The connection to the lift tether worried Philomena. She did not have time to rig a backup, but could not afford to lose the entire platform either. She studied the windings of the many small wires braided together into the tether’s main cable. Shrapnel had grazed it, cutting perhaps ten per cent of the constituent wires. Four such cables held the platform beneath the bridge cabin of the massive air ship. Under normal circumstances an unloaded platform could probably tolerate the loss of one cable, however the weight of her smuggled cargo cast doubt upon that outcome.

Present difficulties notwithstanding, she could scarcely believe she had succeeded in getting this far. Her unique gift to impersonate others made her the obvious choice for the job, however she still only accepted the task reluctantly. She knew she could board the enemy ship, but was less confident about loading three hundred pounds of explosives without detection. The mission was bigger than her concerns, a fact she would readily acknowledge. The High Chancellor would be present for the arrival of this dreadnought and her precious cargo. The opportunity to remove both in one stroke had to be seized.

She checked her watch – thirty minutes until arrival, and five until her jump window. She wanted to patch the cable, but could not find any weldable material. Desperate, she looked around for anything usable. The swaying ladder up to the bridge caught her eye. She quickly cut it from its moorings and lowered it silently to the platform. She removed the rungs, leaving two lengths of thin cable. She fastened both to the base of the damaged main cable and wound them up to the top anchor. The she waited. She wanted to confirm her fix, but did not want to draw attention by causing extra movement. She also did not want to miss her window to leave in one piece.

She fastened her parachute and walked over the edge.