

RARE EARTH

Written by

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EXT. HOVERTRAIN SERVICE DEPOT - DAY

Levitation tracks merge together, running in and out of large industrial buildings in a sorry state of repair. Graffiti-strewn machinery, barrels, weeds, and sad-looking barrier fences skirt the ground. A few hovertrains move in and out of the buildings. Beyond it, a gleaming city reaches towards the clouds.

A small squad of heavily-armed police officers in body armor escort a nervous, pale, balding man in a rumpled suit, GERRARD THURSTON, who is carrying a briefcase.

SQUAD CHIEF

(to Gerrard)

Look, just deliver the case like you're supposed to. Mention the product, get him to talk about it. He likes to brag, so that'll be easy. As soon as we have his audio on file, we'll take care of the rest.

GERRARD

But they've got signal detectors. They'll know I'm wired!

The other officers chuckle and smirk.

SQUAD CHIEF

Hey, no worries. We've hooked you up with the best that Tech Division's got. They scan you, all they'll see is a cheap netphone in sleep mode.

Gerrard looks panicky.

GERRARD

I don't know... I don't know...

SQUAD CHIEF

It's either this or... hey Marty, what do they hand out for running product these days?

MARTY

Forty, fifty years.

GERRARD

I only, I only handle the accounts, the cards, I don't, I never touch the... I'm not involved in the actual...

SQUAD CHIEF

Money laundering is worse. That's, what, sixty?

MARTY

Sixty.

SQUAD CHIEF

Sixty years. You got sixty years left in you? You can rot away in a 3-meter cell, or you can help us lock up this scumbag and walk away a free man. Get going.

The Squad Chief gives Gerrard a shove. Gerrard quickly shuffles away, looking like he's going to throw up.

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE - DAY

The disused warehouse contains several partially-dismantled hovertrains, their parts scattered over a large expanse of concrete floor. Shafts of dusty light provide feeble illumination.

A large metal door shrieks as it is slowly opened by Gerrard. He shuffles inside and looks around.

GERRARD

Hello?

Gerrard's voice echoes through the cavernous room. A large muscular thug in an expensive suit, TWINKS, appears in the doorway of the warehouse office in the middle of the building.

TWINKS

Hey hey, it's the little guy! C'mon over, little guy!

Twinks yells into the office.

TWINKS (CONT'D)

Little guy's here! Brought the thing.

Gerrard makes a beeline for the office, taking rapid, insecure steps as fast as he can. He stumbles and trips over and around the hovertrain debris.

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Four very large, muscular thugs in tight-fitting expensive suits, TWINKS, BEADY, ITCHY, and LUMP stand in a very posh office. Lump leans against the wall, his arms folded and completely silent. Twinks escorts Gerrard in through the door and motions towards a chair at the desk.

TWINKS

Have a seat, little man.

Gerrard sits, then looks at the thugs in confusion.

GERRARD

Where's... where's Kaplan?

A thug with tiny eyes, BEADY, looms over Gerrard.

BEADY

Kaplan's got business. Open the case.

Gerrard sets the case on the desk and opens it. Inside are rows of stacks of electronic cards.

GERRARD

Three million, two hundred eight thousand, and fifty seven in Standard Terran. All clean, won't trigger any fraud systems.

The thugs smile and nod at each other. Gerrard closes the case.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

Look, I'm supposed to give this to Kaplan... for...

Gerrard nervously glances at the tiny microphone in his lapel.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

... for the product...

Another thug, ITCHY, steps forward. He has no neck and his head looks like a giant thumb.

ITCHY

Beady says Kaplan's got business. That means Kaplan's got business. Ain't that right, Twinks?

TWINKS

Yeah. You heard what Itchy said
what Beady said. He's got business.

Twinks leans over Gerrard.

TWINKS (CONT'D)

That means he's busy.

BEADY

Very busy.

ITCHY

So you give the case to us.

TWINKS

We give it to Kaplan.

BEADY

When he's less busy.

TWINKS

Less busy with business.

ITCHY

He's a busy guy.

Gerrard is sweating.

GERRARD

I'd imagine so... what with the...
the Z-5 compound doing so well in
the...

Itchy smacks the back of Gerrard's head.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

Ow!

BEADY

What did he say?

ITCHY

Ain't supposed to mention the
product by name.

Twinks throws Gerrard a suspicious look.

TWINKS

Little man's a smart guy. Works
with the money. Knows about rules.

