

SCENE 1

SFX: Maricel hums *Bahay Kubo* as she flips switches.

BENJIE:

Ready *mahal*?

MARICEL:

Mhm! Let's get on the air.

SFX: A switch.

MARICEL:

(RADIO VOICE)

Welcome back to the 0700 for Ansible Radio with your host, Maricel Reyes. I hope you're listening out there, Epsilons and millionaires. There's nothing more I'd like to do than to update you on what's happening in the Metropolis. The weather's still burning up the coast, but as long as you're taking your daily dose, you'll keep your expectancy high. Word on the street is that there's a turf war going on at Bright Alteco and Pacific Haven, so don't trespass or pass go. Traffic on the Missile looks to be heavy with an accident on the round. Careful this morning, friends. Before I play you a tune to keep the morning running, I want to say hello to my favorite kids! Are you listening today? Seb, Valeria, Caine, I love you all very much. *Mahal*, come say hi to them too, don't be shy! Roxy can get the booth. I'm serious. I'll drag you down here.

SFX: Benjie, laughing, sidles down to the microphone.

BENJIE:

Hi kids! Play nice with each other...eat your plates, wash your vegetables!

MARICEL:

You think you're so funny!

BENJIE:

Okay, okay. But please remember to be good to each other and to others. Remember, kids, we'll always be watching over you.

MARICEL:

We love you so much. And now for a little music.

SFX: Music. It grows tinny and unnatural sounding. We hear machinery in the background. The music rewinds.

BENJIE:

Remember to be good to each other and to others. Remember, kids, we'll always be watching over you.

MARICEL:

We love you so much.

SFX: Rewind.

BENJIE:

We'll always be watching over you.

MARICEL:

We love you so much. And now for a little music.

SFX: A door opens as the music continues to play.

CAINE:

Using your key for my door again? Thought you said you "didn't wanna get in some Epsilon class's space anyways."

DAX:

Caine--

CAINE:

What.

DAX:

Turn that off. I have your delivery list for tomorrow.

SFX: The music stops.

CAINE:

I don't understand why you didn't just send it to my comms.

DAX:

Because I want to talk.

CAINE:

About what? How you screwed me over on cryptos a couple weeks ago? Or maybe how you messed up Jet?

DAX:

I know you're upset about that, but I can just equip a new navsys in your car or on your comms so you don't have to lug that all-purpose around. It looks like you got rid of it anyways, I haven't seen that piece of junk anywhere. Is that why you're listening to old tapes instead?

CAINE:

Wow, you really don't get it.

DAX:

What?

CAINE:

Do you even know what happens this month?

DAX:

Well, that's what I'm here to talk to you about.

CAINE:

Yeah, 'cause you were such a great big help whenever I talk about Mom and Dad and Val dying! And you couldn't wait to make me pay off a debt for people I barely got a chance to mourn.

DAX:

That's...not at all what I was talking about. Or, well, sort of. You've been working with me for five years and I need to talk about how much you're earning for the company.

CAINE:

I cannot believe that you--

DAX:

Frankly, you lose more cryptos for this company than you earn. Considering I give you room and board, unlike the other scum I employ, I'd say you're not being very fair to me. I'd almost think you want to live out on the streets with them.

CAINE:

Maybe I will. You've taken everything I've earned since the day I had to start working for you.

DAX:

I give you everything! You're lucky I even bought your sorry ass otherwise you'd be lower than you already are. Where do you think a seventeen-year-old would have ended up without me to look after you?

CAINE:

You know what? You're not my friend and you never will be. So, quit trying so hard. It makes you look pathetic.

SFX: Caine picks up their radio and begins to storm out.

DAX:

I'm everything you have left.

SFX: Caine stops walking away for a moment and takes in a shaky breath. Then, Caine runs out angrily. Dax laughs/

SCENE 2

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

I'd been shooting off at the mouth at Dax more than usual because...I had a secret. Zero Zero. Jet stayed with Vic and Su-jin for the past few weeks, so they could hook him up to some other gadgets that were, admittedly, a little bit above my expertise. Other than my deliveries, Zero Zero's base was the only other place I'd been driving to. So, with anger like a shot of radcure in my veins, I hit the gas and headed the only other place I knew to cool off.

