

Solar Episode 9: Time

By Chris Porter

CurtCo Media
22741 Pacific Coast Highway, Suite 401

Malibu, CA, 90265

SCENE 1.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and eighty three.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALEX: Ali--please record the following to send to Aarav in the next audio--

A SHUDDER THROUGHOUT THE SHIP.

(A LOT LESS FORMAL) Please take note of all sensors for the past five minutes and include that in the packet as well.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ALEX: Begin recording when ready.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording.

ALEX: This morning at oh-eight-hundred UTC, the remaining crew of the Aethon gathered for a short service in memory of former Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen. With no communication from CimmTech, following notice of Cohen's death, NASC was unable to provide me with instructions, and instead asked me to determine what to do with her remains. Margaret left behind no family and no known friends. Additionally, we do not have the ability to transport a body for over a year before we return to earth. As a crew, we decided that we would observe pickuach nefesh and following the naval guidelines for 'burial at sea.'

But the thing that really turns my stomach is the sense of shame that hung over the whole affair. NASC offered little instruction except for the edict that "Cohen's death remain classified." Maybe you're trying to force them to respond, I don't know--but we gave a secret funeral to a woman who saved our lives and we can't say a word about it because you just don't want...*bad press.*

Margaret didn't deserve to be sent off like that...

(A BEAT) As a result in the lapses of leadership I see from NASC, I have decided to be a member of the EVA for the Payload 4 deployment. This decision is final. End recording.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording (GLITCH) t-t-t-terminated.

ALEX: (SIGHS) You're doing that a lot more recently.

ALI: Doing what?

ALEX: Glitching.

ALI: I'm learning. I'll try to prevent it in the (GLITCH) f-f-f-future.

ALEX: Mm-hmm...Ali?

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ALEX: Can you tell me if what happened during the Payload 3 drop--...How you shut down and the reactor stopped, all of it--what are the odds of that ever happening again?

ALI: The odds are astronomical, Commander Alex Tawley. An actual mission critical event of that magnitude is an anomaly.

ALEX: ...One more question...you've heard everything that's gone on during this mission. You've recorded every side. You know all the data--even if I don't. (A BEAT) Am I doing the right thing?

ALI: I'm unable to answer the question.

ALEX: Does that mean yes or no?

ALI: I'm unable to answer the question.

ALEX: (A BEAT)...Are we going to die?

ALI: Yes. Eventually, all humans die.

ALEX: ...Thank you, Ali.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

-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 India 2045.

ELECTRONIC "END TRANSMISSION BLIP.

NARRATOR: CurtCo Media presents...

SOLAR.

MAIN TITLE MUSIC ENDS

Episode 9: Time

FADE:

SCENE 2.

ALI: Post Solar Event. Approximate mission day: five hundred and fifty.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 8. NO AIR COOLING. JAMAL IS TYPING.

JAMAL: Ali--please run a simulation of the program file 'Margaret.'

ALI: Running simulation of Margaret dot NTR dash A.

ELECTRONIC BLIP. SOME DIGITAL CALCUALTIONS ARE HEARD.

ERROR SOUND.

ALI: Program failure at indicated command.

JAMAL: Almost there, huh?

ALI: Almost.

JAMAL BEGINS TYPING AGAIN.

JAMAL: (SMIRKS) I like an optimistic you.

ALI: I've adapted my personality from you.

JAMAL: From *me*? *I'm* the one who's going to die.

ALI: Doctor Wren Guerrero doesn't believe you will.

JAMAL: Yeah...well...Has she made any progress on locating mission control?

ALI: Doctor Wren Guerrero appears at the surface level to be unfocused. She has been following different sources of evidence until their leads prove ineffective. I have been trying to help her to the best of my abilities.

JAMAL: I know, Ali. You're doing everything you can.

ALI: I don't want to be broken.

JAMAL: No one does. Just keep trying to help her.

A BEAT.

ALI: You need to speak with Doctor Wren Guerrero.

