

THE ARKSHIP ULYSSES

DELETED SCENE #3: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

The chains they used to bind Abi's limbs were heavy, ill-made things. They tore at her skin and cut off the circulation to her feet so every step was an agony of pins and needles as they dragged her out to the hanging post and strung her up to die.

Crowds gathered to watch. In full sight of Dawn's army of followers, Abi was stripped naked and beaten. Her carefully hoarded evidence was discovered and taken away; when Abi tried to stop them, she was beaten anew. As the crowds whooped with joy, Dawn's girls strung a steel rod across Abi's back and tied a weight to her feet before hoisting her far above the watching crowds. Inside an hour she felt as though she were being torn slowly apart; at any moment it felt as though her legs would pop free of their sockets.

Still she didn't cry out. Though she was naked as the day she was born, her evidence likely destroyed and her friends nowhere to be seen, still Abigail Leighton had her pride.

Time passed slowly. Abi spent the better part of a day watching the crowds gather in the square below her to gawk at here and trade gossip. They made bets over how long she would hold out and traded theories over how she'd got the scar on her belly.

Abi ignored them. Mockery and laughter were things she was long used to dealing with; the only thing that truly hurt

her was that Dawn hadn't bothered to carry out the punishment herself. Since the moment she had given the order to hang her here, Abi's friend had been nowhere to be seen.

Vanyan was the first to find Abi after shift change. As always, he appeared before her as if from nowhere, scuttling out of the shadows, his grin almost predatory as he leered up at her with hot, beady eyes and grinned an ugly smile. He smacked his lips together appreciatively.

"Must be me birthday," he joked. "Appen I ent seen a sight so pretty as that since I were looking at me own cock this morning. You come back 'ere for me little girl?"

"Hardly."

He chuckled. "Shame."

"Quiet!" Tess snapped at him. Tess was Abi's guard for the day, a sullen heavily-pregnant girl who spent most of her time hunched over a bucket of shrapnel sorting through it for useable salvage. Over the last few hours, Abi had watched her work and a more efficient scrap worker she doubted she'd ever seen. First she would take the most promising bits of metal from the pile and bite into them to test their strength. Hammer and chisel were used to whittle the pieces down into something resembling useable shapes: knives and tools for the most part. She worked fast and as she worked, she would rub her swollen belly and occasionally Abi could hear her singing as she lulled the unborn child within.

There was no singing now, though, as she glared up at Vanyan. "That there's Dawn's prisoner," she announced, picking

up one of the new knives she'd been working on and dancing it along her hand. "Best you just leave her alone."

"That so?" Vanyan said. "Well, appen Dawn ain't here. And that there's Brent's sister. His concern. That makes it mine." His right hand hovered over his own belt knife as he spoke. The two bunkees glared at each other. "Why don't you just save us all the trouble o'this here back and forth and just cut her down for us?"

"You want her, you'd best go talk with Dawn."

"Appen I'm talking with you." There was a long moment of silence.

Then Brent appeared.

He emerged from the crowd with all the subtlety of a nuclear explosion. He bulled his way through the milling crowds, chest heaving as though he'd just run a circuit of the ship, his expression one of pure rage as he glared up at Abi.

"It's true then," he said, his face dark with fury. "I was hoping someone were playing a joke on me."

"It's no joke," said Vanyan as he smiled up at Abi's tits. "Appen I ent never seen her from this here angle before, but that's yer sister up there sure as shit be brown."

Brent shook his head. "Bitch." Abi looked away.

"I want some time alone with her."

Tess fingered her knife. "Not happening. You want her cut down, you'd best just..."

"Speak to Dawn, yeah I got it." Brent scowled up at Abi, apparently unaware of her nakedness as he ground his teeth.

"Too bad Dawn's not taking visitors right now. I ain't never seen her so pissed off." He pointed. "That's your doing."

Abi knew that already.

"At least let me talk with her?"

Tess shrugged. "Talk away," she told them both, though her eyes were only for Vanyan. "Take one step towards her though and I'll gut you where you stand."

"Understood."

Brent took a step forwards and the crowds fell hush as they waited to see what he would say. Abi was curious too. She had known this moment was coming from the instant she had been strung up her but it didn't make it any easier to face. She would have preferred to do this on her own terms, down on his level with her clothes on her back and the evidence in her hand, away from all these watching eyes, but it seemed fate had a different plan for her.

Still, she had to try to make him understand. This was her brother after all and if he couldn't be convinced, no one could.

