

The Revenge of the Black Claw

by
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INT. CRUDE STONE HUT - DAY

JAMES NICCOLÁ, unkept hair and beard, mid-twenties, attractive, and wearing primitive clothing, hunches over a makeshift wooden table.

Inside the hut is what one might expect from this Robinson Crusoe type, except for the gleaming silver ISO-Beam Rifle hanging on the wall.

With as much delicacy as possible, James slots what looks like a metal pearl into the base of a small, battered Device.

James closes the (SIGNAL) Device, hits a button and watches as it lights up.

He smiles.

Then a small puff of smoke shoots from the side of the device. The light goes out.

James set the device down. Then, with some reverence, he takes a stone and brings it down, smashing the Device.

Sweeping the pieces to the side, he picks up a well-kept 20th Century Cross pen.

He unrolls some homemade paper and begins to write.

EXT. JEZERO - MORNING

A busy and industrialized planet.

SUPER: "Planet Jezero, Kveta Republic"

U-shaped space craft whizz around tall and odd buildings.

Large angular antennae stick out from the tallest buildings.

EXT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS

At the street level sits Bancroft Investigations. The sign outside resembles Middle English lettering.

INT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

TESS BANCROFT sits in quiet meditation in the middle of a sparse Zen style decorated room.

Tess is forties, in shape, with simple style and a commanding presence. A light scar traces down the left side of her face.

A KNOCK at the door.

Tess, eyes half closed, makes no noticeable acknowledgement.

The VOICE (Parnassus) is deep and controlled.

PARNASSUS (O.S.)

A young man from Free Command to see you.

Tess remains still.

PARNASSUS (O.S.)

He claims to be on extremely urgent business.

(pause)

I will have him wait.

INT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

James, this time clean-cut and spruced up in his green Ensign uniform, paces the room.

He sometimes stops, looks at a particular piece of art on the wall, lightly touches the Device on his belt and then moves on.

Tess, now fully dressed and hair in a bun, enters.

James looks at her. His pacing stops, indeed everything stops.

Tess meets his gaze without much emotion but observes everything.

James catches himself.

JAMES

Ms. . . ah, Major Bancroft?

TESS

I'm not a Major anymore, Ensign.

JAMES

Right. Yes, miss. That is, you must be Tess Bancroft, the detective.

TESS

And you must be here to ask me to do something for Free Command. But the answer is no. I won't. I finished working for them a long time ago. Tea?

JAMES

What?

TESS

Would you like tea?

JAMES

Ah, no thank you.

TESS

Then I guess we're finished. Parnassus will show you out.

EXT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

James steps out onto the street.

He glances back at sound of the door shutting behind him.

Unsure, he looks one way down the street, then starts back the other way.

Suddenly he stops.

INT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tess writes at the desk, when a mountain of a man, PARNASSUS, shows James back in.

PARNASSUS

Ensign James Niccolá. Again.

As Parnassus leaves, James takes interest in what Tess is doing at the desk.

JAMES

What are you doing?

TESS

A few notes.

JAMES

Why not use Signal?

TESS
I prefer this way.

Tess sets the very nice 20th Century Cross pen down on the desk.

TESS
I knew that you would be back.

JAMES
How?

TESS
Speculative reasoning formulated by
subjective causal observations.

JAMES
Huh?

TESS
Let's say I guessed.

JAMES
I forgot to tell you something.

TESS
It will make no difference, I won't
work for Free Command, and
certainly never the Delta
Authority, again.

JAMES
Admiral Blackstoke sent me.

A faint flicker of surprise crosses Tess's face.

TESS
Did he?

JAMES
He said that this case might have
something to do with what happened
on the Yorkstar.

Tess rises and moves to where a bell has been mounted on the wall.

She rings it by pulling the cord.

A second later, Parnassus appears at the doorway.

PARNASSUS
Yes.

TESS
Tea please, Parnassus.

PARNASSUS
Yes.

He turns to go.

TESS
And better make some for yourself
as well.

Parnassus exits.

TESS
(to James)
I'll hear you out.

JAMES
There's been a -

TESS
- after our tea is here.

JAMES
This thing is rather urgent.

TESS
I'm sure.

INT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

James, Tess and Parnassus sit.

Parnassus pours tea.

James fidgets - losing his patience.

TESS
All right. Go ahead.

JAMES
There's been a murder on Dover-One.