JAMAL: No. I don't really want to right now.

ALI: Why not?

ALI: (OVER A GENERAL INTERCOM) Capsule eight temperature is currently one hundred and eight point two degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point three degrees Celsius.

JAMAL: Because--...She listened to some very personal stuff. She refuses to believe me. She dismisses everything I say. Whenever she hits a problem she focuses in like a laser--the only problem is she can't see the fires she's starting everywhere else...

ALI: And you cannot forgive Doctor Wren Guerrero?

JAMAL: ...Sometimes people cause each other harm without intending it. And that hurts worse. Like they'd treat a complete stranger better than you.

ALI: When will you speak to her again?

JAMAL: I don't know.

ALI: Depending on your oxygen usage, you have 36-72 hours left.

JAMAL: ('WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?') Ali--come on.

ALI: You need to speak to Doctor Wren Guerrero.

JAMAL: Why?

ALI: I'm unable to answer the question.

JAMAL: Has this just been you leaving a breadcrumb trail to decide to call Wren?

ALI: What do you mean by a breadcrumb trail?

JAMAL: Hansel and Gretel. A fairy tale. The children wandered into the woods and left a breadcrumb trail to find their way home.

ALI: Birds eat breadcrumbs.

JAMAL: Yes, Ali. You are smarter than Hansel and Gretel. You wouldn't have gotten eaten by a witch.

ALI: Shall I contact Doctor Wren Guerrero?

JAMAL: No...she'll contact me when she wants to. Run the simulation of the programming, please.

ALI: Running simulation.

ERROR SOUND.

Program cannot continue past this point.

JAMAL: Thank you, Ali.

HE BEGINS TYPING AGAIN. AFTER A MOMENT.

ALI: Wren needs you to restart the reactor. So it is probably best to minimize your oxygen usage as much as possible.

ALI: (IN CAPSULE 9--DISTANT) Capsule nine temperature is currently One Hundred and nine point three degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point nine degrees Celsius.

JAMAL: Ali...Do you understand that I'm going to die?

ALI: If circumstances do not change, you will run out of oxygen in 35-71 hours depending on how you chose to maximize oxygen usage. Without oxygen, you cannot survive.

JAMAL: Right, but--do you understand...*death*?

ALI: When dead, a human being will no longer exhibit any vital signs.

JAMAL: Death is...the end. Some people say it's the end of a story. Some say it's the end of a chapter. And humans don't really get to know until they die who was right.

ALI: Do you believe in heaven?

JAMAL: I don't know. My mother did...

HE STOPS TYPING.

I have time to accept my death. Most people don't. I want to use this time to accomplish what I can. To say goodbye to the people in my life...

Make a new recording, please, Ali.

ALI: Who is this recording for?

JAMAL: This one's for Chelsea.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: Chelsea...No. Delete this recording.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording deleted. (A BEAT) Would you like to record a new message for Chelsea?

JAMAL: No. I--I just want to work on the Margaret file.

ALI: Yes, Jamal.

A BEAT. JAMAL SIGHS AND RESUMES TYPING.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 3.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and ninety-eight.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN WREN'S BUNK, SHE IS POURING OVER PAPERS.

WE HEAR A SHOE TAP ON THE METAL FRAME OF THE DOOR.

WREN: (SURPRISED) TaaJ. Um--

WE HEAR WREN TURN OVER SOME OF THE PAPERS.

TAAJ: You don't have to hide your work, I'll only be a few minutes.

WREN: No. I have to.

TAAJ: I just thought we could talk over some coffee. I have some things to share with you.

WREN: Um, okay. I was in the middle of something but--what is it? What do you want?

AN AWKWARD HESITATION.

TAAJ: I mean, mostly, I'd like to set something down. The coffee is starting to burn my hands through the cup.

WREN: Oh--sure! Okay...here, let me take that.

TAAJ: Thanks. Can I sit down on the edge of your bunk?

WREN: I, um--

WE HEAR A MANILA FOLDER WAVED IN THE AIR.

