmed them to know you as the devil child that you are.

Mark walks over to the main console.

MARK (CONT'D)
You're up early?

EADE
I dreamt of Earth...

MARK
Not long now...we could be in range. How about we get a dish out tomorrow and have a listen?

EADE
(excitedly)
What will it be like?

MARK
Who knows honey. The war must be over, we'll have to see what's left.

A long beat.

MARK (CONT'D)
Better save your work, I'm going to test the backup power.

Mark holds up his wrist bracelet to the console then types in his password.

SYSTEM
Captain Mark Llewellyn identified.

MARK
System, take the engines offline.

SYSTEM
Please confirm.

Mark retypes his password and clicks on the confirm button.

All the lights flicker and the air-conditioning pops off and on, just like when an aeroplane switches from self power to ground power.

SYSTEM (CONT'D)
Engines offline.

There's a loud pop from the hallway and the main screen, which displays the schematic of the Cradle, turns off. Mark fiddles with his console, trying to locate the fault.

MARK
Probably just a breaker.

Mark grabs a TOOL BOX and walks, just out of Eade's sight, down the corridor and pops out a panel at head height.

EADE
Dad?

MARK
(not paying attention)
What's that?

Mark reaches inside the panel. Surprised he pulls his hand out. It's dripping with water. He shakes it off and reaches back in.

EADE
I dreamt of Mum as well. She was sitting on Earth, waiting for us.

Mark pauses. Emotion catches him unexpectedly.

MARK
Eade honey,

KABOOM - the panel explodes out propelled by a massive jet of steam. MARK is thrown brutally against the opposite wall.

SYSTEM
ALERT: COOLANT PUMP FAILURE.

END FLASHBACK:

CUT TO:

7 MARK'S QUARTERS - PRESENT

7

Eade is more bewildered than upset. She changes back to the bridge camera and rewinds the footage to just before the power transfer flicker.

SYSTEM
Engines offline.

Again the power transfer flicker. But Eade notices something strange. She rewinds it, plays it again and freezes before advancing, frame by frame, zooming in...then freeze. All the stars in the skylights are out, in sync with the lights flickering off.

EADE
(perplexed)
System, why...

A loud electrical sparking noise comes from behind Eade. The cleanbot on the safe has burnt out and is on fire. Eade rips it off the safe and smothers it with a blanket. She stares dejectedly at the smoldering remains.

8

MARK'S QUARTERS - LATER

8

We PASS OVER the burnt out cleanbot until we arrive at the safe where the latest convert is whirring away.

Eade has an anatomical plastic head on the bench in a vice. A scan shows Mark's hemorrhage on the screen behind.

On the rear of the anatomical head, she marks the center of the hemorrhage with a cross, then picks up a DRILL with a FINE BIT. She points the bit at the cross on the head and revs it a couple of times; it emits a bone cutting high pitch whine. We are CLOSE on the face of the anatomical head as Eade moves the drill closer...closer...

There's a CLICK behind her. She spins around. The safe swings open with the cleanbot attached, its legs whirring. Eade leaps down and rummages in the safe. She finds a photo of a younger Mark with an attractive women, Jessica Llewellyn, both in launch suits.

A beat. She continues rummaging in the safe and pulls out an ID WRIST BAND.

9

MEDICAL CENTER

9

Eade enters, slightly upbeat for the first time.

EADE
System, I've got his ID.

SYSTEM
That's great Eade.

Eade holds the new wrist ID to the console. The console shows a picture of her Mum with the description of 'Medical Officer Jessica Llewellyn' along with the password prompt.

Eade's bewildered. She reads Jessica Llewellyn's name on the ID.

EADE

What ...

SYSTEM

It's your Mother's ID.

EADE

What's her password.

SYSTEM

I can't tell you, security won't let me.

EADE

No, no...no, you can, you can.

She collapses into a huddle by the bed; cradling herself with her arms, rocking and crying. A lost girl with a dying Dad. For the first time she seems much younger than her 14 years. *

A long beat.

Eade slowly stands and taps Jessica's ID to the console. *

Jessica's photograph appears on the screen along with a password prompt. With trembling fingers Eade slowly types in 'E A D E'

SYSTEM

Medical Officer Jessica Llewellyn identified

10

MEDICAL CENTER -- LATER

10

Eade sits beside the bed, her eyes alternate between Mark and his vital signs. "Procedure Complete - Coma Induced" is on the console - all looks good. She reaches over and strokes Mark's head before placing Jessica's picture from the safe on the side of the bed.

She sits down at a console near the bed. It beeps and displays. 'CRITICAL ALERT: COOLANT PUMP FAILURE. MELTDOWN IN 5 HOURS 59 MINUTES'. Eade swipes it away and behind are Jessica's personal folders. Curiously she opens the video folder.

