

Intro: It Hurt.

Five hundred feet is one hell of a drop. Long enough to ask where it all went wrong. Long enough to take a bathroom break midway through watching your life flash before your eyes. Unfortunately not long enough to go through all five stages of grief. So when I hit the ground at over fifty six meters per second, I wasn't pleading, grieving, or accepting. I was just pissed.

Messages flash across my HUD. A hundred different ways of saying I'm fucked. By all accounts I shouldn't be able to move. But that's never stopped me before. With a grunt I roll myself onto my back. It didn't really hurt much, rolling over I mean. When you're this banged up there's nothing you can really do to worsen or lessen the pain. Only change where it's concentrated.

Now facing the sky I'm able to catch a glimpse of the last flaming bits of debris before they disappear into pillars of smoke. "Welcome to Mars."

It was always during the landing. Whenever something turns catastrophic it's always during the fucking landing. Never during take off, and most dangers in space could just be avoided. But landings? That's when the real shit hits the fan.

Sirens signal the approach of authorities, a nice bed, and medical expenses. None of which I had time for.

Reaching with my right arm, the least broken of the two, I retrieve a cig from my vest. Taking a glance at it I pray I'm not the one in worse shape. Reaching back down I retrieve my lighter from my back pocket and nearly laughed as I flicked it on and it still worked. Puffing a smoke I continue to look up at the endless abyss of the night sky and wonder when was the last time any of the natives here saw the stars.

Suddenly my view was obstructed by a shit eating grin attached to a face.

"You look like shit."

"Good. That means I look better than I feel. Did I mention you're late?"

"Contrary to popular belief piloting an escape pod during a rather... eventful reentry, isn't exactly easy."

I was about to make a retort when finally my condition caught up to me and like the lights during a power surge, I blacked out.

Part 1: What You Know.

For some reason everytime I wake up I'm never sure how to feel. And this time was no different. On one hand I should probably consider myself lucky to be alive. On the other hand, I couldn't feel my other hand.

"Hey angel. I'd ask how it felt but..."

I turn my head to see that same grin from the night that put me here. I've seen that grin make the calmest mind seethe with rage yet, for some reason. Seeing it only made me want to smile too.

"You must have been waiting since the moment I passed out to say that one haven't you?"

"You mean after you tried to get yourself killed?" Their voice tightens and the corners of that grin begin to twitch.

"Zipper stuck." I say indicating towards my chest where my jackets zipper would have been. "Can't glide with sleeves."

"So you thought you'd try living without a heartbeat instead?" There wasn't even a hint of humor in their tone and the grin was gone. "Four minutes." Their voice was beginning to tremble. "We thought... I-I should've-"

If you're assuming my recent jump was the worst I'd ever experienced you'd be wrong. Very wrong. Even then, nothing I ever felt could compare to the pain I felt seeing that face cry.

"I'm sorry." I reach out. Grabbing that faces hand. It wasn't much but it silenced their quivering.

"Is everyone else alright?" A nod.

"That's good. I'm glad you're all okay."

"You damn well better be." The tone was harsh but the grin was back. My grin was back.

I release their hand as they stand and walk to the far side of the room before turning to face me.

"How long was I out?"

"Sorry, paycheck first, answers later."

I respond with a glare. An amused sigh passes between that grins lips.

"Three days."

"So right on time."

"Correction. Right on time would be if we were with our client right on now."

A groan rises in my throat.

"Can I walk?"

"Can you fall?"

With an amount of effort one would typically associate with moving a space station I manage to lift myself from the bed. Stumbling for a moment before I'm finally able to balance myself on the edge of the bed. For a moment I can see a look of worry crossing their face but it's gone as soon as it arrived.

They start to make their way out the room when they pause for a moment before turning and tossing me a small ball.

"I'll be waiting" They say before leaving out the door. That grin back to it's ear-to-ear status.

I press a button on the top of the ball and it extends into a cain. Wonderful.

Hobbling my way out the room like the fucking cripple I was I'm greeted by none other than my most valued healer.

"I take it you've had your morning cuddle time?"

"Oh but of course. Can't you tell by the ruffling of my feathers?"

"That grin wasn't the only thing struggling with you out of commission you know?"

“What I know is that I’ve made it through a hell of alot worse over the years and this is no different.”

I could almost swear I could see a look of frustration pass across their face as they regarded me for a brief moment. But whatever it was it was gone before I could tell for sure.

“Whatever you say.” They reply. But with a voice more suitable for resigning the dead then speaking to the living.

“Hey I didn’t mean-”

“Your team’s waiting for you.”

Damn. Sometimes I forget just how cold they could be.

“Anything I should know before I leave?”

“I trust your senses will work out most of it far faster than I could brief you on it. However, in case you’re wondering, your left hand was removed due to medical necessity.”

“Oh, and here I thought you severed limbs just for the shits and giggles.”

Not a flinch.