"You got some fucking nerve coming back here, you know that?"

She knew.

"When you left... when you fucking left here with no warning...! I had to hear about it from fucking Dawn of all people. It were fucking chaos here; no one knew what was going on. I had t'take care o'dad on me own! He almost died!"

Meaning he was still alive? Abi felt her hopes surge inside her. "Take me to him Brent; he'll want to see me!"

He spat. "Like you even care. You're lucky you're up there and not down here sis, or I'd fucking kick your ass! You sold yourself out Abs - you of all people! I always looked up to you but then you went and gave fucking uniforms what they wanted and bought your freedom with betrayal!" The crowd were getting angry now. They had heard only glimpses of this story before; Brent's rage was infectious.

Something flew out of the crowd and struck Abi on the thigh leaving a wet mark. "Kill her!" someone shouted out to a roar of general approval.

Brent just ignored them. "Dawn told me what happened, you know. Told me how you used her help - made her use up every last favour she had - and then abandoned her with nothing!"

The worst thing was how true it was. Abi had nothing to say in her defence.

"Cut out her tongue!" someone in the crowd called out. Another missile slammed into the post near Abi's head.

"Fuck her up the arse!"

Shaking his head in disgust, Brent turned to walk away. Abi felt desperate. She had to say something! Had to do something to win him back to her side! Panic clawing at her stomach, the crowds roaring their anger around her, she took a breath and called out a name.

"Longshot!"

There was a moment of stunned silence. Brent froze, his back towards her. "What?" he said.

"Longshot," she repeated. "Lake McKenzie, The Monster..." Capos, all of them. Powerful men who had lived a long time in Brent's bunk.

He knew them well enough. "What are you blathering on about?" he asked as he turned back towards her.

This was it now; no going back. "They started the riots," Abi told him. "They were the ringleaders of the breakout; the ones you were looking for."

Brent exchanged a bitter look with Vanyan. He shrugged. "Just like we figured all along then. So what?"

Vanyan agreed. "Don't matter who the ringleaders were they're all dead now. Dawn took the places they left."

"And what if I told you they're still alive?" Abi asked them. "What if I told you that I'd seen Longshot with my own eyes in a bar down in Geller's? Free. Pardoned for his crimes."

"I'd call you a fucking liar," Brent replied.

"Either that or you need eye surgery," Vanyan added.

"Uniforms don't forgive men for breakouts and they sure as hell don't give pardons for it. Once you're through those gates you never get out, everyone knows that."

"Aye." There were murmurs of agreement from the crowd. One look at their eyes and Abi could see her judgment was settled as far as they were concerned. Not only was she a

uniform-loving traitor but a lying one as well. Death was almost too good for her.

"They weren't working alone though," Abi told them all. "I got proof, Brent. Real proof that proves... Proves that the riots only happened... because the uniforms made them happen. We rioted because they told us to! And Longshot and the others bought their freedom in doing so." There it was; the truth said as simply as she could make it. It was a truth that turned everything on its head.

And not a single soul believed it. Abi's words were met with only a wall of laughter and a brother's angry scowl. "You touched, girl? Uniforms?" He prickled as the laughter grew around him, as though it were all directed at him. "Girl you deserve to hang there."

#

They left her up there for the rest of the night. She was offered no water or food and when she needed to relieve herself she was forced to do so where she hung. She stopped feeling her legs before half the evening was through. Her arms weren't far behind. Whenever she fell asleep, her body would fall forwards, sending a lurch of pain flying through her that only grew worse over the hours. But keeping herself awake was exhausting. Abi spent most of that night in a kind of half-sleeping limbo state that did nothing to ease her tiredness and just left her groggy come the morning.

The crowds had long grown bored of her before that and returned to their business elsewhere. She was already dead as

far as they were concerned. There was only the spectacle itself to see and that wouldn't be until tomorrow night.

That was the rumour, anyway. From what Abi had gathered from the gossip she'd overheard the day before, there was a big operation planned for the next day. Dawn was planning to take a bunch of her girls scouting down into one of the other bunks just before first light when the priests made their rounds. The idea was to force the Capos to engage just before the uniforms called everyone out for day shift. If they timed it just right, they could take a whole block in the confusion as the uniforms tried to break up the riot.

There were promises of loot for all of them, extra rations and an evening of celebration free of chores. Abi was to be the after-party entertainment. Come victory or defeat, her death would cap the evening off nicely.

