SLEPT THE WHOLE WAY

by Marshall Ryan Maresca

CAST
SMITH
JONES
MILLER
BAKER

(Four people, (SMITH, JONES, MILLER and BAKER) are all lying on four pallets, with a blue light over each one. They are more than asleep, they are completely still, in stasis. They are all dressed in identical t-shirts and underwear.)

(There is a trunk to one side. There are control panels on the walls. There is one exit, with one of the panels right by it. First aid kit (futuristic) is on another wall, closest to MILLER.)

(Sound is heard throughout-- a low mechanical hum, occasional metallic clinks, creaks and taps.)

(The blue lights flicker. Everyone twitches. A sound-- might be an animalistic howl, might be a siren, might be an explosion, might be something else. A few beeping alarm noises. Blue light over MILLER goes out. MILLER twitches and convulses. Falls off pallet. Eyes open. Deep, gasping breath.)

MILLER

He- he-

(MILLER can't speak, only choking and retching. Panicked, MILLER scrambles over to the first aid kit. Barely in control of hands, MILLER gets it open, pulls out a patch and slaps it on leg. Starts to breathe easier. Looks around, confused.)

MILLER

What is-- hello? Why--

(MILLER stands up.)

MILLER


(No reaction.)
MILLER

(MILLER goes over to one of the control panels, taps on it. Frustrated. The sound happens again (might be an animalistic howl, might be a siren, might be an explosion, might be something else). MILLER perks up, concerned.)

MILLER
Not good.

(MILLER goes to a different control panel, taps a few controls. The blue lights over the other three fade, and white lights come up. The other three slowly start to move. MILLER goes over to the trunk and opens it up. Pulls out one jumpsuit, puts it on.)

SMITH
Head-- can't-- cold--

MILLER
Smith... Shh. Easy.

SMITH
What are-- Miller-- what?

MILLER
Something's wrong.

(SMITH, BAKER and JONES all start to wake, none of them having the same bad reaction that MILLER had.)

BAKER
What's wrong?

(Sitting up on pallet.)

MILLER
Don't know. My suspension unit failed, woke me up.

JONES
You get scared being alone or something?

MILLER
(Tossing jumpsuits to them.) Your units were on the verge of failure. I was lucky to survive.
BAKER
Thanks.

JONES
How could all our units be on the verge of failure?

MILLER
Not sure.

SMITH
(Dressed and standing.)
The odds of four units failing are astronomical. Has command contacted us?

MILLER
Not yet. But I've only been up for a couple minutes.

BAKER
That isn't right.

MILLER
Nothing about this seems right. I heard something before. It was like a howling sound. Maybe someone screaming.

JONES
(Dressed and at the panel by the door.)
The door won't open.

BAKER
(Dressed and by a different panel.)
Stasis Room 75 to Command. Respond, please.

SMITH
Nothing?

JONES
And we're trapped in here.

MILLER
Are the comms working?

BAKER
As far as I can tell.

MILLER
Then try everyone.

BAKER
Everyone?
SMITH
There are 300 people on this ship. Try each one.

BAKER
(Sighing, annoyed.)

(BAKER continues to call names quietly.)

SMITH
What else can we do?

JONES
We need to get the door open.

(The sound happens again (might be an animalistic howl, might be a siren, might be an explosion, might be something else). Everyone perks up and notices it.)

MILLER
There, did you hear it?

JONES
That sounded like the warning siren.

SMITH
Wasn't the warning siren.

MILLER
Not a siren, that was something living.

SMITH
I don't think so.

JONES
OK, I've tried all the overrides, nothing is budging the door. Maybe if I depolarize the seal, I can pry it open by hand.

MILLER
Enough about the fucking door, Jones.

JONES
We need to get out of here, find out what's going on.

MILLER
I don't think we want to open that door until we find out what's going on.
SMITH
We have to presume no one is up in command.

JONES
Do we?

MILLER
It makes sense. If anyone was up there, they would have seen our units in distress.

BAKER
(Breaking from the list of names.)
Still nothing on this end.

MILLER
Keep it up. Someone else might be in the same situation we're in.

SMITH
I've got an idea. We can try to transfer command functions to here.

JONES
Can that work?

MILLER
Any set of panels can control command functions, if they've been authorized.

JONES
But we don't have authorization.

SMITH
Right, but...

(The sound happens again (might be an animalistic howl, might be a siren, might be an explosion, might be something else). It's a bit louder this time.)

JONES
That noise is not normal.

Not natural.

SMITH
Not human.

MILLER
Not human.

BAKER
There is the Emergency Transfer Protocol.
MILLER

The what?

SMITH

Right! It's a "use in catastrophe" code. Lets anyone on the ship take control of the ship if they are the...

MILLER

Only ones alive.

(Beat)

Or only ones awake.

SMITH

Right. What's the code?

MILLER

It was in the handbook.

BAKER

I know I read it.

JONES

Come on!

MILLER

You don't remember either?

JONES

Just that it was something stupid.

BAKER

Stupid?

JONES

Yeah, like...

MILLER

I know, I know what you mean, it...

(Everyone is trying to remember)

SMITH

Come on! Three hundred people might be counting on us here!

MILLER

I know, I know, it's... It's a whole phrase, you'd never say it by accident.
JONES
Right, and it's a dumb thing to say. Like, a kid's thing.

( Everyone suddenly gets it. )

EVERYONE
Red rover, red rover, let the Captain come over.

( Lights change and brighten. )

MILLER
That's it! Command functions are coming on line.

JONES
I knew it was stupid.

SMITH
I'm getting navigation and sensor readings. It looks like... This doesn't make any sense.

MILLER
Power is at minimal reserves. Life support at minimum. System failures on all levels.

JONES
How could power be at minimal? Fusion reactor should run for centuries.

SMITH
We're nowhere near where we're supposed to be. Engines dark. We're flying ballistic.

BAKER
Oh my god.

MILLER
What is it?

BAKER
I just looked at the chronometer. Like, actually, really looked at it. It's... We've been in stasis for over three thousand years.

MILLER
That's impossible.

JONES
You can't be in stasis that long.
BAKER
Can't you?

SMITH
Well, I... I would think that... I suppose as long as the stasis field has power. I mean, who's ever tested how long you can stay in?

MILLER
But, three thousand years? In that time the...
(Realizing)
Fusion reactors would run out of fuel. Engines would go dark.

JONES
Life support would drop to minimum. Power would run down to reserves.

SMITH
Something must have happened to the skeleton crew.

BAKER
Sudden hull breach in the command center could do it.

JONES
With no one at the helm, we'd have gone off-course and just... kept going.

MILLER
Three thousand years.

(The sound happens again (might be an animalistic howl, might be a siren, might be an explosion, might be something else). It is much louder this time.)

BAKER
I know what that sound is. Power is almost out. Everything's failing. Life support. Stasis units. Magnetic seals on the doors.

(Lights dim. Control panels all go dark. Most other sounds go quiet.)

MILLER
Hull breach.

(beat)

SMITH
We'll keep going. Nothing will stop us. Fly through empty space until the end of time.
JONES
An eternal tomb for three hundred lost souls.

MILLER
Won't be long now.

(MILLER takes off the jumpsuit, lays back down on the pallet.)

JONES
What the hell are you doing?

MILLER
Nothing else to do.

SMITH
Right.

(Does the same as Miller.)

JONES
There must be... Something.

BAKER
(Tries typing on panel.)

JONES
Something.

(Blackout.)

(The sound happens again. Very loud this time.)

END OF PLAY