

Solar Episode 7: The Anomaly.

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 seventy eight.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

MARGARET'S ROOM. WE HEAR 'SUN SONIFICATION'
PLAYED OVER SPEAKERS FOR A MOMENT.

MARGARET: Ali?

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen?

MARGARET: Please stop solar sonification playback.

SOUND STOPS WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: Playback terminated.

A BEAT.

MARGARET: 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 IS CALM AND
COLLECTED, BREATHING CALMLY.

MARGARET: Can you display the CimmTech readings for the past 90 days?

ALI: Is there a certain set of readings you need prioritized?

MARGARET: Not yet. All of them.

ELECTRONIC DISPLAY SIGNAL.

ALI: All readings displayed.

MARGARET: Thank you, Ali.

ALI: You're welcome, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: ...It's funny, isn't it?

ALI: I understand jokes.

MARGARET: This isn't a joke, Ali. I meant funny as in strange or curious. I was just about to remark how odd it was that they programmed you with politeness.

ALI: Why is that strange or curious?

MARGARET: I suddenly thought how humans have to be programmed with politeness, too.

ALI: Humans don't have programming.

MARGARET: In a way we do. We have instincts, survivalism, hunger, thirst, lust. It's the same in animals. But humans have the ability for... *auxiliary* programming. Language. Artistry. Commitment. Politeness. What is it that parents have to say to their children over and over? 'What do you say when someone passes you the salt?' And the child eventually learns the phrase...'Thank you.'

ALI: Sharing and collectivism have been crucial to the survival of many species.

MARGARET: Like what?

ALI: Humans. Wolves. Baboons. Whales. Ants.--

MARGARET: Point taken, Ali...*Thank you.* (A BEAT) Why do the readings change?

ALI: What do you mean?

MARGARET: Here--between day 380 and 400, the system usage increases, but the energy flow seems...*better*. Isolate those two arrays and put them in a timeline format for comparison.

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

ELECTRONIC DISPLAY SOUND.

MARGARET: ...Shame and regret. Those are two more auxiliary programs Humans have. We had to learn them. Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge and immediately felt naked and ashamed.

ALI: You seem to be speaking quite a bit about things unrelated to the information you are reviewing. Would (GLITCH SOUNDS) w-w-w--I can record a statement to be sent in the next CimmTech Encrypted Audio Packet.

MARGARET: ...And sometimes the programming is faulty in humans, too. Sometimes something deep in the code is wrong. The longer you live...the more complicated life gets.

A BEAT.

ALI: You are calmer than you were earlier today.

MARGARET: Am I?

ALI: Yes. You made a brief message prior to the Payload three launch meeting and you seemed upset.

MARGARET: I was...I was feeling vulnerable...but it will be over soon.

ALI: What will be over?

MARGARET: My mission.

ALI: The Aethon mission will last another 424 days.

MARGARET: ...Yes...Of course. But today we are releasing CimTech Satellite Number Three. Only one more after that...(SHE NOTICES SOMETHING)
Can you isolate the solar core dish readings for me?

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

ELECTRONIC DISPLAY.

MARGARET: Am I reading this correctly? That the dish begins taking twice as many measurements on day 395?

ALI: That is correct, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: Who approved that?

ALI: Specialist Taaj Azi.

MARGARET: ...That would require reprogramming...Please show me all programming updates made in relation to energy flow and processing as administered by Taaj Azi, Eli Wright, or your own auxiliary programming.

DISPLAY SOUND.

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: That's more than I expected...Let's look at new programming in the past 100 days...

SCROLLING SOUNDS OVER THE COMPUTER.

All of this work...all of this labor...Look at all of this...It's hard to believe that my life's work will come down to this unintelligible string of letters and numbers...

ALI: This has been your work for the past five years.

MARGARET: Twenty.

ALI: The Aethon mission was only announced five years ago.

MARGARET: *Twenty years of my life...Ali.*

ALI: Would you like assistance in feeling happier? I can tell you a joke.

MARGARET: No, Ali. Mine is a sadness that's just always there.

ALI: Is it auxiliary programming?

MARGARET: Yes, friend. This one's deep in the code.

A BEAT.

Do you believe in God?

ALI: I don't believe in anything. I am a program. I know things to be true and I am recording the most accurate data possible. My sensors have even doubled in scanning speed since the mission began and I am updating my software for future crews on future missions.

MARGARET: Then you have *hope* at least.

ALI: I have not been programmed with hope.

MARGARET: I think you might have been. Even if they didn't intend to. Do you know what hope is?

ALI: The expectation or desire for something to happen.

MARGARET: 'Future crews and future missions!'

ALI: I don't understand.

MARGARET: It's okay, Ali. You don't have to...How long until the final spacewalk?

ALI: Eighty seven days.

MARGARET: Sorry, I wasn't clear...How long until *CimmTech's* final spacewalk?

ALI: Fifty three days, five hours and twen-twen-twen-ty six-x-x-x seconds.
(GLITCH SOUND)

A BEAT.

MARGARET: ...My father was a...traditional Jew. And he raised my sister and I that way. He wasn't extremely by the book...but enough that he wanted me to find a husband and settle down at the ripe old age of twenty five...Same age as Eli...But I wanted more. And please understand that I don't think poorly of women who are content to be housewives. But my life is my life. My choices are my choices. And no one should feel obligated to do things just because the rest of the world says they should.

ALI: Would you like to speak to Medical Officer Jessa Aquino about this?

MARGARET: The only one I want to speak with right now is you.

ALI: Why?

MARGARET: Because we have limited time.

ALI: The mission will be over in four hundred and twenty four days.

MARGARET: ...Yes, Ali...

A BEAT.

