

### Deleted Scene:

Technically was never in the book, but I like it. My favorite part is Harden thinks that his fleet shares (which are extremely valuable) would make people want to be with him. Notice he tries to give them away twice. I admit the scene is not completely edited to perfection. It was in my author notes after all. Enjoy! It really doesn't add anything to the narrative. All of this is important for my author notes on Harden, it's not really important to the plot.

Harden knocked on Phoebe's billet. He didn't want to, but Helen kept pestering him until he got the nerve to actually do it. He might be captain, but he wasn't dumb enough to think he was actually in charge. As long as he did the paperwork, Helen kept everything else running smoothly.

Yet this morning his sister had a direct command. He tried to pleading, explaining and finally ordering her out of his way, she just laughed off his irritation. Helen reminded him that minimally they had to discuss the separation of their assets. He finished Phoebe's transfer paperwork to the *Polaris* though it hurt him to do so. He had been putting it off, especially since the possibility of warping space-time was much more interesting.

His wife said, "come in" and he did.

Looking over her head, he could see her billet was unpainted and unadorned. Or maybe she wanted the walls gray. He realized he didn't even know her favorite color. Maybe it is gray. *Brian knows Helen's favorite color is green. How does a husband not know his wife's favorite color?* He thought and realized he never asked her.

“Do you need something?” she asked looking down at her tablet. It wasn't a question. It wasn't even a loving statement of a wife to a husband; it was professional statement from a doctor to her patient. Perhaps that was for the best, after all he was here as the *Revelation's* captain.

“I know I wasn't a very good husband.” He tried to touch her shoulder; she slipped herself out of his reach. “But you knew how I was, when you married me.”

She did not answer him.

“But I will try to be a good captain, so what can I do to make this transition easier? I finished the paperwork you requested and sent it to the Polaris.”

Phoebe said, “Put me in stasis until I can leave. Mark can wake me up if there is a problem, but I doubt it will come to that. He's a good doctor.”

A lump caught in Harden's throat. “I-I would have you available for emergencies and Hel mention me Becky and Pat still go to you for advice.”

“Then why are you here, Harden?”

He looked down at her face. She was so beautiful. He wondered how his marriage had failed... he hadn't changed.

Had she? He couldn't remember the last time they had made love, though he did remember that she asked and he declined. He remembered declining a lot. He remembered her asking, “*Don't you still find me attractive.*” He said yes, hadn't he? Hadn't he explained how beautiful she was, but the numbers fascinated him.

Phoebe said, “If you need forgiveness, you have it. I don't blame you for my mistakes. Other than getting on with my life, I don't need anything from you. The job on the Polaris sounds like it will help a lot of people in the Flotilla

and I'll still have a lab for medical research. Mark can step into my place—and it will be good for him to do so.”

“You can have my fleet shares! You can have everything. Take it all.”

The sound that erupted from her throat was not a true laugh, more an insane cackle. “You think I want money? I did not marry you for money, and I certainly won't divorce you for it. Just my share from our joint account, my personal things have already been removed from your quarters. Is there something you want from what I took?”

“Don't you know you are the best thing that ever happened to me? You are the best part of me!”

Tears began dripping down her beautiful cheeks.

*If not my fleet shares, then maybe a baby. Phoebe wants a baby.* “We can adopt a baby like you wanted ...today if you want.”

Phoebe seemed to soften for just a moment and then her eyes grew cold and hard. “That's easy to say since we are in deep space,” she paused and chose her words carefully, “but I certainly won't allow my child to grow up with a father than does not love her!”

“I'll give you anything you want.”

“You can't give me what I want.”

He gently touched her shoulders and pulled her into his chest, but she didn't return the embrace. He whispered, “Just tell me.”

She took a step back. “I want a husband who loves me more than his ship and puzzles.” Her voice was deadly calm, but there was no malice. He remembered when his mother's voice became like that with his father. “You say I

am the best thing that happened to you, but you forget me too often. I need someone who will put me first.”

“I can change! If you stay, I will love you like you want.”

“I have heard that static before.” Her voice was still calm, but hard. “How long from when I moved out of our old quarters did it take for you to notice I no longer lived there? Be honest now.”

Honestly Harden couldn't say, because he wasn't sure how much time had passed at all.

A few more words were spoken, but now Harden had to face it really was over. In a daze, he went down to the shuttle bay and sat in *Chi*. Harden did not blame Phoebe for leaving. Everything she said was true. He had been a terrible husband, but then if she was a good wife, why didn't she understand the numbers?

