

Excerpt from FALLING STAR
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Excerpt scenario:

- The Starship Persei houses a family of space pirates.
- A honeypot trap led to an ambush over the planet Erylliad.
- The crew attempts to defend, but the situation looks dire.
- The single escape option, a measly pod, is designated for the safety of Atlas: the youngest of the family.

INT. STARSHIP PERSEI - INVENTORY ROOM

The inventory room is an industrial space filled with crates and other storage solutions. The ceiling above the loading bay bears little besides its necessary structure and utilitarian lighting fixtures. MAEVIS, Cassandra's sister and the crew's meticulous inventory manager, opens crates deftly. KURTIS, a family friend and ex-military medic, passes supplies to Cassandra and Colin.

KURTIS

These will neutralize pain, for better or
for worse. Colin, don't take more than half.
Cassie, may I?

Kurtis signals Maevis to open the next crate.

CASSANDRA

Same rules as practice, Colin.
Be careful, won't you?

COLIN

I know, Mom. I'm ready.

Cassandra nods to Kurtis, who tosses Colin an energy rifle.
Maevis turns to her nephew: the inevitable cadet.

MAEVIS

You're a strong kid.

Atlas dashes into the room.

ATLAS

Mom! The rat is here!

CASSANDRA

ATLAS! Why aren't you-
A rat? Who is here?

ATLAS

You told Colin about the rat before
the alarms went off! Then someone

exploded a tunnel in the wall!
Over there, I saw it!

Atlas signals aft before his mother hastily picks him up.

CASSANDRA

Thank you love, now volume down for a second!

CASSANDRA (into radio)

Code red, stern has been breached!

I repeat: Stern has been breached!

Lennart's alone on the engine.

Rest of us awaiting orders in storage. Over!

Kurtis grabs two large laser rifles, one in each hand. Everybody looks at him.

KURTIS (brash)

What? We sure can't lose the engine.

Lennart needs backup. Just remember

what I told you about the meds!

MAEVIS

Won't you wait a damn second? You already

want to split up before we even get orders?

ATLAS

Mom, when I'm seventeen,

can I have a gun too?

Kurtis chuckles.

CASSANDRA

These aren't toys, Atlas.

KURTIS

Yeah, they're tools.

MAEVIS

Can it, Kurtis. Those are weapons.

ATLAS

When can I have a weapon? Colin gets a weapon!

TASHA (over radio)

Captain's Orders: Maevis and Colin, hide out in storage and radio if any intruders pass the hall. Defend; do NOT pursue! Cassandra... take Atlas to the lab. Kurtis, please escort the kid and then rendezvous with Lennart at the engine. Over!

KURTIS

And, what did I say? You ready Cassie? Kid?

Cassandra puts her hand on Atlas' back. She sighs.

INT. STARSHIP PERSEI - NAVIGATION ROOM

Bastian, Timo, and Tasha work intensely, the flickering consoles sparkling through their beads of sweat. The ship jolts.

BASTIAN (frustrated)

We're being grappled!

TIMO

Wouldn't be her first time...

Give me that, I can shake them off!

Timo tries to grasp the steering controls from his son.

BASTIAN

Back off!

TASHA

Tumbling our crew isn't going to help!

We may have already been boarded by now!

BASTIAN (struggling)

If only I could steer towards those trees...

Another impact cripples the ship and its control.

BASTIAN

No use. Ship's on a course of fate.
Come on, we need to buy Cassie time.

INT. STARSHIP PERSEI - LAB

The lab is mostly Cassandra's workspace. A large table in the center of the room houses high-tech navigation equipment, botanical experiments, and scattered notes. Shelves carry books, tools, and trinkets. Kurtis escorts Atlas and Cassandra in.

KURTIS

You alright, Cassie? Feel sure about this?

CASSANDRA

We'll be fine. Will you help me move this?

KURTIS

Okay, but then I gotta run.

Cassandra and Kurtis push the table against the far wall; the items atop the table topple into a mess. Kurtis leaves hastily.

ATLAS

I want to go help Colin! Maybe I can't hold a gun, but I can use a radio!

CASSANDRA

You know how this works, love. Everyone has a different role: and different orders.

ATLAS

But I never even get any orders!

Cassandra reveals a console in the wall. Atlas' eyes widen.

CASSANDRA

Will you come help me with these switches?

Atlas approaches the wall.

ATLAS

Wow... what are they for?

Gunshots fire on the other end of the ship, echoing throughout. Bastian and Timo dash past the opposite end of the hall, followed by Tasha. Cassandra quickly picks up Atlas onto her hip.

CASSANDRA

We don't have time for questions...
Flip the green switch. That's an order!

Atlas flips the switch, causing the floor to spur into mechanical motion. The floor panels open, exposing a secret escape bay. It is clearly neglected: a dusty mess of junk. Cassandra carefully climbs a ladder down into the bay while holding Atlas.

ATLAS

I knew you were hiding something in your lab!

CASSANDRA (lighthearted)

Yeah, well, it was certainly hidden.

With her free arm, Cassandra uncovers the largest object in the bay, which stands almost to her shoulders. It is a local-system school pod: a self-navigating type of ship designed to transport children to school in their home systems. This one looks modified; decorated; loved.

ATLAS

It's... a ship?

Cassandra opens the small vessel and powers it on. Its unmissable lights instantly brighten the forsaken escape bay.

CASSANDRA

It's your ship now. I'll help you in!

Cassandra attempts to buckle Atlas into the child-sized ship as he fights against restraint.

ATLAS

I don't want to go!

An explosion rocks the Starship Persei. Cassandra manages to buckle Atlas while he is distracted.

ATLAS

Take me out! I want to stay with you!

Atlas cries. Cassandra wipes the tears from his face.

CASSANDRA

You're brave, Atlas. That's why I can trust you with this mission.

ATLAS (panicked)

I don't know how to fly a ship!

CASSANDRA

Catch your breath, love. We need to put your helmet on so you can go to your mission safely.

Cassandra wipes Atlas' tears again and kisses his forehead. Atlas sniffles.

ATLAS

Come with me, Mom! Please!

Cassandra equips Atlas' helmet over his head to his suit.

CASSANDRA

If we could afford a proper escape pod, this bay wouldn't be beneath a table... Your mission is important, Atlas. Will you be brave for me?

ATLAS (sniffly)

Okay... What's my mission?

Cassandra procures a large compass from her suit pocket and places it on Atlas' chest. He grasps the compass with one arm and stops his mother's hand with the other.

CASSANDRA

This is a special Starlight Compass.
It will help you find your way, even at night.
You'll use it to come find me, okay?

ATLAS

Don't leave...

CASSANDRA

I love you. So, so much. Do you
understand your mission?

Atlas looks down into the ornate compass, its face nearly covering both of his thighs. He looks back into his mother's eyes.

ATLAS (bravely)

I love you... I will find you.

Cassandra reclaims her hand from Atlas' grasp and closes the vessel with him inside. She initiates the escape bay protocol before leaving the bay herself. She stands above, their eyes remaining locked until the floor panels close.

EXT. ERYLLIAD FOREST - DAY

Atlas' makeshift escape pod crash-lands into the forest. He emerges with little damage, quick to chase the smokey trail of the Starship Persei as it drifts into the distant sky. Recklessly, he takes off his helmet to run faster, though he remains safe. He loses track of both the Starship Persei and the small vessel he crash-landed in. Exhausted and alone, he sits and gazes into the Starlight Compass: his tears dripping onto it.