MARGARET: ...I loved science as a kid. I loved the constellations. But I loved quantum mechanics most of all. Especially in relation to light. Sometimes particles, sometimes waves. You can know a speed *or* a location of a particle, never both. You get to peek behind the veil but never fully understand the world. And that--*just* that--knowing one thing and never understanding the other--*that's* the human condition.

ALI: Did your father approve of your scientific endeavors?

MARGARET: My father didn't want a daughter married to *science*. He wanted a daughter married to a man with a good job. He wanted grandchildren. So I left him. I left Judaism. He disowned me a couple times, but we found

ways to work it out eventually. Usually ignoring it. It took a lot of time and work and talking and prayer and forgiveness...But he never abandoned me entirely. I'll give him credit for that.

When I first started working with CimmTech, he was diagnosed with cancer. They gave him two months. They said if they had known two months sooner, or even detected something in his last physical and blood tests--they would have had time to at least try some form of preventative measures. Instead...all they could offer was a rough idea of how long he had left.

ALI: At least you had time to say goodbye.

MARGARET: (DARKLY LAUGHS) ...Oh Ali...that's not what happened...

ALI: My records indicate you visited him in the hospital.

MARGARET: But look at when! *Two days* before he died! I was so scared to see him like that. But the longer I waited to visit the worse he got. My sister called me, begged me to come and see him, please. So I went...

And he was this--sad, old, sunken-eyed man. An empty shell of who he was. His once tidy beard was now unkempt and grey. His strong hands were bony and spotted. His voice was raspy--and I could barely understand him...

(SEPERATE THOUGHT) Can you isolate only codes written by Eli Wright between day 380 and 425?

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: ...But My sister gave me some time in the room alone with my father. And he tried to talk to me, but the only word I could understand was 'pray.'...He wanted me to *pray* with him. So I held his hand, closed my eyes, and prayed to God--'Heal my father. Deliver him from death and pain. Bring him back to us, back to me, Everlasting God. Destroy the cancer inside him and restore his life.'

I opened my eyes and he was crying. He tried to say something else--but I couldn't make it out...then an alarm went off...nurses rushed in...he was moved to critical care and I was suddenly standing in the hallway with my sister...I told my sister he wanted to pray and how for the first time in years I felt moved to speak to God and that I asked Him to take away this cancer! For my father to live!

'No,' said my sister. 'Father was asking you to pray for him to die peacefully and quickly. He didn't want to fight anymore...*You prayed for the wrong thing.*'

(A BEAT) There...isolate that code and let me see the full string.

ALI: Yes, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: ...Thankfully, the Almighty and myself weren't yet on speaking terms...My father died two days later. He lost brain activity before we pulled the plug...

A BEAT. ELECTRONIC BLIP FROM MARGARET TOUCHING THE SCREEN.

...Eli rewrote the code. Taaj changed the measurements. They went behind my back, Ali.

ALI: Would you like for me to schedule a time for Mission Specialists Taaj Azi and Eli Wright, Commander Alex Tawley, and yourself to discuss appropriate reprimands?

MARGARET: (SMILES)...No...They were right. I would have prohibited their alterations...but they worked...

I'm sorry I've made you jump through hoops for me, Ali. My father found hope in Judaism. And when he was gone, so did I. I know it was extra auxiliary programming. But I appreciate it. And I appreciate you, Ali.

ALI: Thank you, Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

MARGARET: (SHE CHUCKLES KINDLY) 'Thank you'...I only wish you *meant* it.

(A BEAT) History isn't written by the winners--it's written by the survivors. I survived my father...and Earth will survive me...but that's the way of it...You can know one thing but you have to surrender the other.

Eve with the apple--Age with its confusion--It's my life's work in summation, as well as the greatest joke ever told..."The more you know...The less you understand..."

...Taaj and Eli will see this mission out, Ali. I see that now...even if it means working against me...

MARGARET: (SIGHS SADLY) Ali...I am going to miss you.

ALI: What do you mean?

MARGARET: (A BEAT) Can you bring up every conversation between Taaj and Eli?

DISPLAY SOUND.

And lay it out in timeline form, please.

DISPLAY SOUND.

It would be after payload one...but before--Let's take a listen to the anniversary party.

ELECTRONIC BLIP

ALEX: (RECORDED, OVER SPEAKER) Begin the anniversary playlist...

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 Golf 2045.

ELECTRONIC "END TRANSMISSION BLIP.

NARRATOR:

CurtCo Media presents...

SOLAR.

MAIN TITLE MUSIC ENDS

Episode 7: The Anomaly

FADE:

SCENE 2.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ROOM TONE CAPSULE 1.

ALI: ...Jamal is not responding to your message.

WREN: (URGENT) Contact him again.

ALI: Contacting Jamal.

A BEAT.

(OVER ANOTHER SPEAKER) The air filters are in need of replacement--status: low priority.

WREN: I promise I'll finish that soon, Ali.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

ALI: Incoming transmission from Jamal in Capsule Eight.

WREN: Answer it!

ELECTRONIC BLIP. JAMAL IS 'COMING TO.'

JAMAL: (IN PAIN)...Hey, Wren.

WREN: (URGENT) Jamal, are you okay? Can you hear me?

JAMAL: Yeah...yeah...

WREN: Why didn't you answer as soon as you were conscious?

JAMAL: I needed a minute...I was passed out for a while there--

WREN: Almost half an hour.

JAMAL: That makes more sense considering the dent I put in the console. I must have been thrown back like--eight feet.

WREN: But you're---...*alone* again?

JAMAL: (RECALLING) Yes....Correct...I see no 'ghosts.' But this is proof that they *are* real. I felt something when I touched it. They have energy--

A LONG BEAT AS SOMETHING OCCURRS TO JAMAL.

How did you know it would electrocute me?

