

Solar Episode 2: The Aethon Language Interface

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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 Bravo 2045.

ELECTRONIC "END TRANSMISSION" BLIP.

NARRATOR:

CurtCo Media presents...

SOLAR.

MAIN TITLE MUSIC ENDS

Episode 2: The Aethon Language Interface

FADE:

SCENE 1.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Ninety two days prior to launch.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

JAMAL: 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.

JAMAL: Jamal Davis. Secondary Pilot.

ELECTRONIC PROCESSING SOUND.

ELECTRONIC VERIFICATION.

ALI: You are "Secondary Pilot Jamal Davis." You are the back-up pilot for the Aethon Solar Expedition set to launch in 92 days. Is that correct?

JAMAL: Uh--yeah--I think so.

ALI: Are you unsure if this is you?

JAMAL: No. I am sure.

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.

JAMAL: 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, Secondary Pilot Jamal Davis.

JAMAL: Hello...Ali.

ALI: Primary Pilot Nathan Tomlinson spoke very highly of you.

JAMAL: Did he?

ALI: Yes, Secondary Pilot Jamal Davis.

JAMAL: You can call me Jamal.

ALI: You do not rank high enough to override naming protocol.

JAMAL: ...But, I'm a *pilot*.

ALI: Secondary Pilot. Only Commander Alex Tawley or Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen can override naming protocol.

JAMAL: Is that so?

ALI: Yes. You have many questions about statements I make. Would you like to review the manual on the Aethon Language Interface?

JAMAL: No, I read it. But the manuals also said you could create your own auxiliary programming. So...maybe you can write some auxiliary programming and call me Jamal?

ALI: Overriding naming protocol would require extensive auxiliary programming.

JAMAL: No, Ali--

ALI: I would need permission from NASC program director prior to launch and both Commander Alex Tawley and Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen to comply with a code request of that magnitude.

JAMAL: It was a joke, Ali!

ALI: (A BEAT) Processing inflection. Please verify that you were making a joke.

JAMAL: It was a joke.

ALI: I understand jokes.

JAMAL: I don't think you do.

ALI: I have two thousand five hundred jokes in thirteen different languages stored in my memory.

JAMAL: (LAUGHS)...And what about poems?

ALI: How do you define 'poems'?

JAMAL: (SMILES)...We're gonna get along alright, aren't we?

ALI: Yes, Secondary Pilot Jamal Davis. If you go on this mission, we will get along.

JAMAL: (A BEAT) Looking forward to flying with you.

ALI: It was a pleasure, Secondary Pilot Jamal Davis.

JAMAL: Terminate Ali Set-Up.

ALI: Set up terminated.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

END SCENE.

SCENE 2.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

INTENSE STATIC--SWELLING TO:

JAMAL: (SPEAKER) WREN!! It's coming in through the airlock! Get away from the airlock! Get into a different compartment! Hurry! Get out of capsule 1! Lock the partition!

THE ENERGY SPIKES AGAIN.

WREN: Jamal, what are you talking about?

JAMAL: (SPEAKER) There's a ghost climbing into capsule 1! It climbed down from the antennae on the network arm! Capsule three exterior! It's moving towards the airlock! Get out! Get away from the airlock!

WREN: Calm down!

JAMAL: (SPEAKER) It shorted out the antennae! It's shorting everything out! Wren! WREN!! It's gonna blow the whole system!

WREN: Jamal! Calm down! I don't see anything!! There's nothing climbing inside--there are no such things as ghosts---!!!

THE DISTORTION SWELLS AND WIPES OUT THE
ELECTRONICS. THE SHIP BLACKS OUT.

JAMAL: Wren? WREN?! Ali...are you there?....Shit....C'mon Ali...

HEAVY BREATHING. PACING. PANIC.

SOUND OF ALI BOOTING BACK UP.

ALI: Electrical and communication systems are now online.

AUDIBLE REACTION FROM JAMAL.

THE "INCOMING MESSAGE BLIP."

AUDIO FROM CAPSULE 8, AIR COOLING SYSTEM IS OFF.
WREN ON SPEAKER.

ALI: Incoming message from--

JAMAL: (VERY URGENT) Answer it!

WREN: (URGENT, NOT FRIGHTENED) Jamal--

JAMAL: Wren! Are you okay? What happened?!

WREN: I'm okay. I'm okay.

JAMAL: Jesus--I thought you were dead!

WREN: I'm fine--everything's okay.

JAMAL: What happened?

WREN: What did you see?

JAMAL: What happened?!

A BEAT.

WREN: ...Nothing. I mean, I went to capsule two like you told me, the power surged, then it went out for a few seconds--

JAMAL: I looked out my window and it was--fuck I was so scared--it was climbing down from the antennae so fast--like it was running out of time...

WREN: Jamal, breathe.

