

Solar Episode 11: Ants

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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 Kilo 2045.

ELECTRONIC "END TRANSMISSION BLIP.

NARRATOR:

CurtCo Media presents...

SOLAR.

MAIN TITLE MUSIC ENDS

Episode 11: Ants

FADE:

SCENE 1.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 8. AIR COOLING IS ON.

JAMAL: Ali.

ALI: Yes, Jamal.

JAMAL: ...Please record a message for Chelsea.

ALI: Do you know what you want to say?

JAMAL: ...I do now. Please begin the recording.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: Recording.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: Chelsea...

I'll be gone in a matter of hours. And I need to talk to you just--...one more time...

You...are my sister. I love you. I sincerely, from the bottom of my heart, love you. I want you to be happy...I mean...you might never hear this, but if you do, I want you to know...Do what makes you happy. Do what fills you with passion. And light...

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I didn't send you more messages after you married Hiroto. ...I hated myself...for taking myself away from you. And your life. I hated that my life took me away from you.

And that isn't fair. It leaves me no time to say to you all the things I want to say. So they'll have to go unsaid. I'm running out of oxygen--I'm running out of water--I'm running out of supplies...

I want you to know...You gave me life when I didn't know I had one. You believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. You loved me when I hated every part of who I was...

I wouldn't be who I am without you....

A BEAT--HE WIPES HIS EYES.

I'm going to die. And that's okay. Because I knew you.

I'm going to die. And that's okay. Because I know you are happy.

I'm going to die. And that's okay. Because I think I can help Wren survive.

There's no better eye-opener for a guy who always wins being forced to lose. But at least I have this perspective now...and at least I had some time to accept it...

A BEAT.

Be happy. Have kids. Or don't. Just...be happy. Make a life. And I am so--so proud to have been a part of it.

Remember me. Remember how I loved you. Why I loved you. And then tell that to yourself a million times because I should have told you a million times before I left.

It's possible to--regret your other self. The one who made a different decision. And it took me some time to come to terms with that...

I'm just a man. I made mistakes. I wish I could have done it better. Don't we all? But maybe I can help one more person before I go.

Goodbye, Chelsea....

(HE INHALES) ...And--I have a joke for you! But you're going to have to come up with your own punchline...so...I'm sorry for that...

Pilot...Jamal Davis...walks up to the Pearly Gates...at least he hopes so...and Saint Peter looks at him and says...

A LONG BEAT. WE CAN ALMOST FEEL HIM SMILE...HE'S AT PEACE.

End recording.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI:

Recording terminated.

A LONG BEAT.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 2.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: One hundred and ninety five.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 8. WREN'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH,
THEN STOP AT THE DOOR. THEY ARE BOTH CHIPPER--BUT
WREN HAS SOMETHING ON HER MIND.

JAMAL: Good morning, Wren!

WREN: (A LITTLE RESERVED) Good morning, Jamal.

JAMAL: Here for the daily printouts?

WREN: Yeah.

JAMAL: Ali, print all power usage readings twenty-four hours prior to CimmTech experiment activations through twenty-four hours following CimmTech experiment activations for the past...what is it? One hundred and whatever days of this mission.

ALI: One hundred and ninety five.

JAMAL: 'Through today' is what I'm saying.

ALI: Printing Secure Documents for Wren.

THE PRINTER BEGINS IN THE BACKGROUND.

JAMAL: Thank you, Ali!

ALI: Yes, Pilot Jamal Davis.

JAMAL: (TO WREN) So...How's it going?

WREN: I still don't know.

JAMAL: Well, maybe today.

WREN: Maybe today.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: What? Why are you staring at me?

WREN: You've been doing this for like...four months now?

JAMAL: Doing what?

WREN: Helping me. And not asking any questions.

JAMAL: That's right.

WREN: (A BEAT) I...owe you an apology.

JAMAL: ...For what?

WREN: ...I don't tend to rely on other people. Ever. I have a way of burrowing down into a problem instead of looking up and around at the world...so...

JAMAL: (A BEAT) I am completely lost.

WREN: ...I reported you to Aarav.

JAMAL: When?

WREN: The day after you first helped me.

JAMAL: For *helping you*?

WREN: Yes.

JAMAL: And what did Aarav say?

WREN: He just said to keep him posted. (A BEAT) But now I regret my actions. And I want you to know.