Abi tried not to think about what that meant. Her death on its own wasn't anything she feared. Abi had spent so long staring death in the face she was almost glad to be going to it. More, it was proof that she had failed. She had come down here, hoping to find a place for herself and instead had only ended up worse than she'd been in the first place. There was irony there if she bothered to look for it. Perhaps it would have made a nice story for Father Estavan to tell in one of his sermons. Too bad she could never tell it to him.

The morning hours found Abi weeping.

They were quiet tears and they didn't last for long, but still someone must have heard her for there was a sudden

stirring in the darkness below as of someone rousing themselves from sleep and a moment of stillness as they stared up at Abi in the gloom. "You okay up there, little one?"

It was Vanyan. Abi's tears cut off with a shudder. Having anyone hear you cry was bad enough but Vanyan just made it all the worse. "How long you been down there," she asked.

"Long enough. Appen I thought you could use the company." Abi couldn't see anything in the darkness below her, but still she thought she could see Vanyan smiling up at her. "The guards are all gone now. Appen Dawn got bored o'you."

Not bored. Torn. Abi knew enough of her friend's moods to know that she didn't want to go through with this execution anymore than Abi wanted it done to her. But now Dawn's reputation was on the line, the respect of her followers hanging on a thread. Pride was the action that forced her hand.

A final tear squeezed out of Abi's left eye. She sniffed and looked away. "You shouldn't be here Vanyan."

"Says who? Someone's gotta look out f'you. Protect you an'that."

"Protect me? From what?"

"From yourself mostly. 'Cides, who knows what evil bastards there are lurking in the night, ey?"

For a moment, Abi was tempted to tell him that the only lurking bastard she could see was him, but then an idea occurred to her. Abi had never paid much attention to Vanyan before, only using him where she could to achieve her goals.

Was it possible that through all their slinking about and his botched attempts at sleeping with her, she'd actually somehow gained his affection? Was it possible he thought of her as more than just a woman he wanted to sleep with and as a person he cared for?

The thought stunned her. She had to test it. "Well then I thank you Vanyan," she said. She waited to see what would happen.

What happened was a chuckle, deep and raspy but honest as the day was long. "Appen it really is me birthday after all..."

He loves me, Abi realised. It was amazing to think it had taken her so long to see it.

"Vanyan," she called down, her voice as gentle as she could make it. Softer than a lover's breath on the pillow it was; a secret call for his ears alone. "Is it true that my father's still alive?"

"Last I checked."

"They're going to kill me Vanyan. My brother. Dawn."

He knew. The knowledge saddened him too, she was sure of it.

Heart hammering in her chest, Abi pressed on. "They never even let me see my father," she said.

"I said he should. Brent. He wouldn't listen." He sighed. "Appen you shouldn't've said those things you said. He were angry before, but he would've forgiven you. All them lies... We bunkees may not have much but when we say something it's true."

"I didn't lie, Vanyan," she promised. When she heard him tut, she added quickly, "No really. I can prove it."

"How?"

"Those papers I had on me when they strung me up here..."

Vanyan made a bark of laughter she was certain must have woken half the bunks. "They'll be long gone by now girl. You know, I been living down here my whole life; you an' your dad are the only people I ever met what could read. You could claim a piece o' paper says the Captain's giving us all free hats and still folks wouldn't believe it's true."

"That's why I need to see my father, Vanyan. He would be able to see the truth in what I say. And you'd believe him, wouldn't you?"

There was a thoughtful pause. "Mayhaps."

"If you can just take me to him..."

He cut her off. "Now don't you be getting no ideas," he said with a wily chuckle. "I like you little one, I really do, but don't you get to thinking that I don't see where this is going. Right now it's all pulling on old Vanyan's heart strings, right? 'Cut me down Vanyan. Take me to my daddy Vanyan. I'll give you anything you want Vanyan.' Well appen old Vanyan ain't gonna be no sap, hear? You're up there. I'm down here and that's just the way things are, right? Tomorrow the bunkees will go an' fight some and then after that you'll die."

Abi stewed on that in silence for a moment. She knew the answer well enough, it was just the giving that was hard.

"What if I promised you something in return?" she asked him and felt herself shudder at the very idea of it. If she had any other option...

She felt Vanyan freeze below her. "Promise what?"

"Me. I know it's what you've always wanted. Cut me down Vanyan - help me get to my father - and I swear by my father's name and the name of my brother who you consider a friend, I will be yours until my dying day."

