

SILHOUETTE
by Scotto Moore

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SCENE ONE

Lights up on twelve people arrayed on stage in a pattern, silhouetted by soft back light.

[PROLOGUE]

ENSEMBLE:

The stars in the sky look different tonight

The stars in the sky look different tonight

See the constellations drifting further than they should

See the huntress ranging far and wide outside her wood

Never have I seen the raven's eye approach so close

What could it mean?

What does it mean?

The world that we know is different tonight

The world that we know is different tonight

Omens such as these I haven't seen in all my years
No one knows if signs like these bring happiness or tears
Augury or portent, are they blessing or a curse
What could they mean?
What do they mean?

The stars in the sky look different tonight

NADIA, the town doctor, steps forward into a light.

NADIA: The town of Silhouette is protected by an illusion, a magical veil over the city that we call "the curtain." From the outside, if you were to somehow visually spot the curtain through some unlikely fluke of nature, you might just possibly notice the silhouette of our town inside. But if you marched for days and days in our direction, you'd never find us. The curtain made us invisible to outsiders up in space and on the planet. The curtain kept our people safe for generations.

[STARS]

NADIA:

Everyone's got a story on this quiet little promontory
Settled long ago by frightened soldiers on the run
Somehow they survived though they were very solitary
Generations pass and still the story isn't done

I'm a witness like the others
All the people in this town
Called Silhouette
Shrouded from the outside
No one can see in

But everyone will surely say no matter what their job or trade
They all know where they were the day the star came crashing down

ENSEMBLE:

Ooooh the star came crashing down
Ooooh the star came crashing down

CONSTANCE, the mayor of the town, and GUNMETAL SALLY, the town constable, step forward. MELODY & LAUREL, a pair of young girls, also become visible.

NADIA: I was closing up my practice

CONSTANCE: I was leaving city hall

NADIA & CONSTANCE: Suddenly a sonic boom was heard right through the walls

SALLY: Thought it was a rifle, thought it was a shot
SALLY: Knew that it was louder than most weapons that we got

CONSTANCE: And we knew down deep that the curtain was illusion
And we knew down deep that illusions never last
But you can't get sleep if your eyes are always open
MELODY & LAUREL: And the elders always promise you that dreams give you a past

ENSEMBLE:
I'm a witness like the others
And I've got a tale to tell
Of Silhouette
I was there the day
The curtain finally fell

Ooooooh the curtain finally fell
Ooooooh the curtain finally fell

Melody and Laurel approach Sally.

LAUREL: What do you think that is, Sally?
MELODY: Looks like a falling star!
SALLY: Falling stars burn up in the atmosphere. This one's still coming down.
CONSTANCE: Like a scout craft.
SALLY: Coming in too hot.
NADIA: Escape pod?
SALLY: No chute deployed.
CONSTANCE: Girls, go help your mother. Maybe she can tune the curtain to deflect whatever that thing is, even a little.
NADIA: But the curtain's just an illusion!
CONSTANCE: And Miranda's our best spellcaster, and maybe there's something she can do, even just for a few moments. Go quick now!

Melody and Laurel exit.

CONSTANCE: Sally, break out the arsenal, get people locked and loaded. Nadia, get prepped for injuries.
NADIA: If it hits the town, there won't be injuries to treat - we'll be a smoking crater in the ground.
CONSTANCE: I understand that. Miranda will either deflect it or she won't. We'll either be pulverized or we won't. I prefer to operate as though all four hundred people in this town will still be alive in fifteen minutes and make plans accordingly.
SALLY: I'll set up a perimeter in case the curtain comes down.

CONSTANCE: Check on Miranda if you can.

Sally exits.

CONSTANCE: If that's a scout ship, maybe we can monitor its communications. I'll check the old channels.

Constance exits.

NADIA: In the town of Silhouette, magic is real and everybody uses it. But some things even magic just can't fix.

Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Lights up on the pilot AURELIA in a scout ship cockpit, wearing a simple, slim flight suit, no helmet. FLIGHT CONTROL is a trio of voices that are heard as though over a radio.

[FLYING IN CIRCLES]

FLIGHT CONTROL:

Scout ship twenty-three, this is flight control
Please acknowledge - are you listening?

Scout ship twenty-three, this is flight control
Sending you a message - are you receiving?

AURELIA:

Hello this is twenty-three, picking up your message
I am safe and sound, out here on patrol
Staring at the loneliness of space, it's good to hear your voice
I miss you, flight control

They say you're really tested when the mission seems so pointless
And you're facing down your empty soul
But I am not complaining, you might say I just feel restless
But I know, I know this is my role

FLIGHT CONTROL:

Scout ship twenty-three, this is flight control
We've got a change of plans - are you ready?

Break off toward the nearest planet, zoom in for a closer look
Just a survey sweep - keep it steady

AURELIA:

Hello this is twenty-three, and I got your message
That rock's been surveyed twice, and it's empty
Why expend the time and fuel to fly by one more time
Or is this just a ploy to keep me busy?

I shouldn't need more training, I've been at this so long
I should be at the head of the armada
Why should I be left behind, these orders must be wrong
Can you confirm - you're sending me away?

Oh, I'm flying in circles
Oh, I'm drifting away
Oh, I'm flying in circles
Wondering when I'll see the day
 When I can do my duty, serve the fleet
 As more than just a scout
 I'm ready for adventure that's for sure
 I can fly a fighter craft as well as anyone
 I'm ready for the chance
 I'm pulled by the allure

FLIGHT CONTROL:

Scout ship twenty-three, this is flight control
We confirm your orders - we're sending you away

Scout the planet's surface, look for signs of life
Or anything we missed - check back in a day

AURELIA:

Oh I'm flying in circles
Oh I'm wasting away
Oh I'm flying in circles
Wasting time, what can I say
 Maybe the fleet knows something I don't know
 To keep me in this quad
 I've got to hope this isn't just a drill
 Someday I'll show the fleet I'm better than my squad
 I'm ready for the chance
 I've truly got the will

Oh I'm flying in circles
Drifting through all these lonely years
Oh I'm flying in circles
All alone except my fears

FLIGHT CONTROL: Scout ship twenty-three, we're sending rendezvous coordinates to your nav deck. Meet you there in one day.

AURELIA: Acknowledged.

FLIGHT CONTROL: We expect interference from the planet's atmosphere as you get close for surface surveying, so don't be surprised if you can't reach us during that window.

AURELIA: Thanks, flight control. See you tomorrow.

SFX: a sudden "PING" sound from the capsule's flight computer. Aurelia, who might have been close to drifting off to sleep, snaps to attention.

AURELIA: Huh? Computer, what am I looking at?

SFX: suddenly an array of beeps and buzzes from the capsule's flight computer - alarms going off. Aurelia is rattled by the onslaught of sudden noises.

AURELIA: Computer, what's happening? Computer! Flight control, are you there?

The capsule is severely jolted. Aurelia starts to spin and twist in her cockpit.

ENSEMBLE:

Oooh the star came crashing down
Oooh the star came crashing down

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

Lights up on MIRANDA, eyes up at the sky with an air of intense concentration. MELODY & LAUREL enter in a rush.

MELODY: Mother, did you see the falling star?

LAUREL: Or whatever it is - we can't tell!

MIRANDA: I *felt* it before I saw it. It's a scout ship. Somehow the curtain interfered with its navigation, even from miles away.

LAUREL: Sally said it's not a scout ship.

MELODY: She said it was coming in too hot.

MIRANDA: It'd be coming in a lot hotter if I hadn't caught it.

MELODY: The Mayor said maybe the curtain could deflect it.

MIRANDA: Even all of us together couldn't make the curtain strong enough for that.

LAUREL: What are you doing anyway?

MIRANDA: I'm slowing that ship down so it doesn't explode when it crashes, and I could use a little help.