TESS
Dover-One?

JAMES
The deep space listening post.

TESS
I know what it is. Go on.

JAMES

It happened one week ago, the same time they reported a possible alien contact with the Grippe.

INT. DOVER-ONE/ LAB - ONE WEEK AGO

A grimy lab.

Little lights blink on and off.

In the centre of the room, SPACEMAN GERALD lies dead in pool of blood.

His right hand missing from the end of his arm.

INT. BANCROFT INVESTIGATIONS/OFFICE - PRESENT

JAMES

It's not just the report of aliens, or the murder, but the two of them together in such close proximity that has Free Command worried.

TESS

They think it was the Grippe who killed this man.

JAMES

Yes, of course. But the Delta Authority, er, U-Cop Free Command needs proof that Grippe agents committed the crime.

TESS

Why would they do that? Why would the Grippe care about one officer in a tiny listening station on an insignificant planet?

JAMES

That's why we need you.

Tess considers things.

TESS

Well, it's engaging - mildly, but no thank you. I have enough of a reputation to only choose cases that interest me. This one doesn't.

JAMES
But Miss Bancroft -

TESS
- And that particular planet is restricted. Plus it's over six weeks travel one way. Any evidence would be -

JAMES
Listen, it was Grippe spies that caused the Yorkstar explosion fifteen years ago, wasn't it? The last port of call for that ship was Dover-One.

TESS
I'm sorry, but it's just not worth the time to me.

JAMES
Your husband was on the Yorkstar, wasn't he? The Grippe killed him.

Tess has a flash of anger which she instantly controls.

TESS
That was never proven.

JAMES
Isn't it time then? To prove it?

EXT. FREE COMMAND SPACE PORT, DELTA FIVE - THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "Delta Five Space Port, United Co-Operative Free Command HQ, The Delta Authority"

A system of huge interlocking saucer shaped segments form the space port.

A planet, Delta-Five, shows below the station. It's night and the lights of many continents appear on the surface.

Many ships sit tethered to the docking concourse.

Most of the ships are small but for one massive gun-covered vessel at the end.

Painted Delta Authority Green, the battleship reads AMERICO along the side.

INT. FREE COMMAND SPACE PORT, DELTA FIVE - CONTINUOUS

Tess and Parnassus, who carries both their bags, walk with a tall man a little older than Tess. He wears a green Free Command Uniform, ADMIRAL BLACKSTOKE.

James walks a few steps behind.

BLACKSTOKE

I appreciate this, Major Bancroft.
I know how you hate to leave your
Kveta Republic these days.

TESS

Well Tom, to be honest I didn't
want to, but James must have
convinced me.

They stop at one of the gates in the corridor.

Blackstoke enters a code into the wall and the door slides open.

BLACKSTOKE

Ensign Niccolá is one of our best
investigators. He'll see that you
get there. I'm sorry I'm not going
with you.

TESS

Like the old days, huh?

BLACKSTOKE

Dover-One is too far out for
regular Interperator contact but
send a message through comiqué as
soon as you find evidence of Grippe
infiltration. I'll keep my ship
standing by.

Tess, Parnassus, and James start to board the ship.

Tess stops and turns back to Admiral Blackstoke.

TESS

And what if there are no Grippe,
Tom?

BLACKSTOKE

There will be. They blew up
Yorkstar and they did this too.
But we need proof to go to war,
Major. Proof!

EXT. STERLING - MOMENTS LATER

The shiny new *UCFC Sterling* is a long range space transit shuttle, compact and streamlined for entering and exiting the atmosphere.

Painted UCFC Green with Red stripes.

INT. STERLING - CONTINUOUS

James takes Tess and Parnassus aboard.

Beige and green metal cover the interior of the ship, integrated lights and control panels line the walls.

The convex structure of the ship's hull combined with the compact shape, make it a little uncomfortable for the very tall Parnassus.

JAMES

This is it.

PARNASSUS

It's cramped.

JAMES

The ship's a prototype and built for speed, not comfort.

TESS

Why not take a conventional cruiser?

JAMES

Too slow. Although, if you don't mind me saying, I wouldn't mind being cooped up with you for six weeks, detective, but they need us there yesterday. And this ship uses a new phased string inter -

James leads them down the corridor.

TESS

I don't need to know the details, James.

JAMES

Sure, but it's all state of the art and there's a Signal relay receiver in the galley.