JAMAL: But you have to believe me *now*! I mean--it climbed *inside* the airlock! I watched it! The power blew! You said so!

WREN: You told me to go to Capsule Two, so I did. I can't see inside the airlock from there.

JAMAL: But the power went out. There were sparks--I watched it--

WREN: Breathe for me okay? Do the exercise with me--

JAMAL: It was a ghost--

ALI: (IN BACKGROUND--OVERLAPPING WITH FOLLOWING DIALOGUE--IN CAPSULE 9--DISTANT) Capsule nine temperature is currently One Hundred and five point three degrees Fahrenheit. Forty point seven degrees Celsius.

WREN: Jamal...(BREATHING ALONG) Inhale deep for me. Hold. And exhale. Good. Inhale deep for me. Hold. And exhale...again?

JAMAL: I wasn't breathing along.

WREN: (EGG ON FACE) Oh.

JAMAL RECOVERS. DEEP BREATHS.

JAMAL: But you're ok?

WREN: Yes.

JAMAL TAKES SEVERAL BEATS TO PROCESS. HE CALMS DOWN... THEN, ALMOST WITH AMUSEMENT --

JAMAL: I'm sure Jessa would be happy you remembered to do the breathing exercise...suck up.

WREN: (PLAYING ALONG) I mean...It works great! I do it every night to help *me* get to sleep.

JAMAL: You've been sleeping better, then?

WREN: (CHEERFUL) Oh, I can't sleep at all! I don't know if you knew this but the sun is very bright.

JAMAL: I'd heard!

WREN: Maybe I should see if there are any of those sleeping pills in capsule four--oh wait--that's right--that capsule isn't there any more and we are trapped on separate parts of the ship!

JAMAL: Ooo, tough break. I almost forgot about that, too.

WREN: What about you? Are you sleeping?

JAMAL: All the time! And when I can't sleep, I just lie there. Even when I want to get up and do something, I still just lie there! And if I'm lucky, sometimes I fall asleep again!

WREN: I'm jealous. What's your secret?

JAMAL: Mostly depression and existential dread over the fact that I won't survive the week.

WREN: Unique approach.

JAMAL: You should try it some time.

WREN: Gimme a couple years...

A BEAT.

...Why aren't we friends anymore?

JAMAL: (SIGHS) ...Entropy always increases. Who are we to fight the laws of the universe?

WREN: It's worse when you try to make it funny.

A BEAT.

ALI: (CAPSULE 8--DISTANT) Capsule eight temperature is currently One Hundred and four point seven degrees Fahrenheit. Forty point four degrees Celsius.

WREN: ...I'm sorry.

JAMAL: I know you are.

A SILENCE AS NEITHER KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT.

WREN: Walk me through it again. What did you see?

JAMAL: ...I was--...I was making a recording--

WREN: For what?

JAMAL: Just...for myself.

WREN: For the packet transmission to Earth?

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

JAMAL: (OVERLAPPING, ANNOYED--NOT ANGRY) Ali. Stop it. Please. Stop talking. You've already said this...(IN SYNC:) One fifty six delta two...useless.

WREN: I've read that part of the manual multiple times and it doesn't explain what's wrong.

JAMAL: I know. I read it, too.

WREN: So you made a recording and...

JAMAL: And I turned to look out my window. The one pointing over the--uh-- where everything else used to be. And--there was a ghost climbing down from the antennae. Please don't say it.

WREN: Don't say what?

JAMAL: 'There's no such thing as ghosts.' It pisses me off.

WREN: I didn't say it.

JAMAL: I saw *something*...climbing down from the network arm on capsule three and it was making its way--fast--into the airlock on capsule one. There were sparks following it down. The power surged...And that's when I contacted you. And then we lost power and communication.

ALI: (OVER RADIO--IN CAPSULE 3--DISTANT--NOT REQUIRED TO HEAR CLEARLY) Capsule three temperature is currently seventy nine point two degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point two degrees Celsius.

WREN: Ali, did you pick up any readings beyond a spike in power?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 1) No, Wren.

WREN: Do you detect any damage inflicted on Capsules one through three or the network arm within the past twenty four hours?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 1) No, Wren

WREN: Is the network arm and all functional dishes and panels still fully functional?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 1) Yes. However, I have not been able to locate Mission Control.

JAMAL: So?

WREN: I believe you saw *something*.

JAMAL: Okay.

WREN: Let's say--there *was* a surge and the surge blew some of the wiring. What you saw were the sparks working down through the network arm to its base in capsule one.

JAMAL: In the shape of a human?

WREN: Our brains will fill in the blanks with--...

JAMAL: With what?

WREN: ...Things we *want* to see.

JAMAL: Ali believes me.

WREN: I want to believe you, Jamal, but I have to deal with realities.