BEADY

That's right.

(to Gerrard)

You know all about rules. Money gets tracked when you don't.

ITCHY

So why'd he go and break a major rule?

BEADY

The rule.

TWINKS

Strange, you goin' and breakin' a rule like that.

GERRARD

Sorry! Sorry! Had a... bad coffee this morning.

TWINKS

He says he had a bad coffee.

GERRARD

Yeah! Tasted funny, like they... they didn't rinse out the solvents when they opened up in the morning! Got me... all... fuzzy-headed.

BEADY

Sure, that's happened to me. Gave me the shits.

ITCHY

Feel dizzy for bit.

TWINKS

Maybe forget...

Itchy punches Gerrard hard in the face. Gerrard goes sprawling to the floor.

TWINKS (CONT'D)

(yelling)

THE BIGGEST FUCKING RULE WE GOT!

Beady pulls out a ridiculously huge pistol.

GERRARD

(feebly)

No... wait... wait...

BEADY

The last time I saw a guy break
that rule, he was wired.

Beady kneels down by the crumpled Gerrard.

BEADY (CONT'D)

Was workin' with the cops.

ITCHY

Tried to get us locked up.

BEADY

You ain't workin' for the cops, are
ya?

Gerrard starts sobbing.

GERRARD

They made me, they made me do it,
didn't want to, but they made me...

EXT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE - DAY

The Squad Chief rips off his headset and throws it to the
ground.

SQUAD CHIEF

Damnit! Everyone get in there! Go
go go!

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Beady stands up and aims his gun at the door, his eyes
looking around wildly.

BEADY

Oh shit!

Itchy pulls out an energy rifle from behind the desk and
tosses it towards Lump, shouting:

ITCHY

Lump!

Lump swipes the rifle from the air, arms it, and aims it at
the open office door in one smooth motion. Itchy pulls out
his own pistol. Twinks opens a cabinet and hauls out what
looks like a ring-fed grenade launcher.

A metal screech from the outer door echoes in through the office entrance, followed by the clatter of people running through the hovertrain debris.

BEADY

(to Twinks)

What are we doin'? What are we doin'? There's no back way outta this room!

TWINKS

Wait for 'em to get close, I'll clear a hole with this, then we scatter. Weave through the trains, meet up at the usual spot. Itchy, get the case!

Itchy kicks Gerrard out of the way and grabs the briefcase.

ITCHY

What do we do with the little guy? Shoot him?

TWINKS

We'll fuck him up later. *Kaplan*'ll shoot him.

Twinks looks over at Gerrard.

TWINKS (CONT'D)

After he breaks every bone in your...

There is a metal *tink* *tink* *tink* and a small cylindrical device bounces through the office door. It detonates in a bright flash of concussive force. Twinks is blown through the air and over the desk. He crashes against the far wall and falls to the floor. Beady and Itchy are thrown against the walls. Gerrard cowers on the floor as he is covered in debris.

The dust begins to clear. Lump is standing in the exact same spot he was before the blast.

LUMP

They messed up my hair.

Lump rotates, aiming at the wall. A display flicks out from the energy rifle, showing a scan of the police squad behind the wall.

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE - DAY

The police are converging on the office, weapons drawn.

SQUAD CHIEF

Come out with your hands in the...

Lump's energy rifles fires through the wall, hitting the Squad Chief's head which explodes in a pink mist. The rest of the squad dives for cover as the Chief's body crumples to the floor.

POLICE OFFICER

Full auto! Take 'em down!

The officers flip all their weapons to fully-automatic mode and fire at the office, perforating its walls with a hail of tiny, bright energy bolts.

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE OFFICE

The energy bolts pierce all the way through both sides of the office, sending plaster, dust, and wall fragments flying. Beady and Lump dive for cover as Itchy is torn into tiny pieces.

Gerrard crawls through the debris and under the desk, as Twinks rises up from behind it, using the top to stabilize his grenade launcher.

TWINKS

Lump! Make a hole!

Lump fires several shots at the wall, carving a small hole in it. Twinks aims through the hole and fires, launching a grenade with a loud THWUUUMP! Moments later there is a loud explosion followed by screams.

TWINKS (CONT'D)

Now!

Lump jumps to his feet, and begins picking off the police through the wall. Twinks clambers over the desk as Beady crawls over to the remains of Itchy.

BEADY

Aw, no. No.

He glares at Gerrard.