TESS
That will be good for you.

JAMES
Good for all of us, be a long
couple of days otherwise.

PARNASSUS
Neither Ms. Bancroft or myself use
Signal, Ensign Niccolá.

At this, James stops in mid-stride.

JAMES
You two are atheists. No way! The
great detective doesn't believe in
brain wave tech?

TESS
I believe in it, that's why I don't
use it.

JAMES
You ever hear of progress? It's
been in standard use for -
(James briefly touches the
device on his belt)
- for seven hundred years.

TESS
I like my mind to be my own.
Besides isn't Dover-One well
outside the Signal radius?

JAMES
Outside the radius . . I didn't
think about that. I guess it is.

TESS
Then it looks like we'll all be
atheists.

EXT. STERLING - LATER

The sleek space craft ignites propulsion and leaps to Trans
Dimensional Space(TDS), sailing out of the Delta system and
into deep space.

INT. STERLING - CONTINUOUS

James downloads navigational instructions off the Signal.

Tess enters.

She looks out windows, only darkness.

JAMES

Dark huh? We're traveling in trans dimensional space and moving too fast for the stars to register. Nothing else can travel this fast. But it's kind of spooky, huh?

James goes back to the controls.

JAMES

(to controls)
Damn you!

TESS

What's the problem?

JAMES

This system is still a little buggy. It doesn't want to interface with the Signal network.

TESS

Why not just manually enter the data? Or use a map?

James looks at her like she's crazy.

JAMES

Are you kidding? I can't read a map. Besides, one error and we could be off toward Andromeda.

EXT. STERLING - LATER

Sterling sails through space.

INT. STERLING/MESS - EVENING

Tess, James, and Parnassus eat soup.

James studies the murder report on his light paper.

JAMES

I don't understand why this type of injury would be a normal option for killing someone.

Tess shows no interest.

JAMES
Don't you think? Here have a look.

James tries to pass the screen over to Tess, who dismisses it.

TESS
I've already read the reports.

JAMES
Then shouldn't we talk about -

TESS
When one is eating, one should eat.

INT. STERLING - LATER

James admires himself in the mirror while using a Sonic razor to shave.

Suddenly the ship lurches, James bangs his head on the wall.

JAMES
What was -

The lights flicker off.

The hum of the engines as well as all other sounds stop.

INT. STERLING/BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

James, with half his face shaved and shirtless, stumbles onto the bridge.

Minimal emergency lighting illuminates the room and the control panel.

James sits down in the pilot chair, checking the Signal control.

JAMES
Damn it!

TESS (O.C.)
Problem?

James jumps and notices Tess behind him.

JAMES
It's the radius. We've passed beyond the Signal radius.

The computer was taking all its information from the Interoperator Network and the same thing happened to my PMS -

TESS

PMS?

James pats the device on his belt.

JAMES

Personal Memory Storage - when it lost connection, it reset and now it . . .

The ship shudders and kicks.

TESS

It doesn't know what to do.

Tess sits down in the copilot chair next to James.

JAMES

Right, I think.

TESS

Then we'll just have to tell it.

Tess studies things for a moment and hits a few buttons.

The main lights come back-up.

JAMES

Hey that's good!

Then James sees Tess reprogramming the navigational control.

JAMES

Whoa, that's bad! You shouldn't be doing that.

Tess continues inputting the data, she doesn't consult the Signal.

JAMES

You know your way around Phased string drive control. I didn't know -

TESS

That someone can function without being connected?

James is surprised.

JAMES

How do you know where - ? Have you been to Dover-One before?

TESS

No, of course not. It's too far away and it's restricted, but I know where it is. Everyone should.

JAMES

Why? It's a just a old look-out post -

TESS

Third planet in the Sol system. Officially called Sol-Sai but also known as Earth. A disused far away bit of dirt that happens to be the birthplace of humanity. Check your signal.

James slouches in his chair.

JAMES

I'll have to take your word for it.

EXT. STERLING - NIGHT

The sleek ship speeds through space.

INT. STERLING/TESS'S QUARTERS - WEEKS LATER

A red light above the door begins to flash in the darkness.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Sterling approaching Sol system.
Sterling will drop to normal space in twelve minutes.

A SUDDEN pounding on the door.

Tess stirs in the shadows and switches on a light by her bunk.

TESS

Who is it?

