

VI: A podcast by the Intergalactic Improv Initiative.

KAYA: *Ride of the Valkyrie*, Minisode One: *Carver's Terrible, Horrible Day*. Featuring the voices of Hunter LaPaglia and creator Kaya Renwick.

It is possible to commit no mistakes and still lose... *I Should Roll*.

VI: March 14, 2184, Terran Universal Coordinated Calendar. SSV *Midway*.

KAYA: Corporal Carver Fairbank. You have just been alerted by the *Midway's* VI that the *Midway* has docked at the Citadel, and your CO, Sgt. Elaine Merrill, has told you to meet her at the airlock. You arrive at the airlock and you find your CO, Sgt. Elaine Merrill. She's...she's one of those people who constantly looks like she's sucking on a lemon.

HUNTER: Mm.

KAYA: She's just not a very *pleasant* person.

HUNTER: Okay.

KAYA: She's very, like—she is incredibly efficient and an excellent soldier, does her job to a T...and so I imagine, I imagine Carver would have a fair amount of respect for her for that, but she is *not* a people person.

HUNTER: Gotcha.

KAYA: She maintains order quite strictly; very *drill sergeant* sort of sergeant. You're not sure why, but you've always kind of gotten the feeling that she doesn't like you in particular. Like, she doesn't like *anybody*, but she *definitely* seems like she doesn't like you.

HUNTER: Got it.

KAYA: And so she is in her ironed-creases uniform—it came off the hanger like that and it stays creased no matter what she's doing; how, God only knows. Massive amounts of starch, maybe—and with her cap, and looking very, very sternly at you as you, you come and I, I assume you come to attention because you are nothing if not a good soldier.

HUNTER: Yes.

KAYA: She says,

MERRILL: At ease, Corporal. After that...*clusterfuck*, to put it lightly, of a mission, I have been told that you are to report to the brass. I don't know what's going to come

out of this, corporal, but I can tell you one thing: you sure as hell aren't going to like it.

CARVER: Alright. I figured as much. Did they say where I need to meet them?

KAYA: She pulls up her omnitool and taps it. Your omnitool bleeps.

MERRILL: The coordinates are there. I'll expect a report no later than an hour after your appointment time, whether you'll be returning to the ship or not.

CARVER: [overlapping] Yes, Sergeant.

MERRILL: Dismissed.

KAYA: And then she leaves. She has no time for chitchat. She's gone.

HUNTER: That's terrifying. Okay, alright, cool. I guess I head to this meeting. That's terrifying.

KAYA: You are already at the air—do you go in and, like, get anything to take with you or?

HUNTER: No, I...last thing I need is to be late or something to happen. I just go straight there. Then I'll just wait in the lobby. If need be.

KAYA: Okay, okay. So you, you stepped through the airlock, the decontamination rays wash over you, and the VI says that you are officially leaving the SSV *Midway*, and you step out onto this docking platform on one of the Ward arms.

VI: The Citadel, Widow System, Serpent Nebula. The Presidium, Alliance Docks. Docking Bay D24.

KAYA: Welcome to the Citadel. This is your first view of the Citadel. So Alliance HQ on the Citadel...it's a section of the docks that has been designated for Systems Alliance use. It's not exactly Alliance HQ. But yes, you see—you step off much like ME1 [Mass Effect 1], at the *Normandy*, you step off and you see the stretch of the station: all of the air traffic, the ships that are lined up, the docks are bustling. There's people everywhere. No one's paying you any attention. You're just another service member stepping off the ship. Nobody's bothered.

Welcome to the Citadel.

HUNTER: That's great. Guy can't even enjoy his, his first—[laughs] his first trip.

KAYA: Nope.

HUNTER: So do I just go straight in?

KAYA: Yeah. So you'll probably end up in one of the, you know, just like a C-Sec customs waiting area. And then there would be instructions in your—in your omnitool of where you're going to go.

HUNTER: Sure.

KAYA: And I mean if you're, if you're horribly lost, you could always ask Avina how to get places, because she pops up everywhere. But you could also ask, you know, I'm sure you could ask one of the C-Sec agents, "Hey, I need to get to this spot. This is my first time here, can you point me in the right direction." Whatever you want to do.