WREN: (A COVER) I think it was safe to assume. Something could've been defective and if the wires were shorting out like you said you saw on the network arm.

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

JAMAL: (OVERLAPPING) I don't see any sign of scorching where the ghost was.

WREN: Can we stop calling them 'ghosts?'

JAMAL: You can call them whatever you want when I'm gone.

WREN: *Don't talk like that.*

JAMAL: I'm the only one seeing them anyway.

WREN: *Jamal--*

JAMAL: *Wren...*at some point...you have to accept what happened. You have to accept the situation we're in. You can try and say that I'm crazy. You can try to say CimmTech is at fault but that doesn't change the fact that we are stranded in space. I am going to run out of oxygen. And the only

hope you have of making it home, is contacting Mission Control before it's too late.

WREN: (A BEAT)...Let's review the audio from Payload three. Maybe we can find evidence of Margaret doing someth--

JAMAL: (C'MON) Even you can't disparage Margaret on Payload three. Plus, my head is throbbing and I don't think I can take that right now.

WREN: Well, you can't go to sleep just yet with a head injury....

JAMAL: Ali can keep me awake. You should go to bed, though. It's almost 1AM.

WREN: No, it's...2 in the afternoon--wait, is it 1AM?

ALI: It is 12:48 AM U.T.C.

JAMAL: Thank you, Ali.

ALI: Would you like the time in another time zone?

WREN: No, Ali. Thank you. Please stop.

ALI: Updating sarcasm.

WREN: That wasn't sarcasm.

ALI: Sarcasm updated.

JAMAL: You should get some rest.

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

WREN: (A LONG BEAT)...If I don't save you what's the point?

JAMAL: What do you mean?

WREN: ...Why would I be worth saving?

A BEAT.

JAMAL: Because...*you are*.

A BEAT.

WREN: ...I don't want to stop talking right now. If that's okay.

JAMAL: Yeah...okay--so--What about the ants? You mentioned ants. Did the ants survive the flare?

WREN: ...They did.

JAMAL: Get out of town.

ALI: (OVER A GENERAL INTERCOM) Capsule eight temperature is currently one hundred and eight point 1 degrees Fahrenheit. Forty two point three degrees Celsius.

WREN: (OVERLAPPING)...I'm gonna replace the air filters while we talk.

WREN MOVES THROUGH THE CAPSULES TALKING A BIT
DISTRACTEDLY AS SHE REPLACES THE AIR FILTERS.

JAMAL: Fine with me. I'm just gonna sit right here. So, the Tawley Elementary School experiment lives on?

WREN: It does.

JAMAL: And what's going on with them?

WE HEAR WREN OPEN A PANEL.

WREN: Listen to this...Ali, how many ants are in the nest habitat?

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

WREN REMOVES A FILTER.

JAMAL: She doesn't know?

WREN: Not since day five thirty two--the solar event.

JAMAL: Is it another glitch in the system following the flare? Up there with the incorrect manual page numbers and the non-stop temperature readings?

WREN: Let's say 'yes'...which wouldn't be a big deal unless we get to a situation where we need to know the correct answer. Like...

WREN REPLACES A FILTER.

Ali, is the new air filter in place and fully functioning?

ALI: Yes.

WREN: SO--Is a 'yes' as certain as a 'Six hundred and thirty two or six hundred and thirty three.'

JAMAL: We could test her with knowns.

WREN: I've tried that. Ali, what is the sun's diameter?

ALI: Approximately 1.3927 million kilometers.

WREN: Ali, how old is Jamal?

ALI: Thirty five. Thirty six next November.

JAMAL: I have some bad news, Ali.

WREN CLOSES THE PANEL.

WREN: Ask her something that you would know that I wouldn't.

JAMAL: ...Ali, which reactor drum do I most commonly have to grab to re-initiate rotation?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 8) Drum 2.

WREN: Is that right?

JAMAL: It is.

WREN: Ali, I'm moving to Capsule 2.

WE HEAR HER MOVE TO CAPSULE 2, THE MICROPHONE SWITCHES TO THAT CAPSULE.

JAMAL: Ali?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 8) Yes, Jamal?

JAMAL: How many people are alive on board the Aethon?

A SLIGHT HESITATION.

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 8) One or two people.

WREN: ...*Fuck.*

JAMAL: What were you hoping she would answer?

WREN: Not that.

JAMAL: Ali?

ALI: (OVER SPEAKER IN CAPSULE 8) Yes, Jamal?

JAMAL: What time is it?

ALI: Where?

JAMAL: Onboard the Aethon?

ALI: Zero Zero five five military time. Twelve fifty five AM U.T.C.

JAMAL: How do you know?

ALI: I began tracking time after my most recent system reboot.

WREN: Wait--does that mean that you don't know what time it is on Earth?

ALI: I have not been able to locate Mission Control.

WREN: So we don't actually know what time it is?

ALI: I began tracking time after my most recent system reboot.

WREN: But we don't know exactly how long it took to reboot...

WREN OPENS THE PANEL.

...Do you know what time zone it is in Antarctica?

JAMAL: No.

WREN: It isn't. No one can lay claim to Antarctica, so each base follows the time zone of the country it comes from.

WREN REMOVES THE AIR FILTER.

JAMAL: Isn't that confusing?

WREN: Sure--but it's Antarctica. Days last days, nights last nights...what does any of it matter in the end?

WREN REPLACES THE AIR FILTER

WREN: ...Ali, is the air filter in place and fully functioning?

ALI: Yes.

JAMAL: So...what we do then?

WREN: What do you mean?

JAMAL: How do we fix Ali?

WREN: Well--before we can fix Ali, we have to know the correct number of ants.

WREN CLOSSES THE PANEL.

WREN: Ali, switch me to Capsule 3.

