

Solar Episode 6: Space

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-TITLES-

MAIN TITLE MUSIC

ELECTRONIC "ERROR" BLIP.

ALI:

(ELECTRONIC) Aethon Operating System Timer Failure has resulted in terminal error. Audio packets are unable to be compiled chronologically. Please reset A.O.S. internal clock. Manual Whiskey Foxtrot One fifty six Delta two.

ELECTRONIC "INTERNAL" BLIP.

Emergency audio packet 22 dash Foxtrot 2045.

ELECTRONIC "END TRANSMISSION BLIP.

NARRATOR:

CurtCo Media presents...

SOLAR.

MAIN TITLE MUSIC ENDS

Episode 6: Space

FADE:

SCENE 1.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: seventy nine.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

MESS HALL. WE HEAR THE COFFEE MAKER START, THEN  
WREN'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH QUICKLY WITH A  
SUDDEN STOP.

JESSA: (A LITTLE SURPRISED) Hi, Wren.

WREN: ...Aquino--I thought everyone would be at dinner.

JESSA: Everyone left like an hour ago.

WREN: Oh no. Really?

JESSA: You're working right down the hall. I imagine you can hear when everyone leaves and you time getting coffee so that you don't accidentally meet anyone else.

A BEAT.

Grab your coffee and come sit down.

WREN DOES SO...

I know Alex asked you to come to dinner.

WREN: He did. I tried. I really did...but--

JESSA: You're not in trouble, Wren. I just want to know why you didn't come to dinner.

WREN: ...I don't do well in groups. I just--I don't like having to talk about anything inconsequential.

JESSA: So you hate small talk?

WREN: (ANNOYED) Yes, but not just that.

JESSA: You hate...other people?

WREN: I like people in general.

JESSA: You hate being connected to other people?

WREN: Yes. That's it, I think..

JESSA: You hate depending on others and having others depend on you.

WREN: ...I'm not a people person.

A BEAT.

JESSA: I imagine you don't go to many parties.

WREN: I hate parties.

JESSA: Why?

WREN: Because--...I just take up space. I'm not doing anything to make my presence valuable.

JESSA: Taking up room is what most parties are for. Just an excuse for people to be together. If you got invited, someone must have wanted you there.

WREN: Or they felt bad for me.

JESSA: Or they felt bad for you--in which case--they were trying to help. Although not very deftly. (A BEAT) So I'm guessing you never figured out how to survive a party on your own.

WREN: I could stay at parties where people watched movies. Because then no one had to talk to each other.

JESSA: Well--now you have someone to talk to...Jessa Aquino, reporting for duty. (SHE REACHES OUT WITH HER BIONIC ARM) I'm your new friend in social situations.

WREN: (SKEPTICAL) Hi...

THEY SHAKE HANDS.

JESSA: And because we're now friends--you are no longer to give me a list of biometrics when I ask you how you are in your daily physicals.

WREN: What?

JESSA: You know--I ask you how you're doing and you tell me how many hours you slept. What your waking heart rate was. What food you've consumed so far that day.

WREN: That's all relevant.

JESSA: But it's not what I'm asking. I'm asking how you're doing. Are you stressed? Are you happy? Is Eli pissing you off?

WREN: I don't gossip.

JESSA: It isn't gossip. It's being a human. And I'm here to make sure you're well. Inside and out. Understood?

WREN: Understood.

JESSA: So...as long as we're having some coffee together, Tell me a little about yourself.

WREN: It's all in my file.

JESSA: And I want you to tell me. Anything about yourself that you are okay sharing.

WREN: (A BEAT) ...I worked for a few years in Antarctica.

JESSA: Which is--*amazing!* I know it's a stupid question but...how cold was it really?

WREN: Not as cold as it used to be.

JESSA: And?

WREN: I mean...my hair froze on more than one occasion.

JESSA: That's awesome! What were you studying?

WREN: Now I feel like you're just drilling me.

JESSA: Fair enough! I got carried away...um...something about myself...oh! I once adopted a cat with severe 'emotional problems.' He didn't trust humans. I had to sit with him under a kitchen table for two months before he'd let me pet him.

WREN: Why'd you adopt him?

JESSA: Because I was willing to sit with him under a table for two months and I wasn't sure if anyone else was.

A BEAT. WREN ACCEPTS THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

WREN: ...I like cats. I mean, I *get* them. I'd never own one because who would want that responsibility?

JESSA LAUGHS.

JESSA: Well--you came to the right place! All we have here are ants!

WREN: Do they do any tricks?

JESSA: Not that I've ever seen...So, why Antarctica?

THEN THE SOUND THINS OUT AND BEGINS PLAYING OVER THE SPEAKERS....WE HEAR NOW THE BROKEN FAN

WREN: (IN CAPSULE 1--PRESENT TIME) Ali--stop playback.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Playback stopped.

A BEAT.

(DISTANT) Searching for Mission Control.

WREN: ...Ali?

ALI: Yes?

WREN: I'm going to bed. Power down accessory functions until I wake up.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Incoming personal audio packet.

WREN: Is this the message from Chelsea again?

ALI: No. This message is from Mission Specialist Taaj Azi.

WREN: What?

ALI: Incoming personal audio packet from Mission Specialist Taaj Azi.

WREN: Play it for me.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

TAAJ: (SPEAKER) You know what my daughter loved?

JESSA: (SPEAKER) What?

