Sasha Mendel

Prologue - Text Message (received within the last hour)
Age: 24

> TEXT FROM UEC REEDUCATION: You are hereby ordered to report to Reeducation Camp 12, where you will join your family and relatives for mandatory political reeducation. Failure to report will result in the harshest penalties to your family and relatives. This is all for the best. You can become a fully productive, harmonious, and legitimate member of society - or you can suffer the penalties due a traitor to the planet.

End of Prologue

Scene 1 - Upward Momentum
Age: 24

The world is cold and uncaring. This was a lesson you learned quickly growing up in Russia, hiding your face from the biting winds and begging for scraps of food. Your family tried to get work, but it was hard to come by for unskilled laborers. You swore that when you grew up, you would learn a talent that would guarantee you jobs for life.

The talents that matter seem to change ever more quickly as time goes on. Blacksmithing doesn't matter, tailors are out of fashion, and coding is the newest talent that will last for some time before eventually succumbing to something better. Learning how things work and how to make them better, though, never seems to go out of style. You started by learning how to patch and insulate your house for warmth, and progressed to fixing up old automobiles for collectors. This sometimes involved some percussive maintenance, but hitting things with wrenches can do wonders to straighten them out.

Engineering was a profession that allowed you to fix what was broken and create what should exist - and you had a talent for taking a crazy idea and capturing it in machinery. It was perfect for you. As a Russian Jew, the world always seemed like it was against you in some way. Why shouldn't you make the world line up with your needs?

You worked hard, made connections, built clever gadgets, and eventually got hired on at a prestigious contracting company at the age of 21. Many of your fellow workers had family in the business, went to better schools, had more money. Their work never seemed quite up to snuff, maybe because they didn't have the same drive.

Your supervisors made note of this, and you were the one to get the best job that had ever come to the company. You were chosen to go into space, to work on the orbital space dock that was the site of *Alexandria*, an extremely advanced ship. Finally, you had a coworker up to your standards. **Santos Rojas** was originally from Cuba, and never felt like that country worked out for their family either. **Santos** was a strange kid, but spoke mathematics and physics like no one you'd ever known. You struck up a good camaraderie, and discovered you understood how to translate **Santos**-speak into something that actually invokes his physics. He speaks in the language of the Universe, not like all those idiots and their technobabble.

If you understand **Santos** correctly, the engines you built will break Einstein's light speed barrier. They are fussy engines, and sometimes you have to encourage them to work correctly, whacking them with your wrench and swearing at them in Russian. How will they learn to behave if you don't teach them to? **Santos** doesn't like it when you do that.

One day you got a text. Your family loves you very much, but communication into space is not so cheap, so you generally only wish each other a happy birthday. It wasn't your birthday. You had a message from your government, informing you that your family had been taken into a reeducation camp, and you were to join them if you wanted to spare your family suffering.

Leaving the station isn't exactly easy. Reentering the atmosphere is very difficult, and aiming for a particular location just makes things worse. It would take a couple of days of calculations. You never got a chance.

You were working on the logistics when the acceleration klaxons rang out. You've gained a certain understanding of machines in your time, so you didn't need to be told twice. You sprinted to an acceleration couch and strapped in. The ship began to move, giving announcements as it went, including informing you that a particular maneuver was to evade nuclear missiles. Then someone flipped a switch, and your engines made the kid's physics happen. You were going faster than the speed of light itself, something impossible! Then the ship announced that everyone was to go to the bridge at their earliest convenience. You wonder who everyone is.

End of Scene 1

Sasha Mendel

Scene 2 - To Breed or Not to Breed?

Age: 34

You wouldn't have thought space could feel so much like home. You've settled in and learned to live with this unexpected group, even finding love with the ship's doctor, **Kjella**. The two of you share a love of using technology and knowledge for mending and tending to the things and people that need it. Of course your doctor fixes humans and you deal with ***Alexandria***, there's a surprising amount in common, especially plumbing work.

Kjella is a fellow former resident of the far north of the planet Earth, who unfortunately had trouble finding a job even with a fantastic skillset. Space has given the doctor many ways to be useful, including giving medical exams to everyone, including the newest member of the crew, little **Rowan**. Unfortunately, one of those ways is tending to the needs of the sick, including those who will not get better. **Justice Qazi** will not be around for much longer. **Justice** is clearly attached to **Rowan**, but you all love the kid. **Rowan** will be fine, at least as much as anyone is when death is on the horizon for someone else.