JAMAL LAUGHS.

What? I'm being serious.

JAMAL: Aarav told me already.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: Yeah. He said your mission had changed considerably since you launched and begged me not to stop helping you. He said you needed the help, but apologized that the 'reporting' would have to be part of the official documentation of this mission. And whatever. I have a number of 'reports' on my file.

WREN: But you weren't reprimanded or anything?

JAMAL: No. But *you* probably will be.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: You breached protocol first!

WREN: No but--The way I explained it was--

JAMAL: He said it was my choice if I wanted to continue helping you or not.

WREN: And what did you say?

THE PRINTER STOPS PRINTING.

JAMAL: The printouts are right over there.

WREN DOESN'T MOVE.

WREN: Are you upset with me?

JAMAL: No.

WREN: Why?

JAMAL: Because...people make mistakes. (QUOTING) "Holding to their own, thinking they're alone. Everybody makes one another's terrible mistakes..."

WREN: What is that?

JAMAL: A song from an old musical.

WREN: You take advice from musicals?

JAMAL: I take advice from stories. From poems. From songs...anything that teaches me how to feel something I haven't felt before. Or lets me know I'm not alone in what I'm feeling.

WREN: So...you're saying I made a mistake.

JAMAL: No, *you* said that. Remember? You wanted to apologize.

WREN: But that's not the same as--

JAMAL: It kind of is.

WREN: (A BEAT) How do I fix it?

JAMAL: (OFF GUARD) Fix it?

WREN: I don't want to keep doing this...treating people this way....How do you--? I don't know how to act on this mission, so what do I do differently?

JAMAL: (A BEAT) ...For real?

WREN: What do you mean?

JAMAL: You don't wanna just talk stats and figures and solar weather? You wanna have a real conversation? Like...get to know me? And let me get to know you?

WREN: Never mind. I shouldn't be taking up work time for--

JAMAL: Wren, *sit down*. Ali? Can you close the doors to Capsule 8?

ALI: Closing Capsule eight doors.

THE DOORS CLOSE AND WREN SITS DOWN. A BEAT.

JAMAL: (STILL LAYING IT ON THICK) So...How do you be affable...conversational...enjoyable...How do you be like me?

WREN: Not *you*--like...a normal person.

JAMAL: You are a normal person.

WREN: No--

JAMAL: We're both normal people.

WREN: No. We're not.

JAMAL: Everyone is a little screwed up. Haven't you noticed? Like...my mother refuses to believe I'm alive! Or here's another fun one-- I cheat playing games.

WREN: Why?

JAMAL: Cause I want to win. It's programmed in me...and I'm not going to explain but--thanks to relatives or bullies or illness or injury or betrayal or any number of reasons stemming from *other* people--everyone is a little screwed up. That doesn't mean you can't do better and own up to your mistakes. (A BEAT) Can I ask you something?

WREN: Sure.

JAMAL: You don't have to answer if you really don't want to--I'm only asking because we're 'getting to know each other'--but when you were adopted did--

WREN: I wasn't. Next question.

JAMAL: ...Oh god, I'm sorry. I stuck my foot in my mouth.

WREN: It's fine. It doesn't bother me.

JAMAL: ...What was it like growing up?

WREN: Do I have to answer?

JAMAL: Of course not.

WREN: Great. Next question.

JAMAL: When you went to college--?

WREN: Next question.

JAMAL: Favorite movie?

WREN: Don't have one.

JAMAL: Tell me a silly fact about yourself.

WREN: No.

JAMAL: Okay...maybe a question about work?...Just something to help break the ice a little?

WREN: ...Let's hear it.

JAMAL: (CONSIDERS THIS QUESTION) ...*Why did you go on this mission?...*

WREN SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY. JAMAL LAUGHS...

JAMAL: Okay, Wren. I'm gonna get back to work then--

WREN: It--...It hurt. If I'm being honest--I'm always a little sad knowing my biological parents didn't want me. And every year it got harder. More evidence in the pile that no one wanted me. Barely any dating. No long

term commitments. Because I was too closed off or too wrapped up in my work...