[RESCUE]

MIRANDA: Extend your awareness, feel the scathing heat around the hull

MELODY: Will it hurt? MIRANDA: Magic always hurts a little bit

MIRANDA: Now push! LAUREL: Push the ship?

MIRANDA: Push the air, create a bubble! MELODY: Like a cushion!

MIRANDA: Catch the ship and guide it so it doesn't hit the town

MIRANDA: Extend your awareness, find a patch of land to bring it down

To the ground, bring it close so we can have a look

Someone on the inside of that ship is likely scared out of her mind

And doesn't know if she'll survive or what she'll find when she gets out

MELODY: That ship is coming down straight through the curtain

LAUREL: That ship is coming down right near our home

MIRANDA: That ship is coming down and with our help it's landing safely

That ship is coming down inside the dome

Extend your awareness, feel it gliding down under control

MELODY & LAUREL: Gliding down under *our* control

MIRANDA: Then with a gentle touch, set it down upon the ground

So we can finally take a closer look at our rescued soul

We hear the loud WHUMP of a ship landing somewhere out of view.

MELODY: Well - I guess it didn't explode.

LAUREL: And the curtain's still up!

Sally enters, carrying the equivalent of a small rifle.

SALLY: You brought it down inside the curtain. Think that was smart?

MIRANDA: You want the men getting hold of a fresh new ship?

SALLY: Suppose not.

MIRANDA: The girls and I'll survey the crash site.

SALLY: Be careful, Captain. If that's a Fleet ship - we're in a world of trouble, aren't we.

MIRANDA: Could be.

Sally exits.

MELODY: Do we need weapons to survey the scout ship?

MIRANDA: I have magic that will keep us safe.

LAUREL: How'd you get so much more magic than us?

MIRANDA: Been alive a lot longer than you, now haven't I? Let's get moving.

Blackout.

SCENE FOUR

Lights up on Aurelia, center stage, unconscious in a chair. Melody and Laurel hover nearby, studying Aurelia. Miranda stands across the room, watching closely.

MELODY: Why'd we bring her here?

MIRANDA: Can't parade her through town and start a panic.

LAUREL: Why would people panic?

MIRANDA: We don't get visitors here, and that's on purpose.

MELODY: Why didn't she die in the crash?

MIRANDA: Her nanoengine kept her alive.

LAUREL: Does she know magic like you do?

MIRANDA: No one who spends life on a ship knows magic like we do.

Sally and Nadia enter.

NADIA: She's Fleet, isn't she.

MIRANDA: Shut down the transponder in her neck.

SALLY: The curtain won't block the signal?

MIRANDA: Curtain's weak right now. *I'm* weak right now.

Nadia crosses to Aurelia, places her palms on Aurelia's temples.

NADIA: In case you're awake and simply pretending to be unconscious, brace yourself. This will hurt, but your nanoengine will heal the damage quickly.

Suddenly Aurelia jolts awake in pain. She finds that her wrists and ankles are pinned to the chair, although no ropes or cuffs are present. Nadia fades back as Miranda approaches the prisoner.

AURELIA: I can't move.

MIRANDA: You're restrained.

AURELIA: Restrained by what?

MIRANDA: Restrained by me.
AURELIA: How?
MIRANDA: Magic.
AURELIA: You speak my language.
MIRANDA: I would argue you speak mine.
AURELIA: Then when you say magic -
MIRANDA: I mean magic.
AURELIA: We don't - have magic, where I'm from.
MIRANDA: No, you don't.
AURELIA: Why are you restraining me?
MIRANDA: I don't trust you.
AURELIA: I'm here by mistake.
MIRANDA: Is that so.
AURELIA: You think I meant to crash my ship?
MIRANDA: Let me tell you what I think.

[JUST LIKE ME]

MIRANDA: You're from the Fleet, I can tell by that uniform
The color and the cut haven't changed in all this time
Oh yes you're Fleet, I can tell by the way you wear your hair
I can tell by the fire in your eyes I must be right
 You're so young, was I ever young like you I couldn't say
 The kind of young that doesn't know how young you are
 They gave you your own mission, and they sent you on your way
 An ensign with a scout ship, there's no way you could get far
You're from the Fleet, and soon you'll miss your rendezvous
They sent you on a mission but they'll surely start to fret
Oh yes you're Fleet, and this is just between me and you
The day will come that both of us will wish we'd never met

AURELIA: Now let me guess - you came here as a settler
You came to stay, to colonize this planet while you could
And let me guess, you gave up high technology
You live here by your wits, and you're doing pretty good
 You're so old, several hundred years I'd probably say
 The nanoengine in your gut is keeping you alive
 You don't need food, you don't get sick, and in this way
 You lasted long enough to see your city start to thrive
So let me guess - you used to be an officer
Who somehow wasn't satisfied with life among the stars
And let me guess - you were the one who led the mutiny
And now you wonder if I'm here to put you behind bars

MIRANDA & AURELIA: You're no good at keeping secrets
Or hiding motives, I see right through you
On the Fleet you might be dangerous
But on the surface, a simple fact is true

You're just like me, underneath the skin
You're just like me, no matter where you've been

MIRANDA: You're from the Fleet, and you just wandered by

AURELIA: And let me guess, you've been hiding here in plain view

MIRANDA: So why does Fleet need to send you down through our sky

AURELIA: My capsule shorted out - I don't suppose that was you

MIRANDA: Why would I ever want to attract your attention?

AURELIA: How come I couldn't see you until I hit the ground?

MIRANDA: Yes I'm sure you'd love to know all about our incantation

AURELIA: You've got some secret way to camouflage your whole town

MIRANDA & AURELIA: You're no good at keeping secrets
Or hiding motives, I see right through you
On the Fleet you might be dangerous
But on the surface, a simple fact is true

MIRANDA: How is the Fleet these days?

AURELIA: The glory days are here
Oh the wonders that you've missed
The Empire truly spans the galaxy

The war is finally over
Our citizens are blessed
And the Fleet -

MIRANDA: Oh yes, the Fleet
The greatest conquering machine the universe has ever known
Oh yes, the Fleet
Always looking for a target for its hunger - yet they sent you here alone

MIRANDA & AURELIA: You're just like me, underneath the skin
You're just like me, no matter where we've been

AURELIA: What's your name?

MIRANDA: Captain.

AURELIA: Oh. Well I'd salute, but...

MIRANDA: This is Gunmetal Sally. She's our constable here.

AURELIA: And what is "here"?

SALLY: You don't really get to ask questions, as it turns out.

Sally finds herself a chair, sits opposite Aurelia.

SALLY: What's your name, Ensign?

AURELIA: Aurelia.

[THAT'S YOUR STORY]

SALLY: Ensign Aurelia, is it
Why'd you come here in your scout ship
Oh Aurelia
What were you scouting for
Oh Aurelia
What did you think you'd find
I've got to know
For my peace of mind

You were lucky that the Captain saw your ship fall from the sky
If she hadn't caught you, no doubt you would have died
But you haven't yet reached safety, let's be clear
I still get to make decisions here
So convince me I should keep you alive

AURELIA: I was on a training mission
Buzz an empty planet, that's what they said
Then my sensors shorted out
I lost control, and then I fell, thought I was dead

SALLY: That's your story, is it
The Fleet just happened to be passing by
Aurelia
What were they doing here
Oh Aurelia
What are you training for
Oh Aurelia
You better tell me more

AURELIA: I am just an ensign
I don't give the orders, I just take them, that's what I do
The Fleet wants me to train
And so I train, and now I'm here, talking to you

SALLY: So you haven't flown the vanguard, seen the true destructive might
Of the Fleet in all its glory, such a paralyzing sight
 You're an innocent who doesn't know the score
 You're just a child out on a joyride, wanting more
And that's your story - just making sure I've got it right

AURELIA: That's my story.

SALLY: Duly noted.