TAAJ: (SPEAKER) What are those little wooden dolls? They come from Russia. And they stack inside of each other.



JESSA: (SPEAKER) Russian Nesting Dolls?

TAAJ: (SPEAKER) That's it. She loved those.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WREN: Ali...This is weird. Even for you.

ALI: I do not understand.

WREN: I know. But this is stuff that's already been recorded. I listened to this conversation yesterday.

NO RESPONSE.

Can you bring up that conversation, Ali? The one that was in the message you just played.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Ready for playback.

WREN: And see if you can connect with Jamal.

ALI: Yes.

WE HEAR THE OUTGOING MESSAGE SIGNAL, THEN:

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 2.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Eighty-nine days prior to launch.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ELI: Initiate Verbal Command Verification Sequence.

AOS STARTUP SOUND.

ALI: Hello. I am the Aethon Language Interface. You can call me Ali. Please state your first name, last name, and title.

ELI: Eli Wright. CimmTech Programming Engineer.

ELECTRONIC PROCESSING SOUND.

ELECTRONIC VERIFICATION.

ALI: You are "Specialist Eli Wright." You are the CimmTech Programming Engineer for the Aethon Solar Expedition set to launch in 89 days. Is that correct?

ELI: Yes.

ELECTRONIC BLIP OF SCREEN DISPLAY.

ALI: If your photograph is displayed on the screen, please tap twice to confirm visual identification.

POSITIVE DIGITAL SOUND.

Please recite the following sentences as they appear on the screen.

ELI: (HE HAS DONE THIS BEFORE) The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

ELECTRONIC VERIFICATION.

Sphinx of black quartz, judge my vow.

ELECTORNIC VERIFICATION.

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

ELECTRONIC PROCESSING SOUND AND ACCEPTANCE.

ALI: Hello, Specialist Eli Wright. The North American Space Coalition is honored to be manning a joint mission with Cimmerian Technologies--"The World Can Be More". Welcome to the Aethon. Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen spoke highly of you.

ELI IS ENGAGED, BUT DISTRACTED, FLIPPING PAPERS AROUND--ONLY PARTIALLY IN THIS CONVERSATION.

ELI: Sounds like Margaret. She rips you apart in person and then has nothing but praise once your back is turned.

ALI: Do you have animosity towards Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen?

ELI: No, no. Nothing like that. She's just like my mother cranked to eleven.

ALI: Who is your mother?

ELI: (SURPRISED) It's not in your files?

ALI: No.

ELI: (DISAPPOINTED)...Awesome.

ALI: You said, 'Cranked to eleven.' To what scale are you referring?

ELI: I don't actually know. It's just a saying. Like...'And then some.'

ALI: Can you provide a reference point to its usage in art and-or literature?

ELI: No clue. It's just something someone said and it stuck...it's uh...what's the word?

ALI: An idiom.

ELI: Idiom, thank you.

ALI: I will update that in my lexicon. It will help me when I assist future crews on future missions.

ELI: You are charming, Ali, but I need to get through some of these things on my list.

ALI: Is it anything I can assist you with?

ELI: Nope--Just got a punch up some of your programming. Like...right now you measure a bunch of three dimensional stuff. You know? How far away is the earth? How far away is the sun? At what speed is the solar wind traveling...you know? Partial information.

ALI: It is all necessary information for the mission--

ELI: It is! It is! No argument there. But what CimmTech was thinking is...you know...what if you could measure things in...*four dimensions!*? (A BEAT, TO HIMSELF) ...Never gets the reaction I want.

ALI: I measure time down to the microsecond.

ELI: No, no, time isn't the fourth dimension! That's dumb. I mean it's *part of it* because that's how we understand it as three dimensional beings but if we could try to measure it and--you know--I don't need to explain this to you. It's in the programming anyway...(TO HIMSELF) Like I've never talked with A.I. before...

Ali, I need to access your programming for CimmTech protocol and experimentation.

ERROR SOUND.

ALI: Security Access Passcode required from Flight Director Aarav Patel. Please enter code on screen now.

ELI: Yeah yeah--

HE SIGHS LIGHTLY AS HE ENTERS A 9 DIGIT NUMBER  
ONTO THE SCREEN.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Contacting Flight Director Aarav Patel for Security Access code.

ELI: Thank you.

A BEAT.

How long does it usually take?

A BEAT.

Nothing? No small talk while waiting for security access, I guess. (TO HIMSELF) Okay--then let's take a look-see at these panels...one dash...one dash...one dash....which building is capsule three in?

HE FLIPS SOME PAPERS.

I know we have to put it together in orbit, but why do we have to build the individual capsules so far apart?

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION.

ALI: Security access granted.

ELI: Great...Ali, where is capsule 3?

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Capsule three is located in the North Building in quadrant four.

ELECTRONIC BLIP ON THE SCREEN.

ELI: Oh! Okay--so just the next hangar over! Can you show me a quick schematic on where panel 3 dash 3 4 7 Beta Foxtrot would be?

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

Thank you. Very helpful. (SHOUTING TO SOMEONE NEARBY) Hey! Hey you--yeah--you're going to want to install it in Capsule 3 in quadrant four! It's on top!

INSTALLER: (VERY FAR AWAY) Thanks, man...

ELI: (STILL TO SOMEONE OFF MIC) Radio me when it's in place.

ALI: Is that all?