BEADY (CONT'D)

You fucking snitch!

Beady aims his pistol at Gerrard who throws his arms defenselessly in front of himself. Twinks takes a step back while loading another round, trips over Beady, and falls to the ground. His grenade launcher fires, blowing a large hole in the back wall of the office. Splinters from the blast embed themselves in Beady's face and arm.

BEADY (CONT'D)
AAAHHHHGGG!!!

Gerrard grabs the briefcase by the handle and scrabbles out through the hole. Beady yells after him, contorting in pain.

BEADY (CONT'D)
You're dead! aaagghhh... Goddamned
snitch!...

Beady tries to aim his pistol at Gerrard, but his arms are shaky. He fires off a few rounds, but misses.

INT. HOVERTRAIN WAREHOUSE - DAY

Gerrard staggers out from behind the office and is nearly killed by a barrage of energy bolts. He dives behind some of the larger metal pieces that litter the floor.

GERRARD
It's me! I'm the snitch! Don't
shoot!

A police officer yells back at him.

POLICE OFFICER
The Chief's dead because of you!

There is another hail of energy bolts aimed at Gerrard's cover. Gerrard flinches as pieces of hovertrain scatter around him.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Gibbs and Robert got fragged 'cause
you fucked up!

Another hail of energy bolts fly all around Gerrard, also striking a dismantled hovertrain beyond. Gerrard is white with fear. He curls around the briefcase and tries to become as small as possible. The firing stops. Part of the hovertrain collapses with a crash.

Twinks yells out from the office.

TWINKS (O.S.)
Did you get him?

POLICE OFFICER
 (to Twinks)
 Shut it, meatbag!
 (to the Squad)
 Grenades! Everything you got!

The squad throws a dozen flash grenades at the rapidly disintegrating office. They all go off nearly at once. The remains of the office collapse in a heap.

It is silent, save for the occasional office wall crumbling.

TWINKS (O.S.)
 Gnnhh!... Got... got something...
 for you and yer pals...

The clink-CLACK of a grenade being loaded echoes throughout the warehouse. With a loud THOOOOWWMP! a grenade fires straight up out of the collapsed office and strikes the ceiling, exploding and destroying several trusses. The ceiling caves in, raining tortured metal down to the floor.

Gerrard springs to his feet and sprints wildly towards the nearest warehouse door, dodging around falling ceiling trusses. His breathing is fast and panicky. He hears shouts behind him.

POLICE OFFICER
 Scatter! Get to...

The officer is cut short when a large chunk of ceiling lands on him.

EXT. HOVERTRAIN REPAIR DEPOT - DAY

Gerrard flies out of a decrepit doorway in a puff of dust and plaster. Rending metal screeches from within as the ceiling continues its collapse.

Gerrard zigzags around barrier fences, barrels, and machinery, heading towards the bulk of the gleaming city.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Gerrard stumbles out of an alley and onto the busy streets of the city. He is still covered in dust and plaster and his suit is in disarray.

Hovercars and taxis run along the inset roads. Tall gleaming buildings sport video advertisements and busy pedestrian-packed sidewalks arc around the buildings and over the roads in graceful swoops.

Gerrard rounds a corner and abruptly dashes back behind it. Just around the corner is an entire squad of cops. One is giving a briefing.

SQUAD CAPTAIN

We lost seven guys over this, so the orders from above are shoot to kill. Precinct 12 is going after the mob enforcers. Our job is to find *this* guy.

The captain holds up a touchpad display which prominently features Gerrard's face.

SQUAD CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Gerrard Thurston. Money launderer and document forger. He screwed up the bust and our brothers in arms paid the price. The lieutenant needs a body for the press, might as well be his. We're tackling this in two groups. You're hitting the depot, you sweep the streets. He's on foot so he can't be far. Alright, get to your cars. I want this guy's corpse on the evening news!

Gerrard hurries in the other direction, looking around frantically.

GERRARD

(to himself)
Shit! Shit!

He looks up at a large video advertisement that reads "Be A Lunar Colonist!". It shows various shots of a sprawling lunar colony.

LUNAR ADVERT (VOICE)

(absurdly happy)
... in low gravity! Need a job?
We've got those too! Live and work
in humanity's next frontier!

Gerrard dashes over to a public terminal and pulls up a map search. He locates the nearest launch terminal and takes off running.

EXT. SPACEPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Far off in the distance behind the terminal, a large rocket thunders skyward.