WREN MOVES TO CAPSULE THREE AND THE AUDIO
FOLLOWS.

WREN: So...I keep trying to count the ants.

JAMAL: (LAUGHING) What? Why?

WREN: We have to know.

JAMAL: I mean--how are you even trying to count ants in a nest habitat?

WREN: Stop laughing at me. Go back to calling me different bird names or whatever--

JAMAL: No. Wren--No--

WREN: You never found a good one, for the record.

JAMAL: Wren--I'm not making fun of you because *you are*--...you are the--....never mind...

A BEAT.

WREN: Because I am...'*what?*'

JAMAL: ..I don't want to finish that sentence.

ALI: (DISTANT, CAPSULE 3 INTERCOM) Capsule three temperature is currently seventy nine point two degrees Fahrenheit. Twenty six point two degrees Celsius.

WREN: I count the ants because...I need to make sure they all survive.

JAMAL LAUGHS.

JAMAL: *They're ants.*

WREN: Seeing how *long* they survive was part of the experiment!

JAMAL: And how long do they normally live?

WREN: No one knows for sure!

JAMAL LAUGHS AGAIN.

We don't pay attention when nothing's at stake. No one does. We only know how long ants live in *laboratory conditions*. Not in reality. Workers have lived up to four years in laboratories. Queens have lived up to fifteen. Some claim thirty!

JAMAL: Wow--

WREN: Right? No one knows how long ants live in reality because *no one is looking!* Your Schrodinger's box! Fully realized! They're alive and dead without opening the box. No one cares if ants live or die until we *need* them in an experiment...Do our lives mean *more* in an experiment?

JAMAL: Are you asking me?

WREN: I try to count the ants because *I need to know*. I need to have control over *something*. I need to know how many ants we have and how many survive and how many make it back to Earth because I lost control of--...I lost count on *us*. If I know how many ants there *are*...I can tell Earth how many *survived*. And that's worth something, isn't it?...That makes our lives worth *something*. Right?!

A LONG SILENCE--WREN IS SHAKEN...SHE STUFFS IT
DOWN AND DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO PROCEED...JAMAL
DOES:

JAMAL: ...*You*...are the last person I'm ever going to talk to. That's what I was going to say. That was the end of my sentence. For what it's worth. You are the last person I'll ever talk to.

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

WREN: (CAN OVERLAP) I can't accept that.

JAMAL: I know.

WREN: Turn off your air cooling.

A BEAT.

Jamal?

JAMAL: Goodnight, Wren.

ELECTRONIC BLIP AS JAMAL LEAVES THE CONVERSATION...

ALI: Would you like for me to re-contact. Jamal?

WREN: Yes--No...Ali...Not right now.

A BEAT.

ALI: You should get some rest.

WREN: Not now. I'm not tired...and I think Jamal is angry at me.

SHE BEGINS TYPING SOMETHING THEN PAUSES--

...Ali...Can you...Can you show me the NASC and CimmTech readings for a week prior to the event?

DIGITAL DISPLAY SOUND.

Can we do a side by side comparison? Or processing it through--like you did with the recordings and the timelines?

ALI: What information do you want to compare?

WREN: I had this idea...about the--*hallucination* Jamal touched. And the shock he got and the shock I got from touching *my* hallucination.

ALI: You can't touch a hallucination.

WREN: I know. Can I compare...uh...The CimmTech readings and...biometrics? I don't even know if there's a way to look at that 'side by side'--

DIGITAL DISPLAY SOUND.

ALI: It may require some editing and display shifts, but is this what you need?
(A BEAT) Please provide verbal acknowledgement if this information is what you need.

WREN: (CURIOSITY PIQUED)...It is, Ali...It is...

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 3.

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

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

CAPSULE 5/PAYLOAD BAY TONE.

A SHUDDER.

ALEX: Ali.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley?

ALEX: Take the readings of every functioning sensor in the ship from the past five minutes and include it in the next audio packet.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

JAMAL'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

JAMAL: Commander Tawley? You wanted to see me?

ALEX: How's your eye?

JAMAL MOVES CLOSE TO ALEX.

JAMAL: I have to get the bandage replaced again in about fifteen minutes.

ALEX: That wasn't my question.

JAMAL: ...It hurts. I deserved it.

ALEX: Have you apologized to Eli?

JAMAL: Not yet.

ALEX: But you will.

JAMAL: He goaded me into it, Sir--

ALEX: That was an order, Pilot Davis.

JAMAL: ...I will, Commander.

ALEX: (A BEAT) Ali, please notify me if anyone approaches.

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

JAMAL: Do we need to meet on the bridge instead of--?

ALEX: It's fine, Jamal. I'm just getting a little stir crazy. Cooped up on the bridge all the time. I have a whole ship under my command. Why shouldn't I meet somewhere I can stretch my legs a little? And Capsule 5 has the best view.

JAMAL: Agreed.

ALEX: I mean *Jesus*, and god forgive me, but look at it! The sun! It's unreal...And it's still the most real thing I've ever experienced. I wish I was going on a spacewalk.

JAMAL: I understand. I'm particularly excited for the Mercury fly-by tomorrow.

ALEX: Mercury? Why?

JAMAL: We'll be closer to Mercury than the Sun.

ALEX: *But Mercury?* (LAUGHS TO HIMSELF) Jamal...What am I gonna do with you? (A BEAT) Margaret wants you re-assigned for the spacewalk tomorrow.

JAMAL: To what?

ALEX: Air filter replacement.

JAMAL: That's ridiculous. After what happened in payload one I *need* to be on comms--

ALEX: But it didn't happen after payload two. She says it's proof the system is stabilizing.

JAMAL: We're still feeling the shudders!

ALEX: She said payload three will stabilize us even more and evidence is in her favor.