James enters - pulling on his shirt - excited.

JAMES

We're here! We're finally here!

James bolts from the room.

INT. STERLING/BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tess, now dressed and put together, enters and stands behind James and Parnassus.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Sterling approaching Sol system.
Sterling will rephase to normal
space in five seconds. Five, four,
three, two -

The three of them look out the window as the blackness of space turns to stars, then to the planets of the Sol system.

Jupiter, immense in size and awe, takes up the view to port.

James gazes at it.

JAMES
What's that? Is that Earth?

Tess, also beholds the beauty and scope of the planet as the Sterling speeds by.

TESS
Jupiter.

James makes a connection.

JAMES
Jupiter! Like Jupiter-Dunkel beer.
This must be where it comes from!

TESS
No, they named the beer after -

But James now looks at a smaller red planet.

JAMES
What's that one? Is that Earth?

TESS
Mars.

A moment later, a shining dot appears in the sky. Parnassus steers the Sterling toward it.

TESS
That's it. Thousands of years
humanity thrived here -

JAMES
Parnassus told me the Leaning Tower
of Pisa was built on Earth. That's
crazy! It's so far away.

EXT. STERLING - MOMENTS LATER

The sleek shape of the Sterling approaches Earth.

JAMES (V.O.)
UCFC Sterling requesting landing
clearance and instructions.

INT. STERLING/BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tess, James and Parnassus are crowded into the bridge.

James works the com.

JAMES
Attention Dover-One, this is UCFC
Sterling - it's no use; they're not
there. Something must have
happened. Do you think the Grippe -

TESS
Give them time, James. They don't
get many visitors.

JAMES
It's been like four minutes!

James starts flipping dials when the Com crackles into life.

EXT. STERLING - CONTINUOUS

The ship slows as it passes by the moon.

KARRELL (V.O.)
Sterling, this is Dover-One. We are
darn glad to hear your voice.

INT. STERLING/BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The positive voice of the station Chief LT. ROTHULF KARREL
bubbles over with friendly excitement.

KARRELL (V.O.)
 I am Station Chief Rothulf Karrell,
 here on Dover one! Is Tess Bancroft
 on board, Sterling?

Tess reacts to the conversation, reading into it, she understands that something else has happened.

JAMES
 That's affirmative, Chief Karrell.
 This is Ensign James Niccolá. We've
 been traveling a long way. It will
 be good to be . . . home again?

KARRELL
 I'll shoot you over the landing
 coordinates straight away, Ensign.

EXT. STERLING - MOMENTS LATER

The ship comes through the atmosphere and steers toward the northern hemisphere to a large island off the main continent.

INT. STERLING/BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tess looks out the window at the approaching land mass.

TESS
 (under breath)
 Britain.

James is handling the controls.

JAMES
 Huh?

TESS
 Great Britain. That's the name for
 that island, well one of the names.
 That's where I'm from.

JAMES
 But nobody is born on Earth?

TESS
 I mean my ancestry; I'm English.

EXT. DOVER-ONE - CONTINUOUS

The Sterling lands on one of the many landing pads.

Except for another shuttle far off, all the other landing pads are empty.

An old covered docking tube struggles over to the Sterling and connects to the docking port.

INT. STERLING - CONTINUOUS

Parnassus hunches by the hatch and looks at the readout.

James enters, adjusting the final parts of his uniform.

PARNASSUS

I wonder why they are using the docking tube? The air quality reads fine.

Tess enters behind James.

JAMES

According to the reports it's not. The air here is untamed. Not for human consumption. Something to do with some conflict a long time ago.

TESS

The Ice War? But that was a two thousand years ago? Does that mean the crew can never go outside?

JAMES

That's right. But the air in the station has been treated and purified.

A KNOCK of metal on metal from outside, followed by a series of clicks as the docking tube connects to the ship.

INT. DOCKING TUBE - MOMENTS LATER

James, Tess, and Parnassus head down the dilapidated docking tube.

Bits of paneling are loose and sheet insulating billows in the rush of air.

Parnassus sniffs the air, something about it bothers him.

They walk to the end of the tube.

James, nervous, tries to open the door; it won't budge.

Tess moves in and, using leverage against the wall, forces it open a crack.

INT. DOVER-ONE/ LOADING BAY - CONTINUOUS

Parnassus helps Tess push the door the rest of the way open and they are face to face with LT. ROTHULF KARRELL.