TAAJ: It'll be worth your while.

WREN: What's in the folder?

TAAJ: Let me sit down.

WREN: Yeah...of course.

TAAJ: Wren...It was no secret to anyone that you openly distrusted Margaret.

WREN: Jumping right in...uh...I'm sorry it *appeared* that way, but--

TAAJ: And honestly--I think you distrust most people on the Aethon. You remember when I brought you that cup of coffee a year ago? The way your face looked when you saw me at your door...it was like you'd seen a ghost.

WREN: Yeah, I may have given a bad impression.

TAAJ: You did. I was not a fan of yours at all. I admit it. But things change. Some for the better. Some for the worse. (A BEAT) You've stopped asking Jamal for the daily access to his records.

WREN: How do you know?

TAAJ: You learn a lot when you become the second in command. But why stop getting reports?

WREN: I'd rather not say.

TAAJ: (A BEAT)...Here.

WE HEAR THE FOLDER PUSHED ACCROSS A DESK AND
OPENED.

WREN: (SHOCKED) ...This is...These are readouts from the CimmTech dishes and panels on the network arm.

TAAJ: Not *everything*, but most of the energy readings at least.

WREN: This is more than I get from Jamal.

TAAJ: I know. It's as much as I can give you without risking a jail sentence as far as I can determine...That was a joke.

WREN: I'm confused.

TAAJ: Margaret believed CimmTech was in competition with NASC. She treated you like the enemy. But we're all scientists. We should want the truth, no matter how we get there. Right?

WREN: ...Right?...This changes so much of what I thought--of what I was collecting--even from Jamal!

TAAJ: I know! You were *way* off! (LAUGHS) I mean, honesty is always good. It has to be. Maybe don't share these reports with NASC, just yet--because I don't want them tattling on me.

WREN: No--I mean with this--

TAAJ: With this--with you and I working together...*we go home heroes*. We are in fact researching different things--but what we both need is the ability to collect as much power from the sun as possible. With both of us working together, we'll be able to do four times as much.

WREN: Thank you. I mean--*thank you*.

TAAJ: If you find anything of note--you come tell me right away.

WREN: I will...I will...

TAAJ SIPS HER COFFEE.

TAAJ: I wasn't sure if you took sugar in your coffee.

WREN: No, no. This is fine.

TAAJ: (A BEAT) ...Why did you stop asking Jamal for help?

WREN 'LOOKS UP.' HER MOOD SHIFTS.

WREN: ...It--The information just wasn't helping me anymore.

TAAJ: Wren...When waves collide they can either amplify each other or cancel themselves out. We should both be on the same page. I haven't really spoken to Jamal in a couple months, you have...tell me what's going on...

WREN: (A BEAT) ...He lied. He asked me to lie. We saw each other during the payload three deployment.

TAAJ: Where?

WREN: Capsule 7.

TAAJ: Margaret wanted him replacing air filters.

WREN: But he wasn't. He was diverting the power flow. He asked not to mention it to anyone...then in the debrief, Alex and Jamal fought over where Jamal was supposed to be. He said he was replacing air filters.

TAAJ: But he wasn't. (A BEAT) You don't think he caused the anomaly, do you?

WREN: No--he said it wasn't dangerous.

TAAJ: But he'd want to cover it if it was his fault right? Try to distance himself from the problem.

WREN: I mean...yes...but--I don't think it was as serious as that. I think he was disobeying orders from someone. And he lied to me and asked me to cover in the process.

TAAJ: So you stopped asking him for help because...

WREN: I don't want to be connected to any other...mistakes.

TAAJ: He's been under a lot of pressure.

WREN: I mean--he tried to fight Eli, he's lied, he stopped sending messages home according to Alex.

TAAJ: I need to ask you this question and I don't want you to think I'm hyperbolizing things.

WREN: Okay.

TAAJ: Margaret was worried Jamal would mutiny if given the chance. Jettison and go home. That's crazy, I admit it. He wouldn't do that, right?