ELI: Oh, no. I am plugging in an auxiliary drive...aaaaaand thumbprint to open the file...

DEVICE HAS AN ELECTRONIC VERIFICATION SOUND.

Alright, this chunk of programming--it's gonna overwrite your current CimmTech programming for day-to-day functions, experimental data processing and recording, and emergency protocol.

ELECTRONIC WARNING SOUND.

ALI: Some of this programming will overwrite or generate conflicting programming provisions if activated. Are you sure you want to overwrite current protocol?

ELI: It shouldn't prevent *functioning* protocols though, right? It won't interfere with life support functionality...right?

ALI: That is correct.

ELI: Do I need to get additional access for this?

ALI: No, Specialist Eli Wright. I just need to confirm if you are sure that you want to overwrite programming--

ELI:

Oh, yeah, then yes, I'm sure! Download.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

SOUND OF 'DOWNLOAD' GETS DISTORTED AND  
OVERWHELMS THE AUDIO BEFORE CUTTING OUT  
SUDDENLY.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 3.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and twenty five.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CAPSULE 4 ROOM TONE. WE HEAR SOME LIGHT MOTORS  
FROM JESSA'S BIONIC ARM.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH AND THEN KNOCK ON THE METAL  
DOOR FRAME.

JESSA: Hey, Taaj. Come on in and have a seat.

TAAJ: Thanks.

TAAJ MOVES IN AND SITS DOWN AS JESSA GETS UP TO  
PREPARE A DEVICE.

JESSA: So all your readings from this morning were great. I know we've done this before, but I have to verify things verbally, so here we go again! 'It is one hour before your scheduled spacewalk for the drop of payload two. I am going to check all your vitals. Final approval for spacewalk viability can still be determined by me regardless of test results from this morning. Do you understand?'

TAAJ: I understand.

JESSA: Great. Thanks. Let's do heart rate first. Lemme see your wrist. Ali--mark today's date--mission day four two five--and record the following readings through my arm for Taaj Azi...Taaj, I think my hand might be a little cold, so I apologize in advance.

WE HEAR A SMALL MOTOR AS THE BIONIC FINGERS GRIP  
TAAJ'S WRIST.

TAAJ: It's fine.

A SHUDDER ROCKS THE SHIP, THEN:



A SUDDEN SHARP MOTOR SOUND AND A THUD AGAINST  
THE METAL TABLE.

TAAJ: OW--Fuck! Let go! Let go!!! Let go!!!

JESSA: (OVERLAPPING) Shit shit--I'm trying! Stay calm--Taaj, Stop moving--Ali!  
Power off my arm!

THE ARM POWERS DOWN AND GOES LIMP.

TAAJ: Ow! What the hell?

JESSA: I'm sorry, Taaj. Is your wrist alright?

TAAJ: You could have broken it!

JESSA: Let me see if it's sprained.

TAAJ: No!

JESSA: With my other arm. This one's still off. See?

WE HEAR SOME LIMP HANGING METAL SQUEAK.

Come on, sit down.

TAAJ: Has that ever happened before?

JESSA: No. Please sit down, let me make sure you're alright.

TAAJ SITS DOWN.

I'm gonna move your hand up and down, Okay? Does that hurt?

TAAJ: No.

JESSA: Left to right. Does that hurt?

TAAJ: No.

JESSA: In a circle. Does that hurt?

TAAJ: It doesn't hurt to move, it hurts where you almost *crushed* my wrist.

JESSA: Good. Then it isn't a sprain. It'll probably bruise, but you'll be okay. (A BEAT, TRYING FOR A JOKE)...Well...We should wait a little before retaking your heart rate, I guess.

TAAJ: ...I'm terrified.

JESSA: Because of the shudders?

TAAJ: I've been doing everything I can to make sure it won't happen again. Or or--that it won't happen *FOR REAL*. And I think we did it but--I won't know for sure until it's too late--

JESSA: Slow down, Taaj. What are you talking about?

A BEAT.

TAAJ: Did you know I have a daughter?

JESSA: ...I didn't.

TAAJ: Do you have children?

JESSA: No.

TAAJ: It's...Never mind, I shouldn't be telling you this--

JESSA: Ali?

ALI: Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino?

JESSA: Please close the door.

ALI: Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino.

THE DOOR SLIDES SHUT.

JESSA: Tell me whatever you want, Taaj.

A BEAT.

TAAJ: ...She was an accident. But people told me my whole life that I should want to be a mother, so...I kept her. The father was a good guy...just not...*my* guy...And it was a rough pregnancy. I almost didn't graduate on time. But I did. And then I gave birth...

And...here was this baby...that I loved with my whole heart...and she--*hated* me. She wouldn't sleep in my arms. She wouldn't even sleep if I was in the room. She would cry when I'd go to pick her up...Can you imagine what it's like to love someone who cries when they see your face?

JESSA: No.

TAAJ: Her father offered to take custody...and I accepted. I'd see her on occasion--maybe once every other year for a while. Her father says she doesn't remember crying but...I did. So I took myself out of her life.

JESSA: Do you regret it?

TAAJ: ...No. I don't regret leaving her...I regret *having* her...Not *her*. I don't regret *her*. I regret that I brought her into my life. I regret that she didn't have a say in the matter. And I regret that I only ever disappointed her...I gave her a piece of my heart, and now I can't get it back.

A BEAT.

JESSA: Are you scared of losing her?