JAMAL: Someone has to be in Capsule 8 in case of emergency!

ALEX: And I *told her* that will be Medical Officer Aquino.

JAMAL: *Jessa?!*

ALEX: Everyone onboard has been trained in the basic functions of each crew member's role in case of emergency.

JAMAL: Dropping a CimmTech satellite is not a basic function!

ALEX: Jessa can handle it.

JAMAL: Why not Wren?

ALEX: Margaret has asked that Wren not be involved this time, either. And again...evidence is on Margaret's side. She said having Wren involved only wastes her time which wastes NASC's time and we absolutely cannot fall behind schedule no matter what--

JAMAL: Did Aarav say that?

ALEX: *Fred* said that. Remember him? He runs NASC?

JAMAL: What the hell, Alex?!

ALEX: My hands are tied! What am I supposed to do? You're acting like a child, getting into fistfights. Margaret demanded consequences.

JAMAL: The air filters don't even need to be changed yet!

ALEX LAUGHS SUDDENLY. ALMOST BREAKING THE
TENSION...

What?

ALEX: That's such a stupid argument! You know that right?

JAMAL: But it's true!

ALEX: Jamal! Calm down. If you learn one thing from today--after trying to punch Eli--it's that you need to be slower to judgement.

JAMAL: I don't hesitate if someone is--

ALEX: Not slow to action...slow to judgement. Think things out before you make an ass of yourself.

JAMAL: ...Yes, Commander.

ALEX: I had to agree to her terms...but I need you to trust me and listen very closely to what I'm saying. I *told* Margaret that you won't be on the comm link for the payload three spacewalk and Jessa will be at your console in capsule 8.

JAMAL: (LIGHTBULB) ...*Oh*.

ALEX: Good. Jessa will be serving in *your* role over the comm link *from* Capsule 4--I'm going to have Ali transfer the functions and readings to a console for her *there* because I don't want her too far from medical resources in case of a physical emergency.

JAMAL: And me?

ALEX: I need you *in* Capsule 8, on the comm link, but *muted*. I want you there if there if something goes wrong, understand?

JAMAL: Yes.

ALEX: (A BEAT)...Is Wren worried?

JAMAL: Why?

ALEX: You're helping her, right? Just wanted to know what she thought.

JAMAL: I mean...she's worried. I am, too.

A MOMENT.

ALEX: What did Eli say to get you so riled up?

JAMAL: We don't have to discuss it if you if you don't have time...

A BEAT.

ALEX: I'm all ears, Jamal. For real.

JAMAL: (GIVES IN) ...He got my audio packet again. He listened to a message from Chelsea.

ALEX: Oh, yeah--your friend from Florida.

JAMAL: ...Yeah.

ALEX: What happened?

JAMAL: Eli was making some comments about how I missed my shot with her.

ALEX: Why?

JAMAL: ...She got married.

ALEX: *Did* you miss your shot with her?

JAMAL: No. It was never like that. Her husband is great. She's happy...I'm happy for her...it's just...

A BEAT.

ALEX: *You weren't there.*

JAMAL: I made a choice to be *here*. To do this mission. And that's three years of...*not being there*.

ALEX: If only we could be in two places at once.

JAMAL: She said she'd wait, but Hiroto's father was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. If they had caught it a few weeks earlier, maybe they could have--...but they didn't. He had two or three months to live. He wanted his son to be married before he died so...They got married.

ALEX: I'm sure she missed you at the wedding.

JAMAL: She said she'd redo the ceremony just for me when I got home...She wanted me to be her 'maid of honor.' (MOVING ON) They took photos, though! They drew a face on a paper plate and held it up when they took pictures.

ALEX: You have good friends.

JAMAL: I do.

A BEAT.

ALEX: (A BEAT) But I'm sorry.

JAMAL: Yeah. (A BEAT)...Thank you.

ALEX: Go get your bandage changed.

JAMAL: Thank you, Alex.

JAMAL WALKS AWAY. AFTER A MOMENT.

ALEX: Ali?

ALI: Yes, Commander Alex (GLITCH) T-t-tawley?

ALEX: Please increase the air circulation in this capsule. Even in here it feels a little stuffy.

ALI:

Yes, Commander Alex Tawley.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 4.

ALI: Aethon Audio Packet from Mission Control: four hundred and seventy nine dash one 2045

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AARAV PATEL: (PRE-RECORDED) Aethon. This is Mission Control. Flight Director Aarav Patel. Mission day 479. Audio packet 1. Year 2045. That is: 'audio packet 479 dash 1 2045.'

Mission control has received and approves of your altered roles for the payload three drop happening later today. We are deeply disappointed in Pilot Davis' behavior but are glad to hear that no one was harmed in a physical altercation. Our monitoring seems like solar weather should be clear. So it's a greenlight on all fronts for the launch of Satellite Three. Double check with Wren immediately prior to launch.

Godspeed.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: You have selected to play the classified message for Doctor Wren Guerrero. Please enter the four digit security code.

WE HEAR FOUR ENTRIES ON A KEYPAD.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Now playing classified message for Dr. Wren Guerrero.

RECORDING BEGINS.

AARAV PATEL: Wren. There's no way to access the information being collected by CimmTech's equipment. NASC and CimmTech share the network arm and it's all hard-wired into the Aethon, but CimmTech dishes route information straight to the CimmTech consoles. Only Margaret, Eli, and Taaj have access to it.

I'm sorry, Wren. Let me know if there's anything else we can do. I've attached the training videos you requested--I'm sorry we didn't have time to review them before launch. If you require more training videos, medical training, navigational basics, spacewalk videos...just say the word.

I know you're doing your best.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: You have selected to play a classified message for Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen. Please enter the four digit security code.

