Rojack was mostly still frozen when he died. When doctor Li looked at him later, he reassured the rest that it had probably been painless.

The process of unfreezing takes a manner of days and it seems like Tareq was getting impatient. Ideally the cycle of helmsmen would would overlap, each one waiting till the next was free and about before going under him or herself. This did not happen, but one wonders what could have been avoided if protocol had been followed correctly.

Unfreezing and freezing are done gradually for a reason. When going under, if it happens too quickly, ice develops. When ice crystals develop, they have a nasty tendency to expand, rupturing cells, veins, brain tissue, and usually you want to preserve these things.

The solution was a solution, specifically of antifreeze proteins, taken from some krill long ago when the arctic still held ice. The introduction of these proteins stopped crystallization, which stopped tissue shredding, but it still took almost a hundred years to prefect the process. In the mixture were a thousand other patented concoctions, some of which had to be cooked up from scratch, tested and refined until fit for humans, and then further refined until the risk levels and side effects could be assured.

By the time Rojack stepped into his chamber, he was well aware that the chances of harm were indescribably lower than his predecessor pioneers. However, lower is not none. The freezing process is not just simple chemical or physical reaction. Nothing involving the human body is simple. It is a delicate dance of thermodynamics, chemistry, biology and computerization.

The computer systems in the med bay were probably some of the most expensive items on the entire ship and for good reason, every section of the body has to be regulated and finely brought to functionality in a specific order. Thaw the heart too early while the rest of the body is still vitrified and the organ tries to pump the augmented blood protein mixture around while it's still too viscous to move and bad things happen. Thaw the brain out too quickly before the heart and it starves of oxygen, causing massive damage or death.

All of this was known. So when Sepha stepped from her own chamber and was assaulted by warnings a error messages, she hoped for the best but expected the worst.

“Oh fuck...”

She got to the edge of the pod, while automated systems tried to help her out. She waved them away and unsteadily got to her feet.

She looked down the frigid pod chamber, her eyesight slowly focusing after years of stasis. The long hall was cyllindrical and the pods faced inwards like the seeds of some fruit. There were a full hundred passengers in sleep. Or at least there were. Rojack's container glowed a dull red.

“Oh, Rojack… you poor bastard. Maybe we can still do something for you…”

She hobbled over to the glowing pod, a data slab now appearing in her hand. They had been lucky. Whatever had caused the failure had been contained, or limited in nature. There were no hull breaches. There was no power outage. The reactor was still churning away. There were no other medical anomolies as far as the software was concerned.

Having reassured herself that they were not on the edge of some great disaster, she drew closer to the pod.

The outside of it looked no different, so physical trauma to the unit could probably be ruled out. They were supposed to be impact and crash resistant to a degree anyway. She investigated the glowing red screen on the unit and scrolled through leagues of messages, none of which were clear, but any of which could be the main cause of the fault. She knew enough about the system to diagnose, they all did, but not enough to fix.

She let out a rasping sigh and checked the small window in the pod, wiping away condensation that wasn't supposed to be there.

Bile rose in her mouth and the fought a sudden and horrible urge to throw up. The whole body was desiccated to the point of skeletization. The cooling had failed then, but the cleanliness and automated systems of the med bay had kept away any degradation. Instead it had been the air scrubbers. With nothing to keep fluid in the body it had been whicked away, bit by bit until nothing was left.

She extracted a small silver key from her pocket and leaned over the pod, searching for the hidden locked panel.

She had to crouch, knees screaming to fit it in properly.

“You deserved better.” She said, turning the system on.

Special diagnostics lit up, running the length of the damaged pod. She confirmed her position and password. Then automated systems double, triple and quadruply checked the status of the body in the pod. Then a robotic arm descended from the ceiling and confirmed those first sensor readings.

Finally the process was over and the pod sealed itself, pending further investigation and switched modes to preserve the body.

She straightened up, hands grasping the edge of the pod to righted herself.

She shook her head and then reacquainted herself with policy in the event of a crew death. The cause was still to be determined and it was her responsibility to figure it out. It was going to be a long month.