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. The 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
System? Report.

(No reaction.)

MILLER

System? Report.

(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

(Sitting up on pallet.)

What's wrong?

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.)
Fine. Abella, respond. Addison, respond. Allman, respond.

                    (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.

SMITH
Not natural.

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.

<div align="center">BAKER</div>

Can't you?

<div align="center">SMITH</div>

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?

<div align="center">MILLER</div>

But, three thousand years? In that time the...
> (Realizing)

Fusion reactors would run out of fuel. Engines would go dark.

<div align="center">JONES</div>

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

<div align="center">SMITH</div>

Something must have happened to the skeleton crew.

<div align="center">BAKER</div>

Sudden hull breach in the command center could do it.

<div align="center">JONES</div>

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

<div align="center">MILLER</div>

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.)

<div align="center">BAKER</div>

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.)

<div align="center">MILLER</div>

Hull breach.

> (beat)

<div align="center">SMITH</div>

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.)
Dixon, respond.   Doherty, respond.   Donaldson, respond. Anyone. Anyone.

JONES

Something.

(Blackout.)

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

END OF PLAY