

**THE SPACE BETWEEN
A STARSHIP EXCELSIOR VIGNETTE
by J.M.**

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - DAY

We hear the burning wreckage of a shuttle. Doctor SHARP coughs as she struggles to escape the fire.

Alien birds chirp despite the blaze and it sounds a pleasant environment. A familiar voice calls out.

YUBARI (DISTANT)
Melissa, over here!

Sharp coughs, desperately trying to take in fresh air.

SHARP (COUGHING)
Asuka?

YUBARI
Over here!

She stumbles to get to her.

SHARP (COUGHING)
Hypoxia! I need a med-kit!

YUBARI
You'll be alright, just a little further!

SHARP (COUGHING)
I...

She faints and drops to the ground.

INT. SURVIVAL TENT - DAY

Sharp slowly awakens to being scanned by a tricorder.

YUBARI
Wakey wakey! Emergency rations, no eggs and bakey.

Sharp struggles to gain her composure.

SHARP
Asuka? Where are we?

YUBARI
Survival tent. Weather outside is nice, but nothing beats a roof over your head.

SHARP
How long was I out?

YUBARI
A week.

Sharp is shocked.

SHARP

A week!?

YUBARI

It's been one week since last Tuesday.

SHARP

Why hasn't there been a rescue? The excelsior should have been here by now.

Yubari sounds a little different than she usually does.

YUBARI

Every question has an answer. Every season brings changes.

Sharp is a little puzzled.

SHARP

Since when did you get philosophical?

YUBARI

There's more to life than shooting things, Melissa.

SHARP

Says the woman who really likes to shoot things. What about the shuttle?
Can we salvage the emergency transmitter?

YUBARI

There's nothing to salvage. Everything was destroyed in the crash, except the emergency equipment and a couple weapons.

SHARP

What about our comm badges? You do know we can use them to send short range distress calls, right?

YUBARI

While you were napping I took them both to the highest location I could find and set them to transmit. I modified them both to boost the signal strength, but the power cells will only last a few more Tuesdays.

SHARP

I didn't know you were that technically inclined.

YUBARI

It's not that hard to figure out. It's not like discovering the answer to existence, they're just simple communication devices.

SHARP

If you say so.

YUBARI

The shelter might not be good enough. I've seen evidence of storms in this area strong enough to knock trees over. Might want to consider building a cabin.

SHARP

A cabin? No, there's no reason to do that. The Excelsior will be here before any storms happen.

YUBARI

Look on the bright side, it'll give us something to do while we wait. And I think it's a perfect spot to see the sun set.

SHARP

I'm a doctor, not an architect.

YUBARI

If you can perform surgeries to save lives, you can build a log cabin. Come on, we can use some parts from the shuttle I scavenged to make cutting tools.

SHARP

Shouldn't I stay here and keep recovering?

YUBARI

Do you feel like you need it?

She doesn't, and she knows it.

SHARP

No, I guess not.

Time passes.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

ANNOUNCER

Three months later.

Sharp tries to admire her work.

SHARP

Well, it's not exactly a mansion, but it's better than the shelter.

YUBARI

Very eighteenth century colonial American. I like it.

SHARP

Three months to build it.

She comes to the realization that rescue isn't coming.

SHARP

I haven't even thought about it, but they're not coming. It would never take Dovan three months to find us.

YUBARI

So it would seem.

SHARP

Well, I always dreamed of getting married and settling down in a nice house. Never thought I'd have to settle for you and a log cabin on an unnamed and apparently unpopulated planet. I guess kids are out of the question unless I can make a DNA re-sequencer.

Yubari is point blank about what she says next.

YUBARI

Did you ever really want any of that.

She walks away without another word.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

They sit by a roaring fire eating some kind of creature native to this planet.

SHARP (CHEWING)

These animals look like squirrels, taste nothing like Chicken.

YUBARI

Chicken?

SHARP

Never mind, you wouldn't get it.

The silence is awkward.

YUBARI

Some music would be nice.

SHARP

I've heard you sing before. Go ahead, I won't threaten to sedate you this time.

YUBARI

I've never heard you sing. Or hum a tune for that matter.

SHARP

There's a reason for that. I'm a doctor, not a singer. Although I am very fond of classical music from the 1980s.

With hesitation, Sharp hums a sad sounding song.

SHARP (SAD)

We're never going home, are we?

Yubari's behavior is way out of character.

YUBARI

Is that what you really want? To go back to the ship? Because if it is, there's no reason to be here.

SHARP

You think I don't want to be rescued? It's been three months. It shouldn't have taken this long. Either they can't find us, or gave up a long time ago.

YUBARI

The truth is, unless you let go, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize that the situation is over, you cannot move forward.

Sharp finally realizes something's odd about her.

SHARP

What is with you? Ever since we got here you've been acting strange. You're more like a monk than a soldier. That crash really changed you.

YUBARI

Change is painful, Melissa, but nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong.