The silence seemed to stretch out for an eternity. Then she heard Vanyan get to his feet. "Must be mad," she heard him mutter to himself. "Appen you got yourself a deal."

#

Her father's new bunk was a paradise compared with the one he'd been in when last Abi had seen him. Up on the first floor away from the worst of the stink, in a spacious area of two beds, a firegrate and even two shelves for storage, it was practically a paradise by the standards of the bunks.

Vanyan handed Abi a new set of duds outside and helped her change into them. It was a painful process. Abi's back was still stiff after a day of being hung, her arms an unresponsive agony and she was worried she'd never feel anything in her legs again. But still she was down now and the water Vanyan handed her to drink was good. Right now, she would take whatever mercies she could get.

"Nice place," she observed.

"Just be quick, all right?" Vanyan said, nodding inside.

"I'm gonna get it enough for this as it is."

He carried her inside.

Abi found her father sleeping on the bed furthest away from her. The fire in the grate was low but it was still bright enough to show him looking better than he had in years. The colour had returned to his cheeks and he was breathing better than he had in as long as Abi could remember. None of that was Abi's doing, of course, but still she was glad to see him. He was thin still, but no longer skeletal. He was actually starting to look once more like the father she remembered from her youth.

When she touched his hand, he came right awake and it took him only a moment to recognise her. "Abi!" he said as his eyes picked her out of the dark. "And Vanyan?"

"Mr Leighton, sir," said Vanyan with a bow. "Appen I'll just keep watch outside."

"Hello daddy," Abi said as Vanyan left. She clutched her father's hands in his and felt truly happy for the first time since she'd returned.

Her father was looking much the same. "They said you'd escaped!" he declared, his gaze dancing between her eyes as though uncertain where to look.

"I came back," she told him and felt her father wrap a skinny arm around her and pull her close to him with all his feeble strength. She didn't even mind how bad he smelled as he kissed her gently on the head.

"You look good, dad."

"I feel good. Dawn managed to get me some medicine - real stuff too, God knows where she found it. We think it was just an infection after all."

"That's good." Abi felt a stab of guilt. Brent was right: she should have been here all along instead of running off for her own selfish reasons.

Her father seemed to read her mind though for he shook his head at her and said, "I'm alive, that's all that matters. And you're back too. Does Brent know?"

"He knows." Abi was forced to look away. It was all too much suddenly: being back here with this man who loved her so unconditionally, the things she'd scarified to get here, the people she had betrayed. She was crying again but it didn't seem to matter. "He hates me, dad."

"Shush now..."

"He won't ever forgive me for leaving."

"He will." The High English words brought her back to her senses. He sounded now like the father she used to know; the chief engineer who had taught her how to read. He made room for her on the bed beside her and told her to join him. "But first things first: you need to look after yourself."

"Yes, dad."

He smiled at her words. "Why don't you tell me what's happened?" he suggested and gratefully, she did.

#

The alarm went out shortly before daybreak. "She's gone! Goddamnit, the bitch is gone!"

"Get Dawn!"

Abi waited in silence with her father beside her as she listened to the sounds of chaos around her. The bunks erupted into wakefulness that morning in a state of confused fear. No one knew what to do.

"Don't worry," her father told her, hands pressed into hers. "This will all be over soon."

All around them people were spilling from their bunks, panicked, the news of the exile's escape rippling through them like a shockwave. There was a big operation planned this morning but no one was getting ready for it. Everyone knew what Dawn would do when she found out the exile was missing.

Dawn arrived a few minutes later. "What's going on?" she demanded from the end of the blocks. In the distance, the priest was already starting his morning rounds. "Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!" His bell chimed in the distance.

"Why aren't you getting ready for the attack?"

They told her. Predictably, she was furious. "Find Brent," she snapped. "She'll be with him."

It took them another few minutes to locate Brent and then a few more to beat out of him that he didn't know where Abi was. A few minutes after that and someone remembered Abi's father and less than a minute after that they were all of them bursting into her father's bunk, a crowd of angry bunkees with Brent at its lead. "You!" Brent snapped as he advanced on Abi,

Dawn hot on his heels. "Do you realise the plans you've just ruined?"

It was suddenly very crowded in her father's new quarters.

Brent grabbed Abi by the arm and spilled her off the bed. "Come here!" he shouted.

"Brent," her father called out.

He ignored him. "Vanyan let you down did he? I'll kill that fucking worm!"

Another girl Abi didn't recognise grabbed her by the leg and pulled on it. All the feeling returned to it with a roar of pain and for a moment Abi teetered on the edge of consciousness as they dragged her towards the entrance.