A whole raft of files appear on the screen - Eade starts to scrub through them.

She flicks past one, pauses and returns to it - it's labeled 'Eade'. She clicks play. It's of Jessica, crazed and scared, space-suited up talking into a wide angle camera in the CHANGING AREA just outside the AIRLOCK.

MEDICAL CENTER

JESSICA

Eade, we've only just met, but knowing you is best thing I have ever done. And I'm sorry I can't stay and get to know you better - but I'm going crazy down here. And you don't want a crazy old Mum.

MARK (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Jess turns around and we see Mark standing in the background.

JESSICA

I'm just going to have a look outside. I'll be back - I need to get away for a while.

Mark approaches closer.

MARK

Medical Officer Jessica Llewellyn you are relieved of your post.

We MOVE around to Eade's face.

JESSICA (O.S.)

I have to go, please, let me go.

There's the sound of a struggle and a muffled cry.

We are still on Eade who is agog at what she's seeing.

11 MEDICAL CENTER - LATER

11

Eade, agitated, paces around Mark's bed. She stops, decision made.

EADE

System, wake him up.

SYSTEM

His brain's still swollen.

EADE

Do it.

Medical equipment beeps. The IV line quivers with a fresh infusion. Eade leans over the bed and stares into Mark's face. His eyes slowly open, quivering as he tries to focus.

MARK

(confused)
Jess?

EADE
It's Eade.

MARK
Where am I?

EADE
Where's my Mum? *

MARK
(more alert)
What? *

EADE
You killed her. *

MARK
I never hurt her. *

EADE
Don't lie to me. *

MARK
I had no choice.

EADE
I trusted you.

MARK
There was radiation from the war.

EADE
She's my Mum. What did you do to my
Mum?

MARK
She left us.

The lights flicker and dim. Stripped lighting around the
door pulse an orange warning.

SYSTEM
Extreme Alert: Backup system
failure. Meltdown in five minutes.

Neither Eade or Mark react.

MARK
(near tears)
I didn't know what to do. You
couldn't find out. You couldn't go
after her.

A beat.

EADE
(stunned)
She could be alive?

A beat.

EADE (CONT'D)
You don't know do you?

A beat.

EADE (CONT'D)
We've gotta go.

MARK
What's happening?

EADE
The coolant pumps have failed.

Mark clocks the alert on the display. With great effort he tries to sit up. Eade drags him off the Bed, his legs give out and he pulls Eade with him to the base.

MARK
I can't.

EADE
You can.

MARK
Go.

EADE
Dad come on.

MARK
Eade. Go. Go.

EADE
Please. You've all I've got.

Mark cradles her as best he can and kisses her tenderly.

MARK
Tell your Mum I love her.
If you don't go she'll never know.

Eade stares at Mark, trying to memorise every detail.

FADE OUT

12

AIRLOCK

12

A very frightened Eade is in the airlock swamped in an oversized spacesuit with the name tag M Llewellyn.

She reads the console — 'EXTREME ALERT: COOLANT PUMP FAILURE. MELTDOWN IN 1 MINUTE'.

Eade readies herself.

EADE
System, open airlock.

SYSTEM
Please confirm via keypad.

Eade confirms.

SYSTEM (CONT'D)
Goodbye Eade.

Eade lightly places her palm on the console.

EADE
(whispers)
Thank you.

The airlock countdown begins.

SYSTEM
Depressurisation in 10,9,8...

CUT TO:

13 BEGIN FLASHBACK: MEDICAL CENTER

13

Eade watches a news clip. After Mark and Jessica in launch suits, we see a large structure identical to the schematic diagram of the Spaceship Cradle being lowered into the Ocean.

COMMENTATOR
This couple are about to undergo an extreme trial.

END FLASHBACK:

CUT TO:

14 AIRLOCK – PRESENT

14

The airlock reverberates with groans as long disused machinery awakens.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
They will be submerged in a self-sustaining biosphere.

Eade fights every instinct not to cancel the sequence. She breathes hard. We are CLOSE on her face.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Completely isolated from the
outside world in a simulated
mission to another solar system –
their experiences will be
invaluable should we ever attempt a
trip for real.

Eade takes a deep breath and closes her eyes.

SYSTEM

2,1

The outer door cracks open, water floods in and fills the
airlock. Eade opens her eyes, she almost doesn't believe what
she sees. We are CLOSE on her face as she starts to cry.

15 EXT. OCEAN – MORNING

15

Eade floats underwater. Golden God rays of light surround her
as she ascends towards the surface.

PAINT IT BLACK:

END.