TAAJ: I'm scared of dying with so much of my life undone...I voted to go home--but *you*...*you* voted to continue. Why?

JESSA: Ali, can you power my arm back on?

A POWER UP SOUND, THEN SOME MOTOR WHIRRING AS  
JESSA'S ARM REACTIVATES.

THEN IT BEGINS TO DO THE SLOW FINGER DIGIT WAVE.

Alright--not exactly encouraging.

TAAJ: It's just doing a super slow creepy wave.

JESSA: Ali, please reboot all programming for my arm functionality.

ALI: Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino.

THE ARM POWERS DOWN MOMENTARILY--THEN POWERS UP AGAIN...BUT THIS TIME ONCE ON, IT SEEMS STABLE...JESSA TRIES IT...

JESSA: Power down...reboot...aaaaand okay...there, see? The arm is back up and working! Seems fine. Sometimes all it needs is a reboot! Right? Just like Ali.

TAAJ: I'm not going to let you retake my pulse with that arm again.

JESSA: Understood...(A BEAT) You wanna know why I voted the way I did after the 'flash'? Because I owe CimmTech my life. I was in a coma for a week after my car accident. And when I came to, every inch of my hospital room was covered with CimmTech equipment. Heart monitor. Respirator. Even the catheter. CimmTech kept me alive when all I wanted to do was die. Their stuff even detected a blood infection before the doctors did. And ultimately...they designed this very arm...(SHE WAVES WITH IT) CimmTech saved my life and gave me new one. I can only imagine how important your mission must be. And if CimmTech trusts you on this mission...then I trust you with my life. (A BEAT) I'm going to clear you for the spacewalk despite inaccurate readings. I'll make a full report explaining that my arm malfunction was the cause of the change in biometrics.

TAAJ: ...Thank you, Jessa.

JESSA: And if I can advise you on more thing...Your daughter--

TAAJ: I shouldn't have brought it up--

JESSA: What was the last thing you said to her?

TAAJ: ...'I'm sorry.' She might be too young to remember though...

JESSA: Then maybe you should give her something to remember. Ali, please open the door.

THE DOOR SLIDES OPEN...

TAAJ: (A BEAT--TALKING TO THE WALLS) You know what my daughter loved?

JESSA: ...What?

TAAJ: What are those little wooden dolls? They come from Russia. And they stack inside of each other.

JESSA: Russian Nesting Dolls?

TAAJ: That's it. She loved those.

JESSA: ...What are you talking about?

TAAJ: Thank you, Jessa.

JESSA: Taaj?

FOOTSTEPS AS TAAJ WALKS AWAY. AUDIO TRANSFORMS,  
PLAYING OVER SPEAKERS IN CAPSULE 8. WREN IS OVER  
THE SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 1.

JESSA: (SPEAKER) Ali?

ALI: (SPEAKER) Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino?

JESSA: (SPEAKER) Can you run diagnostics on my arm and send them to Mission Control in the next audio packet?

ALI: (SPEAKER) Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino.

JESSA: (SPEAKER) And bring up the itemized list of what needs to be prepped for any potential disaster during a spacewalk. I want to be prepared for Payload Two.

ALI: (SPEAKER) Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino.

JESSA: (SPEAKER) And I mean *any* potential disaster.

ALI: (SPEAKER) Yes, Medical Officer Jessa Aquino.

WREN: (OVER INTERCOM) Ali, pause playback.

DIGITAL BLIP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 8 WITH JAMAL, AIR COOLING SYSTEM OFF, WREN ON INTERCOM.

ALI: Playback paused.

WREN: So that's what Ali 'sent' to me.

JAMAL: Ali is glitching.

WREN: Her audio playback has stopped glitching.

JAMAL: Ali, please contact Mission Control.

ALI: I am unable to locate Mission Control.

JAMAL: See?

WREN: But that might not be her fault.

JAMAL: Because Mission Control might not be there.

WREN: Right. But...Why would Ali send me this audio? What was that conversation about? The Russian Nesting Dolls at the end, I mean?

JAMAL: I don't know...This feels weird.

WREN: You said you'd help me.

JAMAL: I know...but this is kind of eavesdropping.

WREN: Why is that a problem?

JAMAL: I didn't know Taaj had a daughter...*Did you?* (A BEAT) Taaj *didn't* want us to know that. Is there a way to skip personal conversations like this?

ALI: (DISTANT) Searching for Mission Control.

WREN: ...If CimmTech is responsible for the disaster--we need to know what happened. We know CimmTech was deleting audio files because of the gaps on Ali's timeline. So we *have* to listen to whatever they *didn't* delete.

JAMAL: Are we sure they were deleting things? I thought you said Taaj asked Alex to delete this recording. Why couldn't she just delete it herself?

WREN: Maybe only Margaret was deleting things! It just doesn't make sense any other way.

ANOTHER SUDDEN RUMBLE--STRONGER THAN THE  
LAST--FELT THROUGHOUT THE SHIP.

JAMAL: Safety restraint standby!

ALI: Safety restraints on standby.

JAMAL: Display cam feed on reactor turbine!

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

Standby on remote joystick control for reactor repair arm!

ALI: Remote control on standby.

ALI: (GENERAL ALARM) Reactor drum rotation has ceased. Altitude decreasing.

AN ALARM BEGINS.

ALI: (INTERCOM SPEAKERS, REPEATING) Altitude warning. Reactor Failure.