SALLY: Ensign Aurelia
You were not simply passing by
Oh Aurelia
I think you must be a spy
Aurelia
I don't know how you could have found us
Some hidden flaw
In the curtain that surrounds us

What is the exact location of the nearest ships you've got
What is the precise location of your rendezvous spot
 If the war is over, why the need to scout
 If no one is looking, how did you find out
That we were here, you say you're scouting, I think not

AURELIA: No one's looking for you, no one cares about you
You're like a joke, fools who fled the Fleet
I'm here on my own, crashed my ship alone
You are the last ones I thought I'd meet

SALLY: Oh Aurelia
That's just what a spy would say
Oh Aurelia
This is not your lucky day
Oh Aurelia
Your ship is gone, don't you see
Oh Aurelia
You've got no way to flee

What is the exact location of the nearest ships you've got
What is the precise location of your rendezvous spot
 You haven't yet reached safety, let's be clear
 I still get to make decisions here

If you think you're ever leaving here again - I think not

MELODY: Mayor's coming up the walk.

LAUREL: Bringing the whole council.

Miranda approaches Aurelia.

MIRANDA: *Sleep.*

Aurelia immediately falls into a deep sleep.

NADIA: She's just an ensign, Sally, there's no reason to think she'd know anything beyond her current mission.

SALLY: You pleading ignorance on her behalf?

NADIA: Been a long time since you were her rank, maybe you forgot what it was like.

MIRANDA: We got a recommendation for the Mayor?

SALLY: This her decision or yours, Captain?

MIRANDA: I have faith in my elected officials.

Constance enters, along with Ellen, Tess, and Rachel.

CONSTANCE: Miranda.

MIRANDA: Constance.

Constance takes a look at the unconscious Aurelia.

CONSTANCE: Damn.

MIRANDA: Yeah.

CONSTANCE: Girls, would you mind giving the council a little privacy?

Melody and Laurel exit.

CONSTANCE: So what do we know?

SALLY: She came down alone in a damaged scout ship.

ELLEN: Is it capable of flight?

SALLY: No, it broke into pieces on impact.

RACHEL: Can we salvage anything useful from the wreckage?

NADIA: I think I found a medpak. It's a new design but we might be able to figure it out.

TESS: What about weapons or comms?

SALLY: Comms bank is torched. If I could find the nav bank, I might be able to figure out what happened to her up there.

MIRANDA: I can guess what happened. Her scout ship got too close, and the curtain fried the whole sensor array.

NADIA: Is that how the curtain's supposed to work?

MIRANDA: Who knows? The only reason we think it works is because we haven't been found yet.

CONSTANCE: Until now.

MIRANDA: Until now.

CONSTANCE: Give me a timeline.

SALLY: From the time we spotted the ship in the atmosphere, to the time the Captain brought it down, was maybe fifteen minutes. Took me another ten minutes before I could locate the ship transponder and destroy it.

CONSTANCE: Thought ship transponders were supposed to be indestructible.

SALLY: They're not immune to magic, turns out. Point is, though, that's a solid fifteen minutes worth of distress calls going out on normal comms for sure, plus maybe another ten minutes of transponder pings going out.

TESS: "Maybe"?

MIRANDA: The curtain should have suppressed those pings.

TESS: "Should have"?

SALLY: Watch your tone.

ELLEN: So what does that mean? Is someone looking for her or not?

SALLY: Probably not yet. Probably won't be long, though.

RACHEL: How long?

SALLY: Scout missions last up to a week sometimes. Long range comms happen via relays if the warship's somewhere else. We don't know how much fuel she was carrying so we can't deduce when or where she was expecting to be picked up.

ELLEN: So is she healthy?

NADIA: She's fine. Her nanoengine protected her. If she suffered any injuries in the crash, they've already healed up.

RACHEL: Have you spoken to her?

SALLY: Asked her a few questions.

TESS: Is she cooperating?

NADIA: She hasn't been hostile.

SALLY: But she hasn't been answering all my questions either.

ELLEN: Do we know what ship she was stationed on?

RACHEL: Or what her home world is?

TESS: Do we know who's winning the war?

NADIA: She said the war is over.

MIRANDA: But she guessed who we were. Right away.

CONSTANCE: What do you mean?

MIRANDA: I mean - she figured out almost instantly that I was a leader of the mutiny.

Long silence.

MIRANDA: Happened five hundred some years ago, and the Fleet still remembers.

RACHEL: If the war's over - maybe it doesn't matter anymore.

TESS: Of course it matters. We'll always be deserters.

ELLEN: History makes room for conscientious objectors.

SALLY: Not every time it doesn't.
CONSTANCE: What else does the pilot know about us?
NADIA: She's seen us practice magic.
SALLY: She knows about the curtain.
ELLEN: Clearly we can't let her leave.
TESS: Does that make her a prisoner of war?
RACHEL: Not if the war is over!
ELLEN: Assuming she's telling the truth.
TESS: The Fleet wouldn't send scout ships flying around if the damn war is over!
SALLY: Unless they were out looking for us.
ELLEN: All of our information about the Fleet, about the war, is ancient now. She could fill in hundreds of years' worth of history books for us.
SALLY: So you're expecting an active duty officer to collaborate with mutineers?
NADIA: She might prefer civilian life once she's had a chance to try it.
SALLY: You think I'd trust her as a civilian here? I say we stick her in a jail cell for a couple hundred years first. Make sure she understands what freedom's worth to her.
RACHEL: If she was born and raised on Fleet, she won't understand freedom in the first place.
TESS: Anyway, we don't have a hundred years if the Fleet comes looking for her. We need to know everything she knows.
ELLEN: We'll have to systematically interview her.
SALLY: Already started that.
ELLEN: I said interview, not interrogate. Get to know who she is underneath the uniform.
SALLY: She's probably just wearing another uniform underneath that one.
CONSTANCE: Miranda, you're awfully quiet. What do you think we should do with this pilot?

[COUNCIL MEETING]

MIRANDA: I think we should kill her
Execute her in the public square
We should not reward her
For her time in service, that would not be fair

I think we should try her
For her crimes, for her sins
Then we ought to kill her
On behalf of every planet where she's been

She flies a scout ship
What does she scout? She scouts out targets
Even if she's never flown in combat
She must surely know that's what her role is

She is no objector
Conscientious or otherwise

She is no spectator
That's the very reason that she flies

I think we should kill her
Execute her in the public square
Let her say she's sorry
Then kill her on the spot - it's only fair

RACHEL: We can't try her for war crimes if she's never flown in combat.

MIRANDA: She wears the uniform.

ELLEN: You believe every person on the Fleet deserves a public execution?

MIRANDA: We mutinied for a reason. We fought hand to hand and ship to ship against our friends and family because we knew what they believed in was evil at its core.

TESS: You've known that girl for less than twelve hours and you think she's evil?

MIRANDA: What do you think she's scouting for, Tess? Peace and harmony?

NADIA: She deserves a second chance
Isn't that what Silhouette is meant to be?

MIRANDA: Silhouette's a hiding place
Somewhere to go to ground against our enemy

NADIA: What if they're the ones who called a truce
What if they're the ones who made it right

MIRANDA: What if they just strung the final noose
What if there's nobody left to fight

MIRANDA: I think we should kill her

NADIA: She deserves a second chance

MIRANDA: Execute her where the town can see

NADIA: Isn't that what Silhouette is meant to be?

MIRANDA: I think we should kill her

NADIA: Silhouette is more than just a hiding place

MIRANDA: Instead of wasting any empathy

NADIA: Ironic, you wanting to kill her so badly, seeing how you're the one who saved her life.

MIRANDA: She can be useful before the trial. We should squeeze her for as much operational detail as we can.

SALLY: What would we do with that information, besides fill out the history books a little?

CONSTANCE: Miranda, you're not thinking of some kind of strike, are you?

NADIA: Of course she's not. Silhouette's a *hiding* place. Our primary asset is the curtain spell, and it's purely defensive.

MIRANDA: The curtain fried that scout ship, Nadia, before it ever got close to Silhouette. Seems to me it's capable of a ranged attack.