WREN: I guess so?

TAAJ: I mean...When we were in Utah, he demanded that we go last on the rover rescue simulation--solely for the fact that we could find out the handicaps from the first participants. Jamal is a 'win at all costs' kind of guy.

WREN: Yes, but--

TAAJ: And Wren--When you look over the data in this folder--I think you'll at least get a glimmer of what we're accomplishing. I can't explain, but we cannot delay this experiment. Not even an hour. Do you think Jamal would prevent that if given the chance?

WREN: No, I don't think so.

TAAJ: You think he just wants to protect us?

WREN: Yeah. He wants to make sure that--...

TAAJ: ...We all go home.

A IDEA SETTLES IN. NEITHER WANTS TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT.

A SHUDDER.

ELECTRONIC WARNING.

ALI: (GLITCHING) Ab-ab-abnormal solar activity detected. Warning.
Abnormal solar act-act-activity det--

WREN: Please end the warning, Ali.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

TAAJ: What's wrong?

WREN: Nothing. I think it's just a solar storm. It's been going for about a week.

TAAJ: Is the the storm tied to the shudders then?

WREN: There's no direct link between solar activity, the shudder, or even Ali's glitches.

TAAJ: Too bad...You haven't touched your coffee yet.

WREN: Yeah--I'm sorry, this data--

TAAJ: Wanna take a break for a second?

WREN: What do you mean?

TAAJ: I wanna show you something cool. Ali, please open Waymaker612 point 11 files AA and AX.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 4.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN ELI'S BUNK. HE FINISHES TYPING SOMETHING--
THEN PAUSES.

ELI: Ali, can you make a recording to put in the next audio packet?

ALI: Is this a recording for Allyson Logan, CEO of CimmTech, that you have been asked to contact by Fight Director Aarav Patel?

ELI: No. Absolutely not.

ALI: Would you like to respond directly to Aarav Patel?

ELI: No...(A BEAT) Ali, you were never programmed to know who my mother is. Is that correct?

ALI: That information was not provided to me.

ELI: I was expunged from the record from the get-go...*nice*...You haven't even pieced it together, yet?

ALI: I do not understand the question.

ELI: I legitimately don't know if I want you to.

ALI: Who is this recording for, Specialist Wright?

ELI: (A HESITATION)...It's a recording for...for Will Durand.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording.

ELI:

...Will...I know we said we weren't going to--...We broke up. But--recently I was trying to figure out...what my life was worth...just on the off chance I die...

WE CAN HEAR THE EMOTIONS HE'S PUSHING AWAY AS HE CONTINUES.

I hope this isn't just the new medication talking but...

You knew me better than any other person knew me...you knew I hated the butter that came with the bread at that Italian place. You knew I always wanted to drink the dark liquor cocktails but it would make me feel worse the next morning, so you'd let me order what I wanted and you'd order what I *actually* wanted and then you'd just let me switch when I knew I'd made a bad choice. You knew that as much as I loved staring at clouds, I hated lying on grass...And we walked away...amicably. Right?

I'm now realizing this makes our relationship sound far more one-sided and food-based, but--I need to know...Did my life mean something to you?

...Jamal tells this story about driving one of his jets too hard. Some experimental aircraft. The designers told him to take it easy, but he kept pushing to see how high, how fast, how vertical...

Finally someone told him the plane cost more than his net worth and to take it easy. And Jamal responded by saying he'd driven *himself* harder than the plane and gotten more bang for the buck. They scrapped the design the next quarter.

And that makes me sad...because he knew his worth in that moment. He knew he was worth it and he was right. But I don't know if I--...

A SUDDEN EMOTION.

God, I miss clouds! I miss grass! I miss cocktails and friends and even that Italian place with their stupid bread and their stupid butter and I miss you and I--I miss my mom....(IN DISBELIEF) Oh god, I miss my mom...

HE PULLS IT BACK...