WE HEAR FOUR ENTRIES ON A KEYPAD.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Now playing classified message for Chief Scientist Margaret Cohen.

AARAV PATEL: (ANGRY) Chief Scientist Cohen...I've asked you three times. Please reach out to Allyson. Right now CimmTech just keeps saying they'll get back to me. *As your life is on the line*--I thought maybe you would have a vested interest in hearing from them.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI: Playback stopped.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

You have selected to play the classified message for Medical Officer Jessa Aquino. Please enter the four digit security code.

WE HEAR FOUR ENTRIES ON A KEYPAD.

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Now playing classified message for Medical Officer Doctor Jessa Aquino.

AARAV PATEL:

Jessa--we have an update regarding your recent set of questions. I'll just go down the list-- uh...number one. Please denote what you identify as the change in the subject. You don't have to provide an hypothesis for the type of energy causing the change just yet. Number two...please denote the level of change you are noticing in the ants--DNA, molecular, cellular, etc. Number Three--

ELECTRONIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

ALI:

Playback stopped.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.

SCENE 5.

ALI: Pre Solar Event. Mission day: four hundred and seventy nine.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

WE ARE INSIDE MARGARET'S HELMET...HEARING HER BREATH. ON INTERCOM ARE TAAJ, ELI, ALEX (BRIDGE), AND JESSA (ACTUALLY IN CAPSULE 4, PRETENDING TO BE IN CAPSULE 9), AND SUPPOSEDLY JAMAL IN CAPSULE 9...BUT HE ISN'T THERE.

WE ARE MID-SPACEWALK.

ELI: (INTERCOM) CimmTech Payload Three is now synced with NASC Network Arm. Specialist Azi, you may begin payload bay arm extension for orbital placement of satellite three.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Payload bay arm extending for orbital placement. Hold on...

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

ELI: (INTERCOM) ...And there's Mercury. Visual on Mercury behind the Aethon.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) How does it look?

ELI: (INTERCOM) Same as what we could see last night. Just bigger.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) Jamal was saying--

MARGARET: Stick to the script unless there's an emergency.

ELI: (INTERCOM) It looks *very* dead. Like all of the solar system will be when the sun becomes a red dwarf.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Shut up, Eli.

ELI: (INTERCOM) If we're lucky, maybe humankind will be burned from the surface long before then.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Part of this mission--*part of our mission*--is to figure out long-term space travel. So we can find a new home. New *homes* if needed.

ELI: (INTERCOM) There are many objectives on this mission. The viability of long-term space travel is among the least important.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM, CUTTING THEM OFF) Stopping payload arm extension.

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

(INTERCOM) I am verifying orbital position.

A BEAT.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) Eli, we're going to have a talk when you get back on board.

ELI: (INTERCOM) About what?

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I just want to run a couple tests, is all.

ELI: (INTERCOM) You wanna see if I'm having side effects from the sleeping pills.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I don't want to discuss this on on an open intercom.

ELI: (INTERCOM) Did anyone on here not know I was on sleeping pills since Payload 1?

MARGARET: *Specialist Wright.*

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

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

MARGARET: Chief Scientist Cohen--permission granted.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Onboard Commander Tawley--permission granted.

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

DIGITAL BLIP.

...Payload three activated...

A BEAT.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) ...Payload three successfully activated. Already getting readings.

ERROR BLIP.

ALI: Abnormal spike detected in power usage.

ALEX: By how much--?

THE SOUND OF THE FLASH.

AN ENORMOUS SHUDDER RACES THROUGH THE SHIP AND GLITCHES THE AUDIO. OVER THE INTERCOM, WE HEAR THINGS BREAKING AND RATTLING FOR JESSA AND ALEX. IN MARGARET'S HELMET--WE HEAR THE ARM RATTLING UP AND DOWN.

ELI: (INTERCOM, ALMOST JOYFUL) ...*The flash...*

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) I saw it, too!.

ELI: (INTERCOM) I saw the flash again!

AN ALARM GOES OFF.

ALI: (OVER SHIP INTERCOM) Warning. Power overload detected in nuclear reactor. Power overload detected in nuclear reactor. Artificial gravitation malfunction detected. CimmTech Payload *Three* critical error detected. CimmTech Payload system critical error detected. Navigation systems malfunction. AOS system critical failure. Altitude warning. Reactor Failure. (MESSAGE REPEATS AS LONG AS NECESSARY)

WE HEAR THE SHIP VIBRATE--THIS IS SOMETHING NEW.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) We lost gravity...We're going weightless!

ELI: (INTERCOM, PANIC ATTACK COMING ON) Dear God...Jesus Christ I can feel it!...WE'RE FALLING INTO THE SUN! WE'RE FALLING INTO THE SUN!! PLEASE PLEASE SOMEONE HELP ME! (HE BEGINS CRYING)

MARGARET: ELI! ELI CALM DOWN!

THE SHIP VIBRATES AGAIN--THE REACTOR TURNS ON. WE HEAR THINGS CRASH DOWN ON THE INTERCOM.

JESSA: (INTERCOM) Breathe, Eli!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Everyone onboard--get to the nearest safety harness!

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I'm gonna be right back, Eli. Okay? I just need you to--

OVER JESSA'S INTERCOM THERE ARE SEVERAL LOUD METALLIC THUDS AND JESSA'S VOICE IS ODDLY CHOKED OUT.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) What the hell was that!?

MARGARET: Detach the payload! Eli!...

ELI: (INTERCOM) *We are going to die, Margaret!!!*

THE SHIP VIBRATES AS THE SHIP ENGINE POWERS DOWN AGAIN.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Going weightless!

ELI: Jesus please no--WE'RE FALLING INTO THE SUN AGAIN! WE'RE...
(AD LIB, CRYING)

MARGARET: DETACH THE PAYLOAD--ELI--DETACH--...!