NADIA: Attack against *what*?

NADIA, ELLEN, TESS, RACHEL: Have you all lost your minds?
Are you suggesting that we start a fight
With a Fleet of warships
An armada of unbeatable might

MIRANDA: They're the ones who started it
All those years ago
What good are your history books
If they don't teach you what you really need to know?

MIRANDA: I think we should kill her

CONSTANCE & SALLY: Do you think that we should kill her?

NADIA, ELLEN, TESS, RACHEL: Have you all lost your minds?

MIRANDA: I think she deserves to die

CONSTANCE & SALLY: Do you think she ought to die?

NADIA, ELLEN, TESS, RACHEL: She deserves a second chance

MIRANDA: I think when they come for her

CONSTANCE & SALLY: Do you think that she should die?

NADIA, ELLEN, TESS, RACHEL: Are you suggesting we should start a fight

MIRANDA: We should be watching the sky

We should be watching the sky

We should be watching the sky...

ELLEN: What happens now - do we take it to a vote?

CONSTANCE: You took it to a vote 73 years ago when you elected me Mayor and that will be sufficient. Miranda, I understand why you feel the way you do. But I'd prefer a different route to justice. I want to understand what state the Fleet is in today, before the whole damn thing shows up to rescue her. We need her to talk.

TESS: We putting her in jail?

MIRANDA: She can stay here for now.

RACHEL: After all that, she's going to stay with *you*?

MIRANDA: The Mayor wants her to talk. I might have an idea about that.

CONSTANCE: No torture, Miranda.

MIRANDA: Wouldn't dream of it.

CONSTANCE: But before you wake her up... tell me more about this impressive new ranged attack at our disposal.

Blackout.

SCENE FIVE

Lights up on Aurelia, in her chair, eyes closed. Melody and Laurel enter. Aurelia snaps awake.

MELODY: Oh good, you're awake! That sleep spell lasted a long time.

AURELIA: I was just exhausted. You know, from a long day of crashing spaceships. Didn't need a sleep spell.

LAUREL: Well you got one anyway. Sorry about that.

MELODY: Are you comfortable?

AURELIA: No, I'm stuck in a chair.

MELODY: I mean, besides that.

AURELIA: Not really. So it's magic keeping me in this chair?

LAUREL: A spell, yeah.

AURELIA: How long does it last?

MELODY: Could last a while if Mother doesn't dispel it first.

LAUREL: She's the strongest spellcaster in Silhouette.

AURELIA: Silhouette - is that the name of this place?

Melody shoots her sister a look and they fall silent.

AURELIA: Where's your mother now? Why'd she leave you alone with me?

MELODY: Why wouldn't she?

AURELIA: I'm from the Fleet. I'm dangerous.

LAUREL: Not stuck in a chair.

AURELIA: I suppose. But why *did* she leave you alone with me?

MELODY: She said we could ask you questions.

AURELIA: You're going to interrogate me?

LAUREL: She thought you might soften up to us.

MELODY: Maybe let slip some details about where the Fleet is...

LAUREL: ... or how strong the Fleet is ...

MELODY: ... or how the war is *really* going...

LAUREL: ...because they don't believe it's really over.

AURELIA: You're not being very sneaky here.

LAUREL: It's supposed to be disarming.

AURELIA: I can't answer any questions like that.

LAUREL: We know. We have different questions anyway.

MELODY: See, they don't like to talk about what living in space was *like*.

AURELIA: Who doesn't?

MELODY: The elders.

AURELIA: Your mother? The other mutineers? How many are there living here? Is the whole town mutineers... I mean, obviously you're too young, so clearly they're generating children, but...

LAUREL: We can't answer any questions like *that*.

AURELIA: Then what do we have to talk about?

[LIFE OUTSIDE]

MELODY & LAUREL: Tell us

What's it like in space

How close to the stars

Do you get

Are they bigger

And are they bright

Do your ships fly themselves

Through the endless night

We have rarely seen

The sky outside the curtain

Silhouette is safe

But it's also very small

So tell us

What's it like in space

How fast through the stars

Do you fly

Do you race

Do you soar

Do you ever find yourself

Feeling small and wanting more

We have heard there's no time for family

When you're on Fleet, war is always raging

Must be very hard to live a life so solitary

You must care so much about the war you're waging

We have rarely seen

The sky outside the curtain

Silhouette is safe

But it's also very small

We always thought

We'd never see

More than Silhouette

That's all we'd ever be

AURELIA: I'd never

Set foot upon the surface

Of a planet

Before yesterday

I was born
On a battlecruiser
I was enlisted
Practically that day

I have never seen
Life outside a warship
Even giant ships
Can feel very small

So I asked them
To teach me how to fly
So at least
I'd see planets from above
Didn't think
To even wonder why
You can't miss
A thing you've never loved

I have never seen
Life outside a warship
Even giant ships
Can feel very small

I never thought
I'd come crashing down
In Silhouette
This magical town

Nadia has appeared at the doorway.

NADIA: May I intrude for just a moment? I wanted to check on the health of my patient.

AURELIA: You mean prisoner?

Nadia enters. Her examination of Aurelia consists of simple, slow hand gestures.

NADIA: I couldn't help but overhear - you've lived your entire life in space?

AURELIA: Yes.

NADIA: Well, the good news is your nanoengine is functioning correctly. Adjusting your bone density and muscle mass to accommodate for variation in gravity, and oxygen. The air is thin here. We're a mountain town, pretty far up. Easier to hide ourselves up here.

AURELIA: Hide yourselves from the Fleet?

NADIA: From dangers more present than the Fleet. We are not the only concentration of intelligent life on this planet.

AURELIA: That surprises me. We scanned for signs of civilization twice before.

NADIA: I said they're intelligent. I didn't say they're civilized. At any rate, we all know to hide from the Fleet.

Nadia gently waves a hand. Aurelia almost topples forward out of her chair, before catching herself.

NADIA: You should know there's a protective circle around this house, tuned to the signature of your specific nanoengine. If you try to leave this circle, your skin will burst into white hot flames and you'll be incinerated faster than your nanoengine can repair the damage.

AURELIA: More magic?

NADIA: Magic's everywhere in this place.

AURELIA: What does that even mean?

NADIA: It means you're under house arrest here, but you're no longer trapped in a chair. Is that satisfactory for now?

Aurelia nods.

NADIA: Good. I suppose Melody and Laurel already explained to you what's at stake.

AURELIA: Actually, no, I don't think they'd gotten that far yet.

MELODY: If you don't tell us what we want to know about the Fleet, the elders are going to execute you.

LAUREL: But they don't really expect you to tell us anything useful.

MELODY: And even if you do, they're going to execute you regardless.

LAUREL: They'll put you on trial first.

MELODY: But you won't get to defend yourself.

LAUREL: Because there's no defense against the imperialist crimes of the Fleet.

NADIA: Thank you, that was very succinct.

Silence.

AURELIA: Why don't you just get it over with.

NADIA: Why are you in such a hurry? Isn't the Fleet coming to rescue you?

[DAYS GO BY]

AURELIA: Days go by, and I spend them in a cockpit

Days go by, and I spend them all alone

Days go by, and I know that I'm expendable

The Fleet won't try that hard to bring me home

The ship I crashed was ancient tech, it hardly flew

The ship's worth less than it costs to keep it fueled

I always thought that I had to pay my dues
What did I have to lose
Days go by, and I wonder what I'm doing
Days go by, and I question my place
If we won the war, why are we still flying missions
If we won the war, why are we still out in space

But when you rescued me
That was the first time in my life
I'd ever seen a planet's sky

All the blues and greens
I could hardly stand to look
And as I wept, I wondered why

If we won the war, why are we still flying missions
If we won the war, why are we still out in space

NADIA: Days went by, underneath the curtain
Days went by, pretending that we're lost
After all these days, it's clear we did the right thing
But as days went by, it's clear there was a cost
 You never know what you'll miss until it's gone
 You can love the Fleet but hate the Empire if it's won
 There's no such thing as second chances, we are done
 I sometimes wish I hadn't run
Days go by, knowing we're the righteous
Days go by, far outside the fight
Days go by, wishing it was over
Days go by, staring at the night

But when we rescued you
For the first time in centuries
All this time I barely coped

When you crashed your ship
I could hardly stand to look
You somehow gave me hope

But if you won the war, why are you still flying missions
If you won the war, why are you still out in space

Miranda has appeared in the doorway.

