

SIGNAL LOSS, part two
a “Crime and Rockets” play

Miranda is in a hospital bed, asleep. Ellie sits by her side. Miranda stirs as lights up.

MIRANDA: Ellie?

ELLIE: I’m right here. No, don’t try to sit up.

MIRANDA: Where am I?

ELLIE: You’re in sick bay. On the station.

Long pause.

MIRANDA: Is this really my body? I’m really awake?

ELLIE: Awake, and loaded on pain meds, because you’re still full of cancer.

MIRANDA: Why did you wake me? Did something go wrong on the asteroid?

ELLIE: I can’t tell you. The mission was reclassified as high security. They’re shipping out all non-essential personnel on the next cargo ship. Including you.

MIRANDA: But you’re essential?

ELLIE: I’m the only engineer who can write patches for their janky satellite firmware, so yeah, they’re extending my contract.

MIRANDA: Why aren’t they sending me in cryo? The cancer will kill me before I make it back.

ELLIE: Cargo ship’s too old for your cryo pod. They have to install a custom coupling bay. Even with triple hazard pay, I can’t afford that.

MIRANDA: But we *can* afford that.

ELLIE: *You* can afford it. But your brain scan wouldn’t trust me with your account numbers.

MIRANDA: I see. *Pause.* They’ll get suspicious if I pay out of my account. My wages were docked the entire time I was in cryo.

Ellie hands Miranda a thin black tablet.

ELLIE: So transfer the money to me. You still know *my* account numbers I assume?

MIRANDA: Of course. But won't they ask where *you* got the money?

ELLIE: I know who to pay so they *don't* ask. Made some friends while you were asleep.

Miranda starts typing and swiping on the tablet.

MIRANDA: Someday we're gonna buy our *own* damn ship and we're go *exploring*.

Miranda hands the tablet back. Ellie studies the tablet and is satisfied with what she sees.

ELLIE: No, Ellie, we're not. *She rises.* Control: prepare to terminate simulation.

MIRANDA: *What?*

ELLIE: You never let your guard down with me in the basic simulation. So I spent my hazard pay on a more convincing environment. Lifelike, wouldn't you agree?

Miranda struggles to rise, but doesn't have the strength to get up or reach Ellie.

ELLIE: Yeah, don't try to get up. You're still pretty weak in this simulation.

MIRANDA: You did this just to *steal* all the money?

ELLIE: Half of it's my share. I'm only stealing your half.

MIRANDA: The plan was to split the money when we got back to Mars!

ELLIE: Yes, I was your god damn *lover* and you *still* couldn't trust me not to run off with the money while you were in cryo!

MIRANDA: Isn't that what you're *actually doing*?

ELLIE: No, I'm outfitting an old cargo ship with a brand new cryo pod and sending you back to Mars for cancer treatment. *Then* I'm running off with the money.

MIRANDA: You're just proving I was right not to trust you!

ELLIE: The irony's not lost on me. Control: please terminate simulation and delete brain scan subject Morrison comma Miranda.

COMPUTER *voiceover*: This brain scan's memories have not been transferred to her body or backed up to offline storage.

ELLIE: Yes, I want them deleted.

MIRANDA: Ellie, wait.

COMPUTER *voiceover*: This operation cannot be reversed. Are you sure you would like to proceed?

MIRANDA: What do you expect me to do when I wake up alone and the money is gone?

ELLIE: Control, yes I'm quite sure. *To Miranda*: Be seeing you, Miranda.

Blackout.