

08 - A - INTERSTITIAL SCENE 1.

WE HEAR A DIGITAL BLIP.

THEN THE SOUND OF AN AQUARIUM BUBBLING.

A BUZZ.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

A DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES AND FELICIA BRYANT GOES
TO GREET AARAV PATEL.

FELICIA BRYANT: Aarav. Come on in. Sit down, please.

THEY DO.

AARAV PATEL: I should be at mission control right now. Not here.

FELICIA BRYANT: I know. But I need your help. When was the last time you spoke with Fred Chiu?

AARAV PATEL: What?

FELICIA BRYANT: When was the last time you spoke with Fred Chiu?

AARAV PATEL: He was at the party for new astronaut recruits.

FELICIA BRYANT: But did you speak to him then?

AARAV PATEL: ...No.

FELICIA BRYANT: When was the last time you spoke with him?

AARAV PATEL: Now that you mention it...and besides company-wide emails...over a year.

FELICIA BRYANT: I spoke to him about a week ago. I found him flippant, disrespectful, and devious.

AARAV PATEL: Strong words coming from you.

FELICIA BRYANT: *This*--the privacy of this office is the right time and place to say these things. Not at a press conference.

AARAV PATEL: Press should know *some* things.

FELICIA BRYANT: Well...Fred has stopped returning my calls and texts and emails. Entirely. Out of the blue. Told me to lock you away from media outlets and then went dark.

AARAV PATEL: Really?

FELICIA BRYANT: That's right. CimmTech won't talk to you--won't talk to anyone...and now Fred is gone. It's almost like--...

AARAV PATEL: We're going to be scapegoats.

FELICIA BRYANT: Dennis--before he died--he made some insinuations to me that he didn't like the arrangement between NASC and CimmTech. Apparently CimmTech recorded all of their calls. He even thought someone bugged his office, but that could have been paranoia due to his illness or medication.

A BEAT.

Oh, don't worry, the office has been swept.

AARAV PATEL: Did you check the fish filter on the aquarium?

FELICIA BRYANT: That was the *first* place they checked.

AARAV PATEL: What about--

FELICIA BRYANT: I'm competent at my job, Aarav. I know I've only had this title a few months--but I've been at NASC a long time and I understand my role as the public spokesperson. And you have to understand that you have a role as the face of mission control. So if there's an axe coming down--it's coming for both of us.

AARAV PATEL: What do you suggest we do?

FELICIA BRYANT: ...We have to be honest with each other. And then prepare as much as possible.

AARAV PATEL: For what?

FELICIA BRYANT: The axe. We have to do everything we can to bring home the Aethon's crew, dear God please let them have survived...You, Aarav, you have to bring them home and I'm going to make it known far and wide.

AARAV PATEL: That's what I was doing--

FELICIA BRYANT: Tell me what you need. Food, Clothes, Toiletries. I want you sleeping there--waiting to hear from them.

AARAV PATEL: ...Okay, I will.

FELICIA BRYANT: But you and I--we have to start planning. If this thing doesn't pan out just right--then we'll have to take NASC in a new direction.

AARAV PATEL: Right...just so we're clear--do you mean preparing a new proposal for the joint congressional--?

FELICIA BRYANT: That is not what I mean.

A BEAT.

AARAV PATEL: ...I vastly underestimated you.

FELICIA BRYANT: It's my smile. If you keep your lips together, no one sees your teeth. Get back to mission control.

AARAV PATEL: You know they'll come after us when they find out about Margaret?

FELICIA BRYANT: They'll come after us for *all* of our mistakes. Do your job and I'll do mine.

AARAV PATEL: One last question...What if I already leaked some info to the press?

FELICIA BRYANT:

...You're one of those people who fishes with dynamite, aren't you?

AARAV PATEL:

No--I'm one of those people who shoots fish in a barrel.

ELECTRONIC BLIP.

END RECORDING.

END SCENE.