MIRANDA: Nadia, what are you doing here?

NADIA: Checking on the status of Ensign Aurelia, which I will be doing at very regular intervals.

Nadia exits.

MIRANDA: You've been here for nearly one full day. Have you missed your rendezvous window?

AURELIA: I can't tell you that.

MIRANDA: Is the rendezvous near the planet? How many battlecruisers are patrolling this system? How many of them will be at the rendezvous?

AURELIA: I can't tell you the exact time and place to expect a Fleet maneuver.

MIRANDA: Girls - go find Sally please. She's out scavenging from the wreckage and could use some help.

Melody & Laurel exit.

MIRANDA: Look, what do you think will happen when the Fleet finally finds this place? I'll tell you - they'll nuke this town into glass.

AURELIA: No... no, they wouldn't.

MIRANDA: Why do you think we mutinied?

AURELIA: I don't know. No one does.

MIRANDA: We left manifestos behind.

AURELIA: Guess they've been purged. None of the officers who were alive at the time are gossiping about the whole thing, so...

MIRANDA: ...it's like it never happened.

AURELIA: No, but - it's a mystery. What happened?

[MEMORIES OF FLEET]

MIRANDA: This could take a while
Have you got all day
Do you really want to hear this
Or is that something that you say
To be polite
I can't tell
I can't say I've rehearsed it
But I know it well

The first time
That I rebelled
It happened in my heart
Where no one but me
Could doubt my loyalty

And for my part
I said nothing

The next time
That I rebelled
I couldn't help but say
What about the golden rule
Do we have to be so cruel
I didn't get my way
But I said something

Several more times
I rebelled
But no one would hear
The claims I was making
The stand I was taking
We all lived in fear
But I still spoke up

Yet one more time
I rebelled
And someone reacted
Told me to my face
Told me stay in my place
Said I'd be redacted
But I still protested

And each time
That I rebelled
I gained more belief
I rallied the willing
To stop all the killing
To bring relief
We fought for our lives

AURELIA: Why did you rebel?

MIRANDA: The Fleet used to serve the Known Worlds. Then the Admiral decided to *conquer* the Known Worlds. The era of Protected Space came to a violent end. My home world... came to a violent end.

AURELIA: So it's personal.

MIRANDA: Doesn't have to be "personal"
For a thing to be wrong

Do you not understand this
Or is that something that you said
To be polite
I can't tell
I don't know why you'd say that
You sound like a child

The last time
That I rebelled
I made sure that it hurt them
Explosive rips
Took out dozens of ships
I thought I had cut them
 We disappeared

But the last time
That I rebelled
I had no way of knowing
What we left behind
Did we change any minds
Did our movement start growing
 I never knew

Everyone's got a story on this quiet little promontory
Settled long ago by mutineers I barely knew
Somehow we survived though we were very solitary
Generations pass until the story reaches you

I'm a witness like the others
All the people in this town
Called Silhouette
Shrouded from the outside
No one can see in

But now that you are here I think the one thing that I truly fear
Must be on its way the day the star came crashing down

ENSEMBLE:

Oooh the star came crashing down
Oooh the star came crashing down

AURELIA: Killing me isn't going to change anything about the Fleet.

MIRANDA: We weren't going to kill you. That was just a threat to try to get you to talk.

AURELIA: You had your daughters lie for you. Cold.

MIRANDA: Mayor wants to keep you alive in case they come looking for you.

AURELIA: And if they don't come looking for me?

MIRANDA: It'll be the best thing that ever happened to you. You don't deserve it, let's be clear.

Constance enters, with Sally. Melody and Laurel sneak on to eavesdrop.

CONSTANCE: Am I interrupting?

MIRANDA: No.

CONSTANCE: Ensign Aurelia. I'm Constance - I'm the Mayor here. I'm the person responsible for keeping you alive, despite strenuous arguments from certain quarters.

AURELIA: Thank you.

CONSTANCE: It's time for you to earn your keep. Sally?

Sally hands Aurelia a black semi-sphere of metal, with serrated edges as though it's been ripped in half.

SALLY: This looks like it might be the core of a nav bank, but it's a design I don't understand.

AURELIA: It's damaged for starters. The fusion battery melted into the power sheath, and the housing is a mess.

SALLY: But can we peel telemetry off of it?

AURELIA: You want to know if I had time to activate a distress signal. And what the signal relay path back to the Fleet is too, I imagine, and whether such a signal was acknowledged before the crash.

SALLY: I admit to being curious.

MIRANDA: She won't cooperate.

CONSTANCE: She might. In exchange for her freedom.

AURELIA: What do you mean, freedom?

CONSTANCE: You can't leave this planet without your ship, which will never fly again. And you shouldn't step outside the curtain, if you want to take my advice. But I'm willing to let you leave Miranda's house... tour our fine city and meet some of the civilians here, who would all love to make your acquaintance... assuming you're willing to chat with Sally first about your nav bank.

AURELIA: What difference does it make?

CONSTANCE: Could be no one's looking for you. Could be there's a mech division about to drop on our heads to come get you. Big difference to me.

MELODY: What's a "mech division"?

MIRANDA: Armored soldiers.

LAUREL: Would they find us inside the curtain?

MIRANDA: Maybe. And what would they do if they found us, Ensign Aurelia?

AURELIA: They'd kill everyone in Silhouette.

MIRANDA: This just now occurred to you, did it?

MELODY: Even though we healed you up?

LAUREL: Even though almost none of us actually fought in the war?

AURELIA: You... should evacuate.

CONSTANCE: The trail we'd leave would be too obvious. And we have other dangers to worry about out there. Staying inside the curtain's our best bet right now. Plus any intelligence you might care to provide us in our hour of need.

Aurelia takes a long look around before making her decision.

AURELIA: Do you have any printers down here?

SALLY: Got one in my lab.

AURELIA: We can print up a power bypass, and maybe print up a custom socket to whatever ancient rig you've got that still works.

CONSTANCE: Excellent, that sounds promising. The protective circle outside Miranda's house is now revoked. Let's head to the lab.

Aurelia follows Sally out.

CONSTANCE: Don't fret, Miranda. We can always execute her some other fine day.

Constance exits.

MELODY: Mother... why do you want to execute Aurelia so much?

LAUREL: She seems like she would really fit in here.

MIRANDA: Because she's Fleet. And Fleet would not hesitate to kill my darling girls, which is something I cannot abide, do you understand?

SCENE SIX

"Crossfade" into Aurelia touring the city in a brief movement montage while the next song starts underneath.

[LEAVING THE CIRCLE]

AURELIA: Slowly it goes

Slowly you're settling

Nobody knows

If you're ever leaving

And though you dare not say

With each passing day

You're starting to hope

That you might be staying

Every moment

You spend in this place
Is a moment
You're not wasting out in space
 Some of the people here
 Are growing dear
Much more than the rest
Of the whole human race

Weeks go by and they gain your trust
You realize that they surely must
Be testing you while your guard is down
They always work to protect this town
 If you are truly stranded
 You understand it's
 A privilege that you're invited

You're leaving the circle
 And you are so well met now
Leaving the circle
 You're living in Silhouette now
Leaving the circle
 Leaving your past behind
Leaving the circle
 And you'll never change your mind

RACHEL/TESS/ELLEN: It's early morning
Look how the sky is green
Now turning blue
And everything in between

AURELIA: I never saw the sky
 I never questioned why

RACHEL/TESS/ELLEN: But still you're here
What do you think that means?