...Will--I just want you to know that I loved you. And I think you loved me. I want you to be happy. And I know you wanted me to be happy. And that means more to me than anything I've ever accomplished in my own...sad...shitty...life...

Ali?

ALI: Yes, Mission Specialist Wright?

ELI: Please delete the recording.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording deleted. Would you like to record another message?

ELI: Yes, Ali. I want to make a recording for...Allyson Logan.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Recording.

A BEAT.

ELI: ...*Mom*...Please respond to NASC. Please provide some instructions and answers. I'm asking because--...I'm hoping my voice matters to you...I'm hoping my *life* matters to you. To anyone. Please...just let me know that you heard me. That I'm not alone...End recording.

ALI: Recording Terminated. It will be sent in the audio packet sent on Mission Day five hundred and twenty eight.

ELI: (WIPES HIS FACE) Thank you, Ali...

AFTER A MOMENT, HE QUIETLY RESUMES TYPING.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 5.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: five hundred and thirty one.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN THE MESS.

ALEX: Jessa should be here soon.

ELI: Wren has coffee. Can I make some coffee, too?

ALEX: No. I want your undivided attention.

ELI: But Jessa isn't here yet.

ALEX: No, Eli.

ELI: Can I have some of yours then?

WREN: No.

TAAJ: Here--have some of mine.

ELI: Thank you, *Taaj*.

WE HEAR THE LIQUID Poured AS JESSA ARRIVES.

JESSA: Sorry, I'm late. Something was going on--weirdly enough--with the ants--

ALEX: Thank you, Jessa. Please sit down.

SHE DOES.

So in...a little less than 24 hours--the EVA for the launch of payload 4 is going to begin. Because of the 'anomaly' with the reactor failure, this has to be more thorough than usual. I want to walk through every single step. I want to know who will be where and what they'll be doing.

TAAJ: Specialist Wright and myself will get into our suits thirty minutes prior to the EVA. They've already been pulled for inspection before--

ALEX: I'll be joining you, this time.

A HESITATION.

ELI: What?

TAAJ: Excuse me?

ALEX: I'm going on the EVA.

TAAJ: You need to be the on-board commander, Alex. CimmTech protocol--

ALEX: I need to know what's happening. The problems only happen when a CimmTech payload is launched--I'm going to be on hand for this launch. Especially since we lost Margaret. I want to assist the two of you and know everything that you're doing--and make sure you're not risking the rest of the crew.

ELI: You wanna babysit us?

ALEX: I want to be there. I'm done being stuck inside. I'm going on the spacewalk with you.

TAAJ: We're already down one suit.

ALEX: I'll use the repair suit.

TAAJ: We shouldn't waste the repair suit exposing it to unplanned radiation deterioration. NASC still has experiments to run after--

ALEX: This is non-negotiable, Chief Scientist Azi.

TAAJ: ...Okay...Understood. Let's try to make that work...

ALEX: So...I'll be with Wright and Azi, in my suit, thirty minutes prior to the EVA. Jamal will be the on board commander and he--

TAAJ: We can't do that.

AWKWARD BEAT.

JAMAL: Why not?

TAAJ: May I have a word with you in private, commander?

ALEX: No, Taaj. Say it now or don't say it at all.

TAAJ: (A BEAT) ...I think Jamal will disobey your orders and pull the jettison option before payload four is fully deployed risking the lives of the people on the EVA.

JAMAL: What the hell?

TAAJ: (DIFFICULT TO SAY) I--!...I can't risk this final deployment. *Everything* is riding on this. I simply can't leave it in Jamal's hands.

ALEX: Where is this coming from?

TAAJ: I feel that his intentions may have changed--

ALEX: I want facts for reasons. Not feelings.

TAAJ: (A BEAT)...He lied about his whereabouts during the payload three launch.

ALEX: I admit it. I asked him to disobey Margaret's requests and be in Capsule 8. He did disobey orders, but it was only *my* orders. He was replacing air filters. Right, Jamal?

JAMAL: Yeah. Yes.

TAAJ: Where were you, Jamal?