HUNTER: Okay. Yeah, I'll just. I'll just do that. I'll just go up to one of those C-Sec agents and just ask them for some directions and just kind of explain to them that I'm trying to get to Alliance HQ.

KAYA: Sure. The turian at the desk is—I'm sure he fields this question about a dozen times a day, and answers in a very bored tone and shows you that, like, motions to the nearest rapid transit station. "And so yeah, just select, select what Ward you want, and you want Alliance HQ. That's on the...yeah, that's there. Tha—yeah. Here you go, kid. Have a—have a good day." [giggles]

CARVER: Thank you.

KAYA: Okay. And yeah, so you find, you find your rapid transit station and it's probably about a twenty-minute skycar ride to the office buildings in which Alliance HQ sits in 2184. You can, it's, it's got the, the Alliance banners on the walls and as you walk in there are—

HUNTER: [overlapping] For sure.

KAYA: —Officers in dress uniform. We're basically we're, we're, we're doing our best to be like, "We're the Alliance. We know what we're doing. We definitely haven't only been here for thirty years and are kind of a little bit shitting ourselves. [giggles] We belong. Yay!"

HUNTER: [overlapping] Sounds about right.

KAYA: And this *is* on the Presidium. This is—we managed to get, you know, a little bit of office space. Probably Udina just bothered someone long enough to, to get somebody to sign over a few floors somewhere. So yeah, you get there and it's, it is, it's a busy, busy place. Lots of—all human, obviously, and people just rockin' around everywhere.

HUNTER: So I guess I'll go up to the nearest person I can find at like, a desk and just let them know that I was told to report. I was wondering where I needed to go.

KAYA: Okay. You find the nearest receptionist, a young man with close cropped hair, kind of like a blonde brown. An ensign, looks like, based on his insignia. You show him the appointment brief, and he nods and directs you down a corridor, gives you, gives you a waypoint, essentially, gives you a waypoint. Would you like to do any sort of Insight check on how he reacts to this?

HUNTER: Boy, would I. Let me get my dice back out. You said an Insight check.

KAYA: Yeah.

HUNTER: Okay, let's go. Plus zero, that's wonderful. All right, let's see how this works. Eleven.

KAYA: You get the feeling, like, so...the—your appointment brief doesn't include *who* you'll be speaking with, but it does say what, like, the designation of the room, like the room number, and you notice when he reads over it, he pauses. Like he knows what room that is.

HUNTER: Oh, no.

KAYA: But he doesn't, like, outwardly react. There's just sort of this, "Oh." And then he tells you it tells you where, where, where, and how to go.

HUNTER: Great. All right. Well, then I will just continue on my [giggles] merry little way to the...yeah.

KAYA: That's the firing squad room. [chuckles]

KAYA: Surprise! The Alliance has brought back extrajudicial killings. Brought back? *Ohh!*

HUNTER: Oh, just for me. I'm so—I'm so special.

KAYA: Yeah. [chuckling] As you continue, well, give me, give me a Perception check.

HUNTER: Oh, perfect.

KAYA: We'll see how nervous Carver is and how much he's paying attention.

HUNTER: Let's see. Oh, I got a plus five for this one. Let's go. Twelve plus five, seventeen.

KAYA: Okay. Yeah, you definitely notice as you're walking that the average rank of the people in the corridors is getting higher.

HUNTER: Oh no.

KAYA: And *higher*.

HUNTER: Suddenly feeling like I should have put on my dress blues instead. [chuckling]

KAYA: You kind of get the feeling like Sergeant Merrill probably knew who you were going to see and didn't tell you.

HUNTER: Just neglected—

KAYA: Yeah.

HUNTER: [overlapping] Sounds about right.

KAYA: Yeah, just, just left that bit out. Yeah, it just, it wouldn't surp—you have no proof, but it would not surprise you. You also notice that, you know, there are—there are signs on the walls showing you like, what, what wing you're in, and so on and so forth. You are now in the Command wing.

HUNTER: Fuck.