MELODY & LAUREL: Slowly it goes
Slowly you're settling
Nobody knows
If you're ever leaving
 And though we dare not say
 With each passing day
We're starting to hope
That you might be staying

AURELIA: Weeks go by and you gain my trust
I realize that you surely must
Be testing me while my guard is down
RACHEL/TESS/ELLEN: We always work to protect this town
If you are truly stranded
You understand it's
A privilege that you're invited

ENSEMBLE: You're leaving the circle
And you are so well met now
Leaving the circle
You're living in Silhouette now

ENSEMBLE: You're leaving the circle
AURELIA: I'll never change my mind
ENSEMBLE: You're leaving the circle
AURELIA: I'm leaving the Fleet behind

A sudden crack - a sonic boom, the sound of a fast moving object piercing the atmosphere at top speed - followed by silence. The ensemble looks to the sky - suddenly anxious. After a beat:

ENSEMBLE: The stars in the sky look different tonight

Blackout. End of Act One.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights up on a faceoff in tableau: on one side of the stage, Constance sits in a chair, with Sally standing at her shoulder and Nadia nearby.

On the other side of the stage, two new characters: COMMANDER BLAKE, in a military uniform reminiscent of Aurelia's from act one, sits facing Constance; and his second, LIEUTENANT MILLS, stands at his shoulder. We've heard & perhaps seen these two men throughout the first act, from the back riser or behind the back scrim etc; but now they are a menacing presence in the foreground.

Between them but upstage is Aurelia, standing at attention; and Miranda by her side. Silence for a long beat. Aurelia finally tries to speak, and is swiftly shut down:

BLAKE: You'll speak when you've been addressed, Ensign.

He is not mean, or sharp, when he says this; rather almost nonchalant in his delivery. This airiness carries over into the following line, as he attempts charm as an opening negotiating tactic.

BLAKE: Well, goodness, I have so many questions.

[SO MANY QUESTIONS]

BLAKE: Tell me, how long have you been hiding here
Invisible in plain sight, on a planet we ignored
The system all around you was a battleground
For several hundred years, cannons roared
 Could you see the fighting in the skies at night
 Nuclear explosions, cruisers going white

Tell me, how did you keep your secret safe
Until you figured out how to build your dome
Perhaps it's fair to say we just lost interest
The fighting never stopped while you established your home
 Did you care about the damage that you'd done
 Did you ever wonder if the war had been won

Tell me, did you sabotage the ships you stole
So no one from your party could ever try to leave
And tell me, did you give up your technology
Replace it with the "magic" that you weave
 Did you care about the human cost
 Did you ever wonder if the war had been lost

Tell me, are you satisfied with your choice
Do you find your days here pleasing, is your time here enhanced
Or do some among you second guess the price
Do some among you secretly want a second chance
 Did you think eventually that we'd forgive
 Did you think that we could ever let you live

CONSTANCE: I don't think that's up to you, young man
Without wanting to be rude
I've a different point of view, young man
And I'm not trying to delude

 But let's be clear that you're the one who's on the precipice
 You're the one who may not leave your chair alive
 We've shown you kindness as a courtesy

But if you're planning to survive

You'd best talk plain
You'd best talk fast
Or do you think our protection will last
I think not

BLAKE: Tell me, do you think I came here all alone
Do you think my shuttle craft could travel any real distance
Now the Fleet itself is orbiting your world
Do you think your "magic" dome could offer any real resistance
It's just illusion, it's not a shield
Or is there other "magic" that you wield

SALLY: I'm surprised you'd drop in with all these questions
I'm impressed by your bravura and your ignorance
Yes we know more than misdirection
We could slay you where you sit out of sheer petulance
Or perhaps we'd handle things a little differently
We've still got guns - are you listening to me?

BLAKE: Tell me, if you choose to murder me today
What will happen to Ensign Aurelia
Do you think the Fleet will let her walk away
The very thought would generate hysteria
The Fleet is playing nice with you by sending me
They could have swarmed your whole damn town with infantry

Tell me, what do you suppose the end game is
What will be the fate of those in Silhouette
Does your "magic" have the juice to stop a bomb
Don't say another thing you might regret
All I want is safe return of what we've lost
Ideally without any further cost

CONSTANCE: I don't think that's up to us, young man
This woman here is now our guest
If she wants to leave with you, young man
I don't care about the rest

But let's be clear that once you leave you won't be welcome back
And don't expect to ever find this place again
The Fleet might choose to launch a full attack

I wouldn't put it past you simple men

We won't be here
Don't look surprised
Do you think we could trust you with our lives
I think not

[WE AGREE]

BLAKE/CONSTANCE/SALLY/MILLS: So we agree
Though we come from different worlds
We agree
And we see each other true

We agree
On just this one thing
We agree
To each other's point of view

And we agree
That we've been honest
We agree
That we mean the best

We agree
To call a truce before the battle starts
We agree
That we say what's in our hearts

BLAKE: Ensign.

AURELIA: Yes sir!

BLAKE: Lieutenant Mills will supervise retrieval of the remains of your scout craft.

AURELIA: Yes sir!

SALLY: We scavenged a few bits from the wreckage.

BLAKE: Those bits are property of the Fleet, and will be returning to the Fleet with us.

SALLY: I'll take you to my lab.

Sally exits, leading Aurelia and Mills.

MIRANDA: Just one question, Commander. Why'd you come back to this system? What made you burn resources on searching this planet one more time?

[JUST ONE QUESTION]

BLAKE: I think we all know the answer to that

I've got room on my shuttle for four
I'd be happy to take one more
Back to the Fleet
Back to security, culture and all of the things
That you left, long ago
But we are not coming back for the rest of you
So don't bother to pack up and move your whole town
We don't care that you're living in exile
You can have this whole planet
We don't need it, not any more
And we don't need you, not any more
But one of you is welcome to take that fourth seat
And reveal to your comrades which one of you
Signalled us back to this system
Warned us to search very close to the ground
Because of the "curtain" that hides you from space
But now that I've seen you
I think it's a just punishment
Or should I say banishment

In the town of Silhouette
Do you ever truly see the sky
In the town of Silhouette
Is where you'll die

Blake exits.

[NOBODY'S LISTENING]

NADIA: It was me
I couldn't stand the thought of spending
Another century
Never seeing the stars

Didn't know
What it would mean to leave the Fleet
To join a mutiny
Especially ours

Couldn't stand all the hiding
Couldn't build up a city or else they might find us
No providing
Creature comforts but living here managed to blind us

We're protesting but
Nobody's listening

It was me
I was just dying to go back to space
Back to the Fleet
Back to the stars

Didn't know
What it would mean to spend my life
In such a town
A town like ours

Why did we prefer fighting
Could've fought just as well from within if we'd stayed
By escaping
By giving up we gave it all away

We're protesting but
Nobody's listening

MIRANDA: I should kill you.

NADIA: Try it.

CONSTANCE: No executions in this town.

MIRANDA: You kill traitors.

CONSTANCE: Like us?

NADIA: You the judge and jury in Silhouette now?

CONSTANCE: Shut your mouth, Nadia.

MIRANDA: So we just let her go? She knows everything about this place.

CONSTANCE: So do they by now. The damage is already done.

MIRANDA: Oh I can think of a lot more damage on the horizon.

CONSTANCE: Nadia - get your things and get on that shuttle. I better not see you again.

Nadia exits.

MIRANDA: You're getting soft.

CONSTANCE: Minute that shuttle lifts off, I give it fifty fifty odds the Fleet starts a bombing run immediately. May as well let somebody from Silhouette escape this mess.

MIRANDA: See, this is why you never made Commander.

CONSTANCE: What am I missing?

MIRANDA: Silhouette's not the only exposed target in this encounter, Lieutenant.

Miranda exits as lights fade to black.