WREN: I'm going to get into the safety restraint.

JAMAL: Wren--wait!

WREN: We're going weightless.

JAMAL: I know! I feel it! Trust me!...Ali! Activate reactor arm video feed!

ALI: Reactor Arm Video feed only available in capsules eight and nine--

JAMAL: Activate! Activate joystick control--Hold onto something.

WREN: I can still get to the restraint!

JAMAL: It'll take you twenty minutes to get out! Grabbing the closest rotary drum--

ALI: Drum one--

JAMAL: Grabbing *drum one* and--

HE JIGGLES THE JOYSTICK. THE ALARMS CONTINUE.

Trying again. Grabbing drum one and--

HE JIGGLES THE JOYSTICK. THE DRUM STARTS SPINNING.  
ALARM SHUTS DOWN. SOME SMALL THINGS CLINK AS  
THEY LAND.

ALI: Altitude stabilized. All systems nominal.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: You okay?



WREN: I'm fine. Ali--take note of all scientific readings throughout the Aethon--  
time stamp all of it and load it into the queue to send to Earth.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: I am unable to locate Mission Control--

WREN: (OVERLAPPING) I know--just put it in the queue.

A BEAT. BREATHING SUBSIDES.

...Jamal...What do we do when the reactor fails and you're on *my* side of  
the ship?

JAMAL: (AN EXCUSE)...I gotta check on the thermal reactor levels. Give me a  
few minutes and we can review the payload two drop. Okay?

WREN: ...Okay

JAMAL: Ali, Terminate call.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

JAMAL DOESN'T MOVE RIGHT AWAY. HE SITS AND SIGHS  
DEEPLY TO HIMSELF.

ALI: (DISTANT) Searching for mission control.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 4.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and twenty five.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CAPSULE 9 ROOM TONE.

JAMAL: Ali. Can we run a simulation of payload two drop if the satellite draws *twice* as much energy as projected?

COMPUTING SOUND.

ALI: Simulation readings displayed on console D in Capsule nine.

JAMAL: What would happen to you, though?

ALI: The reactor could go offline temporarily. But power reserves should cover any over-expenditure of energy.

JAMAL: (KNOWS THE ANSWER) And that's *not* what happened after payload one?

ALI: I am unable to answer that question.

JAMAL: Yeah...okay...Strange question: What would happen if we *reverse* the energy flow?

ALI: Please clarify your question.

JAMAL: What if we *take in* energy from the satellite?

ALI: We are not projecting to *absorb* any energy at this time from the CimmTech Experiment.

JAMAL: Yeah--but...Can you run the simulation anyway?

ERROR BLIP.

ALI: Error. Unable to complete requested simulation due to redundant hypotheticals.

KNOCK ON THE METAL DOORFRAME.

JAMAL: Shit! Eli! God...

ELI: Nervous?

JAMAL: No. I just didn't hear you walk up.

ELI: That's why I knocked.

JAMAL: What do you want? Shouldn't you be prepping for the spacewalk in...under an hour?

ELI: Ali switched our audio packets.

JAMAL: I noticed. (ACCUSATION) *CimmTech's* payload one drop seems to have scrambled some programming. If only we had a programmer who could fix it.

ELI: I'm not responsible for all of *Ali's* programming.

JAMAL: Then what do you do here exactly?

ELI: I am responsible for the programming of--

JAMAL: I didn't actually want an answer, Eli.

ELI: Oh...Maybe you should start using a hand signal or something so people know when you're actually asking a question or just being an asshole.

JAMAL: Most people can tell. I had Ali send you your audio packet.

ELI: I saw. Thank you.

JAMAL: (SARCASTIC) Did you know you could do that? Have Ali resend the packages? She's programmed to do things like that. You do know what programming is, don't you, Specialist Wright?

ELI: I didn't mean a middle finger when I suggested a hand signal.

JAMAL: But it cleared things up, right? (A BEAT) Why are you here, Eli?

ELI: ...I need you to watch the payload drop today.

JAMAL: I will...I'll be monitoring the reactor levels from here in real time--

ELI: No I mean...actually watch...out the window.

THE GRAVITY OF ELI IS SINKING IN ON JAMAL.

JAMAL: Why?

ELI: If *it* happens again--I want *you* to see it.

JAMAL: Why me?

ELI: Because if *you* believe me--then I'll *know* what I saw.

A BEAT. JAMAL TURNS AWAY.

JAMAL: ...Ali?

ALI: Yes, Pilot Jamal Davis.

JAMAL: Can you run a simulation if I run the energy through reserve power units?

COMPUTING SOUND.

ALI: Simulation results displayed on Console D in capsule nine.

ELI: (ANNOYED) Will you help me?

JAMAL: (TO ALI) So it looks like it would prevent a power overload but I would have to change it all manually.

ELI: Of course you won't help me. Why would a selfish egomaniac try to help--

JAMAL: Your insults suck.

ELI: Fuck you.

JAMAL: Better.

ELI: *I need your help, Jamal. Please.*

JAMAL: I don't trust you.

ELI: Because I'm CimmTech.

JAMAL: No. I don't trust you because you saw something and then you said you didn't. So either you're a liar about what you saw or you're a liar about what you didn't see.

ELI: Then look out the window. *See what I lied about.*

JAMAL: (A BEAT) ...Did you listen to my audio packet?

ELI: No. As soon as I heard Chelsea's voice--

JAMAL: So you listened to it.

