

LAURIE

Charlie, you alright?

YOUNG CHARLES

Yes- fine, I need to- uh- I need to sit down.

CHARLES

I was not, in fact, alright, just too full of pride to admit anything to her.

*The game continues with uneven teams. Laurie pauses and walks over to Young Charles.*

LAURIE

Hey. You don't look fine.

YOUNG CHARLES

It's just a headache.

LAURIE

I have painkillers, if you want.

YOUNG CHARLES

We only have 10 left in the first aid kit, I don't need to waste supplies-

LAURIE

No, they're mine. They gave me a bottle after the surgery, and I held on to them.

YOUNG CHARLES

Don't you need them? Or-

LAURIE

Doesn't matter.

CHARLES

A small act of kindness. Selflessness. I didn't understand, or I didn't care, I was trying to understand her *logic*-

YOUNG CHARLES

I, uh- ok.

*Charles sweeps the scene to the side, and motions Young Charles to lie in his bed. Charles stands over him as he lies in bed, staring through a glass dome at the night sky.*

CHARLES

Glennanike had two moons, one bright and one like a faint orange shadow of the other. I often gazed at them for indeterminate amounts of time, and I preferred to focus on the hidden one. I thought of home, of pasts and futures, of time lost and times to come. I would occasionally fall asleep, feeling oddly comforted. I also began to notice how quickly the moons grew and shrunk depending on the star that gave them light. They changed much slower and more thoroughly than Earth's moon. The days on Glennanike were far longer than what we had known, and we had no need to mark time other than to track our crops, so we simply slept when we were tired, often when the light was low, and organized meetings by calling across our confined quarters. I measured time somewhat by how I grew, but when I returned to Earth I found out that we were there much longer than I could have ever imagined. Time passed and passed, we fell into a routine, we grew used to our lives, it became almost normal. There were a few instances of excitement- some atypical mass spectrometer reading, someone would notice a new sprout in the crops, or occasionally we would even receive a message from ACM. But time passed and passed, slow and nondescript. I began to read books of poetry and philosophy from our entertainment room, something entirely new- excuse me-

*Charles pauses the tape recorder, stands up, takes out a handkerchief, and coughs violently into it. He is pained, and he seems to be alarmed by his own failing health. When he catches his breath, he sits down slowly and resumes.*

CHARLES

*(realizing he needs to tell the story faster)*

Laurie's dormitory was next to mine, and we shared a center door. We spent a lot of time in my room talking during the hours of low light when the rest of the colonists were asleep. We didn't really talk about anything in particular, and we very rarely mentioned our past lives like we did that one dinner. If I remember correctly, we talked

a lot about religion and philosophy. I trusted her. I trusted her more than I thought I could. She was so smart, I still find it difficult to believe that she could do something so foolish as trust me back.

*Laurie and Young Charles sit on the edge of his bed.*

LAURIE

If there is a God, Charles, would he follow us all the way out here?

YOUNG CHARLES

Would an all-knowing being who created the universe be geographically limited? I don't think so.

LAURIE

But, like, would we be worth his time? There's so... much stuff on Earth. So much suffering-

YOUNG CHARLES

*(sarcastic, failing to be humorous)*

Don't they say that there is no suffering too small to be worthy of God's attention? So even when you stub your toe, you can rest easy that He is there for you?

LAURIE

You know what I mean. It's hard not to feel like we're apart from all of that. But, like, Tess believes. You ever see her praying? She's one of the smartest people I've ever known, and she finds such solace in something I... struggle to believe, or accept.

YOUNG CHARLES

I- uh- there are all different kinds of solace, Laurie. People cope in different ways, whatever works for them, no one way is smarter than another.

LAURIE

But some ways might just be easier. I can't decide whether it's lazy or wise to put my trust in something I don't understand, but it sure as hell is nice to think that there's a greater plan that we're a part of. It takes some of the pressure off, you know?

YOUNG CHARLES

I guess. But I thrive on the knowledge of my own free will. If I felt like I didn't have control, I wouldn't find solace.

LAURIE

Well, maybe there are all different kinds of control. Maybe it's like a blueprint, maybe you can live the details of your life as you see fit, to your own personal code, but in the grand scheme of things, it all fits into a bigger story that's already planned.

YOUNG CHARLES

Maybe, but then what about the bad people, the amoral ones, the ones that make terrible mistakes- are they meant to be that way or are they just... not following the blueprint?

LAURIE

I don't believe in bad people.

YOUNG CHARLES

Oh?

LAURIE

Just misguided. I can't imagine a world where people are evil without reason.

CHARLES

I could. But I feared I had become so adept at hiding my own evil that I even began to convince myself.

YOUNG CHARLES

I suppose that's a nice thought.

END EXCERPT