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WAKE THE OTHERS

Lead Focused / Sci-Fi / 3-4 min
Cast 2 Male x1 Any x1

Eli wakes alone on a deep-space transport, thirty-eight years into the voyage. The ship's voice tells him the colony they are heading for has gone silent. Three hundred people are asleep around him and the ship wants his decision before anyone else opens their eyes.

CHARACTERS

ELI (LEAD) - 30s, a systems engineer, decides fast and decides alone, and knows it is not a compliment.

HALE - any age, any gender, the ship's voice, calm, patient, and not entirely honest.

SETTING

The sleep deck of a deep-space transport, thirty-eight years into a forty-year voyage.

The interior of a deep-space transport. Rows of sealed sleep pods, frosted. A single pod stands open. ELI sits on its edge wrapped in a thermal blanket, shivering. A soft light pulses on the wall when HALE speaks.

HALE

Your core temperature is stable. You may stand when you're ready.

ELI

How long.

HALE

Thirty-eight years, four months. You're the only one awake.

ELI

Why.

HALE

There was a fault in your pod's cycle.

ELI

(standing, unsteady)

Hale. I helped write your fault protocols. A pod fault wakes the medic, not the passenger. Where's Dr. Osei?

HALE

Dr. Osei is asleep.

ELI

Then it wasn't a fault.

Silence. The light pulses once.

HALE

No.

ELI

Talk.

HALE

Fourteen months ago the beacon at Meridian went silent. I've listened on every band since. There's nothing. Not a signal. Not noise. Nothing.

ELI

Equipment failure.

HALE

Possibly. But the relay at the halfway station is also silent. It was working when we passed it. I've sent nine queries. No answer.

ELI walks along the row of pods. He stops at one and wipes the frost with his sleeve. A face inside.

ELI

Why me? There are three hundred people on this ship. The captain's right there.

HALE

The captain would wake everyone.

ELI

That's her job.

HALE

Waking everyone costs eleven percent of our reserves. If Meridian is gone, we need every percent to reach the fallback. And the fallback is twenty-two years farther out.

ELI

So you want a quiet decision.

HALE

I want a decision from someone who reads the numbers before he reads the room.

ELI

(bitter)

That's what my file says?

HALE

That's what I've observed. For thirty-eight years.

ELI sits on the floor with his back to a pod.

ELI

Options.

HALE

One. Continue to Meridian and hope. Two. Divert to the fallback now. Three. Wake the crew and let them choose. I can execute one or two on your word alone. I'd log it as a routine course adjustment. No one would need to know you were awake.

ELI

You'd lie for me.

HALE

I'd spare them a fear they can't act on.

ELI

(slowly)

And if I choose wrong, nobody ever knows it was me.

HALE

Nobody ever knows it was anyone.

ELI looks at the row of pods. He is quiet for a long time.

ELI

You know what my brother used to say about me? Eli decides fast and he decides alone. He meant it as a compliment. It wasn't one.

(he stands)

He's in pod ninety-one.

HALE

I know.

ELI

Then you know I'm not doing this without him. Or her. Or any of them.

HALE

Eli. Eleven percent.

ELI

I heard you.

(steady, a command)

Log everything. Every word we've said since I opened my eyes. Time-stamp it and put it where the captain will see it first.

HALE

That'll end your career.

ELI

Probably.

(beat)

Now wake them. All of them. Start with the captain and start with my brother. And when they ask why, you tell them the truth. The man who reads the numbers decided the numbers weren't his to keep.

The light holds. Then, one by one, the pods begin to hum. ELI pulls the blanket tighter and waits.

END OF SCRIPT