ELI: Only a few seconds.

JAMAL: But you listened to it.

ELI: No, I--yes, but--

JAMAL: I'm messing with you. Keep up. Or do you need a hand signal for that too?

ELI: Did you listen to *my* audio packets?

JAMAL: Oh, hell yeah.

ELI: What?!

JAMAL: You wanna report me? Or do you want me to look out the window? You see, you can't report me..because if you want me to look out the window--

ELI: (OVERLAPPING) Yes, obviously. I get it. Shut up. You talk so much.

JAMAL: Your brother seems to like talking to you about as much as I do.

ELI: Great.

JAMAL: And it sounds like he's throwing out some stuff from a '*Will*' somebody? Who is Will?

ELI: Will was my--*No*--I'm not going to engage with you about this!

JAMAL: Then by all means leave! And have Ali send me my audio packet!

A BEAT.

ELI: I gave you every opportunity to be nice to me.

JAMAL: (A REALIZATION) You *fucker*.

ELI: Yes, Jamal, to answer your question, I know programming *very well*. And I know for a fact that Ali can't transfer the audio packets without authorization from the recipient--*ME*. And you'll want this audio packet. Chelsea needs to talk to you about her fiance, Hiroto. *Big news*. (A BEAT) And you're right. It *is* effective with the middle finger.

JAMAL: You could have just told me upfront.

ELI: I could have.

JAMAL: But...

ELI: ...I was hoping you'd help me, regardless.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: What if I don't see a flash?

ELI: Then I guess I lied about seeing one.

JAMAL: I'll look out the window.

ELI: How do I know you'll--

JAMAL: I'm a man of my word.

A BEAT.

ELI: ...Ali?

ALI: Yes, Specialist Eli Wright?

ELI: Please transfer today's Wright Personal Audio Packet 425 dash 1 2045 to Pilot Davis.

ALI: Yes, Specialist Eli Wright.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION SOUND.

Personal audio packet transferred.

JAMAL: (RELUCTANT)...Thanks.

ELI: ...Margaret will know if you're changing the energy flow to go through the reserve units. So you need to make the change when you won't get caught by her.

JAMAL: When?

ELI: And Alex probably would want to know you're doing it. But telling him means telling Margaret.

JAMAL: *So when?*

ELI: Whenever they *both* aren't looking. During off hours?

JAMAL: Maybe...but if I get caught, won't that raise more questions?

ELI: (ALMOST SINCERE) So don't get caught.

ELI BEGINS WALKING AWAY.

You'll look--*actually look*--out the window?

JAMAL: I will.

ELI: ...On the bright side...maybe you'll get to witness my death!

JAMAL: Don't get my hopes up!

ELI IS GONE.

...Ali.

ALI: Yes, Pilot Jamal Davis?

JAMAL: Please open the audio packet you just received for me.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

Play the message from Chelsea.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CHELSEA: (OVER SPEAKER--A LITTLE WORRIED) ...Hey Jamal...this isn't easy for me to say...it's about Hiroto and me...Hiroto's dad is very sick...

ELECTRONIC DISTORTION.



END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 5.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and twenty five.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE ON THE BRIDGE--ALEX'S VOICE IS THE PRIMARY VOICE--ALL OTHERS ARE PIPED THROUGH THE RADIO AT VARYING QUALITY.

ALI: Commander Alex Tawley.

ALEX: Yes, Ali?

ALI: Everyone is in position for the launch of CimmTech Satellite Number Two.

ALEX: Thank you, Ali. I need you to record on every sensor you have for the next two hours. Send it all in tomorrow's audio packet. No matter what happens.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ALEX: ...Connect me to the payload two spacewalk, please.

ALI: Connecting you to the payload two spacewalk, already in progress.

ELECTRONIC BLIP. (EVERYONE IS TENSE, EXCEPT FOR MARGARET WHO IS MORE DISGRUNTLED.)

ALEX: This is Onboard Commander Tawley, joining the launch of CimmTech Earth-synchronous Satellite number two. Please report who is on the commlink and their current positions for the record.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Specialist Eli Wright. In Capsule five bay awaiting deployment sequence for payload two.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen. In capsule five bay awaiting deployment sequence for payload two.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Specialist Taaj Azi. In Capsule five manning deployment bay arm, awaiting deployment sequence for payload two.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Pilot Jamal Davis. In Capsule eight, tracking reactor and energy flow readings, awaiting activation of payload two.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) Medical Officer Aquino. In Capsule four, on standby for emergency during deployment and activation of payload two.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Good, let's begin--

ALEX: You out there, Wren?

A MOMENT. THEN A RADIO INTERRUPTION.

WREN: (INTERCOM) Specialist Dr. Guerrero, following deployment readings on console 1 of Capsule 1.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Dr. Guerrero is not a part of this launch. I did not approve her involvement.

ALEX: Her involvement will not be critical, I concur, but she is on standby in case of emergency and will notify us if she detects anything out of the ordinary in her readings.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) She isn't cleared to have access to CimmTech experiments. It's a breach in protocol.

ALEX: I didn't grant her access. She'll be tracking the deployment using *only* NASC sensors.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) This is unacceptable, Commander.

ALEX: Should we cancel the deployment?

A BEAT.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Specialist Wright--begin.