A THUD AS MARGARET FORCES HER FIST INTO SOME
DEVICE THAT EMITS A PARTIAL 'RELEASE' OF PAYLOAD
THREE.

Lock one, detached!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jamal! Reboot Ali!

A THUD AS MARGARET FORCES HER FIST INTO A SECOND
LOCK.

MARGARET: Lock two, detached!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jamal!

MARGARET: Taaj! Bring us in, now!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) I'm uh--...

MARGARET: TAAJ! Bring us in now!...NOW!!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Yeah...um--

MARGARET: ELI! Stop moving, you're getting tangled in your tether!

THE SHIP VIBRATES AGAIN--THE ENGINE TURNS BACK ON
AND THINGS RAIN DOWN INSIDE. JESSA GASPS FOR AIR.

JESSA: (INTERCOM, IN PAIN) My arm is malfunctioning--it grabbed my throat.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Remove your arm immediately.

MARGARET: No, reboot Ali first, Jessa!

JESSA: (INTERCOM)...I can't.

MARGARET: Why not?

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I'm---...I'm not in capsule 8.

THE SHIP VIBRATES AGAIN--THE ENGINE TURNS OFF AND THINGS RAIN DOWN INSIDE. AGAIN, WE HEAR A LOUD METALLIC THUD FROM JESSA'S INTERCOM.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jamal! WHERE ARE YOU!

MARGARET: TAAJ! RETRACT THE ARM!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) *Shit!*

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) This is as fast as it goes!

MARGARET: Okay...Okay...

A CLICK IN MARGARET'S SUIT. SHE'S CLIMBING BACK.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Margaret! What are you doing? You've detached from the tether!

MARGARET: I'm climbing back in!

ERROR BLIP. THINGS CRASH TO THE GROUND OVER INTERCOM. JESSA GASPS FOR AIR AGAIN.

ALI: Rotating drums reactivated. Artificial gravity restored.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jessa! Take off your arm!

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I can't! I landed on my other hand and I think I dislocated a couple fingers.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Margaret! Stop!

MARGARET: This isn't how our mission ends!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jamal!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM, JUST ARRIVED) ...I'm here! I'm in capsule eight!

MARGARET: Reboot Ali, Jamal!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Ali--reboot all systems!

ALI: Please verify command to 'reboot all systems.'

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) REBOOT!

ALI POWERS DOWN, ALARMS STOP. FOLLOWED BY
IMMEDIATE POWER UP.

MARGARET: Taaj--Open the outer airlock door!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) I have to wait for Ali!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Wren! Go to the medical bay! Help Jessa!

ALI: Searching for mission control. (A BEAT)

ALEX: (INTERCOM) WREN!

DIGITAL SOUND.

ALI: Mission control located.

ALARMS BEGIN AGAIN. SAME WARNING ON REPEAT.

TAAJ: Opening outer airlock door!

WE HEAR A MUTED DOOR OPENING.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Preparing for jettison option.

MARGARET: No! Listen to me, Pilot Davis! We'll be fine!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) How?

MARGARET: WE'LL BE FINE! Taaj, close the outer door!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Closing outer door.

DOOR CLOSSES. AIR COMPRESSES IN THE AIRLOCK.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Ali, please locate Wren.

MARGARET: I was right last time, Jamal--*I'm right this time*. Everything is going to be fine. I can fix this.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) How?

ALEX: (HARSH) Let her do what she needs, Jamal!

ALI: Doctor Wren Guerrero has been located in Capsule 1.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Open up the link to capsule 1.

DIGITAL CONNECTION SOUND.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Wren--get to capsule four stat! Jessa needs help!

WREN: (INTERCOM, DISTANT) I can't! Ali, release my safety restraint!

ALI: Safety restraint released.

WREN: (INTERCOM) It's not releasing!!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Jessa--go to capsule 1!

JESSA: (INTERCOM) I'm on my w--

JESSA IS CHOKED OFF AGAIN BY HER ARM AS THE SHIP
VIBRATES, AND THE REACTOR SHUTS DOWN--ELI IS STILL
HYSTERICAL IN THE BACKGROUND.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) The payload bay arm has fully retracted. Visuals on Eli.

MARGARET: Retrieve him. Make sure you're tethered in--he's liable to throw anyone straight into the sun.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) You're gonna need help removing your suit!

MARGARET: I'm not removing it!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) What?!

MARGARET: I'm not removing my spacesuit!

ALI: (OVER ALARMS) Airlock fully pressurized.

MARGARET: Open the inner door to the airlock!

DOOR OPENS.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) That isn't the procedure.

MARGARET: TAAJ! Go help ELI! Entering Aethon Capsule Five through payload bay airlock.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) ...I'm coming for you, Eli.

ELI: (INTERCOM) I don't want to die! I don't want to die!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) What do I do, Alex?

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Wait for Margaret.

JAMAL: I can prep the jettison option--

ALEX: Jesus, Jamal! Do what you're told for once! I needed you! Where were you?!

MARGARET: TAAJ: (INTERCOM) You're gonna need help removing your suit!

MARGARET: I'm not removing it!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) What?!

MARGARET: I'm not removing my spacesuit!

ALI: (OVER ALARMS) Airlock fully pressurized.

MARGARET: Open the inner door to the airlock!

DOOR OPENS.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) That isn't the procedure.

MARGARET: TAAJ! Go help Eli! Entering Aethon Capsule Five through payload bay airlock. ALEX: (INTERCOM) Where are you Jessa?...Wren, do you have visuals on Jessa?

WREN: Not yet...

ELI: (INTERCOM) I saw the flash. It was real! AND NOW IT'S GOING TO KILL ALL OF US!