More time passes.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

ANNOUNCER

Nine months later.

Sharp is exploring a field, looking for anything useful. Her tricorder buzzes and whirs and makes its

typical scanning sounds.

SHARP
There you are!

She picks some kind of plant.

SHARP
Tiny little space apple things. You, my little friends, are going to make lots of little space apple babies in my orchard.

Her tricoder beeps. She checks the scan and is puzzled by what it says.

SHARP
Duranium alloy. Small fragments.

She figures it out.

SHARP
This area looks familiar. The shuttle crash must be nearby.

She follows the tricorders lead.

Note: The music sounds ominous as she approaches the source.

The tricorder beeps get louder as she gets closer, but just as she's about to stumble onto the wreckage, Yubari stops her.

YUBARI
Melissa! You strayed too far from the cabin, you know our rule about not going out too far alone.

Sharp ignores her and continues her approach. Yubari becomes more "vocal" in trying to stop her.

YUBARI
Melissa, don't go there!

SHARP
I'm detecting duranium, it must be from the shuttle wreckage.

YUBARI
You don't need to see it, Melissa. There's nothing left for you there.

She continues on, but she feels like she's making a mistake.

SHARP
I know you're right. But I know you're wrong.

Yubari almost pleads with her.

YUBARI
Please don't.

She finds the wreckage and is both stunned and horrified at what she finds.

SHARP
This is all that's left? The cockpit?

She can't understand how she survived the impact.

SHARP
We must have impacted at an insane speed. It's completely compacted. How did

we survive this?

Yubari knows the truth even if Melissa doesn't.

YUBARI

It doesn't matter.

SHARP

What do you mean it doesn't matter? We should have been dead long before we impacted. Look at this wreckage, Asuka, we should have been crushed and incinerated. Based on the look of this wreckage alone there was a zero percent chance of survival.

YUBARI

We were very fortunate.

Sharp is coming close to an answer to a terrible question.

SHARP

I don't believe in luck, or good fortune.

She approaches the wreckage and scans again.

YUBARI

Melissa, you're only going to give yourself more questions than you can answer.

SHARP

Faint traces of biological residue.

The tricorder shows her the truth.

SHARP

DNA trace. The plasma fire almost burned it away, but there's still enough.

She taps a few buttons and runs an analysis.

YUBARI

Melissa...

SHARP

Human DNA, female. Not a trace element, enough to suggest someone was vaporized in the pilots seat.

Something tells her the question she's about to ask is pointless, but she asks anyway.

SHARP

I can't remember, was someone else with us on the shuttle?

Yubari gives her the only answer there is.

YUBARI

No.

Sharp knows the answer, she just doesn't want to believe it.

SHARP

Then who died in the crash, Asuka? Who died?

She doesn't get an answer from Yubari, and runs off.

Some time later, Sharp is alone and crying. She's not crying for whoever died in the crash, but for herself. Yubari slowly approaches her.

YUBARI

How long has it been since the crash, Melissa?

She composes herself enough to answer.

SHARP

A full year today.

Yubari is ready to tell her everything.

YUBARI

Time becomes meaningless when you stop keeping it.

Sharp cries again, knowing that she's about to learn the truth.

YUBARI

You've known all along, you just chose not to remember.

INT. SHUTTLE - COCKPIT

One year ago, alarms are going off as Sharp desperately tries to save the shuttle.

SHARP

Mayday! Mayday! Excelsior, can you hear me! My shuttle has suffered a warp core failure! I can't eject, and plasma fires are burning in the aft compartment! I have to eject the aft section before the core explodes!

She taps a few controls and ejects the aft section of the shuttle which promptly explodes. In the cockpit, the plasma that remained burns through a conduit and ignites the cockpit.

SHARP

Oh, god! The plasma fire traveled through a conduit into to the cockpit! I'm on a crash course with an uncharted planet! Excelsior! Anybody!?

She knows it's over. She calms herself and begins to hum the same tune she hummed in the cabin for Yubari.

The fire engulfs her, and the remains of the shuttle slam into its final resting place on the planets surface.

Back on the planet, her tears have stopped as she remembers everything. Now that she knows what happened, she makes peace with it. Yubari, or whatever she is, comforts her.

YUBARI

Death is not so terrible. When you finally face it, it can be as beautiful the sunset we are witnessing now.

SHARP

I died before the crash. The plasma fire incinerated me. Yubari wasn't there, I died alone.

YUBARI

I never said I was her, Melissa.

SHARP

I was travelling to a planet. The population were agricultural experts. A minor disease was making them all sick, they asked us to help cure it. I had the cure done in ten minutes. I wanted to go alone, to get away from the ship for a while. I made Asuka stay behind. She tried to insist on going with me.

YUBARI

She was one of the last people you thought about. I'm sorry, Melissa, I didn't think you were ready for this.

SHARP

Who are you, really? A Q who saved me at the last instant?