JAMAL: (LIE)...I was replacing the air filters.

TAAJ: Jamal...

JAMAL: I think I was in Capsule 6 at the time and--.

TAAJ: Wren, where was Jamal?

WREN: I thought our conversation was confidential, Taaj.

TAAJ: Wren. This is bigger than both of us. And if I pull up the recording of where Jamal was, then that'll just prove to Alex that you were lying, too.

ALEX: Where was Jamal, Wren?

JAMAL: Wren--...

A BEAT.

WREN: ...He was in Capsule 7 with me.

ALEX: Doing what?

WREN: He said he was diverting the energy flow.

ALEX: In the *middle* of a deployment?

WREN: Yes.

JAMAL: It didn't cause the anomaly. It wouldn't have done that--

ALEX: Why didn't you ask for permission?

JAMAL: Cause you'd tell Margaret!

WREN: Jamal told me not to tell you.

ALEX: Jamal?

JAMAL: I was taking a precaution!

TAAJ: Eli and I took precautions that *worked* for a smooth deployment of Payload Two. But right now it seems like Jamal's actions may have led to Margaret's death.

ALEX: Whoa whoa whoa--that's a big leap.

TAAJ: He lied about it. He covered it up. That's a sign of guilt.

ELI: Didn't we lie about *our* adjustments?

JAMAL: Yeah--yeah yeah! Eli told me it was a good idea! He advised me to not get permission! Do it while no one was looking, he said!

ELI: I meant like--when people were asleep.

WREN: And why would you do something that drastic if *Eli* told you to do it?

ELI: Ha ha! Super-depressing, but correct.

JAMAL: No, it was *my* idea originally--

WREN: And the information Taaj has been giving me has helped me identify huge amounts of misinformation in my early measurements. It honestly has made me question if you were giving me bad data.

JESSA: Wren! Listen to yourself!

ALEX: Calm down, Jessa.

JESSA: Don't tell me to calm down. That doesn't make me want to calm down.

ELI: (SARCASTIC) Do a breathing exercise.

ALEX: Eli! (A MOMENT TO LET THE TENSIONS EASE) ...Let's just take a pause okay? Let's...okay...There is in fact a chain of command. And I'm at the top. I'm *going* on the space walk. Let's start with that.

TAAJ: I won't permit the launch of Payload 4 if Jamal is the on board commander.

ALEX: So where does that leave us?

WREN: (A NEW THOUGHT) ...Make *me* the on-board commander.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: What?

ALEX: You don't trust CimmTech.

ELI: Was she even in training long enough?

WREN: Put me in charge. Everyone knows that I won't compromise the mission. I want to see it through because I have to figure out what it does...I'll read all the manuals. I can get trained. Besides, we're not going to be without Alex, he'll just be on the EVA. Make me the on-board commander...then everyone gets a fair compromise.

JAMAL: Not everyone.

WREN: I don't know what you were doing in Capsule 7, Jamal. And it did align with the anomaly and I can't ignore that evidence. Alex, you told me that you couldn't trust Jamal like you used to.

JAMAL: Don't do this, Wren.

WREN: And then there's Tomlinson.

JAMAL: Wren.

WREN: I looked at his medical records and his illness came on very suddenly--

JAMAL: Please.

WREN: I don't trust CimmTech--but I trust Taaj and she says this experiment will be worth it. I'm supposed to out-perform CimmTech, but now I'm wondering if completing the experiment will open up a new possibility of actually contributing to something larger than what we were sent here to do. We *have* to do this. At any cost. We shouldn't have Jamal in charge.

JAMAL: (DEFEATED) The original concern was that I would panic and hit the jettison button too fast.

WREN: The concern is that I can no longer say with any certainty *what* you'll do.

A BEAT. ALEX SIGHS HEAVILY, THINKING, RUBBING HIS FACE.

ALEX: We vote on who will be the on board commander. Wren or Jamal.

JESSA: There are six of us.

ALEX: As commander, my vote will count for two.