Karrell is tall, about Tess's age, and exceedingly happy to see them, although he would likely be exceedingly happy to see a wall too, he's just that way.

KARRELL

Wow, you guys are really, really here! That is incredible. We don't see many other folks here, it's been eight months since our last supply delivery and those delivery crews are not much for conversation let me tell you. Oh, by the way, I'm Rothulf Karrell.

JAMES

Pleased to meet you, sir. I'm Ensign James Niccolá. Permission to come aboard, sir.

James salutes, but Karrell brushes past him and singles out Tess.

KARRELL

And you must be Tess Bancroft. I've heard a lot about you, let me tell you. This is certainly a pleasure.

Karrell takes Tess's hand and begins vigorously shaking it. Tess nods to Parnassus.

TESS

My assistant, Parnassus.

Parnassus looks down at Karrell - who gives him a big but insincere smile.

KARRELL

Ah, yes, Mister Parnassus, the Informal Human from the Nagasaki Assemble.

(to all of them)

I'm sorry for the stuck air-lock. They don't get much use, let me tell you. Well then, allow me show you around.

INT. DOVER-ONE/DOCKING CHAMBER- CONTINUOUS

Karrell guides them from the docking chamber, with its numerous banks of computers and old mining equipment.

Karrell takes them down a hall.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Further in, there's been more effort to keep the slow disintegration of the station at bay.

The walls are cleaner and show various signs of patching.

KARRELL

So, this facility was built four hundred fifty seven years ago as a mining station on top of what used to be some kind of ancient fort. But it's been three hundred years since the mine finished and the place wasn't used again until it was turned into a listening post a slight six years three months and eleven days ago.

Tess quietly observes all as they move down the corridor.

JAMES

How many crew do you have on site, Chief?

KARRELL

We did have seventeen, I'm surprised you don't know that. Didn't you look at the reports?

JAMES

I'm having trouble remembering them.

KARRELL

Ah, yes. Signal withdrawal. . . Originally, during the mining, there was a crew of over four hundred, but we only have - had - seventeen.

PARNASSUS

A lot of empty space.

Karrell replies condescendingly toward Parnassus.

KARRELL

That's right. Very good.

(back to James and Tess)

There is a lot of the station we don't use. Most of it has fallen into disrepair, but we do have lots of new equipment too, in order to monitor and record deep space yerba, hink, micro, and radio waves for Grippe insurgence. Good thing too.

INT. UNLISTED WING - CONTINUOUS

They pass into another corridor, this one looks a little more used.

Some type of SINGING echoes in the background.

KARRELL

This is the unlisted crew wing.

Most of the doors are closed, but one colorfully decorated room has its door open.

Tess peeks inside and sees a middle aged woman juggling, JUDY SMITH.

KARRELL

This is Civilian Technical Expert Judy Smith. She is one of best scientists this side of M21, let me tell you.

(To Judy)

Judy, these are some folks visiting from the Delta Authority.

Judy takes only slight notice as she concentrates on juggling.

KARRELL

You'll have to excuse Judy. She is working her way up to five balls. It requires a lot of focus.

Tess quietly observes.

INT. DOVER-ONE/MINING PIT - CONTINUOUS

They come to a giant foreboding pit with a service bridge over it.

The wailing/singing increases in volume.

KARRELL

And this is the big pit!
 (Having to shout over the singing)
 Some of the crew jokingly call it
 the pit of despair, or the pit of
 doom, or the pit of everlasting
 suffering, or, well, the names go
 on and on let me tell you. All in
 good fun of course.

PARNASSUS

This is where the mining was.

KARRELL

That's right, that's right. Very
 good. We're not sure how far down
 it goes, but it's a long way, let
 me tell you!

James marvels at the sight, when a strikingly beautiful
 woman of about James's age, DOCTOR DIATOU REYNOLDS, brushes
 by him.

Karrell acknowledges the woman.

KARRELL

Ah good, you can meet the station
 doctor. This is Doctor Diatou
 Reynolds, our newest crew member.

Tess notices a light dusting of dirt on her boots.

James gives her a suave smile.

JAMES

Hiya, I'm James Niccolá, Free
 Command. How are you doing?

Reynolds pays him no attention whatsoever and moves to an
 instrument panel on the side of the bridge.