SFX: Caine's engine cuts.

VIC:

Heya, Caine!

SFX: Caine slams their door.

VIC:

Ookay! Someone's a *little* moody.

CAINE:

Ugh. Where's Jet?

JET:

Right here! How are you, Caine?

CAINE:

Not good at all. I'm just...

SFX: Vic coughs.

CAINE:

I'll tell you later. How's your personality core?

JET:

I hope your day is better soon! My personality core is running at 79%! 67% improvement from prior runs! In other words, I am doing...kickass!

CAINE:

Who taught you that?

VIC:

The kickass guy who's been working on him of course.

CAINE:

Pfft.

SFX: Door opens.

LOLA:

Oh, Caine. I was just about to call you.

CAINE:

Something wrong?

LOLA:

Not for you, at least. Erasing your presence at Celadon Carbonate was a non-issue considering that your identification is held by your employer: POTEN Co. rarely troubles itself with such issues. Su-jin, however...as a class Delta they own their own ID, so they are a person of interest to POTEN until we eliminate the traces of them from the feed.

CAINE:

That's too bad. I'm not great at wiping drives.

LOLA:

No need to trouble yourself with that. I need something different from you.

SFX: A mechanical whirring, then a bloop!

CAINE:

I'm never gonna get used to you being able to pull up screens on your arms.

LOLA:

It's a rather fun design choice in my opinion. Anyway, I've been in contact with a woman from the Kvadrata who has agreed to release coordinates to one of the communities that she believes is outside of the Metropolis. She also has what she believes is a safe passage that's relatively radiation-free. She's rather cagey, considering she hasn't even told me her real name, and she won't send the

coordinates over comms since she believes they'll be compromised. Someone will have to retrieve the physical copy. Su-jin and I are still working on erasing their identifiers, so I need you and Vic to follow her instructions and bring back the coordinates.

CAINE:

I can handle it myself.

VIC:

Wait, you want me to bring them?

LOLA:

Caine, I am trusting you because I think you believe in the same ideals as us. But I'm requesting that you go with Vic because this is a rather sensitive topic. You are the newest member of Zero Zero and I highly doubt that a complete stranger from both my perspective and my informant's, would be the best option to send alone. Vic. I told you that this morning.

VIC:

Before or after I was modding the blaster packs? 'Cause those babies are...whoo! Really gonna rock a droid's world now!

LOLA:

After. I'm well aware your attention span can be...a little poor when you're goofing off.

VIC:

My bad then.

LOLA:

Your bad indeed. I trust you'll all be able to meet with her and return with the information tonight?

CAINE:

'Course.

VIC:

Consider it done my friend. Little buddy?

CAINE:

Did you just call me...?

JET:

Ready to ride!

CAINE:

Uh. Okay. Come on, Jet.

SFX: Caine's keys jangle.

SCENE 3

SFX: People chatter, bargain with each other, observe wares, and tinker with bots. Caine's engine cuts.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

The Kvadrata's sands glittered stark white, even under all the neon lights screaming for you to pay attention from ramshackle huts, lashed together from driftwood and hulls of abandoned ships. Some still towered, even from within the valley, caught on the shore of a desert that suddenly appeared, like a mirage come true. They say the Kvadrata used to be a seaport for the Metropolis but siphoning the water to get more uranium left it high and dry. Still, the sand leaves a salt taste in your mouth and wearing goggles is less of a suggestion and more of a requirement...even if it makes you look like a total idiot.

VIC:

Looking good, Caine.

SFX: Caine groans.

JET:

Will I be accompanying you?

CAINE:

Sorry, bud, no can do. The sand out here won't play nice with you and we've been working on you all this time—I don't wanna mess it up right after I just got you back.

JET:

No worries! Please have a nice trip!

CAINE:

Thanks buddy. We'll be quick.

SFX: The car door shuts. Caine and Vic walk away from the car and the sounds of the Kvadrata grow louder.

VIC:

So, um. *Who's* been working on Jet all week?

CAINE:

What?

