

"Cry Baby"

by  
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1 INT. LT. MALTIN'S ALIEN PRISON CELL - ANY TIME

1

We are in a small, alien-looking prison cell. On a bunk, 30-year-old LT. MALTIN is *trying* to rest. He is wearing a beaten-up astronaut's uniform and has several days' growth of beard. He has his arm over his eyes and looks very agitated.

Through a speaker in the cell's ceiling, we start to hear a baby cry, softly at first and then growing louder.

MALTIN  
(exasperated)  
Not *again*!

Maltin groans as he tosses and turns on his bunk. He jams his hands over his ears.

The crying grows even louder.

MALTIN  
I'm gonna go *nuts*!

He gets up from his bunk, takes a few steps to the cell's metal wall, and starts pounding on it.

MALTIN  
Hey, Warden! *Warden*!

With a loud clang, the wall he was pounding on slides aside. We see CRUN, his alien jailer. He is noticeably alien, but not drastically so.

The crying fades a bit.

CRUN  
Is something wrong, Lt. Maltin?

MALTIN  
Is. . . is something. . . Can't  
you *hear* the crying?

CRUN  
Of course.

MALTIN  
Can you *do* something about it?

CRUN  
If I *wished* to.

MALTIN  
You son of a -

(CONTINUED)

CRUN

My advice would be to calm down.

MALTIN

*How?* All day, every day, for hours on end, all I can hear in this soundproofed cell you've locked me in is that *crying*.

CRUN

Can't you muffle the sound?

MALTIN

You've taken away anything I could muffle it *with*! I can only press my hands against my ears for so long.

CRUN

I do not feel sorry for you. You are here to serve your punishment for the heinous crime you committed.

MALTIN

It was an *accident*.

CRUN

Of *course* it was.

MALTIN

It *was*! The dust storm kicked up when Captain Kittredge and I were landing our spaceship. Our scanners were inoperative. We couldn't see the boy.

CRUN

His name was Frad.

MALTIN

I *know* that.

CRUN

So, because of your incompetence in landing your craft on Mingar during a *minor* dust storm, you crushed a child under one of your landing struts.

MALTIN

I told the judge -

(CONTINUED)

CRUN

I was at the trial. You were found guilty. *This* is your sentence.

MALTIN

To listen to a recording of him crying for hours on end? It's. . . It's *inhuman*.

CRUN

We are not human.

Maltin nervously paces.

MALTIN

I *can't* take this anymore.

CRUN

You have the option of choosing death, as your captain did.

Maltin stops pacing.

MALTIN

You'd like that. Wouldn't you?

CRUN

How I feel makes no difference.

MALTIN

The captain didn't know *how* you'd execute him.

CRUN

Turning him over to Frad's parents seemed the only reasonable thing to do.

MALTIN

You're *savages*.

CRUN

We did not kill a child.

MALTIN

I'll go *nuts* if I have to put up with much more of this!

CRUN

You will not.

(CONTINUED)

MALTIN

(beat)  
What do you mean?

CRUN

The computer will not allow it.

MALTIN

Computer? I thought you were the boss here.

CRUN

Oh no. I merely tend to the computer. It will not allow you to, as you said, "go nuts."

(beat)  
You see, through a network of sensors in the walls, it constantly monitors your condition. The computer knows how much you can physically tolerate.

MALTIN

It has a pretty high opinion of me.

CRUN

Every day, it will mete out your sentence until you think you can't *possibly* take any more. It will push you to the limit - to the very *brink* of your sanity! - and then it will back off and allow you to recuperate *just* enough to begin your sentence again.

MALTIN

The judge *has* to reconsider.

CRUN

He will not.

MALTIN

I can't take fifty more years of this!

CRUN

(beat)  
Where did you get that figure?

MALTIN

I'm thirty. Eighty years is the average human lifespan.

(CONTINUED)

CRUN

Not on Mingar.

MALTIN

(beat)

What. . . What do you mean?

CRUN

We live for *two hundred* years.

MALTIN

(sarcastically)

Good for you.

CRUN

Now that you are a prisoner here  
and breathing our atmosphere, you  
will likewise live for two  
centuries.

MALTIN

You're joking?

CRUN

Our doctors confirmed the changes  
happening to your body during your  
pre-incarceration physical.

MALTIN

*Two hundred years!* I can't  
possibly. . . I'll. . . I'll never  
survive for that long!

CRUN

The computer will see that you do  
so you complete your sentence.

MALTIN

How many times do I have to tell  
you people: The boy's death was an  
*accident!* I'm *sorry*.

CRUN

It makes no difference here.  
Murder is murder.

Maltin paces some more.

MALTIN

I *can't* stay in this room - with  
that *noise* - until I'm two hundred  
years old!

(CONTINUED)

CRUN

Yes, you can.

With a clang, the wall begins to slide back into place.  
Maltin tries to stop it, to no avail.

MALTIN

No, no! *Wait!*

With a clang, the wall is back in place.

The sound of the baby crying grows very loud. Maltin jams  
his hands over his ears.

MALTIN

*Noooooooooo!*

FADE TO BLACK.