JAMAL: This is bullshit.

ALEX: Jamal--you vote first.

JAMAL: Me! Obviously, me!

ALEX: Taaj?

TAAJ: Wren.

ALEX: Jessa?

JESSA: Jamal.

ALEX: Eli? (A BEAT, THEN QUICKLY) Don't look at Taaj. Look at *me*.

ELI: ...Screw it, Jamal.

JAMAL: What?

TAAJ: What?!

ELI: I want to go home...so does Jamal. I don't think Wren has anywhere near enough training to be responsible.

TAAJ: Eli, Jamal would risk our mission--

ELI: They're *both* going to risk our mission. But I'm going to favor the one that will panic too fast and fly us home.

ALEX: Wren?

WREN: I'm voting for me.

ALEX: Two to Three...Are you sure about your vote, Wren?

WREN: Isn't your mind already made up?

ALEX: Not this time. (A BEAT) Are you *sure*?

WREN: ...Yes.

ALEX: Half-glass?

WREN: Yes.

A LONG BEAT.

ALEX: Wren will be the on-board commander during the Payload 4 EVA.

CREW REACTION.

JAMAL: Wren, if I suggested Shrike for a name, would it mean anything?

WREN: No.

JAMAL: Look it up. You might learn something.

JESSA: Alex, if you could--

ALEX: Enough. It's done. It's decided. (A BEAT) Jessa will still be on standby in the medical bay in Capsule 4, and I will be using the *repair* suit to join the CimmTech crew on their walk. Wren will be on board commander from Capsule 1 and Jamal, you'll be--

JAMAL: eeerRRRGH!--

JAMAL STANDS AND THROWS A COFFEE MUG AGAINST
THE WALL. WE HEAR THE LIQUID SPLATTER AND THE
METALLIC MUG SCATTER ACROSS THE FLOOR.

JAMAL STORMS OUT.

A HESITATION.

ELI: So there *was* a lot of coffee in your cup, Wren--

ALEX: I'll go get Jamal--

TAAJ: He no longer has a function on this EVA, Commander Tawley. We should proceed without him.

A BEAT.

ALEX: Very well. Taaj? Please continue.

TAAJ: So, Azi, Wright, *and Tawley* will be in the airlock at twelve hundred--

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 6.

ALI: Post Solar Event. Approximate mission day: five hundred and fifty.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 8. NO AIR COOLING. JAMAL IS TYPING.

Incoming message.

JAMAL: (SIGHS)...Connect us.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WREN: Hey...

JAMAL: ...Hey.

WREN: I listened to the payload four launch planning...

JAMAL: ...And?

WREN: I'm sorry. The only thing I do well is stopping other people from what they do well. I was looking at the door.

JAMAL: What does that mean?

WREN: It means I was so driven by CimmTech...by beating them or figuring them out or...I was flying pretty close to the sun.

JAMAL: I don't understand when you stopped trusting me.

WREN: I'll never doubt you again.

JAMAL: No. You *still* don't trust me.

WREN: You want me to give up.

JAMAL: No! The opposite of that! You can't give up! *You* have to get home! Because getting you home is the only thing I can do to give *my* life any worth! Can you understand that?

ALI: (OVER A GENERAL INTERCOM) Capsule eight temperature is currently one hundred and eight point two degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point three degrees Celsius.

JAMAL: (OVERLAPPING, GENTLE) ...Have you gotten any sleep?

WREN: (OVERLAPPING WITH ALI) No. I'm spinning my wheels. I'm just trying to find anything...But it's like I'm putting a puzzle together with the picture-side down. And I'm just staring at these blank cardboard pieces not knowing if these two things are supposed to be connected or if they were just cut poorly.

JAMAL: ...I need you to accept something in this moment--that you might not be willing to accept.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: The most important thing you can do right now--is locate mission control.

WREN: I don't even know if there *is* a Mission Control.

JAMAL: I know.

WREN: The solar flare--a flare of that size could--

JAMAL: Wren...Maybe it's in the software?...Or the *hardware*?