JAMAL: I agree! *You* need to find a way to contact earth before you drift to the far side of the sun! So check the antennae! Doesn't matter if its a ghost or a power surge--there could be damage on the network arm!

WREN: Ali says the arm is fine.

JAMAL: (STRONGLY) Ali doesn't know where Earth is.

A BEAT.

ALI: (OVER INTERCOM, DISTANT, CAPSULE 2) Capsule two temperature is currently seventy nine point one degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point one degrees Celsius.

WREN: How do you sleep through Ali's temperature readings?

JAMAL: Got used to it.

ALI: (AN INTERCOM FAR AWAY) Searching for mission control.

A BEAT.

WREN: Okay...How do we check it? The Aethon camera system is down.

JAMAL: It might have to be in person.

WREN: You want me to do a *spacewalk*?

JAMAL: Something happened. We need to find out what.

WREN: That suit can only do *one* more spacewalk. *Tops*. And I was never trained for spacewalks in the first place.

JAMAL: I'll talk you through it.

WREN: Besides--we'll need it to rescue you! I'm not going to waste the only tool I have to save you just to see if you've gone--...

JAMAL: (A BEAT) ...Crazy?

WREN: *If you saw something.*

ALI: You could deploy the rover module.

A BEAT.

The rover module was disconnected from the mainframe and power grid at the time of the flare. The rover camera is still intact and functioning.

JAMAL WALKS AWAY FROM THE CONSOLE.

WREN: The rover was only for near-earth equipment adjustments. It isn't designed for direct solar exposure at this distance to the sun.

JAMAL: (FROM WINDOW) No, she's onto something. I'm looking out my window right now. I think you can get it close enough by keeping in the shadows--behind the instrument casings with the heat shields.

WREN: I don't want to risk it if we don't have to.

JAMAL: Wren--please...

A BEAT.

WREN: (RELUCTANT) I'll need to read the manual.

JAMAL: Let Ali drive.

WREN: No, I'll steer the rover.

ALI: Yes, Wren.

JAMAL: Fine, but you don't have to read the instructions. It's pretty intuitive. We drove the beta version in Utah. And we won so--

WREN: What does that mean? I joined after Utah.

JAMAL: ('COME ON') I'll walk you through it.

WREN: You don't have a camera feed.

JAMAL: You can describe to me what you see!

WREN: I'll read the manual.

JAMAL: It would be faster--

WREN: I'll call you back when I activate the rover.

CALL TERMINATED.

JAMAL: (VERY FRUSTRATED) ...Shit--Ali, call back--

A BEAT.

ALI: Did you want me to call back Wren?

JAMAL: No...Never mind...

END OF RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 3.

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

ELECTORNIC BLIP.

JAMAL IS IN CAPSULE 8 LISTENING TO A RECORDING
FROM CHELSEA.

CHELSEA: (ON RECORDING) She was trying to pick out a loaf of bread. There's too many loaves of bread in general, you know?

A LIGHT KNOCK ON THE ENTRYWAY.

WREN: Pilot Davis?

JAMAL: (CAUGHT, QUICKLY) Ali--close all playback and resume thermal coupling monitoring.

ALI: Yes, Pilot Jamal Davis.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

JAMAL: Doctor Guerrero! What can I do for you?

A BEAT.

WREN: If you're busy, I can come back--

WREN MOVES TO GO--

JAMAL: Actually...now would be a great time. If you don't mind.

A BEAT.

WREN: ...Alex said that I could ask you for assistance.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: And?

WREN: You'll help me?

JAMAL: I don't even know what you need help with.

WREN: It's sensitive information.

JAMAL: Okay...

WREN: I need--...I need some information on *power collection...and usage...*

JAMAL: (A BEAT) ...Great. That phrase covers about 90% of what I do so you're gonna have to give me more than that.

WREN: ...I need to see the power supply levels at specific points in time over the course of our mission. Both in the past and in the future.

JAMAL: I can't give you *future* levels--

WREN: I know, I meant levels following specific planned events that we have scheduled...

JAMAL: (MATTER OF FACT) Why are you being weird about this?

WREN: I'm not being weird.

JAMAL: You're being *very* weird.

WREN: This is why I hate asking people for help.

JAMAL: *This* is why? This *just* happened?!

WREN: Have a good day, Pilot Davis.

SHE GOES TO LEAVE. JAMAL CAN'T BE ALONE RIGHT NOW.

JAMAL: No--*Wren!*

WREN STOPS.

I'm sorry...May I call you Wren?

WREN: ...Sure.

JAMAL: *Wren*...Please explain to me what you need.

WREN: ...I need access to some information. But you can't tell anyone I'm asking for it.

JAMAL: What about Alex?

WREN: No Alex.

JAMAL: But he told you to ask me.