ALEX: (HERE WE GO) ...'Once more into the breach, dear friends--'

JAMAL: (INTERCOM, ENTHUSIASTIC) 'Or close up the wall with our English dead!'

ALEX: (*WITH MARGARET*) Not now Jamal. This isn't the time or place.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM, *WITH ALEX*) If we must breach protocol I will at least insist we follow the scripted deployment.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM, *WITH MARGARET*) Why the hell would you bring up dead people right now, Jamal? Think for two seconds.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Okay! Jesus. Sorry...

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) ...Eli...when you're ready.

A BEAT. ELI IS TERRIFIED AND ALONE...AND WE HEAR THAT IN EVERYTHING HE SAYS...

(INTERCOM) ...Eli.

ELI: (INTERCOM)...Ali--please...please link wireless power to Payload two.

ALI: (INTERCOM) Yes, Specialist Eli Wright.

ELECTRONIC BLIP. POWER UP SOUND.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Okay. Okay...So far so good. Thank you, Ali...Power supply connection has been verified. Levels are...nominal. Next I will establish NASC Network Arm connectivity...Activating communication on payload two.

DIGITAL BLIP IN HELMET.

ALI: Abnormal spike detected in power usage.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Power usage spike is adherent to modelled predictions regarding Payload two deployment.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) This happened last time.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Correct, Pilot Davis.

ALEX: Pilot Davis, can you confirm levels are returning to nominal?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) I confirm.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Requesting verbal permission to continue with payload two deployment protocol.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Chief Scientist Cohen--permission granted.

ALEX: Onboard Commander Tawley--permission granted.

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...okay...continuing with payload two deployment protocol. Payload two is now hailing the network arm connection.

DIGITAL BLIP.

ALI: Please enter access code to allow for sync with NASC Network Arm.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Commander?

ALEX: Echo. 8. 2. Beta. 1. 3. Uniform. 9. 9. 1. 8. Whiskey. Uniform.

DIGITAL BLIP.

ALI: Access granted.

DIGITAL BLIP.

CimmTech Payload Two is now synced with NASC Network Arm.

ELI: (INTERCOM, HEAVY SIGH, TO HIMSELF) ...oh shit. My hands are shaking.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Follow the scripted procedure, Specialist Wright.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) Take a deep breath for me, Eli. Hold it. And exhale--

ELI DOES SO.

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...Okay...Specialist Azi. You may begin payload bay arm extension for orbital placement of satellite two.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Payload bay arm extending for orbital placement. Brace yourselves.

THE SOUND OF A MOTOR--THE ARM IS EXTENDING WITH  
ELI AND MARGARET ON IT.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Pilot Davis?

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) *Eli*. stick to the script unless there's an emergency.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Jamal, you out there?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) I'm here, Eli.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Are you looking?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) I'm looking.

ALEX: Pilot Davis, you're supposed to be monitoring energy usage levels.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Yes, Commander. I am.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Jamal--

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Eli, I gave my word.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Eli--we took care of this, right?

ELI: (INTERCOM) Right.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Everything's going to be fine...right?

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...I hope so...

A BEAT.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Stopping payload arm extension.

THE MOTOR STOPS AND WE HEAR THE WEIGHT OF THE  
SATELLITE SHAKE THE ARM UP AND DOWN.

(INTERCOM) I am verifying orbital position.

A BEAT.

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...Margaret--

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Everything will be fine, Eli. Trust me. Trust only me...

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) ...Orbital position is accurate for release.

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...Thank you, Specialist Azi. Requesting permission to activate payload two.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Chief Scientist Cohen--permission granted.

ALEX: Onboard Commander Tawley--permission granted.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Activating payload two...Jamal are you watching?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) I am.

ELI SIGHS IN PREPARATION. HE IS ON THE VERGE OF A  
PANIC ATTACK.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Counting down from three. Three. Two.....One.

DIGITAL BLIP.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM)...Payload two activated...

A MOMENT WHILE WE WAIT FOR SOMETHING TO GO  
WRONG...BUT NOTHING DOES...

TAAJ: (INTERCOM, HESITANT) ...Payload two successfully activated...We're getting readings.

A LONG BEAT--EVERYONE IS WAITING. NOT MARGARET.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Detach the payload, Specialist Wright.

A MOMENT MORE.

(INTERCOM) Specialist Wright?

ELI: (INTERCOM, RELEAVED AND DISAPPOINTED) ...Nothing happened.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Payload two was successfully activated.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Nothing happened. Jamal? The readings--are they--

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Power usage is currently under anticipated levels.

A BEAT.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Detach the payload, Specialist Wright.

ELI: (INTERCOM, ANNOYED) Give it a second...Ali, any unique energy detections?

ALI: No, Specialist Eli Wright.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Eli. Detach the payload. Everything is fine. The second system is stabilizing the first.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Nothing happened, Eli.

ELI: (INTERCOM) I know that! I just want to be sure! Give it a second!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) So what did you see the first time? Your own reflection?



TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Jamal! Zip it! Eli--everything's fine. *The precautionary measures* were successful.

ELI: (INTERCOM) But I saw something last time.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) You did not, Specialist Wright.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) We all heard you take it back, remember?

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) It doesn't matter, Eli. We solved the problem.

ELI: (INTERCOM) But I saw--

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) We solved it!

A BEAT.

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...Specialist Wright, detaching payload two, lock one.

A THUD AS ELI FORCES HIS FIST INTO SOME DEVICE THAT EMITS A PARTIAL 'RELEASE' FOR PAYLOAD TWO.