SCENE NINE

Lights up on Melody and Laurel at home alone, when Aurelia enters, followed by Mills.

MELODY: What's going on - who's that?

LAUREL: Are you in trouble?

AURELIA: No trouble. I just came to get my flight suit. And - I came to say goodbye.

[LIFE OUTSIDE (reprise)]

AURELIA: I'd never
Seen so many people
Living free
All on their own
I was born
And raised as a fighter
Thought I was tough
Down to the bone

I had never seen
Life outside a warship
Even giant ships
Can feel very small

So I asked you
To teach me your magic
But of course
That isn't something I should know
What I meant was
Teach me how to live like you
Which you did
But now I've got to go

I had never seen
Life outside a warship
Even giant ships
Can feel very small

I never thought
I'd come crashing down
In Silhouette
In this magical town

Miranda enters. Aurelia tries to compose herself.

AURELIA: Sorry, I was here to get my flight suit.

MELODY: She came to say goodbye!

LAUREL: Did you know that she was leaving?

MIRANDA: I knew.

Aurelia and Mills exit.

MIRANDA: Girls... I've got something very important to ask you. I'm going away for a little bit, and I need you to do something for me while I'm gone.

MELODY: How long is "a little bit"?

LAUREL: Do you need us to recharge the curtain while you're gone?

MIRANDA: Something like that. Remember that game we used to play when you were little, when I'd go ranging out into the wilderness as far as I could go?

MELODY: And we'd try to keep track of you the whole time.

LAUREL: We'd watch you in our mind's eye, like a bird almost.

MIRANDA: I'm about to go farther away from you than I ever have, and I need you to watch me the whole time, you can't lose track of me even for a second. Because once I stop moving, that's the signal.

MELODY: The signal for what?

LAUREL: Where are you going anyway?

MIRANDA: Fleet's in orbit.

MELODY: You're going into space?

LAUREL: Are you coming back?

MIRANDA: Of course I'm coming back. Of course I am.

Blackout.

SCENE TEN

Nadia packing her things into a backpack. Miranda enters. They stare at each other for a long moment.

NADIA: Came by to execute me when the Mayor isn't looking?

MIRANDA: I don't care what happens to you. But I do have some bad news for you. You're not leaving in that shuttle.

NADIA: What do you mean?

MIRANDA: I'm taking that fourth seat.

NADIA: You're going back into space? Why? You hate everything they stand for!

MIRANDA: I've got a few surprises left.

NADIA: Stay here! With your children!

MIRANDA: It's because of them that I fought all these years to keep this world out of sight! It's because of them that you're forcing me away!

[DAYS GO BY reprise]

NADIA: Days go by

MIRANDA: Until finally they end

NADIA & MIRANDA: Days go by

Abandoned by a friend

In so many ways

We pretended that we cared

But now I see

All you are is scared

NADIA: I can't stay here.

MIRANDA: Make your peace, Nadia. While you still can.

Blackout.

SCENE ELEVEN

Lights up on the interior of the shuttle craft. Blake and Mills in the front seats; Aurelia in a seat behind them; there is a conspicuously empty fourth seat next to her. We hear a hum as though the shuttle is warmed up and ready for takeoff.

AURELIA: Permission to speak, sir.

BLAKE: Audacious. Permission granted. What's on your mind, Ensign?

AURELIA: What's really going to happen to Silhouette?

BLAKE: They brought down a military scout ship in low orbit. What if they develop a targeting system and long range strike capability? We can't afford to leave them to their own devices.

Their unsanctioned weapons research will very soon become a historical footnote.

AURELIA: Then why bring one of them back with you?

BLAKE: We need someone to put on trial for mutiny and then execute.

Miranda enters and climbs into the seat next to Aurelia.

AURELIA: It was you?

MIRANDA: No. You said only one seat was available?

BLAKE: That's correct.

MIRANDA: The town nominated me to take it.

BLAKE: What made you so fortunate?

MIRANDA: I threatened to kill anyone else who tried to take it.

BLAKE: I see. Are we going to have a problem here?

Blake and Mills suddenly seize up as though paralyzed, looks of terror on their face.

MIRANDA: Doesn't really look like there's going to be much of a problem.

AURELIA: What are you doing?

MIRANDA: I thought Nadia told them we could do magic, but apparently they weren't impressed.

BLAKE: How are you doing this?

MIRANDA: All the original settlers had Fleet-issued nanoengines implanted in our nervous systems. Meant to keep us alive for centuries with minimal resources on deep space missions. But on the surface, *our* nanoengines have had five hundred years to evolve and adapt to the biosphere. Magic works because we convince nanites to do what we want.

BLAKE: Do you think your magic will work in space? On a battlecruiser? Do you think *our* technology hasn't evolved in five hundred years?

MIRANDA: I'm calling your bluff, Commander. I'm sitting right here in a Fleet shuttle, surrounded by Fleet steel, and my magic seems to be working just fine. What's your secret weapon?

BLAKE: We learned a few things after your mutiny. Nanoengines now enforce Fleet hierarchy.

MIRANDA: I'm sure they purged me from the active duty roster.

BLAKE: It may surprise you to learn that, thanks to the chaos of war, no one ever made it a priority to officially court martial you in absentia. But your nanoengine has been receiving Fleet code upgrades since the moment you entered this shuttle. You're physically bound to follow my orders, so I order you to release me from whatever "magic" hold you've got over me, Lieutenant.

MIRANDA: Nadia was a Lieutenant. I'm a Captain. So as the ranking officer on this shuttle, let me explain what I expect to happen now. We're going to make sure the Admiral assumes this mission went perfectly, so that none of us gets near him. He can't countermand my orders if he doesn't know what they are. And then - I've got some priorities.

Lights dim and slowly crossfade to the next chunk of the scene as we hear the sound of the shuttle lifting off into space: a crisp roar at first, which fades into silence just as the lights resume - darker now, interior ship lighting without the light of the planet's surface coming through the windows of the shuttle.

[AWAY]

FLIGHT CONTROL:

Shuttle number one, this is flight control

Please acknowledge - are you listening?

Shuttle number one, this is flight control

Sending you a message - are you receiving?

MILLS:

Hello this is shuttle one, picking up your message
We acknowledge, and we're heading back to base
We found our missing pilot safe and sound, we're bringing her along
Back up into space

The mission to explore the surface turned out to be pointless
There's nothing there worth further scrutiny
The signal that we thought we heard must come from somewhere else
This planet holds no sign of mutiny

FLIGHT CONTROL:

Shuttle number one, this is flight control
We're glad to hear our pilot is safe and sound

When you're back, send her to the med bay for a closer look
Then we'll debrief her on what happened on the ground

MILLS:

Hello this is shuttle one, and I got your message
Commander Blake's debriefing her right now
He'll shortly send you his report about the interview
It's more efficient this way you'll allow

Once we make it back to Fleet, the Ensign will be placed on leave
She needs a bit of time to heal and rest
She's lucky she survived the crash, the wreckage was a mess
I think it's clear the Ensign's truly blessed

FLIGHT CONTROL: Roger that. Docking bay one is cleared for your arrival. Welcome back to the flagship, shuttle number one.

Miranda leans forward, peering out the front window of the shuttle.

MIRANDA: You brought the flagship here? If that's the flagship, where are the escort fighters?

Pause. Commander, where are the escort fighters?

BLAKE: We no longer fly escort fighters.

The ship lands. Miranda exits first and comes forward on the stage, looking out over the audience; followed by Blake, Mills, and Aurelia.

MIRANDA: Why is this docking bay empty? Where are the other shuttles? Where are the fighters? Where are the hangar technicians? I don't understand what I'm seeing, Commander. Explain.

BLAKE: The flagship is running on a skeleton crew now. With your permission, Lieutenant Mills is capable of performing the duties of a hangar technician, if you'd like him to service shuttle number one immediately. Our remaining fighters are grouped in docking bay four now.