He heard the shuttle airlock open and close. With the slight hope it was Phoebe, he looked up. It was Mark who entered the shuttle. “What the fuck do you want?”

“I am formally giving you, mine and Pat's resignation,” Mark said.

“What? You can't leave,” he said. “Why would you leave? Why does Pat want to go?”

“I'm the one who wants to go. Pat and I decided we want to stay together.”

“So you two are going to make the same fucking mistake I did? You're too young to be married.”

“We aren't kids anymore,” Mark said.

“Then why do you still fuck around so much?”

“We haven't really fucked around for two years,” Mark said.

*Two years?* It didn't seem like that. It seemed like just yesterday that these two “borrowed” a shuttle and took two other boys out to a nebula. He began trying to think. Pheobe didn't understand and she was leaving. Mark was leaving. He began muttering to himself trying to dislodge the equations that were nudging his brain. “Two years? It couldn't have been two years.”

Mark was in his face again. “Listen to me, I am leaving because I want to help people, you fucking idiot, not nurse you because you smoke too much and live on coffee. Now that you are not going planet side, you've stopped exercising. You've lost 15% muscle mass. You look like shit.

“Phoebe is an excellent doctor and from what I saw she seemed like a good wife, yet you refuse to listen to her in either capacity...”

Harden interrupted him. “Did you just say capacity?” That wasn't his little brother talking, but a grown man. Looking up at Mark, he did seem bigger. More filled out in the shoulders than he had been. Maybe his brain had finished developing? “Did time dilation occur on my own ship?”

“Harden, shut the fuck up and listen. There is no reason for me to stay here.”

“But you're my brother...”

“I'm also a medical doctor; Pat is a qualified pilot and we're both biologists and there are better fucking jobs than this one. You still think of us as kids and we aren't.”

“Okay, you're not kids. I don't want you to go. Helen doesn't want you to go either.”

"We've discussed it with Helen...she understands."

"Why didn't anyone tell me?"

"Hel, Pat, and I been trying for a solid month, you haven't been listening. Plus she's really busy trying to do the job of both the XO as well as the Captain while you do whatever the fuck you do..."

"Please don't go," Harden said. "I don't want anyone to go, but I fucked that up so badly Phoebe won't even listen anymore. She sounds like Mom did when it was over with Dad." He met his little brother's eyes. "I didn't know I fucked it up...I never wanted it to be like that. I tried to give her my shares she wouldn't take them. I told her I'd adopt a baby like she wanted, but she's leaving and I can't stop her. If you would have heard her voice...it was just like Mom's after she gave up arguing with Dad. Like she witnessed a death."

Mark nodded. "I don't remember that. I don't even remember Mom really. Only an old face on the COM."

"If you go, we won't know each other anymore. One of us will be an old face on the COM," Harden trailed off, "What do I have to do to make you stay? Do you want my fleet shares? That's all I have, you can have them."

Mark sighed. "I don't want your fleet shares, you idiot. I want you to start eating meals with the crew, exercise every day. Dad's already agreed to quit smoking and so will you."

Harden agreed to it and Mark finished, "And you will take at least an hour of each day to talk to the crew. Maybe at dinner since you will now be there."

"The whole crew?" Harden's stomach dropped and began pulling at his fingers. "All at once? What will we talk about?"

Mark sat down beside him and slid an arm around his shoulder. It felt odd, the last time they shared any affection his little brother was seven, maybe eight years old. Still a wave of relief rolled through his chest and a lump grew in his throat.

“Seriously, why are you freaking out? This has probably been the most amicable divorce in human history.”

“What if I fuck it up worse?” He pressed his palm in his eye to brush away tears before they came.

“That would pretty much be impossible,” Mark said, “Listen, Phoebe will be gone soon, then there are only six of us and three of us are your own relatives. Hel and I will help you, but it can’t be like it has been.”

“It won’t be, but are you sure time dilation hasn’t occurred on the ship? Phoebe leaves in two weeks and you have grown-up, but I’m the same.”

“No, you’re thirty-nine, I’m twenty-three. We have never been on separate timelines.”

“What’s the date?”

“December 3<sup>rd</sup>”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive.”

“Where did the time go?”

“For you, it was just lost. Let’s accept that fact and move on.”

Written by Elizabeth Guizzetti Copyright 2013. First Publication.