Gerrard heads towards the terminal's entrance. As he reaches the doors, several police cars float to a halt in the parking lot, lights flashing.

Gerrard hurries through the automatic doors.

INT. SPACEPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Gerrard immediately veers towards the restrooms.

INT. SPACEPORT TERMINAL RESTROOMS - DAY

Gerrard hurriedly checks the restroom to make sure it is empty. He locks the door, then leans breathless against it.

GERRARD

Okay... okay...

He sets the briefcase down on the counter and opens it, counts out a few currency cards, pockets them, and shuts the case.

He pulls out a thin container from inside his suit jacket and opens it. Inside is a flat-panel computer and a variety of different cards. He inserts an identity card into the computer which pulls up his picture and name.

Gerrard erases his name on the card, and types in the name Halstead Bremmer. He taps his picture, which enlarges to fill the screen. He then uses his fingers to slightly change the position and distance between his eyes, the length of his nose, and the position of his mouth, then compares the altered image with his reflection in the mirror.

He taps the screen and the image shrinks back down. He makes a sideways dragging gesture on the screen and a window pops up that reads "Writing Identity...".

Gerrard turns on a faucet, wets a small towel, and blots off as much of the plaster and dust as he can. His eyes are wide and panicky and he trembles a bit, but his arms and hands are steady as they smooth out the creases and rumples in his suit with a practiced precision. With quick, efficient movements, he slicks down what little hair he has, and removes the last smudges from his face. He grabs the briefcase and heads for the door.

INT. SPACE TRAVEL TERMINAL SECURITY STATION - DAY

Gerrard approaches one of the many entry stations, choosing the one with the shortest line. He glances around nervously.

The person in front of him is admitted access and the security doors whoosh open as they step through, and whoosh shut just as fast.

STATION GUARD
(bored)
Next.

Gerrard swipes his identity card over the counter. His face and information appear on the guards screen. The guard looks barely awake.

STATION GUARD (CONT'D)
Halstead Bremmer?

GERRARD
Yes.

STATION GUARD
Still at 25 Panzer Square, E
District?

GERRARD
Yes.

STATION GUARD
Unit 17?

GERRARD
(slightly impatiently)
Yes.

STATION GUARD
Security check will take just a
moment.

On the guard's screen, measurement lines appear on Gerrard's image, measuring the location and proportions of his eyes, nose, and mouth. Another monitor lights up and rapidly scans through a huge series of faces, each with their own set of measurement lines.

Gerrard looks around again. At the far end of the terminal he sees a group of police officers approach security personal.

The guard's monitor beeps softly and displays the text "No Match".

STATION GUARD (CONT'D)
Security check passed. Any luggage
to declare?

GERRARD
No.

STATION GUARD

Carry-on?

Gerrard holds up the briefcase.

GERRARD

Just this.

STATION GUARD

Please place it into the carry-on scanner.

GERRARD

Oh! I uh...

Gerrard digs into his inside coat pocket and produces another card.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

I have a Class 2 waiver.

Gerrard swipes the card over the counter.

STATION GUARD

(bored and slightly
irritated)

That policy was revoked three weeks ago after the Newport incident, please place the item into the scanner.

GERRARD

But I have... but this says that...

The Station Guard starts to get suspicious.

STATION GUARD

Sir, I need you to place the item in the scanner.

GERRARD

I can't. I mean, I'm not *supposed* to, see...

The Station Guard reaches for the intercom.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

Wait! Wait.

Gerrard digs in his pockets and tosses out three currency cards in front of the guard.

STATION GUARD
(a little too loudly)
Are you trying to *bribe* me?

Gerrard motions to the guard to quiet down while frantically looking over at the policemen who are making their way down the security stations one by one.

GERRARD
That's 30,000. Untraceable.

The guard looks at Gerrard in disbelief, takes a currency card, and scans it. The guard's display beeps and displays some information. The guard's eyes widen.

The guard immediately hits a button. There is a soft beep noise, the word "Approved" appears on the monitor, and the security doors whoosh open.

STATION GUARD
(overly-official)
You have a nice day.

Gerrard rushes through the doors as the guard hurriedly pockets the currency cards, leans back, and deliberately looks bored.

EXT. SPACEPORT - DAY

Hovershuttle tracks fan out through miles of widely-spaced launch pads, many sporting large passenger and freight rockets. Shuttles run back and forth from the launch pads.

