

Prisoner MR 62-7

by: Barry Sherwood

Marcus Richler, 32, leans against a large wooden crate within the dim lit storage room. Holding his hand against three jagged claw marks just beneath his ribcage, he knows unequivocally that it's the end of the line. The same creature that left him with this fatal wound continues its relentless thrashing at the metal door. All that stood between Marcus becoming a meal is a half inch piece of steel. A warm sensation continues to pour down the inside of his tattered prison jumpsuit. His numb fingers finally release a red steel wrench. It's ping against the floor is a faint echo in comparison to the creature's lunges against the door. Marcus takes in a deep breath allowing the stale air to tingle down into his lungs. His mind swarms with regret. He wonders if he should have told the warden to piss off when selected for a corporate restoration work detail. In his own arrogance, Marcus spent weeks methodically planning his escape while on the off-world detail.

"Well, I think this is it..." whispers Marcus. Slowly sliding down to the cold metal plated floor, he shakes his head in disbelief.

"Marcus...Marcus are you there?" crackles a familiar voice over the small radio transmitting within his jumpsuit pocket.

“Phil...did you guys make it to the transport?” asks Marcus. Holding the quarter sized circular device in between his thumb and index finger. Releasing the pressure on the transmitter, it would fade from glowing red back to black.

“Yeah, we’re waiting for you. Where are you?” asks Phil, a 19-year-old convict who had been serving time for graffiti protesting the Solaris Corporation.

“You may as well get out of here. This thing has me trapped,” replies Marcus.

“We can’t just—”

“—shut up inmate, we’re not going back into that mess!” shouts a guard. “Soon as this shuttle finishes start up procedures we’re leaving.”

“What?!” shouts Phil.

“Don’t sweat it kid. Do me a favor though,” wheezes Marcus, “I got a daughter on Titan, her name is Lorina Richler. She’s around eleven years old now, but if you make it out that way can you tell her my final thoughts were of her? I don’t want her thinking her old man died trying to fix up some run-down asteroid prison for the corporation. Make something up for me, okay?”

“What do you mean make something up? You saved us, she needs to know, they all need to know what happened here,” replies Phil.

“We both know the Corporation won’t let that happen. Hell, they’ll space you just for threatening to say something,” chuckles Marcus.

“He’s right kid. We keep our mouths shut. It’s an old rundown mining station being converted into a prison. They’ll chalk it up to an industrial accident or whatever crap the

corporation wants to sell to the media. You guys aren't the only ones with families and I'm not going to risk mine over this heap," says the guard in the background.

"Listen Phil, just tell that glutton who calls himself a warden that I figured out a way to remove the collars. Hell...he might buy it. If he thinks you helped the guards survive a prison riot, maybe he'll commute your sentence," replies Marcus. The alien screeches as it slams into the steel. Marcus's green eyes glance up and focus on three holes now torn into the door. The white light of the corridor beams across the packed storage room. Slowly purple talons fill the three holes.

"What if the warden—" says Phil.

"—seems like I don't have much time left," interrupts Marcus. As the creature pulls the door, Marcus can see the thin fabric of metal beginning to waiver.

"I'll find your daughter, I swear it," replies Phil.

"Thank you, I know you will," says Marcus. His head becomes lighter, and the pain begins to fade.

"We will remember what you did for us inmate," whispers a guard. Marcus smirks as the door begins to tear from the doorway. He shakes his head, before glancing up to see the doorway is filled with the bright white light of the hallway. Despite his blurry eyes, he notices something written on several containers...mining charges.

"Hey guard...do me a favor, use that detonator feature on my collar," replies Marcus. The creature begins to blotch out the light from the doorway as it enters the storage room. Marcus smiles as he flicks the transmitter at the creature. Hearing the warning tones of the collar as it activates Marcus simply closes his eyes.

The End