James eyes a cable that runs from the instrument panel into
 the depths of the pit.

He reacts at what he sees.

About 100 meters below the bridge, a cage hangs free in the
 air. There appears to be a MAN strapped to the underside of
 it.

The Man is also the source of the strange singing that they
 have been hearing.

JAMES

Ah, Chief Karrell, do you want to explain . . .

KARRELL

Oh, certainly. As I said Doctor Reynolds is our station doctor and that man hanging at the end of the rope over the "black pit of eternal damnation" is Crewman Caruso.

JAMES

What's wrong with him?

KARRELL

He has space sickness.

PARNASSUS

We're not in space.

KARRELL

Well, there's plenty to see. This way, this way.

Karrell heads off again.

James looks over at Reynolds and catches the briefest glance of her looking back at him before she returns to the instrument panel.

INT. OFFICER'S WING - MOMENTS LATER

Karrell shows them a large rather sterile room with a table and four sets of bunk beds along the walls.

KARRELL

Here you be! This is the castle in the kingdom. I apologize that the two, er, three of you will have to share space, but there aren't a lot of rooms that are usable.

PARNASSUS

It will be fine.

JAMES

Chief Karrell, isn't it time you show us the murder scene? We should get investigating, if we are to find out who or what killed Spaceman Gerald.

KARRELL
Oh, right. . . Well -

TESS
No.

KARRELL
Pardon?

TESS
I'm more interested in learning
about the recent murder of the
Weapons officer.

Karrell is dumbfounded.

James tries to correct her.

JAMES
Tess, I think you should have spent
more time with the files. Gerald
wasn't the weapons -

Karrell takes a long look at Tess.

KARRELL
How did you find out about Officer
Kearns, we haven't reported it yet?

Tess meets Karrell's look - her mind working overtime.

TESS
I first suspected it from the tone
of your voice.

JAMES
Wait a sec, who the hell is Kearns?

TESS
He would be the weapon's officer.

JAMES
But what about Spaceman Gerald?

TESS
I'm not interested in Spaceman
Gerald. There's no chance he was
killed by the Grippe. It was
obviously an accidental death that
happened while he was returning one
of the particle delinarators to the
betawave listening antenna.

(to James)
Maybe you should have spent more
time with the files.

KARRELL
Yes, we were thinking, er, the same
thing.

Now the center of attention, Tess pushes another point.

TESS
But that's not all, is it Karrell?

KARRELL
What do you mean?

TESS
There is something else going on in
this station.

KARRELL
Of course there is, there's a
killer on the loose.

TESS
Besides the murder. People are ill
at ease.

JAMES
Ill at ease. I'm ill at ease now!

TESS
I would think that it might have
something to do with alien contact.
But then the folks here would be
happy to see us. Only they seem
afraid of us. Afraid we discover
something. The crew is missing . .
. yearning.

KARRELL
Yearning?

TESS
You most of all. What did you lose,
Karrell?

INT. DOVER-ONE/ LAB - MOMENTS LATER

The grimy lab appears just as Tess imagined it.

Karrell shows them the access panel for the accelerator.

KARRELL

This is where we found Gerald. Such a tragedy, a senseless waste, let me tell you. Taken at his peak, he was. Like the civil-war. Like we all will be soon, if the Grippe invade.

James takes interest in the technology.

TESS

Don't bother with that James. His death was accidental.

JAMES

I don't see how you can know that.

TESS

I saw the diagram of the room, you showed it to me. I've had a lot of time to think about it. You see that access panel? Unless I'm mistaken, that is for the Interperator Signal accelerator, yes?

Karrell nods.

Tess approaches the panel.

TESS

According to the report, he was working down here alone. Right, Karrell?

KARRELL

Yes, that's true. But I want you to know that it was completely against procedure.

TESS

But when his arm became stuck in the access panel -

Tess demonstrates.

TESS

He began thrashing around and likely tripped this switch with his foot, which turned the accelerator on and effectively incinerated his arm. He probably bled to death in twenty minutes.

JAMES
Probably?

TESS
I'm not a doctor. But right now
it's more important that we move on
to the body of Weapons Officer
Kearns.

Karrell seems relieved.

KARRELL
Yes, of course. Certainly.

JAMES
Wait a second. That can't be it!

TESS
Alien contact.

JAMES
What?

TESS
I'm not interested in domestic
squabbles or accidents. We came
here looking for proof of alien
contact and that is what we are
going to find.