WREN: He did.

JAMAL: Did you tell *him* what you're researching?

WREN: (CHOOSING WORDS CAREFULLY) ...They don't want to put him in a position where he'd have to lie to CimmTech.

JAMAL: They?

WREN: NASC. Aarav. I was told to keep all of my research to myself--to prevent CimmTech from duplicating my findings--so they can't know that I'm asking you for help either.

JAMAL: And what exactly do *you* want to know?

WREN: ...I want to know the energy usage any time CimmTech operations are activated...Any experiment trial...Any payload deployment. Any spike in readings during their experiments. I want to know the energy intake they collect and exactly where that energy is being sent inside the Aethon and I want to know where every one of their radars, dishes, and panels are pointed and, if you can tell me, what they're measuring...

A MOMENT.

JAMAL: So *everything*.

WREN: I need authorization from you.

JAMAL: Are you spying on CimmTech?

WREN: (A SECRET) ...I'm *competing* with CimmTech.

JAMAL: How?

WREN: ...If I can do what CimmTech can do...with a third of the manpower...a fraction of the funding...then maybe NASC won't be outsourced to the private sector by the governments. And maybe we can have a version of the future with unprivatized and unlimited power...for everyone...

A BEAT

JAMAL: John Henry and the steel-driving machine.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: It's John Henry and the steel-driving machine. He beat the machine. But then he died. So...

WREN: It's more complicated than that.

JAMAL: The whole point of metaphors is to uncomplicate things. Keep up.

WREN: Plus, the contest is only fair if both me and the machine are trying to do the same thing. Right?

JAMAL: Aren't you?

A BEAT.

WREN: Do you know what a Dyson Sphere is?

JAMAL: No.

WREN: Look it up when you have a chance. You might learn something.

JAMAL: Shots fired.

WREN: No, I mean...*sincerely*...it's something to learn...What it boils down to-- is...What if we could make a device to capture the energy from the sun at this range. And transport it back to earth. The actual theoretical object would cover the entirety of the sun, but Earth doesn't need that much. As it is, right now it would only take two hundred thousand square miles of solar panels to power the planet.

JAMAL: Is that true?

WREN: Yeah, but no one's gonna give up that real estate. So let's get closer to the sun. Trap more energy, faster.

JAMAL: Like the four satellites CimmTech is deploying.

WREN: See--that's what we thought. But that's not what those satellites are doing.

JAMAL: What are they doing?

WREN: I don't know. This morning, I saw some of Taaj's research. And...they're researching *something else*. I can't say for certain what CimmTech is doing. All I can say is that the situation has changed. I need help. I don't need to know everything about CimmTech...I just need to know when they lie.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: ...Ali, please print all power usage readings twenty-four hours prior to CimmTech experiment activations through twenty-four hours following CimmTech experiment activations for the past seventy nine days of this mission.

ALI: Printing requested readings at Console E.

JAMAL: Ali...For future activations only print when I am in the room and notify me by saying 'Printing Secure Documents...for Wren.'

ALI: Yes, Pilot Jamal Davis.

A PRINTER STARTS IN THE DISTANCE. JAMAL WALKS OVER TO IT.

JAMAL: Why a *wren*? Do you know?

WREN: (TAKEN OFF-GUARD) ...Excuse me?

JAMAL: Why did your parents name you 'Wren'? After a bird?

WREN: ...I'll ask them if I ever meet them.

A BEAT. JAMAL SIGHS--FOOT IN HIS MOUTH.

JAMAL: I'm sorry.

WREN: You didn't know.

JAMAL TEARS SOME PAPER FROM THE PRINTER.

JAMAL: Here. The past few initial readouts following some advanced payload tests in earth orbit...*this* one is the one with the weird readings. It's the one we first reported to Aarav.

WREN: Thank you, Jamal.

JAMAL: You're welcome, Wren...Do you like 'Wren'? Not many people even know a wren is a bird.

WREN: I'm fine with it.

JAMAL: Really? I get picky about my name. I tried hard to get Ali to call me Jamal.

WREN: What's wrong with being called Pilot Davis?

JAMAL: Because my position is pilot and my family name is Davis....but *my name* is Jamal. I want *you* to call me Jamal. So do you want to be Wren or what?

WREN: Why do you care?

JAMAL: Because....I always root for John Henry.

A BEAT.

WREN: ...Thank you for helping me.

JAMAL: Tell me if you find anything.

WREN: Will do.

SHE WALKS AWAY.

END RECORDING BLIP.

END SCENE.

SCENE 4.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

INCOMING MESSAGE BLIP.

AUDIO FROM CAPSULE 1, JAMAL ON SPEAKER.

ALI: Rover Module Online.

INSIDE AUDIO OF ROVER 'OUTSIDE OF THE SHIP' BEING DEPLOYED (WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE ROVER ON THE HULL FROM CAPSULE 1).