MIRANDA: Grouped in a single docking bay? How do they fit?

BLAKE: There are fewer than you remember, Captain.

A dawning awareness overtakes Miranda.

MIRANDA: If the flagship is here alone, where is the rest of the Fleet?

BLAKE: The flagship *is* the Fleet, Captain.

MIRANDA: Only - one - ship?

[ONLY]

MIRANDA: Whatever story that you've got to tell
I'm not sure that I could ever stand to hear
I should have asked while we were on the planet
I never should have let myself get so near

Tell me, how did you win the war
With only one ship?

BLAKE: I'm sure in retrospect it must be obvious
We didn't win the war, I thought you knew
Your mutiny sparked another
Then another that ripped the whole Fleet in two

And then planetary forces attacked
We're now one ship

And so the once majestic Fleet
Is reduced to hiding from its foes
And so the once majestic Fleet
Is barely surviving its death throes

But we know one day we will fight back
With only one ship

MIRANDA: Have you all lost your minds?
You've just one ship and a skeleton crew
What makes you think you'll win
Against the forces that already beat you

I think you were lying

When you said you'd leave Silhouette alone
I think you need magic
You need to steal our resources for your own

I guess in retrospect it was obvious
You knew that our magic was real all along
If you came to Silhouette and beat us down
You'd have a place where you could grow so strong

And so the once majestic Fleet
Would conquer us, and steal our magic powers
But the once majestic Fleet
Should have stayed with us for more than just a couple hours

You didn't think I'd fight back
Against your one ship

AURELIA: What are you going to do?

MIRANDA: I think I should kill them
Execute the whole entire crew
I think I should kill them
Every one of them - including you

I think I should kill them
For their crimes, for their sins
I think I should kill them
On behalf of every planet where they've been

AURELIA: You can't.

MIRANDA: Why not?

AURELIA: You're just like me, underneath the skin
You're just like me, no matter where we've been

The sound of an explosion in the distance rattles them. An alarm goes off.

BLAKE: What's happening?

MIRANDA: Silhouette is using the curtain as a weapon.

BLAKE: But - it has no targeting system!

MIRANDA: They're targeting *me*, and I'm close enough to hit.

AURELIA: Do they know how many people they're attacking? Do they know 20,000 people still live on this ship?

AURELIA: We deserve a second chance
Isn't that what Silhouette is meant to be?

MIRANDA: We owe no forgiveness
Or no mercy to the flagship of our enemy

AURELIA: What if we surrender
What if we lay down all our arms

MIRANDA: What makes you think I'd trust you
I can't be fooled by your simple charms

MIRANDA: I think I should kill you

AURELIA: We deserve a second chance

MIRANDA: Execute the whole entire crew

AURELIA: Isn't that what Silhouette is meant to be?

MIRANDA: I think I should kill you

AURELIA: Silhouette is more than just a hiding place

MIRANDA: Instead of wasting any empathy

AURELIA: Don't kill us, Miranda - *lead* us.

AURELIA: Oh, we're flying in circles

Oh, we're wasting away

Oh, we're flying in circles

Never know when we'll see the day

When we can get some rest, find some peace

Let the fighting go

Most of us have seen our share of pain

Help us find a better way

Teach us what you know

Without demanding such a deadly claim

Another explosion rocks the ship, this one louder.

MIRANDA: Whatever story that you've got to tell
I'm not sure that I could ever stand to hear
I should have asked while we were on the planet
I never should have let myself get so near

Truly, you will always fight the war
I know you will always fight the war
You'll never stop fighting your hopeless war
With only one ship

AURELIA: Miranda - please - *we surrender*. The 20,000 people who live here - you're doing the same thing to their home that the Fleet did to yours.

MIRANDA: My home wasn't *guilty*.

AURELIA: You'll be guilty when this is over.

MIRANDA: I won't *be* here when this is over.

BLAKE: Captain - this is the last ship in the Fleet. If you kill this ship - it's genocide.

Miranda regards him for a moment.

MIRANDA: Commander Blake.

BLAKE: Yes, Captain.

MIRANDA: You're relieved of duty.

With a sharp gesture, she uses magic to kill him where he stands.

MIRANDA: Ensign.

AURELIA: Yes, Captain.

MIRANDA: You are hereby field promoted to Commander. I suggest you do something.

Aurelia turns to Mills.

AURELIA: Lieutenant, fill as many support ships as you can and evacuate the flagship. *No* fighter ships leave the docking bay. Take *no* weapons down to the surface. Just printers and medpaks. Am I understood?

Mills exits. Aurelia turns to Miranda.

AURELIA: Any further orders, Captain?

MIRANDA: If the Admiral tries to get on one of those shuttles, execute him on the spot.

AURELIA: Why are you letting us evacuate?

MIRANDA: You'll barely get anyone off this ship.

AURELIA: Why are you letting *me* evacuate?

MIRANDA: My daughters like you.

AURELIA: Then come back with me.

MIRANDA: If I get on a shuttle, they'll just target that instead.

AURELIA: You didn't come up with any signal for them to *stop* shooting?

MIRANDA: I was expecting there to be a Fleet of warships up here! I was expecting a TARGET RICH ENVIRONMENT! I was expecting them to KEEP FIRING until the Fleet slipped a bomber down to the surface and KILLED THOSE GIRLS and everyone in that city! THAT'S what I had time to come up with!

AURELIA: I see. Maybe it's better that you stay here.

MIRANDA: I don't need your permission for that.

Aurelia exits.

Miranda sings a final line.

MIRANDA: The stars in the sky look different tonight

Lights fade to black as we hear one final explosion that carries us into the blackout, this one loudest of all - practically on top of us.

SCENE TWELVE

[STARS (reprise)]

ENSEMBLE: And we knew down deep that the curtain was illusion

And we knew down deep that illusions never last

But you can't get sleep if your eyes are always open

MELODY & LAUREL: And the elders always promise you that dreams give you a past

ENSEMBLE:

I'm a witness like the others

And I've got a tale to tell

AURELIA: We managed to save four hundred souls that day. We filled every tug boat we had as fast as we could, and we fled to the surface. I found the girls right away, because I wanted them to hear it from me, what happened to Miranda, but they knew.

MELODY: We knew before she left. She didn't have to tell us in words what she was really planning.

LAUREL: She only ever really wanted one thing for us - freedom - and I think she got what she wanted.

SALLY: Those four hundred souls who came down to the surface without weapons weren't going to last long without our help, though.

ELLEN: We got the curtain back up as soon as we could, and we made a trade - we'd teach them our magic in exchange for their ships.

TESS: See, these survivors were war criminals. Nowhere safe anywhere in the galaxy for most of these folks. Nowhere but here, that is.

RACHEL: We'd all had our fill of revenge for one lifetime. So they got to stay in the secret town of Silhouette, and Silhouette's citizens finally got a chance to leave.

CONSTANCE: All but one, that is. One woman didn't have safe passage to leave the planet with the rest of us on any of those tug boats.

NADIA: And now I'm the Mayor of Silhouette. Traded one ragtag band of war criminals for another, but that's how it goes sometimes.

AURELIA: I was torn. Everyone I'd ever known and loved on that warship was dead and gone. So much grief all at once doesn't make any sense. All of us survivors had so many questions about everything we'd ever believed, so many questions we'd never get answers to. But in the end, I decided to leave, and I took Melody and Laurel with me, because there was one question I did know the answer to.

MELODY & LAUREL: Tell us - what's it like in space?

AURELIA & NADIA: Everyone's got a story on this quiet little promontory
Settled long ago by frightened soldiers on the run
Somehow they survived though they were very solitary
Generations pass until the story's finally done

I'm a witness like the others
All the people in this town
Called Silhouette
Once a mystery
Now we understand

But everyone will surely say no matter what their job or trade
They all know where they were the day the star came crashing down

ENSEMBLE:
Ooooh the star came crashing down
Ooooh the star came crashing down

end