KAYA: And you eventually come to the designated door, where the placard beside it and your omnitool when you, when you wave your—wave it over the door panel says that this is the office of Captain David Anderson, Head of the Systems Alliance Special Operations Fleet.

HUNTER: Lovely.

KAYA: [chuckling]

HUNTER: Am I like super early or am I like about on time for when I'm supposed to be there?

KAYA: I'd said you're pretty close to on time, like close enough to on time that it does strike you, like you—it would have been difficult to get here faster. And again with the—it kind of feels like Sergeant Merrill was setting you up to fail.

HUNTER: Love that. So cool. So it's not super early, so I'll just go ahead and knock on the door and then wait to see if I'm allowed to enter in.

KAYA: Okay. So the door panel is orange, right, not immediately openable. As you knock it takes a couple of seconds, but then it flashes green, and the door slides open onto an office similar in style to, like, Ambassador Udina's, who's—we're all—we're on the Presidium, they're all kind of the same deal, with that sort of open window overlooking the, the lake, and so on, so forth.

It's smaller, maybe like half the size of the Embassy offices. And you notice as you step in that it's pretty sparsely furnished, which—given what you know about David Anderson, which is that mostly, he's like, out on ships doing his job. He

probably doesn't spend a whole lot of time in this office. This is kind of just like if he needs to meet with somebody, that it might be here if they happen to be in the same place if they're not going to, like, meet on a ship or whatever.

So this is definitely not a *homey* office. It's got a desk. It's got a couple of chairs. It has a shelf that is basically empty. It has a nice view. It has a workstation at the desk, but it's just an office. It's nothing special.

The man, the myth, the legend is currently standing at the railing overlooking the lake, and he has his back to you at the moment.

HUNTER: I'll just walk up behind them and then just stand at attention.

CARVER: You summoned me, Captain?

KAYA: He takes a second, but then turns and meets your eyes. Nods.

ANDERSON: At ease, Corporal.

HUNTER: I'm still—I definitely, like, I'm not at attention, but I'm still very rigidly standing there because I'm—

KAYA: [giggles]

HUNTER: I'm terrified, but also, like, “Oh my God, my hero!” So like, there's a lot of mix of emotions right now.

KAYA: Yes, it's a very *uneasy* at ease. We'll put it that way. [chuckles]

HUNTER: For sure.

KAYA: He's a pretty perceptive guy. He probably notices.

HUNTER: Ah, fuck.

KAYA: Well, I mean, he notices that you don't, like, you're...you don't relax.

HUNTER: Gotcha.

KAYA: Well, give me—give me an Insight check.

HUNTER: [chuckles] Ohh, okay.

KAYA: With your, you know, plus zero.

HUNTER: Yeah, plus zero. Sixteen, okay.

KAYA: Yeah. Alright, with a sixteen, you can read him pretty easily. I mean, you're, you're pretty close and he's not trying to be particularly neutral or whatever. He doesn't look happy. He doesn't look *mad*? But like, he's definitely not happy. This is not a nice day for David Anderson any more than it's a nice day for Carver Fairbank.

HUNTER: Okay.

KAYA: You get the sense that he doesn't want to say what he's about to say. And just he, he watches you for a second, he looks back out the window, doesn't turn, but he just, he looks back out the window, he says:

ANDERSON: This is your first time on the Citadel, isn't it, son?

CARVER: That—that is correct, sir, yes.

ANDERSON: Wish it were under better circumstances.

CARVER: As do I, Captain.

KAYA: He glances at the console on his desk, and then turns back to you.

ANDERSON: Now, I've read your after-action report, Corporal, and I've read that of your sergeant and that of your captain. But I'd like to hear what happened from you directly.

CARVER: In truth, I did what I thought was right. I was faced with an impossible decision, and...I chose to save the life of my comrade.

ANDERSON: At the risk of several deep cover operatives and long-standing operations in that area of the Traverse.

CARVER: Yes.

ANDERSON: I see. May I ask why?

CARVER: I couldn't just stand by. Captain, may I speak plainly?

ANDERSON: Granted.

CARVER: We were *fucked*. I couldn't just *let*—I couldn't let them be captured the way they were going to. I saw what was happening to *so many innocents*. I couldn't let that happen again...I wouldn't...I could not let it happen again.