James is irrationally angry.

JAMES
Maybe there's more going on here
than just aliens. Did you consider
that?

TESS
I guess it could have been Santa
Claus.

JAMES
Who's Santa Claus -

TESS
- or the Niltrop Hunter or the
Easter Bunny. Did you consider
that?

James exits.

Karrell seems a little nervous over letting him roam the
ship.

KARRELL
Hey where are you going, there?

TESS
Let him go. He's upset because I
wouldn't have sex with him. Asked
me three times every hour after we
lost Signal.

KARRELL
Pardon? Why not?

TESS
Excuse me?

KARRELL
I mean, is that your general
policy?

Tess gives him a look.

TESS
I'm a detective. I look at each
case on its own merits.

KARRELL
I'm glad to hear it.

TESS
Show me where Kearns was killed.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Karrell, Tess, and Parnassus move down the hall.

Suddenly, CARUSO jumps out of the side corridors and attacks
Tess.

He gets one wild punch in, which she manages to block with a
shoulder.

Then, using a type of Kung Fu, Tess expertly wards him off,
and Parnassus gets a hold of him.

CARUSO
It's come! It's come! The Claw!

Tess registers surprise at the mention of The Claw.

Another crewman, BROOKS - thirties, hipster - appears with a
restraining beam.

BROOKS

Bloody hell, Caruso! Sorry about that, dudes. I was taking the Moron back to quarters and he snaked me.

KARRELL

Ah, yes, don't worry. Don't worry. No one was hurt. You're not hurt are you, Ms. Bancroft?

Tess shakes her head.

Parnassus lets go of Caruso as Brooks activates the restraining beam, encapsulating Caruso in a green energy field.

BROOKS

I'll just nip him back to his room. He'll be lev in a few.

Brooks starts to lead Caruso off. Caruso struggles and gives Brooks a hard time.

Parnassus glances at Tess. She gives him a nod and he goes to help Brooks.

After they turn the corner, Karrell gives Tess an apologetic look.

KARRELL

You must be thinking things here are a bit insane, but let me tell you, this doesn't happen all the time.

TESS

Why don't you tell me about something else.

KARRELL

Pardon?

TESS

Tell me about The Claw.

Karrell does a double take but quickly recovers.

KARRELL

Claw, what Claw?

TESS

Caruso was raving about the coming of the claw.

What is the claw? Is that what people are afraid of? Or what they're missing?

KARRELL

I should take you to Kearns's quarters. We can talk about the claw later.

INT. KEARNS'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The small room looks the same layout as Judy Smith's.

Kearns was obviously a artist and a good one too. The walls of the room are plastered with sketches.

By the bed on the floor a pool of blood slowly congeals on the floor.

Kearns, very dead, rests on the bed.

KARRELL

We just found him this morning. Aside from Doctor Reynolds checking to make certain he was . . . nothing was disturbed.

Kearns was a big man. His body lies half on and half off his small bed, strapped down by his legs and throat. His mouth taped closed.

TESS

Why didn't you move him?

KARRELL

We knew you were coming.

TESS

I see.

His left hand is missing, having been roughly hacked off.

The bed around the stump has is completely soaked through with blood, where it bled out.

Kearns, again was a very big man, so it likely took a while.

Tess gives the body a slight kick, like checking a car tire.

TESS

Time of death?

KARRELL
 Doctor Reynolds said it was last
 night, about twelve hours ago.
 That makes it oh-one-hundred GMT.

Tess smiles at him.

TESS
 Greenwich Mean Time?

KARRELL
 We're not too far from Greenwich
 you know.

Tess finishes examining Kearns and looks around the room again. Many of the drawings on the walls are of the station - the halls, the pit, etc. But some of the drawings are of outdoor landscapes.

Tess takes note of this but doesn't say anything.

INT. DOVER-ONE - CONTINUOUS

James wanders the corridor.

Although evidence of traffic - footprints and such - dust coats floor and walls.

James spots another man, CREWMAN BARITELL FRUNGUS, laying some cabling.

James approaches him.

Frungus is about forty, with glasses, longish hair and a beard.

FRUNGUS
Ca va?

JAMES
 Huh?

FRUNGUS
 How it going?

JAMES
 I was going to ask you the same thing.

FRUNGUS
 Actually I meant it as more of a greeting.