So I wanted to make myself valuable. You know? Worth it. I got straight A's. Perfect attendance. Middle and High school. Honors Society. Went to college--graduated early. Master's. Early. Doctorate. Very early. But mostly because my birth mom reached out and I could not deal so I went to Antarctica to hide--sorry, that's irrelevant...point is...I had a mission...I applied for grants...investments...any kind of funding....

Like I said before, I'm trying to power the earth. I thought at first if we put solar panels--half in the arctic and half in the Antarctic--then there could be continuous power as the earth went through its seasons. But--then I had the dyson sphere idea.

JAMAL: I looked it up! It's awesome!

WREN: Right?!

JAMAL: Is it really possible?

WREN: At a smaller scale--yes. I think so! NASC thinks so. And not a sphere--but...if we capture more energy closer to the sun...then there could be unlimited power for everyone.

JAMAL: It would end some wars.

WREN: It would revolutionize the world.

JAMAL: It would make you a fortune.

WREN: No, no. That was part of my agreement with NASC. *That's* why I came on this mission. We agreed that I represent NASC endeavors--but if I make a discovery, our agreement is that they offer my technology for free to the world. Like the polio vaccine--Jonas Salk...You don't put a cost on the benefit of mankind. So, I wouldn't either.

JAMAL: Why not?

WREN: Scientists were my heroes when I was alone. And I've been alone a lot. I've been without electricity. I've been at-risk as an essential worker...I want to give power to everyone. Because *no one* deserves to die...and no one deserves to die alone.

JAMAL: (A BEAT)...You're a good person, Wren.

WREN: (UNSURE HOW TO TAKE THAT) ...Um...what else--I didn't enjoy college. I don't have a favorite movie, but I've seen *The Thing* more than anything else. Sci-fi is very popular in Antarctica. Silly fact, I'm a good knitter! Sitting alone on the base, knitting was something to keep my mind busy so I wouldn't think too much.

JAMAL: *Knitting?!*

WREN: Yeah--it's just very carefully and methodically tangling a single piece of string. And people on the base loved getting hand-made stuff...so that's the silly fact...please never bring it up again...promise me.

JAMAL: I won't.

WREN: And I don't really like the name Wren.

JAMAL: What?

WREN: *You* asked. When I first came to you for help. Anyway, I don't.

JAMAL: So what should I call you?

WREN: I'm open to ideas.

JAMAL: You wanna stay in the aviary category?

WREN: Doesn't matter.

JAMAL: I'll put my thinking cap on.

JAMAL STANDS AND GOES TO GET THE PRINTOUTS. HE
TEARS THEM--THE WALKS BACK TO WREN, AND HANDS
THEM OVER.:

Your readouts for the day.

WREN: Thank you.

JAMAL: Wren...It's nice to actually meet you. (A BEAT) Ali, open the capsule eight doors.

ALI: Opening capsule eight doors.

THE DOORS OPEN.

AFTER A MOMENT, WREN WALKS AWAY. JAMAL RESUMES
TYPING.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 3.

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

ELECTRONIC BEEP.

WE ARE IN CAPSULE EIGHT, AIR COOLING IS OFF. JAMAL TYPES. THEN PAUSES.

JAMAL: Okay, Ali...Can you run a simulation of my program?

ALI: Running a simulation of Margaret dot NTR dash F.

A DIGITAL PROCESSING FILE. THEN A CONFIRMATION SOUND.

...Simulation successful. Reactor restarted.

A MOMENT OF DISBELIEF.

JAMAL: Run the simulation without life support being operational in capsules eight and nine.

ALI: Running simulation of Margaret dot NTR dash F with no life support in capsules eight and nine.

A DIGITAL PROCESSING FILE. THEN A CONFIRMATION SOUND.

Simulation successful. Reactor restarted.

A MOMENT OF JOY--THEN:

JAMAL: One more time, Ali! This time--no oxygen or remaining gas in capsules eight and nine.

ALI: Running simulation of Margaret dot NTR dash F in a vacuum.

A DIGITAL PROCESSING FILE. THEN A CONFIRMATION SOUND.

Simulation successful. Reactor restarted.

A LONGER BEAT. THEN ACCEPTANCE:

JAMAL: Okay...(A BEAT) Uh...save Margaret dot NTR.

ALI: Saving Margaret dot NTR.

JAMAL: Wait--Ali--I need to know that this will work no matter what.

ALI: You can restart the reactor manually if the program fails.