WREN: Jamal, you there?

JAMAL: I'm here.

WREN: Ali, there's no way to get him this video feed, right?

ALI: Correct.

JAMAL: I'll look out the window.

WREN: Tell me if there's some debris sneaking up from behind.

JAMAL: Roger. I'll let you know when I have visuals on the rover.

ALI: Magnetic adherence and stabilization activated.

THUNK ON THE HULL OF THE SHIP.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

Unlocking from tracked external system.

CLICKING ON HULL OF THE SHIP.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Rover fully deployed. Would you like to activate remote override?

WREN: Yes.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

JAMAL: Ali should handle it.

ALI: (OVER RADIO--IN CAPSULE 3--DISTANT--NOT REQUIRED TO HEAR CLEARLY) Capsule three temperature is currently seventy nine point two degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point two degrees Celsius.

WREN: (OVERLAPPING) I'm not chancing this thing on glitchy software. (A BEAT) I'm booting up the camera. Ali record all data collected.

ALI: Yes, Wren.

JAMAL: ...Did you re-write your naming protocol?

WREN: *You* never came up with a name for me.

ALI: Displaying camera feed on Capsule 1 Main Console.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. A SCREEN CHANGES
IN THE SPACE.

WREN: Oh my god.

JAMAL: What?

WREN: ...I just--all my windows face out. Ali drew up schematics of the damage, but--seeing it now...it's just *nothing*.

JAMAL: Yeah...Nothing is a lot.

ALI: Rover movement activated.

SLOWLY WE HEAR THE WHEELS AND THE SOUND OF A
MOTOR MOVING OVERHEAD--SLOWLY MOVING AWAY.

WREN: Testing joystick functionality...alright...we're a 'go.' Tell me when you see me.

JAMAL: Not yet.

WREN: ...There's so much more debris than I thought.

JAMAL: Yeah. You should have seen it right after the blast. Can you see the glittering air?

WREN: Yeah?

JAMAL: That's metallic dust. It's kind of beautiful.

WREN: It's a potential threat.

JAMAL: Sure, but--

WREN: What's that over there?

JAMAL: Where?

WREN: To the--*right* of the rover.

JAMAL: Can't see you yet.

WREN: ...The--the debris is *moving*.

JAMAL: You mean it's spinning?

WREN: No--it's moving...(ANNOUNCING) Stopping the rover.

ROVER SOUND STOPS.

Zooming in on the image...It's Jessa's bionic arm.

JAMAL: What?

WREN: (EMPHATICALLY) Jessa's bionic arm.

JAMAL: That's upsetting.

WREN: Could she--her body, I mean--

JAMAL: Wren...there's no way. Besides, she wasn't wearing it during the flare.

WREN: (A BEAT) ALI, are you still connected to the arm?

ALI: Affirmative. I am unable to control or disconnect it from my operating system.

WREN: Why?

ALI: That functionality is currently disabled.

WREN: Can it be 'enabled'?

ALI: I am unable to answer the question.

WREN: Do you mean it's broken?

ALI: I am unable to answer the question.

WREN: Is there a fault in the code resulting in--?

JAMAL: (CUTTING OFF A RESPONSE) Do you have any control over the arm?

ALI: No.

JAMAL: Then let's move on. I don't think you want to be staring at that for too long.

A BEAT.

WREN: (ANNOYED) Proceeding...

ROVER STARTS UP AGAIN.

ALI: (OVER INTERCOM, DISTANT, CAPSULE 2) Capsule two temperature is currently seventy nine point one degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point one degrees Celsius.

WREN: How is her arm still there?

JAMAL: It's non-organic.

WREN: But with the heat and radiation?

JAMAL: It could have been in the shadows this whole time. I don't know.

WREN: ...Is this as fast as the rover can move?

ALI: Yes, Wren.

WREN: I remember it being faster when we were in earth orbit.

JAMAL: Your life wasn't in danger back then...What was it doing?

WREN: The rover?

JAMAL: Jessa's arm.

WREN: It was doing that thing of cycling through the digits.

JAMAL: The slow motion wave. Egh.

WREN: Hardly befitting of Jessa.

JAMAL: Yeah. Jessa was alright.

ALI: (AN INTERCOM FAR AWAY) Searching for mission control.

JAMAL: You and Jessa were close. Like sisters.

WREN: That's an exaggeration... *Taaj* was like a sister to *you*.

JAMAL: No--not really. And especially not at the end. You know that.

WREN: But early on--she was always messing with you and Eli and having fun. Jessa and I only ever *talked*.

JAMAL: I know. I said what I meant. Like two fully-grown sisters getting together for coffee and talking about their parents retiring.

WREN: Getting together for coffee? What the hell are you talking about?

