



Act II
Scene 2

Sheer Laziness

Author: Mike Crawford

Workers move around the outpost like robots, repairing equipment and fine-tuning the strength of the invisible shields that protect the settlement from the biting winds beyond. As you walk, you notice what no one else does: Tif, imperceptibly changing her appearance as you cross the camp, gradually making her skin more sun-scorched and her hands calloused.

You and your crew file into what seems to be the mess hall of the outpost, where ten or so workers are relaxing with the day's rations of dark sludge. A few are human, but most are native Moler – natural diggers. A moment later, you're sitting among them.

“So, what've you got to trade?” A female Moler adjusts her yellow-rimmed external lenses (sadly, her relatively rare species isn't high on the list for augment compatibility research) and peers across the table.

“Not much equipment,” says Tif. You let her talk it out while you sample the sludge. “Our assets are mostly liquid at the moment, to speak honestly.”

“Little use for currency here...” murmurs the Moler. “Although...”

Tif waits patiently, smiling.

“We have been looking,” continues the Moler, “for someone to undertake a small task for us.”

“What sort of task?”

“An expedition. To one of the ghost cities.”

Wentworth clicks in disapproval. “Suicide.”

He might be right, but you're too distracted by the instructions the Moler has already passed you...



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