VIC:

Oh, nothing. You just were saying we've been working on Jet, but I just...haven't seen you in the past few weeks. 'Cept to come over and watch me work on Jet. Oh! And, you know, hang out with Su-jin.

CAINE:

Haha! Well, like. Okay, okay, that's so not true! Hey! That's not true! Okay, first of all, Jet is *my* friend, alright, so I think I have a right to come see him and make sure he's doing okay and see whatever...doohickery modifications that you're putting in on him. And second of all, Su-jin is just...friendly! You know, a friendly...friend. Maybe... they're the one hanging out with me, have you ever thought about that? Hm? I don't know. Just a thought. Just saying.

VIC:

Isn't hanging out kind of a two-way street?

CAINE:

Well, maybe it is, but you know, you never know-

VIC:

Hey, hands off!

CAINE:

Whoa, hey, hey!

SFX: Footsteps.

VIC:

Gotta be careful. Even up here, your stuff's liable to be stripped off of you. Still got your comms?

CAINE:

Yeah. Thanks.

VIC:

You wanna go ahead and check what Lola sent?

SFX: Boop!

CAINE:

"Note from Lola: She's obsessed with pre-Incendian tech. It would do well to remember that. That being said, 'Lamprey room 4 port, password: south fishtail.'" Well, this is nothing.

SFX: Rummaging.

VIC:

It's Kvadrataalk. They use all these nautical terms to get people confused since it's nonsense now, basically. Even that last part is a little confusing, but I guess we should keep it in mind. Here you go.

SFX: Clunk.

CAINE:

Uh, why are you giving me climbing equipment?

SFX: Vic starts getting his harness on.

VIC:

We're heading down into the lower part of the Kvadrata--the Trench--and it's a loooong drop from here to there. You gotta be kidding me. Are you really gonna be climbing with your hands all wrapped up like that? You can take those off, man.

CAINE:

I'll be fine.

VIC:

Suit yourself. Knot's tight...

VIC:

Well, come on. This is the quickest way down. So, don't
diiieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

CAINE:

Vic! Hang on!

SCENE 4

SFX: Caine struggles down the rope. Vic laughs.

VIC:

Oh man. Took you long enough!

SFX: Caine lands and takes off the carabiner.

CAINE:

I was actually worried about you! What is your problem?

VIC:

I've got problems plural, Caine, and the fact that I'm a little bit of a thrill-seeker barely counts as one.

CAINE:

Oookay, so where is this lamprey anyways? I don't even know what we're looking for.

VIC:

It's a building with a huge grinder on top of it. Truescrappers go there all the time to salvage pieces before they're deemed totally worthless and tossed up there. Then whatever's left gets turned into all those makeshift shops.

SFX: Wind picks up.

CAINE:

Let's find it—and fast. It's freezing down here.

VIC:

That's not good.

CAINE:

I don't like the way you said that.

VIC:

We need to find cover *right now*.

CAINE:

What is that?!

VIC:

Trench winds! They get caught in the valley and kick up a sandstorm—we'll get torn to shreds!

SFX: They run off.

CAINE:

In here!

VIC:

Don't be stupid, that hut's gonna blow sky high the second the wind hits it!

CAINE:

Like you've got a better idea! That ruin is barely holding it together!

VIC:

Maybe you just need to trust me and get your ass over here!

CAINE:

Come on! All you do is act like a know it all! Ay dios ko...

VIC:

I'm just trying to help you out, but if you wanna *literally* die on that hill, be my guest!

SFX: Wind roars. Sounds a little like a tidal wave. Caine and Vic both yell.

VIC:

Caine? Dammit. Caine!

CAINE:

Over here. Ow, ouch. Arai, arai, arai...

SFX: Vic heads over. A metal grinding sound.

VIC:

You okay?

CAINE:

Yeah, the wind just tossed me this way and that. What is that sound?

VIC:

We're in luck. The thing that broke your fall and possibly your nose was the Lamprey! Pick yourself back up, bud, we're in business.

SFX: Footsteps. Vic knocks.

JACK:

Who's there?

CAINE:

Ugh...can you just...can you just let us in?

VIC:

Caine. It is brass monkey weather out here though. Care to let a couple pals in?

JACK:

Well, what's your game, stranger?