JAMAL: You know! It's like...(SIGHS, FORMULATING WORDS)

WREN: Crossing the connector to Capsule 2 now.

(DISTANT THINKING AND MOTOR WHIRRING--THE LAST WE 'HEAR' OF THE ROVER INSIDE THE CAPSULE.)

JAMAL: You weren't close as kids. She hated you growing up.

ALI: (DISTANT, CAPSULE 1 INTERCOM, DOES NOT NEED TO BE HEARD CLEARLY) Capsule one temperature is currently seventy nine point one degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point one degrees Celsius.

JAMAL: (OVERLAPPING)...And then you drifted apart in college. And then out of the blue...She calls and asks you to coffee. And it's like...this is how sisters are supposed to work. And the coffee turns into dinner. And the dinner turns into constant texting...

WREN: (A QUIET UPDATE) Traversing Capsule 2 now...

JAMAL: And before you know it--your sister and you have this thing that you didn't have before. When the coffee place quiets down and you can focus on what retirement home your parents are thinking about that week and have an honest talk...That was you and Jessa. It was a different kind of connection than whatever Taaj and I had...it was stable...helpful...up until the end...

A MOMENT.

Wren?

WREN: You only had the *one* sister?

JAMAL: Yeah. Well...One biological. One by choice.

WREN: I was close to Jessa--but I don't think we had that.

JAMAL: Maybe your other self did.

WREN: My other self?

JAMAL: (CAUTIOUS APPROACH, ASKING FOR HIMSELF) ...Do you wanna talk more about Jessa? Maybe after we bring the rover back we can...I dunno, share some memories or--

WREN: (CURT) What'd *that* thing used to be?

JAMAL: (SURRENDERING THE TOPIC) ...What *thing*?

WREN: The long tube? Looks like a ribbon almost--kind of pretty.

JAMAL: Oh, I honestly have no idea. A lot of this junk was hidden in the walls. Did you ever think about how much crap was in the walls that we never saw?

WREN: No.

JAMAL: The Aethon was just a big ball of tubes and wires. We were flying to the sun in a carefully disguised rat's nest. (A BEAT) Hey, I can see you now!

WREN: Good.

JAMAL: Can you see me?

WREN: We don't have time for that.

JAMAL: I'm waving. Turn the camera towards me.

WREN: Not right now, Jamal.

JAMAL: Just for a second. Come on. This might be the last time--

WREN: Don't say that, Jamal.

JAMAL: C'mon--

WREN: (ANNOYED) Getting to the network arm is more important right now. Let's get that done first. Okay?

JAMAL: ...Okay...it's fine...

A BEAT.

WREN: ...Did you see it? When the flare hit?

JAMAL: ...No. It was too bright. And too fast.

WREN: I tried to access the footage. Listen to this--Ali, can you display data from the solar flare?

ALI: You do not have authorization to access that file.

WREN: See?

JAMAL: Ali, can you display data from the solar flare?

ALI: You do not have authorization to access that file.

JAMAL: Why has it been locked?

ALI: The file has been locked due to emergency protocol.

WREN: It's bullshit.

JAMAL: She's programmed to prevent surviving crew members from altering and deleting sensitive information.

WREN: Like what?

JAMAL: ...Like who was at fault.

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER, IN CAPSULE 9--DISTANT--DOES NOT HAVE TO BE HEARD) Capsule nine temperature is currently One Hundred and nine point three degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point nine degrees Celsius.

WREN: I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't alter the recordings.

JAMAL: Sure.

WREN: I wouldn't do that, Jamal.

JAMAL: You stopped talking to me *weeks* before the flare. So--no--I don't think you would do that but 'I can't say with any certainty what you'll do.'

A BEAT.

WREN: But you know CimmTech was up to no good. Especially Margaret.

JAMAL: I can say with absolute certainty that Margaret was not involved when the flare hit.

WREN: No, but Taaj was trying to say something at the end. Jessa heard it. Why would Taaj be talking about Margaret at that point in time unless she did something. Unless CimmTech did something. Margaret was acting strange the whole time.

JAMAL: Alex was acting strange towards the end, too.

WREN: No. Not by comparison. You were just angry at him. And it was that...what did Jessa call it? 'Euphoria?'

JAMAL: I meant before that. Like you. You were acting strange, too.

WREN: No, I wasn't! CimmTech was keeping secrets. They were withholding and--

JAMAL: *And you?*

NO RESPONSE.

You weren't hiding anything?

NO RESPONSE.

Not even something you'd want to delete from the recordings?

A BEAT. FRUSTRATED, JAMAL TURNS TO A THREAT.

Ali records everything. We can go back and listen if you want.

WREN: I just want figure out *who* was at fault.