INT. SPACEPORT HOVERSHUTTLE - DAY

Gerrard sits nervously, staring out the window at the distant rockets and absentmindedly cradles his briefcase as the shuttle zips through the spaceport.

EXT. SPACEPORT LUNAR ROCKET LAUNCHPAD - DAY

The hovershuttle pulls up at a huge 100-meter tall lunar passenger rocket on its launchpad. The passengers disembark the shuttle and make their way towards the loading elevator.

Gerrard walks with them, looking up at the gargantuan vehicle. He bumps roughly into a younger man in his mid-20's, MICHAEL, who drops his carry-on bag that spills some minor items (phone, envelope, IR keys, etc...) over the ground.

GERRARD

Oof! Sorry! I'm sorry...

Gerrard stoops down to help retrieve the dropped items. He stands and sees that the man has recently been crying -- red, baggy, glistening eyes and an expression of devastation.

Gerrard proffers the dropped items.

GERRARD (CONT'D)

Uh... sorry about that...

Michael roughly begins stuffing the items back into his bag, holding back another flood of tears with tremendous effort. His voice trembles.

MICHAEL

Don't... **snorpht**... don't worry about it. No problem...

Gerrard looks at the writing on the envelop he is about to hand over.

GERRARD

Aerospace Academy. You're a spaceship pilot?

Michael takes the envelope and rips it in half.

MICHAEL

Didn't even get the honor of graduating last in my class.

Gerrard looks at him quizzically. Michael holds up the two halves of the envelope.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Letter of Expulsion. Worst grades in the academy's history and I wasn't fast enough in the emergency simulations. Washed right out.

Michael shrugs in apology.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You didn't come here to hear some sob story. Sorry.

Michael turns and trudges towards the loading elevator. Gerrard looks after him, thinking. He then catches up to Michael.

GERRARD

Hey, wait up. You ah... you know anyone up there?

MICHAEL

On the moon? No. Just... just going. If I can't fly a ship, maybe I can find work on one. You got something lined up?

GERRARD

No, no connections. Spur-of-the moment.

Michael is taken aback by this.

MICHAEL

Seriously?

Gerrard manages a small smile.

GERRARD

I uh... I had a bad day too.

INT. LUNAR ROCKET LOADING ELEVATOR - DAY

They squeeze into the crowded elevator. Gerrard looks up through the elevator's window at the rocket.

GERRARD

Think they serve drinks on that thing?

Michael looks down at his carry-on bag and pushes open a side pocket just open enough for Gerrard to see two small travel bottles of whiskey.

Gerrard chuckles.

EXT. SPACEPORT LUNAR ROCKET LAUNCHPAD - DAY

The elevator whooshes up towards the passenger section of the rocket.

INT. LUNAR ROCKET PASSENGER SECTION - DAY

Passengers are lifted up through the vertical body of the rocket. The seats are against one side of the rocket and face the other, giving just enough room for a person to squeeze over to their seat.

Gerrard and Michael maneuver into two of the seats. Gerrard stows away his briefcase as Michael glances around and pulls out his two small travel bottles of liquor.

Gerrard sits and buckles himself in. Michael hands him one of the small bottles and then straps himself in as well.

Michael uncaps his bottle and lifts it in a salute.

MICHAEL

To running away from life's
problems!

GERRARD

I'll drink to that!

They each gulp down a shot of whiskey.

A synthetic BOOP emanates from the PA system, followed by the voice of a flight attendant.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (PA)

Please ensure that your carry-on is
stowed and your seat harnesses
securely fastened. Press the
highlighted "Launch Configuration"
button to rotate your seat prior to
lift-off.

There is another BOOP and a button on the armrest of each seat lights up.

Gerrard and Michael glance at each other, shrug, and then press their buttons. Their seats rotate backwards so that they are soon lying on their backs, looking up through the body of the rocket. Other passengers are doing the same.

The rocket quivers and the low rumble of the engines preparing to fire grows louder and louder.

MICHAEL

(speaking loudly over the
rumble)
You know how I paid for my ticket?

GERRARD

How?

MICHAEL

When my racist bigot addict
grandfather heard I flunked out of
the academy, he laughed so hard he
had a heart attack and died on the
spot! My share of the inheritance
was just enough for a one-way trip!

Michael and Gerrard laugh hysterically as the engines fire at full power, shaking the rocket. The roar nearly drowns out all other sounds.

EXT. SPACEPORT LUNAR ROCKET LAUNCHPAD