(INTERCOM) Specialist Wright, detaching payload two, lock two

A THUD AS ELI FORCES HIS FIST INTO A SIMILAR DEVICE THAT RELEASES PAYLOAD TWO.

(INTERCOM) Payload two released, please confirm orbital position Specialist Azi.

A BEAT.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM, RELIEVED) Position confirmed...(TO HERSELF)...Thank god...

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Specialist Azi. Please retract the payload bay arm.

THE MOTOR AS THE ARM BEGINS RETRACTING.

ALEX: Specialist Wright...Is the deployment complete?

ELI: (INTERCOM, ANGRY) Specialist Wright confirming that payload two drop was successful.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) CimmTech payload two drop was successful.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) CimmTech payload two drop was successful.

ALEX: Wren?

WREN: (INTERCOM, DISAPPOINTED) ...Everything seems nominal.

A BEAT.

ALEX: (FRUSTRATED)...Okay...then...Payload drop two was a success. Taaj, finish bringing them inside and close off capsule five. I want a full report from everyone.

MARGARET: (INTERCOM) Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ALEX: Ali, terminate my comm link.

ALI: Connection terminated.

AN ELECTRONIC BLIP.

A BEAT. THE AUDIO SLOWLY MOVES TO DAY 549. CAPSULE 1, WITH JAMAL ON A SPEAKER FROM CAPUSLE 8.

ALEX: ...Shhhhit.

ALI: What's wrong, Commander Alex Tawley?

ALEX: *Nothing*, apparently...

ALI: (SPEAKER) Is that problematic for you?

ALEX: (SPEAKER) No, it's--...If something had happened...I'd know what to do.

ALI: (SPEAKER) But 'nothing' happened and you don't know what to do.

ALEX: (SPEAKER) Correct. Sometimes nothing can be worse than something.

WREN: Ali--pause playback.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Playback paused.

WREN: Why did Eli break the script to talk to you?

JAMAL: Eli always broke the script.

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER FROM CAPSULE 8) Capsule eight temperature is currently one hundred and eight point one degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point three degrees Celsius.

WREN: (OVERLAPPING) Yeah--but why did he ask for you? I thought you guys didn't get along.

JAMAL: Eli asked me to watch for the flash. That's all.

WREN: And why did you help him?

JAMAL: Wren--this was one of the few parts of our mission that actually went according to anyone's plan at all. You want a smoking gun--but this isn't it. This is the--what do you call it?

WREN: The control?

JAMAL: Yeah.

WREN: But it isn't. This happened after things were going wrong. This is symptomatic of a bigger problem.

JAMAL: When was the last time you got some sleep?

WREN: I just had some coffee, I'm fine--

JAMAL: Ali, how long has it been since Wren slept?

ALI: Two days.

JAMAL: For *over* an hour?

ALI: Seven days.

WREN: There's too much to do. And if I could just stop obsessing over these idiotic ants, maybe I--

JAMAL: Figure out how to contact earth! That's it! That's the only problem you need to solve! If you think we'll figure out how exactly CimmTech shut down communications by reviewing the recordings, then let's do that!

WREN: But it's all related.

JAMAL: Solve the *one problem* that you have the ability to solve! You're on the network arm. I can't do that for you. Ali can't do that for you...That's the *one* problem you actually have power over. Okay?

WREN: But I'm going to save you, Jamal.

JAMAL: One problem at a time, Wren. (A BEAT) Wait--what's up with the ants?

A STATIC PULSE WARPS THE RADIO SIGNAL...

(TERRIFIED) Shit!...

WE HEAR SOMETHING FALL TO THE FLOOR.

WREN: Jamal, you there? You broke up for a second.

A BEAT.

Did I lose you?

A BEAT.

Ali, is the link to Jamal still active?

ALI: Yes, the link is still active.

WREN: Jamal?

ALI: (DISTANT) Searching for Mission Control.

A BEAT. WE HEAR JAMAL BREATHING DEEPLY...

JAMAL: (AWAY FROM MIC, TERRIFIED) ...There's a ghost in my capsule.

WREN: What?

THE STATIC WARPS AGAIN.

JAMAL: ...There's a ghost in my capsule. It's at the window.

WREN: Outside the window?

JAMAL: Inside. Inside.

WREN: Ali, do you detect anything in Jamal's capsule--which one is it?

ALI: I detect nothing irregular in capsules 8 or 9.

THE STATIC WARPS AGAIN.

WREN: What's happening to the comm link signal?

ALI: I detect nothing wrong with the comm link signal.

JAMAL: It's here, Wren.

WREN: Jamal...I believe that you're seeing something. But it isn't real. Stay calm.

JAMAL: It's waving at me.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: It's waving at me. It's...it's trying to make contact I think?

WREN: It's waving?

JAMAL: I'm gonna wave back.

WREN: Jamal...is it possible you're projecting onto it what you want to see?

JAMAL: ...I didn't see Eli's flash. I didn't believe him. And look where that got us.

WREN: This is different.

JAMAL: I'm going to make physical contact.

WREN: No--stay away!

JAMAL: It *waved* at me, Wren! It knows I'm here and I see it!

WREN: Jamal!

JAMAL: If it isn't real, it won't hurt me--

WREN: Jamal--You're going to electrocute yourself, *don't*--!

HUGE STATIC BURST.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.