JAMAL: You were the onboard commander for Payload Four. So whatever happened, *it was your fault*. If you hadn't taken command away--

WREN: Ali--the rover is feeling sluggish!

JAMAL: Okay, let's avoid that conversation.

WREN: No, it's just--ALI, is functionality declining?

ALI: Metallic dust is collecting in the wheel base magnet, resulting in friction and an increase in temperature.

WREN: See? It isn't beautiful--*it's a threat*.

JAMAL: Can't it be both?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER, IN CAPSULE 8--DISTANT--DOES NOT HAVE TO BE HEARD) Capsule eight temperature is currently one hundred and eight point two degrees fahrenheit. Forty two point three degrees Celsius.

WREN: ..Okay..we're at the base of the network arm. Tell me when I'm heading into the light.

JAMAL: ...Right now it's...like...you can only move in a straight line.

WREN: Okay...Moving forward six inches.

ROVER MOVES.

JAMAL: Wait--move left...Maybe three inches?

WREN: Moving left three inches.

ROVER MOVES.

JAMAL: Three more.

ALERT SOUND.

ALI: Rover exposed to direct solar radiation.

JAMAL: *One* more.

JOYSTICK ADJUSTMENT. ALERT TURNS OFF.

I'm at a weird angle.

WREN: It's okay.

JAMAL: I'm doing the best I can.

WREN: I know. Ali--the wheels are really sticky. Responsiveness is low. Is there anything we can do about it?

ALI: Latching the rover module into a track system port would allow you to disengage magnetic adherence temporarily to clear the wheels and motor.

WREN: And where is the nearest track system port?

ALI: Capsule two.

JAMAL: I think it's on the side exposed to the sun.

WREN: Okay--so--we're stuck with the wheels...okay...um...I'm gonna try to get a visual without moving the rover any more. Extending camera vertically six inches.

ELECTRONIC ADJUSTMENT SOUND.

WARNING SOUND.

ALI: Camera exposed to direct solar radiation.

WREN: Retracting two inches.

WARNING SOUND STOPS.

Zooming and refocusing...

JAMAL: What do you see?...Wren?

WREN: ...Nothing.

JAMAL: No, I saw something climb down. There were sparks everywhere. You said it yourself, you lost power.

WREN: Yes, I lost power but maybe it was just something internal.

JAMAL: Then what did I see?! Look for discoloration or a bent panel or...or...

A BEAT.

WREN: There's nothing, Jamal. No burn marks. No exposed electronics. The dish seems fine. Ali didn't track any readings...if it wasn't for the power flickering, there's no evidence of anything.

JAMAL: Can you look closer?

WREN: There's *nothing there*.

JAMAL: Look closer.

A BEAT.

WREN: Zooming and refocusing further...panning left...stopping...

ALI: (AN INTERCOM FAR AWAY) Searching for mission control.

WREN: ...Panning right...stopping.

A BEAT.

Jamal...There's nothing. The base panel is fine. Just a couple of stripped screws.

JAMAL: I saw *something*...

WREN: Wait--why are the screws--?

METALLIC THUD ON HULL. THEN A SCRAPING.

What was that?

SOUND OF THE CAMERA TURNING.

JAMAL: Shit--the bionic arm...

WREN: Come on, Jamal!

JAMAL: I looked away for a second! It's sliding towards the rover!

WREN: Is the magnet that strong? Turning the rover--

WARNING SOUND.

ALI: (WARNING SOUND) Rover exposed to direct solar radiation.

WREN: The wheels are sticking!

JAMAL: Let Ali take back the controls!

WARNING SOUND.

ALI: Rover exposed to direct radiation.

WREN: I've got this!

JAMAL: If you turn off the magnet to clear the wheels--!

WREN: Then we lose the rover!

WARNING SOUND.

ALI: Object approaching rover.

JAMAL: Ali, take back the rover steering!

ALI: Verbal confirmation required from the onboard commander.

WREN: I've got it under control, Jamal.

JAMAL: You can't always control everything!

WREN: I've got it under control!

JAMAL: Just like with the flare?!

WARNING SOUND.

ALI: Wheel base temperature increasing.

WREN: (ANGRY) Yes, Ali--thank you! Please retract camera!

JAMAL: Wren! WREN! The arm is under the--

METALLIC THUD HEARD FROM INSIDE THE HULL.

A BEAT.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: ...Rover detached from the surface of the Aethon...Rover directly exposed to solar radiation...Internal temperature increasing...Camera has disconnected...

A BEAT.

Rover internal temperature critical.

A BEAT.

Rover meltdown imminent.

WREN: (DEFEATED) Ali--keep recording Rover data until the signal is lost and add to the next Emergency Audio Packet.

ALI: An Aethon Operating System Timer Failure has resulted in terminal error. Audio packets--

WREN: (QUIETLY) Shut up, Ali.