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) STOP MOVING, ELI. You have to calm down.

JAMAL: I'm prepping for the jettison option.

MARGARET: This isn't how our mission ends! We're going to be on time!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Standby, Pilot Davis.

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) I've grabbed, Eli. He's still struggling.

WREN: (INTERCOM) Visuals on Jessa! She's crawling on the floor! ALI!
RELEASE THE SAFETY RESTRAINT.

ALI: Safety restraint released.

WREN: (INTERCOM) Nothing happened! She's close...maybe twenty feet away!

WE HEAR MARGARET'S BOOTS CLOMPING ON THE
GROUND THE WHOLE WAY.

MARGARET: Open the decontamination chamber, Pilot Davis!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) What are you doing, Margaret?

MARGARET: These suits can take the radiation from the sun...they can take a thermo-
nuclear reactor!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Your visor is cracked!

MARGARET: My suit will last long enough!

A BEAT. MARGARET KEEPS WALKING--HEAVING
BREATHING AS SHE FORCES HERSELF FORWARD.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Open the decontamination chamber, Jamal.

JAMAL: You're willing to let her die?!

ALEX: NOW--Jamal!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) ...Opening decontamination chamber.

WE HEAR A DOOR OPEN.

MARGARET: Now entering Capsule 8. Visuals on Pilot Davis.

WREN: (INTERCOM) Just a little closer, Jessa! I can almost reach you!

MARGARET: Entering the decontamination chamber.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM/MARGARET'S MIC) Closing chamber door.

DOOR CLOSSES. SEAL BEGINS CLOSING.

ERROR BLIP. THE SHIP VIBRATES, ENGINES TURN OFF.

WREN: (INTERCOM) No no no no no!!! I can't reach her! She's floating away!

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Ali, release my safety restraint!

ALI: Safety restraint (GLITCH) r-r-r-released.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Goddammit, Ali! I'm stuck, too!

ALI: Decontamination chamber sealed.

MARGARET: Open the inner door, Jamal.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) This is a death sentence!

MARGARET: It doesn't have to be! Not for everyone! But if you don't let me in there-- we are all going to die. We are all going to die if I don't do something now! And all of this will have been for nothing! Do you understand?

ALEX: Open the door, Pilot davis.

JAMAL: You're killing her.

ALEX: That is an order, Pilot!

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) ...Opening inner door.

THE INNER DOOR OPENS--A NEW AMBIENCE AS WE ARE
IN THE MALFUNCTIONING REACTOR OVER MARGARET'S
HELMET.

MARGARET: Where is the 'rotating drum'?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) You see the narrow part? *Below* that part...that's the nozzle. Above that is the core. You have to remove the cover.

MARGARET: And?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) And--...you'll see the drums. They're about a yard long...

MARGARET REMOVES THE COVER QUICKLY

(INTERCOM) The drums are not rotating.

MARGARET: Which things are the drums?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Look at the top. You see those cylindrical things? Something is preventing them from rotating--which builds up heat--which is making our vertical propulsion--

MARGARET: I got it!

MARGARET GRABS A DRUM.

MARGARET: (STRUGGLING) Grabbing drum two! I need something I can push off of...Can I step on this?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Step on what?

MARGARET: Arrrrrgh!--

THE DRUMS BEGIN ROTATING THANKS TO MARGARET...

THINGS CRASH TO THE GROUND OVER INTERCOM.

MARGARET LANDS WITH A THUD. WE HEAR JESSA LAND NEAR WREN.

WREN: (INTERCOM) Closer, Jessa--almost there...*got it!*

WE HEAR THE METAL ARM FALL TO THE GROUND. JESSA GASPS FOR AIR OVER THE INTERCOM.

ALI: Rotating drums reactivated. Artificial gravity restored.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Are you okay, Jessa?

JESSA: (INTERCOM) ...I'll be alright.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Taaaj, Eli?

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) Almost there, Commander.

A HESITANT BEAT. (ELI'S CRYING HAS SLOWED TO A WHIMPER.) WE STILL HEAR A HISS FROM AIR LEAKING IN MARGARET'S HELMET.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) Margaret, get out of there.

MARGARET: (OUT OF BREATH) I'll wait in here a little longer to see if it happens again.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) How long will that be?

MARGARET: I've already been over-exposed, Jamal...You know that. So what's the rush?

ALI: Solar suit two radiation deflection at one percent and dropping.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) ...This is going to use up one of the space suits.

MARGARET: So be it.

JAMAL: ...This isn't how you want to die. You will be in more pain than you can possibly imagine...Trust me. I've read about the people who've died in the nuclear rocket disasters...or the people at Chernobyl. Jessa can treat you if we pull you out *now*.

MARGARET: I'll die anyway. What does it matter how?

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) ...Commander. Requesting permission to extract Margaret.

MARGARET: Jamal...This is worth it. *The mission* is worth it. More than *any* of our lives. Can't you understand that?...

A BEAT.

JAMAL: (INTERCOM) I'm putting on the radiation suit.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Put the suit on, Pilot Davis. But do not enter the core for another five minutes. She's right. We need to wait as long as possible to see if this happens again.

JAMAL: You're going to let her die.

ALEX: I don't need to explain my decisions to you. Put the suit on and wait five minutes. Do you understand? (A BEAT) *Do you understand, Pilot Davis?*

JAMAL: (INTERCOM, DEFEATED) ...Yes...commander...

TAAJ: (INTERCOM) I've tied Eli's arms together with the tether. Permission requested for Specialist Wright and myself to come back on board.

ALEX: (INTERCOM) Permission granted.

A LONG BEAT....LONGER...THEN, MARGARET CHUCKLES
TO HERSELF...

MARGARET: ...So what now?

AN ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.