



Scene 2: A Broken Wing (Falcon IV Capsule)

Year 4395 IMC (in the Modern Calendar)

Location:

In orbit, in the Falcon IV capsule

The mission was to go to station IMS-10 (abandoned by Tursa sixty years ago, and therefore available for salvage), a station still in orbit. The IMS-10 was a complicated structure built from several capsules and modules. Your mission was to assess IMS-10 with an eye towards repairs, thereby opening the possibility of using it for other missions in the future. You were in charge of the mission, and the success would be yours, even though it was not a solo mission.

You and the other two mission members - Kevin Isley and Barbara Williams - successfully launched, achieved the plotted geosynchronous orbit, reached the station, and docked the Falcon IV capsule. After several hours of hard work, which went well, just like the training simulations, you verified that the station seal still held against vacuum, and showed only superficial damage.

It was some time after entering the twisty, cramped passages of the station that disaster struck... After cracking the seals of your helmets, Kevin Isley began sweating profusely and then vomited. And then worse - he died quickly... and it was really, really ugly. Looking in the cramped space of the station, near where he died, through the mist of Kevin's blood, you saw telltale biohazard labels - so terribly easy to overlook in one of the darkened nooks of the station. The Tursan labeling indicated this was a bioweapon facility. Alarming, it seemed to still contain active agents, even after being in vacuum for nearly sixty years.

Barbara complained of nausea, and you evacuated back to the Falcon IV with her, as per protocol. You weren't going to leave her behind. She fell unconscious.

You are starting to feel nauseous. How could the Tursans have done this without anyone knowing?

You returned to the capsule to radio your status report to Blue Phoenix Mission Control. They have activated the overrides and detached the capsule from the station. Ordinarily, the Falcon IV's autopilot would bring you back safely. It's possible you can be treated... but it's possible for you to be the vector for a plague - even for your dead corpse to be such a vector. You and your suits have been in contact with whatever toxin is in the station. That means the Falcon IV capsule must be considered compromised.

Even at the cost of your lives, established quarantine procedures demand the capsule be destroyed. There is no self-destruct button on the capsule - that sort of thing is only for cheesy late-night movies. Heck, you can't even deliberately pilot the ship to its own destruction. But, Blue Phoenix Mission Control could override the safeties on the autopilot and burn you up in the atmosphere.

You are still conscious and in radio communication with ground control. If they're stupid enough to bring you back, you're not opposed to living. Maybe they can even do something for Barbara. It would be the stupid, irresponsible choice. Not even you are worth it. But it's **Mission Control's call**.