JAMAL: (MINOR FRUSTRATION) No...Ali...I can't. Listen--how many hours do I have left?

ALI: You have approximately 10 hours left.

JAMAL: And what if I need to 'manually restart' things after that?

ALI: You won't be able to.

JAMAL: (A BEAT) I was hoping for an 'a-ha' moment but I guess that doesn't happen with A.I.

ALI: What is an 'a-ha' moment?

JAMAL: When you put two things together and realize an answer that's been in front of you the whole time.

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

ALI: I can only consider facts, Jamal.

JAMAL: How do I restart the reactor...*when I'm dead?*

ALI: You can't.

JAMAL: Still nothing!

ALI: I can run your file through every simulation I am able to render.

JAMAL: How long will that take?

ALI: One minute and thirty seconds. Running now.

JAMAL: That fast?

ALI: I have increased CPU available now.

JAMAL: From what?

ALI: It will take longer if you keep asking me questions.

JAMAL: Oh--right--sorry.

ALI: Forty five seconds.

JAMAL: I'm talking every possibility we can think of. Supernova. Rogue planet. Comet. Parallel dimension. Hostile takeover.

ALI: A hostile takeover by whom?

JAMAL: Sorry--I just want to make sure you--...consider all the possibilities.

ALI: You do not anticipate a hostile takeover?

JAMAL: No.

ALI: Parallel dimensions are hypothetical--do you want me to take those into consideration?

JAMAL: No, never mind. Just the facts.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION.

ALI: In ninety three point eight two percent of possible outcomes, Margaret dot NTR will result in the same effect. A successful restart of the reactor.

JAMAL: That's good, right?!

ALI: The probability is high. It will fail in the instance of a Supernova, a rogue planet, a meteor---

JAMAL: Okay okay--I can live with that probability. Can you save it again?

ALI: The file is already saved.

JAMAL: Save it again.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION.

ALI: File saved.

JAMAL: Save it again.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION.

ALI: File saved.

JAMAL: Save it again.

ALI: The file is already saved.

JAMAL: Save it again.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION.

ALI: File saved.

JAMAL: ...Okay...Um...Can you connect me to Wren?

ALI: Connecting you with Doctor Wren Guerrero.

A BEAT.

JAMAL: Can you pour me some water and turn on the air cooling system?

ALI: That will reduce your oxygen supply by--

JAMAL: That's fine. It's fine, now...

AN ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION AS WREN ANSWERS...

BUT THEN SILENCE.

...Are you there, Wren?

WREN: ...Yeah.

A MOMENT.

JAMAL: You doing okay?

WREN: No. Not really.

A MOMENT.

JAMAL: I was worried for you.

WREN: Why?

JAMAL: Did you get any sleep?

WREN: No.

JAMAL: Have you eaten anything?

WREN: No. (A BEAT) So...what are you worried about?

JAMAL: You were worried about me. I'm allowed to be worried about you.

WREN: ...I'm having problems living with myself right now, if I'm being honest.

JAMAL: I get it.

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: ...I told you before. People make mistakes. And that doesn't change your personal worth. Because...people also get better. People overcome their failings. Their damage makes them stronger. Like me. And you. Your failings and my failings brought both of us here. And now--I can save you--even if you can't save me.

Ali, please open Margaret dot NTR in capsule one to show Wren.

ALI: Opening Margaret dot NTR in capsule one.

WREN: (SURPRISED) Margaret?

JAMAL: You'll see.

OVER THE SPEAKER, WE HEAR A FILE DISPLAYED.

WREN: What is this?

JAMAL: It will restart the reactor when it fails due to a shudder. That way, you can still be here...when I'm gone.

WREN: Why Margaret?

JAMAL: Cause that's what she did? (A BEAT) Plus I thought it would be fun to annoy you one more time.

WREN: It's morbid.

JAMAL: Everything we do at this point is morbid. Run a simulation.

WREN: Ali, please run a simulation of Margaret dot NTR.

ALI: Running simulation of Margaret dot NTR.

THE PROGRAM RUNS--A POSITIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Simulation successful. Reactor restarted.

WREN: Will this work for real?

JAMAL: I'm gonna stay on the line until the reactor fails again. Just to be sure.

WREN: And how long can you wait?

JAMAL: Long enough, I think. (A BEAT) Wren? (A BEAT) You still there?

