

One Last Job

Four partners in crime stumble upon the chance of their lives. A distant planet holds a richness so vast it makes all their former jobs look like chasing petty cash. They're not alone though. And that might have something to do with who's on the team.

"I don't know, Liam, I think it's kind of sketchy", Will says calmly. The gem on the table keeps pulsing the coordinates on the map. The others are convinced, though. Not being able to keep their eyes off the red cross dead set on the hologram, they find themselves thinking, seeing, longing, in silence.

"Will, take a good look at this. And not with your eyes closed."

Rolling his eyes, Will looks at the leader with a dim smile. Liam continues:

"This is huge. This is what we have been working towards. For a long time now. After this, everything is possible. Can't you feel it?"

Sighing, Will knows he's going to ramble on despite his asking eyes. Still, out of politeness, Will answers his question:

"Feel what?"

"This energy in the air. From the moment we all tap into it together, there's no stopping us. The Eagle can take us. Max made sure of that. Nights he spent doing the math. Calculations modern technology can't even perform. Right, Max? "

"Hold the flattery. I wouldn't have been able to get those results. Not without uhm...Your unrelenting support and Amy's of course."

"Damn right, you mention me as well", she nods: "That machine sucked the life out of my back."

"Sure it wasn't something else?"

"Oh, shut it, Liam."

Ready to say something in return, Max changes his mind and looks down, all red and barely keeping it together.

"I just don't know. I've got a bad feeling about this whole thing. Also, don't we have enough money to enjoy the rest of our lives in peace? You know, just the four of us?"

"To live off scraps and smithereens here and there? No, seriously. It's petty cash in comparison to this big boy. Why you're backing off? Now that we're so close? Come on, Will. We make this our last job and we're set for life."

"I need to think about it is all."

Liam holds his hand in front of Will's face and rubs his thumb against his bent index: "Think about this..."

Shifting his gaze back at the hologram, Will ponders, lost in thought.

"Look, just sleep on it, okay?"

Will nods and takes his leave. Once alone, he sighs and gives his ear piece a firm tap: "What now?"

"Lose the tone, dipshit. How's the money coming along?"

“Still working on it.”

“I don’t have to mention again what will happen next time you ignore me? Friendly reminder: first we make you take the girl, then the genius, then...”

“The leader...Yeah, my memory is fine, thank you.”

“Just one misstep, one moment of doubt down the road and that little thing in your head gets toasted. You get what I mean? Toasted! You won’t remember your name, your friends....The only thing left for you will be to put them all down! And you damn well know who we will save for last. You hear me?!”

“...Yes.”

“Two days left! Tick tock, little fucker...”

His hands over his ears, he stares outside. Millions of ways ahead and no way of knowing where to go. What to do now? The stars outside remain silent. Brimming in the dark, they have this inviting look about them. Yet running away will only worsen the trouble he’s in. Or won’t it? Not awaiting an answer, Will decides to take up Liam’s advice, wondering what tomorrow will bring.

The next morning, at the edge of his bed, Will stretches his arms. Despite the eventful evening, he’s had a good night’s sleep. And now: a brand new day. He still doesn’t know what to do. ‘Two days left’. As he makes his way to the control center, he looks out the window. The green tint of the approaching planet screams exploration, but quickly, he realizes what this means. He rushes forward, only to find all his partners enjoying breakfast.

“Hey, Will.”

With a confused and speechless look, Will greets Liam.

“Ready to become rich and famous? It’s time to say goodbye to the meager bounty hunter life style, don’t you think?”

Closing his eyes, Will reminds himself he shouldn’t be surprised:

“Of course...Of course, you didn’t wait for me...”

“Listen, Will. Honestly, we didn’t think you’d be up by now. We just thought, in and out, back before you know it. Only thing is, the engine didn’t think about cooperating the moment we set course.”

“Well, glad there’s still something on this ship supporting me. I’m going to say it again: It’s bad news!” As he trots away, Will sighs: “As if my opinion mattered from the start.”

“Will, hold it. Hold up.” He’s gone. Amy presses her hand on Liam’s shoulder: “Don’t waste your time. You know he’s –”

“You know he’s not a great listener, Liam. I respect him, but at this point, he’s become a liability. One that leaves us with a four-man job, that’s for sure.”

“Three-man-and-one-woman job, Mr. Math Genius. Besides, can I speak too? Whenever I open my mouth, you cut in line and do all the talking. Whenever I have things to say, it’s all grunts and laughs.”

“Listen, Ames, first it needs to sound important before you can grab someone’s attention.”

“Oh, hear who’s talking! Well, if you can fix the machine yourself, by all means, go –”

Liam jumps from excitement: “Guys, knock it off! We’re almost there! Get ready to – “

A thud. The landing succeeded flawlessly, almost without any notice. Nobody knows how, but Will managed to take a shower and dress up in the meantime. Just as he is about to join the others, he spots another ship, landing in the distance. For about half a minute, nothing seems to happen. Yet, soon after, three small dots move away from the ship. As he keeps staring out the window, they slowly grow bigger and spread out over the open desert-like land.

Knowing who they are, it can't be good news. Meanwhile, the others have made their way outside, already taking in the sights. Amy is standing closest to The Eagle. She's looking a bit out of sorts, carrying a regretful and hesitant look in her eyes. As if she's about to give her last glance ever to the ship. As if she realizes things won't be the same before long.

Max is running towards the nearest rock. Having checked its surface, he unzips his pants, lowers his shoulders and lets it all out.

Sensing the grains of sand beneath his feet, Liam closes his eyes, taking it all in. He can feel it. This energy, this sense of discovery. As he, from the corner of his eye, sees Will reaching for the exit, he mumbles: "Sorry, Will."

The next moment, debris of all shapes and sizes starts scattering around the ground. The Eagle or what's left of it...Up in flames. Every single one of them felt the impact. Only one wasn't prepared. Swiftly, Liam gathers Amy and Max and points towards the approaching vehicles: "Quick, we need to move!"

Silence. But then, an arm reaching out from under the rubble. Against all belief, Will survived the explosion. Smoke, fire, dust and wind. Barely managing to process what just happened, he watches as his enemies draw near. He realizes he's only got a couple of seconds. Time to act.