VIC:

We're hoisting a flag. A lady's sent us for a map.

JACK:

I don't know anything about that.

CAINE:

Come on, of course you know about the coordinates.

JACK:

No one gets in the Lamprey without a good reason. Or a couple cryptos.

VIC:

Or a couple parts? I noticed you got a pretty fine set of gadgets back there. You a scrapper?

JACK:

True as they come.

VIC:

You don't just stay on station here all the time, do you? I'm sure you've been all over the Metropolis—you've got that kind of a look on your face. You look like you do

things handsomely. And I'm not just Kvadrataalking now. You seem so worldly and knowledgeable...I'm positive you already know all about this map.

SFX: BUZZ! The door opens.

JACK:

Don't overstay your welcome.

VIC:

Couldn't if I tried.

CAINE:

Flirting? Really?

VIC:

Oh, don't be jealous just 'cause you don't know how.

SFX: Bar ambiance.

JACK:

Keep it quick and I'll be glad to see your face again in a few.

VIC:

Thanks, darling.

SFX: Jack and Vic laugh. Caine starts walking away.

VIC:

Hey, Caine, wait up!

SCENE 5

SFX: Footsteps.

VIC:

Four doors to the left, that's what room 4 port must have meant...here we are.

SFX: Bang!

VIC:

Ouch! Watch your head, Caine, this room's barely big enough to fit me. It's barely a room, really, it's the size of a closet. Maybe we counted the doors wrong-

WOMAN:

Password.

VIC:

Whoa! Didn't see you there.

CAINE:

Whoa whoa whoa! Hey! Hey!

SFX: Blaster powering sound.

WOMAN:

I said *password*.

VIC:

No need for a blaster. And certainly not one so close to my face.

WOMAN:

A pretty face isn't gonna make me lower it. I can either escort you both out of here with two shots or I can get the password.

VIC:

Caine? Will you get my comms out of my pocket?

CAINE:

Yeah, s-sure.

SFX: A blaster shoots. Caine and Vic flinch. A clunk.

CAINE:

What is wrong with you? You could have blasted off my hand or broke his comms!

SFX: Caine picks up the comms.

WOMAN:

That was a warning shot. You're not checking your comms in here. Those things are the easiest way to track a person across the whole Metropolis unless you're on a meshnet.

CAINE:

How are we supposed to remember what you sent her?

AZY:

Maybe she should have prepared you a little better.

VIC:

It's a little unfair.

WOMAN:

And?

VIC:

And we should be given something if you're not gonna let us check that. Like a hint.

WOMAN:

Hmph, I guess a pretty face might be enough for that. Fine. You have ten seconds to figure it out once I give you this hint. If you don't get it, you don't get the coordinates. The password isn't what I sent you—that'd be too easy. It's the name of the star.

CAINE:

What did it start with? What did it say?

VIC:

It was Kvadrataalk, like the rest of it.

CAINE:

Something like...fishy, fishtails?

VIC:

Southern fishtail.

CAINE:

What the hell does that have to do with stars? They've been dead for centuries!

VIC:

Don't panic, think. We need these coordinates.

CAINE:

Sorry I'm not obsessed with stuff from the past!

VIC:

Oh my god. Of course. It's from the navigator's chart.

CAINE:

What?

WOMAN:

If you're so sure, what's the password?

VIC:

Alnair.

WOMAN:

Heh.

SFX: She holsters her blaster.

WOMAN:

Was that so hard? I got your coordinates right here.

END OF EPISODE 2.

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars. If you liked this episode, please share it with your friends. You can find us on social media: we're @utes_podcast on twitter and undertheelectricstarspodcast on tumblr. You can also find us on Patreon at mxeliramos--that's M-X-E-L-I-R-A-M-O-S. Please support us if you have the means. Our voice talents are

as follows: Rey Vargas as Maricel Reyes, Kevin Paculan as Benjie Reyes and Vic Vass, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, David McGuff as Dax Pastore, Robin Guzman as Jet, and, now with the correct pronunciation (hopefully) Chaitrika Budamagunta as Lola Sunn. Additional voices were provided by yours truly, Martin Savill, and Inger Junger. Thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.