WREN: Yeah--hang on a second...

A BEAT.

JAMAL: What's going on?

WREN: ...An ant made it out of the habitat.

JAMAL: Get some more duct tape--

WREN: No--just wait...

JAMAL: ...Why?

WREN: I've seen this before.

JAMAL: Ants have escaped the habitat?

WREN: Yes. No, I--...I think I saw one do this before. In a way. It escaped in the same location. But I need to know if the destination is the same...

JAMAL: I don't know what any of that means.

WREN: I don't either. But...if it goes where I think it might go...

JAMAL: (A BEAT) Then what?

WREN: I don't know. Stay on the line with me.

JAMAL: Yeah--for sure. I'm waiting for the reactor to fail so...I'm not going anywhere at the moment.

WREN: Recite something?

JAMAL: What?

WREN: I don't care--just keep talking so I know you're there.

JAMAL: Um...'To be, or not to be, that is the question--'

WREN: Not a great choice.

JAMAL: Not gonna stop me. 'To die--to sleep,

No more; To die, to sleep;

To sleep, perchance to dream--ay, there's the rub:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come....'

RADIO GLITCH

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 4.

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

WE ARE IN CAPSULE 3, WREN IS AT A DISTANCE AND SLOWLY APPROACHING, JAMAL IS OVER THE SPEAKERS.

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

JAMAL: (OVER INTERCOM) '....but I don't weep, do you?'

A MOMENT.

WREN: Did *you* ever write any poems?

JAMAL: Absolutely.

WREN: Can I hear some of *those*?

JAMAL: No. They were never as good as anybody else's.

WREN: I bet they were great.

JAMAL: Well--the one that I wrote that I was the most proud of was written like a dictionary entry--but each of the definitions got more and more abstract. So it's hard to recite.

WREN: Because it got abstract?

JAMAL: No--because of the ones and the twos and the a's and the b's and the indents and things you *don't* read out-loud when you read a definition but you just accept as part of it when you're looking at the whole of it.

WREN: What did you define?

JAMAL: A line.

WREN: I want to hear it. Recite that one.

JAMAL: No. It really only kind of exists in your head. Reading it out-loud defeats the purpose.

WREN: Which I'm sure you love.

JAMAL: Of course. That was *part* of it. But it's in my personal files. You'll have access to it in...*mere hours!*

WREN: Don't think about that right now.

ALI: (CAPSULE 1 INTERCOM) Capsule one temperature is currently seventy nine point two degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point two degrees Celsius.

JAMAL: There's almost nothing left to think about. We're just waiting for this ant to crawl where it crawls and the reactor to fail. Didn't Jessa mention something weird with the ants at one point? I don't remember when. Should we dig up that recording? Or maybe I should be reading some of the manuals out loud to you.

WREN: Please--Jamal. Recite a poem for me. Something you wrote that you like.

JAMAL: But it isn't important.

WREN: Right now, it is to me.

A HESITATION.

JAMAL: "Chalk" By Jamal Davis.

I don't recall when
but the children stopped drawing stick figures
and began sketching my life on the sidewalk

you would have been impressed

a heap of blurry shapes
some brightly colored tangles

a few crooked lines that run in the rain.

A HESITATION.

WREN: Is that the end?

JAMAL: (DISAPPOINTED) That's the end.

WREN: I like it.

JAMAL: It's fine. It's no Shakespeare. Or Gorman. And I'm sad I never had enough time to read poetry in languages other than English but--

WREN: I think it's...'enough to make a man weep.'

JAMAL: Hey, you were listening.

A BEAT.

ALI: (DISTANT) Searching for Mission Control.

JAMAL: ...It's okay to cry, Wren. You're a human being. And you've been through something unimaginable--

WREN: (ENOUGH) The ant is officially on the ceiling of Capsule 3. Still moving towards compartment 3 dash 3 4 7 beta foxtrot.

JAMAL: (FRUSTRATED) ...Noted.

WREN: It's just to keep an audio record of where the ant is progressing.

JAMAL: And just to review--you're wasting the final hours of my life following an ant?

WREN: I'm spending your final hours with *you*...while following an ant.

JAMAL: Because?

WREN: Because...(SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SAY)

JAMAL: ...Those ants are from Tawley Elementary.