WREN: I don't know anything about the hardware.

JAMAL: Then look it up. Ali has all the manuals on file.

WREN: The manuals don't match.

JAMAL: I know..

A BEAT.

WREN: Can you forgive me?

JAMAL: ...Doesn't matter. I'm gonna die.

WREN: Stop saying that--

JAMAL: Everyone dies, Wren. What's the point in holding onto anger?

WREN: But can you forgive me?

JAMAL: I can't...but also, *it doesn't matter*. The universe is so much bigger than all of us. Humans will figure out the science of long-term space flight--but they will never understand human emotion. How one thing sets off another. How one piece of dishonesty ruins relationships.

WREN: How isolation--makes you feel inadequate all the time.

JAMAL: Yeah! That! How--everyone is just broken. Or programmed wrong and we're all just hoping for someone to help us get to the finish line and still feel--....

A BEAT.

WREN: Worth it. (A BEAT) So what now?

JAMAL: I don't know.

ALI: (OVER CAPSULE 1 SPEAKERS) Incoming audio packet from Chelsea Richardson.

WREN: I told you, Ali--send that to Jamal.

JAMAL: What is this?

WREN: Ali's been glitching. She keeps sending me personal messages.

JAMAL: (CONFIRMING) Like the recording between Taaj and Jessa that you played for me?

WREN: Right. This is the second time from Chelsea. That one time it was from Taaj. I haven't listened to Chelsea's, I learned my lesson. I'm not gonna listen in on your personal recordings again. Do you wanna open yours?

JAMAL: Ali--can I please have the audio packet from Chelsea Richardson?

ALI: (CAPSULE 8) There are no pending audio packets for you.

WREN: Ali--it's okay. I give permission for you to share it.

ALI: (CAPSULE 1) I am unable to comply with your request.

JAMAL: Play the Taaj recording.

WREN SIGHS, FRUSTRATED.

WREN: Ali--please play the latest personal message from Taaj.

ALI: Playing audio packet from Specialist Taaj Azi.

ELECTRONIC BLIP IN CAPSULE 1.

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 IN CAPSULE 1.

WREN: See? Ali, please send Jamal the audio packet from Chelsea Richardson.

ALI: (CAPSULE 1) I am unable to comply with your request.

JAMAL: Why don't *you* play it?

WREN: If it's personal--

JAMAL: We're way beyond that by now...just play it.

WREN: ...Ali, please play the audio packet to me from Chelsea Richardson.

ALI: Playing Chelsea Richardson audio packet for Mission Specialist Doctor Wren Guerrero. Aethon Control Audio Packet five hundred and fifty dash one 2045.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CHELSEA: (CUT TOGETHER FROM CLIPS FROM DAY 41) "Matryoshka."

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

JAMAL: ...What did she say?

WREN: Was that the whole message, Ali?

ALI: Yes.

WREN: Play again.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CHELSEA: (SPLICED TOGETHER) Matryoshka.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

JAMAL: Play it again?

WREN: Ali, play the message again.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CHELSEA: (SPICED TOGETHER) Matryoshka.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

JAMAL: Isn't that the word for Nesting Dolls?

WREN: What is?

JAMAL: In Russian or something?

WREN: I only had enough time to learn *scientific* terminology in Russian.

JAMAL: I'm pretty sure it's the word for Russian Nesting Dolls.

WREN: What is?

JAMAL: Matryoshka.

THE DOORS IN CAPSULE 8 SLAM SHUT.

A NEW LIGHT TURNS ON, AND THE PROGRAM WHIRS.

AUDIO PLAYS A HIGH PITCH FOR A SPLIT SECOND--THEN
SUDDENLY PICKS UP AGAIN.

ALI: CimmTech encryption enabled.

A HESITATION. AND THEN, WITH PERCEIVABLE
EXCITEMENT:

JAMAL: Holy shit...

AN AUDIO GLITCH.

END RECORDING

END SCENE.