ANDERSON: I understand, son. I've seen some of the worst horrors this galaxy has to offer. And in your shoes, I might have done the same thing. But I need to know, Corporal Fairbank, that you understand how far this may set our operations back.

CARVER: I do. If need be I will prep a letter of resignation immediately.

KAYA: He gives this due consideration.

HUNTER: *Fuck*. [chuckles] I was hoping he'd be all like, "That won't be necessary, son, no.'

KAYA: [overlapping chuckles]

HUNTER: [overlapping chuckles] I was more kind of bluffing that.

KAYA: Which he—he probably also realizes, because I'm sure this is not the first time he's had to have a conversation like this in his life.

HUNTER: Yeah.

KAYA: But no, he lets this sit for a second. And he's watching you. And then he goes back to looking out over the Presidium. And then he says.

ANDERSON: Corporal, I've been watching your career for some time now. You may or may not know that I was one of the Alliance's first N7 graduates. And, up until recently, I held the record for the fastest rise to N7, eclipsed by the sadly departed Commander Shepard.

CARVER: Yes, sir.

ANDERSON: You weren't far off, son...and that impressed me. I had my eye on you.

Now, I like to believe that everyone who enlists in the Alliance has its best interests at heart. I know that everyone...well, almost everyone...who goes through the Interplanetary Combatives Training has the best interests of not only the Alliance, but humanity, at heart. Still, it takes a soldier of a certain caliber to go that far that fast. And so I ask you, Corporal: what drives you?

CARVER: I wish it were that simple a question to answer. I could lie and say it's just that I want what any human wants. I—I—I want to elevate our status among the rest of the species on the Citadel. I want to further humanity's goals. But I'm afraid it's much more selfish.

KAYA: He arches an eyebrow and gestures for you to continue.

CARVER: When I was young, I lost both of my parents. They were both Alliance military and officially they were declared MIA. Something *happened* to them. And that is what drives me to continue up the ranks the way I have.

Every detail I have tried to find about that mission is just *marked* with red tape

and black ink, and there's no way to access it. The only way I can access it to find out the truth of what happened to them is to continue to rise the ranks.

ANDERSON: I see. Then let me ask you this, son. How did your decision on this mission factor into that goal?

CARVER: In all honesty...didn't. The only thing in my mind during this mission was what I thought was right and who I had to save. I couldn't let someone else go through what I went through. I couldn't let someone else go, not knowing what happened to someone who's dear to them.

ANDERSON: I understand. Thank you, son.

CARVER: Of course, sir.

ANDERSON: Unfortunately, my hands are somewhat tied. You will receive the rank of N7. There is a new hardsuit waiting for you with Requisitions: you can pick it up on your way out. However, the outcome of the events in your last mission are such that we are grounding you until a disciplinary review and a full review of the mission may be completed, including a full intelligence review.

I cannot stress to you enough, Corporal Fairbank, how far-reaching the consequences of this action may be. While I honor and respect—and again, may have even done the same in your shoes—I respect your decision and I respect your motivations, the fact remains that every one of your squadmates knew what they were signing up for; and sometimes when you go into a mission, you lose good people.

There are barracks here on the Citadel where you are welcome to stay, unless you have other accommodations. I know that you are from a small colony world, and I imagine that transport back there is...irregular, to say the least. If you opt to stay in the Alliance barracks, you will receive a small stipend to cover your basic expenses, but otherwise...consider yourself benched, son. I'm sorry, but it's the best I could do.

CARVER: Thank you, sir. I understand.

ANDERSON: Very good.

KAYA: He sorta—he half smiles as the light is glittering off the Presidium lake, and it catches his eye and he half smiles and he says,

ANDERSON: Welcome to the Citadel, Corporal. Enjoy your stay.

Dismissed.

VI: You have been listening to *I Should Roll: Ride of the Valkyrie*, Minisode One: *Carver's Terrible, Horrible Day*.

Featuring the voices of Hunter LaPaglia as Carver Fairbank and Kaya Renwick as everyone and everything else.

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