YUBARI

I don't concern myself with lower beings like them. Best not to interfere with their evolution. The Q are very young, very immature.

SHARP

I'm a lowly Human, so what use do you have for me?

YUBARI

A great deal, Melissa. I didn't save you from that fire or the crash. And you are flesh and blood as you were before.

Yubari, or whatever she really calls herself, tells her something Sharp would never believe otherwise.

YUBARI

You saved yourself. In your last instant of life you became something that few Humans have ever, or for a very long time by your understanding ever will. You achieved a clarity of spirit, a "transcendence" if you prefer to call it that. You took a huge leap forward in Human evolution. And I don't mean some primitive concept of biological advancement. You changed reality and willed yourself back to life. Melissa, I can't begin to describe to you the kind of achievement you made.

SHARP

Who, or what are you?

YUBARI

Let's just say I'm very privileged to have been here with you to see it happen.

Sharp figures it out anyway.

SHARP

You're Human, aren't you?

Yubari doesn't respond, but it answers the question anyway.

SHARP

I know you are. Somehow I know.

YUBARI

And now you're free. You can lay down the burden of flesh and blood.

SHARP

I can see everything. Everything that ever was. It's all becoming clear to me. There really is no such thing as time. I see the beginning and the end together. I see the coming war. The trillions of lives lost. The unimaginable destruction. It's all as if it's happening right now. I feel like I could stop it all with just a thought.

YUBARI

But just because you can...

SHARP

Doesn't mean you should.

YUBARI

We all know that without being told.

SHARP

They don't know what's coming. I could warn them.

YUBARI

It wouldn't change anything. Everything happens as it happens, Melissa.

SHARP

So, what do I do now?

YUBARI

At best, I'm only a guide. You're the one who has to take the next step. You must leave the space between this existence and the next. I can't help you do that, it's only meant for you.

SHARP

Can I go back? Before I died?

YUBARI

You can go anywhere you want. Any "time" you want. But one thing you can't change, Melissa, is what you are now. This is an achievement you can't give back.

SHARP

I don't feel like I'm done there. Not yet. I see myself helping people during the coming war. Holding a dying child in my arms.

YUBARI

Then that is what is meant to be. You have your answer, Melissa.

INT. COCKPIT - SHUTTLE

Back in the cockpit of the shuttle, one year ago. Sharp is woken from a nap. She frantically checks the shuttles warp core.

SHARP

Computer, status of warp core?

COMPUTER

The warp core is functioning at ninety nine point eight percent.

SHARP

Run a diagnostic on the core and EPS system.

COMPUTER

No malfunctions detected.

And now she wonders if it was all just a dream.

SHARP (RELIEVED)

It was just a dream.

INT. EXCELSIOR - SHUTTLE BAY

Yubari greets Sharp in the shuttle bay.

YUBARI

So, did you need me?

SHARP

The inoculations went smoothly and safely. Your assistance was not required.

YUBARI

It's just as well. There was a little excitement while you were away.

SHARP

More red alert sirens and exploding consoles? Did you get to shoot something?

YUBARI

I don't always want to shoot things, Melissa.

A technician interrupts. They sound a little concerned.

TECHNICIAN

Doctor, how was your trip?

SHARP

Uneventful. Why?

TECHNICIAN

Well, there was a problem with your shuttle. One of the new technicians installed the wrong plasma manifold in the shuttle you took. It could have caused a warp core breach. Or caused a catastrophic plasma fire. Maybe even both. I just checked it, and it is the wrong manifold. I don't understand how it held to get you there and back.

Sharp doesn't know what to say, but Yubari does.

YUBARI

Whoever that was, take them off of duty. Put that shuttle off limits.

TECHNICIAN

Yes, ma'am! This will never happen again.

Sharp is too stunned to say anything.

YUBARI

Those knuckle draggers are lucky you weren't killed.

Sharp sounds more concerned than curious.

SHARP

What happened while I was gone?

YUBARI

What happened? Didn't you just hear him? You could have been killed.

Sharp snaps at her.

SHARP

What happened!?

YUBARI

We discovered a new planet. Uncharted, uninhabited. It's a verdant paradise. It's got starfleet all excited about establishing a permanent foothold out here.

SHARP

I need to see it.

YUBARI

Sure, there's plenty of pictures and video from the survey team.

SHARP

No! I need to see it.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

A shuttle lands in a meadow on the newly discovered planet, just where Sharp crashed before. Yubari is more impressed with the site than Sharp is.

YUBARI

It's beautiful! I haven't felt sun on my face in forever.

Sharp wanders off.

YUBARI

Uh, Melissa, don't wander off. We're still doing a survey, there could be dangerous animals here.

Sharp knows there isn't.

SHARP

There aren't.

Sharp arrives at the place she built the cabin.

YUBARI

Looks like a nice spot.

Sharp struggles to remember, it's more of a feeling than a memory.

SHARP

Nice spot for a cabin. Perfect to see the sun setting.

FADE OUT.

THE END.