

**The Coward's Distance:** A follow up story from a previous quest. It consists of a series of emails and scattered journals found by the player.

---

Email from **Maxwell Kerr**

If you're reading this, I'm probably in a bad way. I hope you're still on that metal crate of yours, and I hope you remember me too. You dropped me off on Cansa, remember? Maybe you don't.

Well, I can tell you I've evolved from my initial form of communication. Advertisements were.. Well, I was extra paranoid there. And paranoid here, too. Haven't been sleeping well these past weeks.

I know you, you went above and beyond to get me here, you did. You were bold about it, too. I'd be able to forget that kind of kindness the same way I could forget the concoction of insults my ex husband managed to make up in the hellish months before the divorce. If you're wondering, it's never.

When you left me, I promised I'd try working on that chip, to get those files off it, if I could. The Federation corrupted it well and good, I can promise you that. That information could have changed this cluster, made everyone take a stand. But if you look at everything that's happening right now then maybe it's a good thing all those files were wiped.

We've already been over how I have a few screws loose, sure, and maybe you never believed me about the information I got on that chip. There wasn't anything left on it for me to prove to you, or anyone in this world, that the Apollo governments have far too much monitoring control over us. That's ok, though. I've changed my tune a little. I've had to, to survive. Cansa is... well, Douros is terrifying, and it's been on the news cluster-wide, right? I'm trying to say that if you didn't believe me before, maybe you can believe me now. Maybe you can do nothing else but believe me, but I'm reaching out to you all the same.

Don't come. I had a journal, I wrote a lot after you left. I sent it all out into uninhabited space. If you hit Parsuss, you've gone too far. I've just been writing up what's happening. There's nothing solid there, but all the same - as I said, you're only getting this if I'm in a bad way, so it would mean a lot if you went and read those things. If you're busy, I understand, I do. But something here, in the outer rims, it's not right. Apollo's not right.

Maxwell

---

**Reply to Maxwell Kerr? Y/N**

Maxwell,

I got your email. I'll read them, if I find them. What am I supposed to do after that?

(signing off)

**Received in uninhabited space near Magella. Date Marker is October 31st.**

Been in Cansa all of one night. There was a rush on the station, when a ship pulled in. I thought it was going to be something big, like some official I'd have to run from, but it was food. Real food, too, not synthetic. Brought all the way up from Pisa and Croce. People were pushing each other just to see it, to see the colour of it. I thought about how violent they would be if they got to touch it, and left. Still trying to recover the chip. I'm thinking I'll need help, but the moment I ask someone, then it's real. It's real that I can't go back to Sagan's Lights, not for a long time.

**Received in uninhabited space outside of Magella. Date marker is 12th November.**

The man's nice. His name is Heydar, and he tells me it means "a lion's character". I can't tell if he's joking, or trying to impress me, or both. I won't say I have a crush, but - well, I have a crush.

I saw him looking at the chip, but he didn't ask about it. I haven't taken it out since then. Who knows if I can trust him. Paranoia is setting in.

The damn thing is completely blank. I've tried scanning it for any files remnants, but I'm not as tech-savvy as I'd like to think. It's driving me bonkers.

I know the Federation tried to push it onto me, they did, tried to blame me for "acquiring" those files. But it's not my fault all it took was a bad accent for them to be handed to me - I clearly can't even scan a piece of tech, let alone fill it up. Everything since then has been a dream; a bad one, sure, but it's not nightmarish yet.

Signing off.

**Received in uninhabited space closer to Parsuss. Date marker is 12th December.**

I don't know what's happening, only know that something is. Never seen people this tense. A thousand Magellan-branded ships rocked into port and were gone in an instant - I swear to you, they filled up with a thousand silent people and flew out of Cansa like it was nothing. Nobody wanted to talk about it, or think about. But it's tense here.

I can't... I don't really trust anyone right now. I had a dream last night I was with Samuel, back on the Two Sisters, and he was yelling at me, over and over. I don't know why I dreamt of marriage, but maybe I felt safer there than here.

Cause I had someone, didn't I? I had someone here, too. At least for a while. I had someone- he was nice to me, didn't make me feel crazy, you know? - but I lost him in the protests. He didn't come back after that. And now I'm sitting here, and I'm thinking Max, Max you idiot - was he watching me?

Watching me, in case I knew anything about what's going on. Or, I mean, he could have just wanted to leave. Men do that a lot.

The thing is, maybe I'm just no good at spying on people. Or maybe Magella pulling out of Douros is just making everyone on edge, and all of this is entirely innocent.

But I saw Heydar looking at the chip that first night. And I saw him stare at me in the crowd - he let go of my hand. He told me to throw it away one night - it was our first proper fight, too, when I said no. Haven't looked at it since. I don't know why it would mean anything. What was happening back on Sagan's shouldn't matter to someone in Douros.

It could be worthless. It could be he wants me looking at something other than this chip.

Signing off.

**Received in uninhabited space. Date marker unknown.**

Heard a thousand whispers about EarthGate today. People arguing over it, people running mad with ideas of destroying it and securing our future in an isolated monitoring network. Hell.

