

SQUEAK: I don't have a place at the Earie. I'm... a problem.

ROUKE: Problem for who?

SQUEAK: The Council.

ROUKE: You want to be a Listener so you'll be *less* of a problem for the Council?

SQUEAK: Yes.

ROUKE: What do you know about Listeners?

They circle her.

SQUEAK: That nobody expects anything of you other than that you do your jobs. There are less rules for you about what you can and can't do. How you have to act. You have more advocacy than anyone else. The Council is wary of you – they're threatened by you –

ROUKE: And that appeals to you?

SQUEAK: I don't know.

They stop circling.

ROUKE: Well, you should decide, because once they work out you're here, you won't be able to change your mind.

SQUEAK: That was already explained to me.

LANOLIN: They'll never totally trust you. If you go back, or if you stay.

Pause.

Start

SQUEAK: I'm going to stay.

ROUKE: Look, sorry –

SQUEAK: Isobel

ROUKE: Isobel. I wish we could help you out. I'm sorry Marcus told you to come here. That was wrong of him. He had no right to do that – it was egotistical and stupid and he doesn't always realize that it's going to

be other people will ultimately be on the hook for... whatever he puts out there. He's good at saying... things it feels good to hear. Things that make you feel powerful and in control, but none of that it real. It's all just...

LANOLIN: Just what?

ROUKE: ...

LANOLIN: Seriously, 'just' what?

ROUKE: I don't know. Idealism? Speculation? Bullshit?

LANOLIN: You think he's wrong?

Pause.

ROUKE: I think he's selfish.

(to SQUEAK) I think he asked you here against your best interests.

SQUEAK: Which are what? What are my best interests?

LANOLIN laughs. ROUKE looks at her.

LANOLIN *(to ROUKE)*: What? She's right. You have no idea.

ROUKE: He's using her.

LANOLIN: Why? To what end?

ROUKE: WHO THE FUCK KNOWS.

Pause.

ROUKE: He doesn't care about you. Us. Any of us.

LANOLIN: You don't know him.

ROUKE: Yeah, I do.

LANOLIN: Then you aren't listening.

ROUKE: Right. Because the two of you have found some kind of profound, unspoken intimacy that transcends just fucking –

She punches him in the mouth. She swings again. He catches it. They fight. It's an even match. Whatever real anger has existed is burned off quickly and the fight starts to feel like a kind of release – something they both need. It has changed tone, becoming wild and more intimate – hovering just on the edge of turning into sex.

A charged pause. LANOLIN breaks it.

LANOLIN: Then tell him you think he's full of shit. Or stop whining.

ROUKE: I don't whine.

LANOLIN (*as ROUKE*): "UGGGG. DON'T PUT YOUR GLOVES IN MY BOX. Don't ever put your things anywhere near where my things are. What if I have to spend THREE SECONDS figuring out which gloves are mine...???"

End

There's a clicking sound – like Morse code – from the panel of instruments. They both look up. LANOLIN goes to the instruments. She takes down a clipboard hanging on the wall. She begins jotting something down - referencing the charts. She indicates to ROUKE to put on a headset. He does. He listens for a moment - nothing. He shrugs. He takes the headset off. The clicking stops. LANOLIN writes something down. She removes the sheet of paper, folds it up and seals it.

SQUEAK: You're the recorder.

LANOLIN and ROUKE stare at her. They've forgotten she's there.

LANOLIN: Yeah.

SQUEAK: I've never heard anyone write... before. Not up close. It sounds like whispering.

Pause.

SQUEAK: Could you write something else?

LANOLIN: I'm not supposed to waste the materials –

ROUKE: We're not supposed to appoint new listeners either -

LANOLIN: Fine.

She takes down the clipboard. She writes. SQUEAK listens.

SQUEAK: What are you writing?