"Brent!" her father called out, louder. The effort reduced him to coughing.

"Go back to sleep, dad," Brent told him. "This don't concern you none!"

Hands were all over Abi suddenly, hitting her, pinching her, tearing the clothes from her back. She was lifted, carried, dumped and kicked, dragged over to the doorway, spat at, shouted over, left and then kicked again. People squabbled over her and she could barely breath as she was squeezed amid the chaos.

"Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!"

I ain't fucking dead! Abi wanted to tell him.

There was a sudden loud banging noise.

Everyone froze; the noise repeated.

Abi's father was sitting up in bed, his chamber pot clasped in his hand as he banged with all his strength against the steel struts of the bunk.

Everyone stared at him, astonished, but in that moment he had eyes only for his son. "Doesn't. Concern. Me?" he repeated, his eyes full of such rage as Abi had never seen. "My daughter?"

"She abandoned us dad," Brent said, unrepentant. "Fucking bought her freedom with some deal with the uniforms. Left us behind to rot!"

"She's your sister."

"Trust me; that's the only reason she's not fucking dead already!" he announced and with that tore the chamber pot out of his father's hands and flung it to the ground with a clatter.

His father sighed as his son glared down at him. "Such violence," he said. "This isn't how your mother and I raised you, Brent." He looked over at the group of girls still wrestling with Abi in the doorway and told them simply, "Leave her alone."

They let her go. Old he might be, but Abi's father was a man who was used to being obeyed. The tone in his voice was one which brokered no argument and besides these people were intruders in his quarters and Abi was his daughter. Old age didn't exactly earn a bunkie respect, but in this place where people rarely lived past their thirties, it at least earned you the right to be heard.

"Have you listened to what your sister has to say?" he asked his son.

Brent scowled down at Abi. "Lies," he announced.

Dawn agreed. "I ain't got nothing to hear from that girl," she announced hotly, arms folded across her chest.

"Then listen to me instead," he begged. "Dawn: you who cared for me when I was at my weakest and helped me when no one else would. You brought me supplies, companionship. You think I didn't realise, but I did. You looked after me even after my own daughter had left us and you had nothing to gain from it. For this, I tell you now, you will always have my undying love and friendship. And my thanks."

Dawn suddenly wasn't able to look him in the eyes. Her gaze was frozen somewhere in the corner between Abi and her father as she struggled not to look either of them in the eye. "It... it was..." Her face flushed.

"Will you listen?" he pressed. "For my sake, will you at least hear this girl out?"

Dawn sighed, defeated. "Fine whatever. But then after, we're taking her away."

"If that is your wish. Now, please." He turned to Abi. "Tell them what you saw."

Heart hammering in her ears, dress a ruined piece of cloth clutched over her chest, Abi started to speak.

She spoke as clearly as she knew how. No grand exclamations or hyperbole, she presented the facts as they had happened to her. She told them how she had first become

suspicious of the uniform's involvement with New Girl; how she had come to realise that the Priesthood genuinely seemed to believe that marrying the Captain to a bunkee would heal the ship.

"They've been duped," she told them. "Just as surely as we have. And it's the uniforms doing the duping."

At first they didn't believe her. Dawn kept interrupting her with barks of angry protest, jumping to her feet and storming around the narrow space while Brent yelled at her to be quiet. Some of the evidence Abi had found was recovered from wherever it had ended up and returned to Abi and she used it to prove that what she was saying was true.

Brent for his part just scowled down at the papers, uncomprehendingly. He had lost a lot of his education during his time down here, and the knowledge that he could no longer read was an embarrassment to him. However, his father was there to confirm the rest.

Abi told them how she had followed Commander Hathaway and broken into his office. She told them what she had found there. When they heard how Longshot and the other Capos were still alive, Brent jumped up - seemingly convinced now that his father was backing up what Abi was saying - and shouted, "I'll kill them!"

He wasn't the only one who thought that way.

By now word had gotten round that something big was going down in old man Leighton's bunk for a rather large crowd had gathered inside the cramped space and the thoroughfare outside

was a wall of peering faces and craning necks. Abi spoke louder for their sakes.

"This is why I came back, brother. This is why I'm here. I was gone - free - I had nothing to gain by returning. But then I saw how they were using us and I knew I had to do something.