Heydar tells me to shush. He took my hand and walked me away every time we passed a group like that. I let him. I don't want to draw any more attention to myself - see, I'm learning. But Magella's making everyone here nervous.

Half of these people are fighting to keep EarthGate because they want to see Earth, or they want to be somewhere other than Dorous (who could blame them). Then you have half-crazed (like I'm one to talk) angry protesters, wanting to tear it down. If you ask them why, they knock you out. I'd chalk it down to fear, but the way this Apollo-wide government works, it's more than likely some form of manipulation.

Heydar doesn't say anything when I tell him those theories. I like that.

—

**Received in uninhabited space. Date marker early November.**

I found a roomy hole in the wall. How sad is that sentence? Wait for it, though. I can't remember the last time I was this happy over something so small. No, truly, it gets more tragic.

I had to fight someone for it. Less fists, more wits. I traded the pills I was taking for sleep, but I need a place more than shut eye. At least this way I can take the chip out and work on it, rather than run from place to place as paranoid as I was on Sagan's streets.

**Received in uninhabited space. Date marker unknown.**

Samuel,

I probably won't ever send you this, but I need to write it up.

Part of me wants to apologise. Wants to say sorry for the way I am. It's not like I can help it much, but I could have tried a little harder. I could have stopped with the theories, and the conspiracies. At least at dinner times. I know you hated that the most.

This is the part that wants to say: If I kept my mouth shut, I could still be on Sagan's Lights, in your arms. Instead I'm on Douros, living in half broken in wall with a stranger or two.

The rest of me, though, doesn't want to give you that satisfaction. If I'd kept my mouth shut, I would have just been craven, like you. I know you thought I was crazy, but part of you believed me, at times. You're just like everyone else. You turned away from what you saw.

I don't think you'll be able to do that much longer. I don't think anyone will. Whatever is happening.. It won't be isolated to Cansa, I can promise you that.

Max.

### **Received - uninhabited space. Date marker mid November**

I've been thinking a lot about Samuel, ever since Heydar kissed me. That's dumb, isn't it? But I have been. It's not in a.. Not in a regret-filled way. Not in a 'I miss you' way, either. I find it hard to miss Sam.

I know this might sound strange and all but, heck, it's my journal and I'm allowed. He won't ever see it anyway. I miss fighting with him. Or, more accurately, I miss what he had to say about politics - because it was the only time I ever got that side of the story, in full-fledged detail. The moment I surrounded myself with like-minded people - even those who were tame with their theories - I lost all need to understand that side. Where Sam saw "blank slate" I saw Big Brother. That's an Earth reference, sure, but it applies. Lots of Earth talk on Douros, lately. Gets me thinking about the past.

### **Email from Maxwell Kerr**

Still alive. I don't know if you're getting these. Maybe you sold that box ship of yours and moved on. I'm going to send this out, just in case. We left on good terms, didn't we? Why can't you reply?

I really don't want to die, you know?

Remember when I stood on Sagan's with that chip in my hand and tried to preach to you about doing something great? I talked about making a difference, like some naive visionary, as if I could pull into Cansa and change Apollo forever.

I said I wouldn't be a coward anymore. I said I'd take my beliefs, and make them real, that I'd make people see.

But if being craven means I'd get to live, I'm starting to think I'd like that more.

Please respond,

Maxwell Kerr

### **Reply to Maxwell Kerr Y/N?**

(If you chose to reply earlier)

Maxwell,

I replied to your first message - I'm out here, finding these journal pieces. Did it not send through?

I don't know what I'm doing.

I hope you're well.

(signing off)

(If you didn't reply earlier)

Maxwell,

I'm sorry I never replied, I didn't mean to make you worry. I'm hearing you, and I'm finding these pieces for you. Can you tell me, though, what to do after that?

Hope this finds you well,

(signing off).

### **Received in deep space. Date Marker - 11th December**

I ran. I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it, I just ran. He held a gun to that woman's head, and she stared at him like she wanted him to do it. Like it was better than being here, and starving. She was standing there, with her girl buried into her stomach, one hand over her shoulder, staring death in the face with a smile. I was cowered, bent over and shaking, and I didn't even stop to help. I was halfway around the bend when I heard it.

Deafening and booming, it made everyone in the square stop. Not a shot. Thankfully. It was the call to stand down.

The message was for the Magellans, but everyone on Douros stopped yelling so fiercely after that. Like the entire thing was a standoff, and when Magella conceded the point of it was gone.

I didn't even stop to help. How awful is that?

---

### **Email from Maxwell:**

Listen - if anyone is receiving these, I'm sorry for wasting your time. And if not, I'm sorry for writing them. A reply would be darned nice, though.

I can't tell you the truth of what's happening here because I don't know. If you've found the things I sent out, then maybe you have some idea.

I'll be ok, on my own here. Despite everything, I remember why I chose to come here in the first place. Cansa fights. Sagan's Lights likes to lie down for the government, but Cansa will fight.

If you're there, I won't ask why you're not replying. But one last favour?

Take care of yourself, captain.

Maxwell.