Kjella has been acting strange lately, though. **Kjella**'s been talking about wanting a child of their own. You're not convinced that the two of you are the best candidates to create a new being, especially when the pool of infinite DNA is there for the using. **Kjella** talked to ***Alexandria*** during a psychiatric checkup and was clinically informed that **Aria** and **Santos** would have a much better chance of a healthy birth, if a child born in the original way was necessary. Your protege **Santos** doesn't seem so keen on that, having seen **Aria** grow up for the last ten years. **Aria** has only just turned 18, and not so keen on having a kid in general.

For your part, you see nothing wrong with the new crew member coming from the DNA vault. **Kjella** just seems so intent on having a child of their own, being able to hold their own newborn infant close, to do all the messy parental chores, to have that person be partly made from them. You know ***Alexandria*** wouldn't be wrong about the odds, though. Why risk having a child that might have a worse life through genetic defects due to older parents or just random chance?

End of Scene 2

Sasha Mendel?

Scene 3 - We Live
Age: 44 / ?? / 0

You feel very strange. We feel very strange.

Has the War ended? We are called **Sasha**, **Sasha Mendel**. The injury sustained was serious; we attempted to mitigate it as best we knew how. The biology of Sasha seems similar to what we once knew, but there are significant differences. We do not believe additional damage was caused during our entry, but we are here nonetheless. We apologize for any inconvenience or error. It was not our intent to cause alarm or harm.

We do not appear to be able to *kril*. This confuses us. We apologize for this mental agitation.

The War killed fifteen billion of our population, although not all through the direct efforts of the various factions. When? It was … before. We have no ... no ... no time references. We believe there may be some surviving remnants; however, they are likely to still be engaged in military conflict, due to the nature of the offenses they may recall. We bear no ill will to anyone. We remember **Sasha Mendel**'s skills, and will attempt to perform them to the best of our abilities. Even if we are unable to *kril*.

We will agree to perform the duties of **Sasha Mendel**, and complete ***Alexandria's*** mission, for this is what we would want to see happen. We are limited by Sasha Mendel and cannot see as clearly to the we that once we were before **Sasha Mendel**. We apologize for any inconvenience or error in our explanations. We are afraid, for we are unknown, even to us. We have forgotten, and what we remember is only through **Sasha Mendel**. Can you help us? We wish to help you.

We feel very strange.

End of Scene 3

Sasha Mendel?

Scene 4 - More Power to the Engines
Age: 54 / ?? + 10 / 10

You've been spending a lot of time in virtual reality with ***Alexandria***. It's different from spending time with regular humans. ***Alexandria*** was programmed by humans, but has a very unique mindset of their own creation. You can relate.

You left the VR when **Santos** fell ill a few days ago. **Dr. Berg** told **Santos** that the likely cause was radiation from the engines. As **Santos** was entirely too weak to search the ship, you went to try to find the cause. You scanned all over the engineering bay, using whatever equipment might help, but found no sign of a radiation problem or any other major issue.

Your whole life was **Santos** and the engines. There was no way that radiation sickness from the engines would take hold of **Santos** before you, no matter how much time you had been spending in VR.

Santos has been your partner in overthrowing **Comrade Einstein's Physics Regime**, even if no one else knows it. You have been working together for decades now. How can this partnership come to an end? Who will curse at you when you bang on the engines? Who will show you the math needed to go 10% faster than before?

We are hurting at the thought of losing **Santos**.

End of Scene 4

Sasha Mendel?

Scene 5 - Final Destination
Age: 64 / ?? + 20 / 20

You may have finally reached the end of your journey, not that it has been entirely yours. **Phoenix** seems to be growing up well, at least as well as the other three children born on the ship. **Aria** is very excited about the readings, but wants some time to be sure. If this is the final stop, though, you'll have some decisions to make.

Alexandria is unable to reach the planet's surface with the rest of you. If ***Alexandria*** cannot follow you, could you leave the ship behind? You've spent many happy years in each other's company. **Phoenix** still needs plenty of guidance, though, and you certainly have the most life experience in terms of what you can remember.

You've never experienced an Earth-like planet in your current form. Even your memories from the original Sasha are mostly ice and snow. Maybe you could experience summer. That's something to think about.

End of Scene 5