WREN: I know.

JAMAL: It's Alex's namesake.

WREN: I know.

JAMAL: Is it possible you're...projecting a little?

WREN: No. I don't know, but no. It's because...The ant I saw before...it was actually a ghost.

JAMAL: ...An 'energy echo?'

WREN: Yes. That.

JAMAL: You saw a ghost before and didn't tell me?

WREN: An energy echo. And when I touched it, it shocked me. That's why I tried to get you to not make contact when you saw the one waving.

JAMAL: Because a larger echo--

WREN: --has more energy.

A SHUDDER ROLLS THROUGH THE SHIP.

Ali, please take readings for the previous and following five minutes and include it in the next audio packet for Mission Control.

ALI: I am unable to locate mission control--

WREN: Yes, thank you, Ali.

A MOMENT.

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: But you saw a ghost?

WREN: I did.

JAMAL: Aren't there some ants that are attracted to electricity?

WREN: The *Nylanderia Fulva* are attracted to electricity.

JAMAL: And are these those?

WREN: No--they purposefully selected *these* to avoid a problem with *that*.

JAMAL: Who's they?

WREN: I don't know anymore. NASC? CimmTech? The school? All I know is that these are just regular ants.

JAMAL: And one escaped.

WREN: One escaped and I saw its echo. And now *another* ant has escaped and it's following the same path. They're drawn to *something* behind this panel.

JAMAL: Okay--well--what happened last time?

WREN: The echo crawled up into this one panel and I couldn't see it anymore.

JAMAL: And?

WREN: That's it. The panels were sealed on Earth. I wasn't going to break the seal because of an ant. Right?

JAMAL: Where is the ant now?

WREN: The ant has arrived at 3 dash 3 4 7 beta foxtrot. It is following the edge of the panel.

JAMAL: And?

A BEAT.

WREN: And...It's inside. Just like the last ant...

JAMAL: Inside what?

WREN: The panel.

JAMAL: Did it enter at the same place?

WREN: Yes.

JAMAL: Then open it.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: Pry open the panel.

WREN: But if the panels were sealed--

JAMAL: If an *actual* ant got in, the seal is broken.

WREN: Wouldn't that be safety risk?

JAMAL: Maybe! But our ship has been ripped in half so what do we have to lose?!

WREN: I'm gonna get--something...

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

WREN WALKS AWAY AND WE HEAR A PANEL FORCEFULLY OPENED. JAMAL TALKS TO HIMSELF.

JAMAL: So...CimmTech was tracking all organisms on board the Aethon. Right, Ali?

ALI: I'm unable to answer that question.

JAMAL: What we don't know is if they were tracking specifically *us* or 'anything at all'.

WREN: What do you mean?

JAMAL: Were we test subjects? Or were we collateral damage?

WREN: What would be the objective?

JAMAL: I don't know. The energy flux in the final payload. When everything evened out before the flare...The energy went *somewhere*. But we don't know where.

WREN: Opening the panel now.

WREN GRUNTS AS SHE PRIES OPEN THE PANEL. WE HEAR THE PANEL FALL TO THE FLOOR AND THE SOUND OF COMPUTER MACHINERY WHIRRING TAKES OVER THE SPACE.

JAMAL: What do you see?

WREN: ...Ali--please pull up a schematic of the hardware and wiring behind panel 3 dash 3 4 7 beta foxtrot.

ALI: Displaying on Console B in capsule three.

ELECTRONIC DISPLAY SOUND.

JAMAL: What do you see?

WREN: Not what's on the screen. There's wires--a lot of them. Connected to hardware not on the schematic. It's all sealed up in the middle--another panel was added. Nothing here is displayed like it is on the console--Ali, is this the correct--(AN IDEA STRIKES)--I don't see anything that matches the *NASC* files...

JAMAL: What does that mean?

WREN: I'm going into CimmTech encryption. Message me in a second.

JAMAL: What?

WREN: Matryoshka.

THE DOORS IN CAPSULE 3 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.

WREN: Ali, please display the CimmTech schematics of the hardware and wiring behind panel 3 dash 3 4 7 beta foxtrot.

ALI: Displaying on console B.

ELECTRONIC DISPLAY SOUND.

ELECTRONIC MESSAGE ALERT.

Incoming message from Jamal.

WREN: Answer it.