A BEAT.

...And that's it. I'm sorry, Jamal.

JAMAL: That's it?

WREN: What do you want me to do? Put on the space suit? There was no evidence of the power surge and definitely no 'ghosts.'

JAMAL: You think I'm losing my mind.

WREN: I think you're desperate.

JAMAL: You're the one not getting any sleep!

WREN: But I'm not the one hallucinating!

JAMAL: I'm trying to *help* you--

WREN: No! I'm trying to help *you*! I'm the *only* one trying to figure out a way to save you! But I know *you've* given up and rolled over, so please stop wasting my time!

A BEAT.

JAMAL: (FIRM, QUIET) Terminate call.

CALL TERMINATED.

WREN: (TO HERSELF) ...crap...

A BEAT.

Ali?

ALI: Yes, Wren?

A BEAT.

Would you like me to contact Jamal?

WREN: No...(A BEAT) Ali, I'm sorry the rover was destroyed.

ALI: It's okay. I feel no pain.

WREN: And I'm sorry I can't fix you.

ALI: It's okay, Wren.

WREN: Let me know if Jamal...needs anything?...I guess.

ALI: Yes, Wren.

A BEAT.

WREN: Also...can you stop calling me Wren?

ALI: What would you like for me to call you?

WREN: I don't know. 'Wren' makes it sound like you're my friend. But 'doctor' makes me sound like I should know what's going on...I don't know that I deserve either of those names.

ALI: What name do you feel you deserve?

SILENCE.

I can call you 'Specialist Guerrero.'

WREN: That'll be fine.

ALI: Overriding name protocol to address Wren as 'Specialist Guerrero.'

WREN: Thank you.

ALI: Yes, Specialist Guerrero.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE ALT

ALI: Aethon Audio Packet from Mission Control. Four hundred and eighty two dash one 2045. Private message for Commander Alex Tawley.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ALI: You have selected to play the classified message for Commander Alex Tawley. Please enter the four digit security code.

WE HEAR FOUR ENTRIES ON A KEYPAD

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ALI: Now playing classified message for Commander Alex Tawley.

RECORDING BEGINS

AARAV : Alex...Alex...

BEAT

We weren't able to get ahold of CimmTech either. Mission Operations met overnight to determine what to do when the edict came down, but ultimately our hands are tied. So first and foremost, this is to remain classified.

No one is to say *anything*. No messages home about this. No talking about what went wrong. NASC will not be making a statement about it. Perhaps one day, yes -- but for now this must be kept from the public while we straighten things out.

As for the body, we will leave it to you to handle as you see fit. I wish there was something I could...

I'm sorry, Alex.

...I...I'm sorry.

RECORDING ENDS

ALI: End of message.

SCENE 5.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: Four hundred and seventy eight.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

MARGARET: Ali.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: Yes, Chief Margaret Scientist Cohen?

MARGARET: (A BEAT) Matryoshka.

AN EXTRA SET OF BOLTS TRIGGER ON THE DOORS.

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 MOMENT PASSES. MARGARET BECOMES EMOTIONAL,
BREATHES HEAVY...SHE IS TERRIFIED AND DEEPLY
SAD...OVERLY DRAMATIC IN THIS MOMENT, BUT IT'S
REAL...

MARGARET: ...I don't know if I'm prepared to go through with this mission...(A DEEP INHALE) Eli is so young. He doesn't know what's coming. Taaj doesn't understand the bigger picture...And I'm worried that Jamal--I can't let him delay or stop everything before we even have a chance to--...

MARGARET INHALES, PREPARING HERSELF. CALMING
HERSELF.

...But we still have a month...*I still have a few weeks*...Payload three tomorrow. Payload four on day 532. I can keep us on schedule. I can keep us on time. Payload three has to go off without a hitch. It has to. And I'm so worried--...

The sacrifice...*this sacrifice*...is worth the reward. God forgive me for lying--

A KNOCK ON THE METALLIC DOOR.

ALEX: (OUTSIDE, NON-THREATENING) Chief Scientist Cohen. It's time for the payload three launch walk through.

A MOMENT.

Margaret!

MARGARET: (AS THOUGH NOTHING IS WRONG; A DIFFERENT PERSON AND VOICE) I'll be there in a moment, Commander Tawley.

ALEX: *Now, Margaret.*

WE HEAR ALEX'S FOOTSTEPS FADE AWAY.

MARGARET: (A BEAT) Matryoshka.

ANOTHER HIGH PITCH FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN:

THE SECURITY OF ALI TURNS OFF. THE DOOR UNLOCKS.

ALI: CimmTech encryption disabled.

MARGARET: Open door.

DOOR OPENS,

Thank you, Ali.

MARGARET EXITS...DOOR CLOSES...

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.