"Commander Hathaway - he's the main one - he's manipulated us for years to meet his own agenda. He creates a crisis and then fixes it, making himself seem like some sort of big hero. These edicts prove that he ordered only minimum security on the night of the breakout. He ordered the diaphragm at Geller's Row to be deactivated. He called his own father down to the bunks in time for the breakout. Then, on cue, Longshot and the others break out. Us bunkees follow. Carnage, right? Then, Hathaway stops the riots - everyone calls him a hero - and suddenly he is made the ship's new Second."

At least that was the original plan, anyway, until a certain Commander Garrot had come along and stopped the riots before he could, thus making security seem like a bunch of incompetents and almost undoing his plans completely.

"You should see it out there: everyone on the ship is scared of us. Us - starving and weak and behind bars as we are - we are demonised by the uniforms and then used as justification for the most ridiculous policies. And the only person innocent in all this is Captain himself who is too blindsided by it all to do a damn thing against it."

There was a lot of angry muttering at that. Abi's claims were certainly outlandish, and yet on some level they all knew it was true. They'd all felt on a primal level that the uniforms had a vendetta against them. This was just a case of having their worst suspicions confirmed.

"Dawn's been fighting a good war down here," Abi said. "Stopping the Capos: that's a good plan, since most of the Capos are working for the uniforms. But I'm sorry to say: it's not enough. You've been fighting the wrong war."

"Says you," said Dawn.

"No, she's right," said Brent. "Fighting Capos won't achieve nought in the long term. If this here is true, the uniforms need to pay for this."

"If!" Dawn returned. Suddenly she was on her feet and her expression was full of fury as she glared at the people around her. "God's tits, who's talking about the long term here? What matters is now! Riches. Food. Medicine for your father, Brent. Fighting Capos brought us these things. I brought us these things. Am I the only one who sees it?" She asked them with a snort of derision. "Am I the only one who sees what this bitch is doing?"

Apparently she was. With a final angry glare at Abi, Dawn turned and fled the bunk. A few girls left with her but still more remained. Those were the ones Abi could use. She would deal with Dawn later.

"We have to break the cycle," she told the remaining bunkees. "We have to send the uniforms a message that we won't ever be fucked with again."

"But how?" asked Brent. "How do we do that?"

She told them. As she spoke their eyes went wide, first with shock, then with fear and finally, with pure desire.

"You know this is almost blasphemy," Brent told her.

"So what?" she returned. "Almighty God can go take a diving leap into the core for all I care. I'm done with doing the uniform's bidding and I'm done serving bunkees as well. I intend to do things differently."

She looked around at the people fate had left her with. Brent, Vanyan, her father, Mona. Over in the corner, the cowed form of Sparks, the nervous pyromaniac who stood there giggling to herself.

Good, Abi thought with a nod of satisfaction. I'll be needing that one.

"You know," she told them. "I've spent a lot of time lately wondering where I belong. Am I nobleman, a uniform, a bunkee? No. I'm an exile. And being on the outside, it's given me the ability to see solutions that no one else has. This is it. The only one there is. And right now you're either with me or you're not because I'll do this even without your help - so help me God - though it'll go much easier with. Are you with me?"

They were with her. Not all of them, of course. Tess and a couple of the others retreated from the room even then to

seek out Dawn and tell her what she was planning. But enough of Dawn's girls remained to pull off her plan and most of them nodding. There was no trust in the looks that greeted that decision - no pounding of the air or declaration of loyalty as had greeted Dawn yesterday - but their nods of agreement were perhaps all the more honest for that. There was genuine hatred glimmering in those eyes. That hatred galvanised them, united them in a way that no declaration of loyalty ever would.

Abi smiled to see it. You see what you uniforms have created here? she thought, picturing Commander Hathaway smirking to himself. A monster. And it's coming right for you, you fuck.

Time to make something new. "Alright then, listen up," she said. "At night shift, when the uniforms ask for volunteers, we are all going to step up. We'll wait until shift change, the call for workers. Make sure you all line up in the same place: the farms. We have only one shot at this; we have to do it right."

"How do we know we can trust you?" someone asked. "How do we know this isn't just some uniform trick."

"Because without trust we're no better than animals," she replied. "That's what the uniforms think of us, you know. But I know better." She looked at her brother. "Once a bunkee, always a bunkee right?"

He nodded and for just a brief moment, it was her brother staring back at her. Wounded and prideful he might have been,

but she knew he would forgive her in time. If only the same were true of Dawn.

"Alright then," she announced as she climbed stiffly to her feet. "Time to blow a fucking hole in the aristocracy."