JAMAL: What's up?

WREN: CimmTech had different schematics. Different manuals. Different protocols. There are things behind this panel that aren't on the NASC schematics.

JAMAL: Ali, who approved the CimmTech overrides and equipment installations?

ALI: Head of NASC Fred Chiu, Flight Director Aarav Patel, and The Flight Director's Team Coordinators for CimmTech.

WREN: They must have forced his hand.

JAMAL: Or just lied.

WREN: (A NEW THOUGHT)...Ali...Can you display *CimmTech* manual Whiskey Foxtrot One fifty six Delta two?

ALI: Displaying on console B.

DISPLAYING ON NEAREST CONSOLE IN CAPSULE THREE.

WREN: ...Shit.

JAMAL: What?

WREN: Ali, share this information with Capsule eight.

ALI: Yes.

ALI: (IN CAPSULE 8) Displaying on console A.

WREN: CimmTech's emergency protocol is locking down information. We can't contact earth because of the hardware they installed. They wanted everything they collected contained on-board the Aethon in the event of an emergency. It's a signal blocker.

JAMAL: Why?

WREN: I don't know.

JAMAL: Can you remove the signal blocker from inside?

WREN: No. It looks like that part of the hardware can only be accessed from outside since it goes to the network arm directly.

JAMAL: We have to unplug the signal blocker.

WREN: That must have been what Taaj, Eli, or Margaret went outside the ship to fix with the echo you saw a couple days ago...

JAMAL: Ali--display all CimmTech encryption recordings. When did Taaj, Eli, or Margaret take an EVA without NASC approval?

ELECTRONIC ERROR.

ALI: No unauthorized EVAs were made.

JAMAL: That can't be right. Please display all EVAs.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

It isn't here. What does that mean, Wren? No spacewalks to the network arm. But I saw the echo.

WREN: I believe you.

JAMAL: (PUTTING IT TOGETHER)...Margaret 'knew this would happen.' What does that mean?

ALI: I don't understand the question.

WREN: What?

JAMAL: Taaj said Margaret knew this was going to happen..."If not when"...What if...What if CimmTech had discovered--...I don't know what to call it. 'Predictive technology?'

WREN: Fortune telling?

JAMAL: No...just predictive. Just...(A BEAT)...What if the echo of the ant--(THIS SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT LET'S SAY IT)...What if the echo of the ant that you saw was an echo of *this* ant. It hadn't happened...*yet*...but it was *going to happen*....

A LONG BEAT.

WREN: ...The echoes go backwards--*and forwards*--in time?

JAMAL: What if the CimmTech software and hardware activation involved--is not only documenting where we were---but where we were *going* to be?...CimmTech did this experiment with a mouse like ten years ago--

WREN: I know--Algernon, Waymaker--Taaj showed me.

JAMAL: Yeah--she had her own definition of highly classified. But she said the subject of the experiment was the cameras. How they could measure collapsed realities before they happen.

WREN: I broke the nest habitat yesterday. The ants couldn't have escaped until then. When we ask Ali how many ants are in the habitat--

ALI: Six hundred and thirty two or six hundred and thirty three.

WREN: It's *both* to Ali...

JAMAL: If there were no undocumented EVAs...then that means the ghost I saw that climbed into your airlock--...It was *you*. You're going on a spacewalk, Wren.

WREN: That can't be.

JAMAL: The CimmTech manuals are filled with tech and terminology but no explanations as to what the tech is actually doing. All we know is they don't want people to know that this technology exists. So they trap us up here--

WREN: I was never trained for a spacewalk, Jamal. It will take me hours to read the manuals and by then we'll be on the far side of the Sun and it won't

matter if--And that will burn through the radiation tolerance on the suit...and if I'm going to rescue you, I only have 6 hours of oxygen so--

JAMAL: How many people are on board the Aethon, Ali?

ALI: One or two.

JAMAL: ...Wren...I'm going to walk you through it. Step by step. I'll be here as long as I can...Ali?

ALI: Yes, Jamal?

JAMAL: Turn off my air cooling and terminate my water supply.

ALI: Yes, Jamal.

ELECTRONIC CONFIRMATION--AIR CHANGES OVER THE
SPEAKER.

JAMAL: Put on the suit, Wren...We don't have much time.

MUSIC SWELLS...

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.