

SCENE 1

SFX: Neon buzzes. Music plays. High heels click.

MACHINE:

Climate set to 24 degrees Celsius.

HAVEN:

(SIGHS CONTENTEDLY)

MACHINE:

Would you like to have your oxygen therapy? New aromas included are: blood orange, blueberry, ginger vanilla, and violet.

HAVEN:

Yes, I'll take it now. I think I'll do rose petal again. It's oh so lovely.

MACHINE:

Please don your cannula!

HAVEN:

Machine, dispense oxygen.

MACHINE:

Dispensing underway!

HAVEN:

Wonderful. Dispense champagne.

MACHINE:

Processing!

HAVEN:

Oh, these robots are such garbage. Guard, get me some champagne.

GUARD:

Right away, Dr. Haven.

SFX: Champagne pours.

HAVEN:

Mm. Nothing like a little alcohol to whet the new liver.
Machine, status update?

MACHINE:

Client 172 is experiencing problems with their HavenHealth lung!

HAVEN:

Oh, yes, that pesky little one. Reboot it.

MACHINE:

Client 172 will experience lack of oxygen for one minute!

HAVEN:

Reboot.

MACHINE:

Complete! Continuing list. Client 601, 849, 858, and 903 have all died. Time of deaths were as follows: 9:41, 16:52, 18:00, and 21:39. Their HavenHealth procedures were as follows: heart transplant!

HAVEN:

Ugh.

MACHINE:

Client 912's HavenHealth has a damaged HavenHealth cardioplate!

HAVEN:

What? Where is xe?

MACHINE:

Client 912 is in their quarters!

HAVEN:

Unbelievable.

SFX: Heels click away.

MACHINE:

Oxygen dispensing paused!

SFX: Neon buzzes.

CLIENT 912:

Ugh...stupid junker...

SFX: Door opens.

HAVEN:

Client 912.

CLIENT 912:

Well, if it isn't the good doctor herself.

HAVEN:

Care to explain yourself?

CLIENT 912:

Care to repair my stupid cardioplate first?

HAVEN:

That's a *HavenHealth* cardioplate, thank you.

CLIENT 912:

Well, it's doing an awful job of keeping me together. Can't even stand up to one little shock.

HAVEN:

Say *one* more word, Client 912.

CLIENT 912:

You know as well as I do that it's nothing more than a broken, junked and chopped piece of POTEN Co. tech that you can't fix properly. 'Cause you're not skilled enough to fix something that-!

HAVEN:

Machine, shut off oxygen intake to Client 912's HavenHealth lung.

SFX: Whir.

MACHINE:

Shut off complete.

CLIENT 912:

Sucks that you can only shut off air to one, huh? Boy, if I had a crypto for every time you pulled this little stunt...

HAVEN:

But you don't, do you? That's why you're here in the first place.

CLIENT 912:

Once a parasite, always a parasite, huh Doc?

HAVEN:

I took pity on you, 912. I saw you were dying and I took pity on you.

CLIENT 912:

You call this pity?

HAVEN:

And all that I ask for in return is that you find others who are suffering. Who might need a little Haven help.

CLIENT 912:

I wouldn't wish this kind of a life on my worst enemies. Following the orders of some sick freak who can't even keep her own body from falling apart.

HAVEN:

Machine, cut functionality to Client 912's heart by 30%.

CLIENT 912:

I...argh!

SFX: Whir.

MACHINE:

Complete!

HAVEN:

See, 912, this is the reason why I order you around. I'm fully organic, unlike you. You're no better than a cheap robot, following commands—a piece of machinery that has to do what it's told. No one does that to me. So, if I have to

root around for a couple organs every now and then, it's simply the price of my freedom.

CLIENT 912:

You *took* my—!

HAVEN:

I *paid* for it. I didn't hear you complain back then.

SFX: Client 912 scoffs.

HAVEN:

I expect you to be finding more clients by tomorrow, 912.

SFX: High heels click away. The door slides shut.

SCENE 2

DAX:

Twelve hundred and sixty-three cryptos, for a second delivery of water tanks plus the delivery system and disposal of previous ones. Eight hundred and twenty-five cryptos for a shipment of parts for a model E874 air purifier. And last of all, fifty thousand and ninety-one cryptos for a solar distilling panel. Now, I'm not sure if your sorry excuse for a brain can do basic math, but what exactly is missing from each of those?

EMPLOYEE:

I swear, I don't know what you're talking about.

DAX:

Come again? I almost thought you were making another excuse, and at this point, it's *really* not gonna cut it anymore.

EMPLOYEE:

Please, I just needed a couple cryptos. Please let me go.

DAX:

And how much exactly is a couple cryptos?

SFX: The employee sobs.

DAX:

Don't...don't start with me, 86er. When I hire someone to work in my warehouse, I expect them to be able to keep their disgusting little habits to themselves.

EMPLOYEE:

It was only six cryptos.

DAX:

All three deliveries. And how much do I pay you?

EMPLOYEE:

Eighteen cryptos an hour.

DAX:

Exactly. If you had just gotten off your lazy ass and worked another measly hour, you could have easily gotten enough to pay for your filthy adrenoshot. So, for every crypto you took from *my* business, I'll keep you in this back room for another hour to let you get clean.

EMPLOYEE:

I have kids. I need to go back home.

DAX:

A strung-up junkie like you? Taking care of kids? Well, if you think about it, I'm really doing you and them a favor. After all, you wouldn't want them to see you like this, would you?

SFX: The employee sobs loudly. Dax's comms rings.

DAX:

Excuse me, I've got to take this.

SFX: Dax rips some duct tape and covers the employee's mouth.

DAX:

Dax Pastore speaking. Yes. Uh-huh. Of course we can manage that. I'll call you back. Thanks. You too. Bye.

SFX: Beep.

DAX:

I've got to finish some forms. I'll call and let your family know you'll be...working some extra hours. Don't say I don't do anything for you.

SFX: The door closes on the employee crying. Beep.

DAX:

Audio log 27. Closed a deal with another bar in Glasshouse. The owner of this one is...profitable, but Cryobar is really the closest to the elite, so I'll consider if this one is even worth the trouble. Possible connection between three employees and Celadon Carbonate, though if they've been laid off, they're not my best bet. (SIGH) Speaking of employees, another one of mine has been getting hooked on adrenoshot. It's exhausting, honestly, and I hate the idea that the scum working for me have been spending their

salaries on drugs. I've got to keep a better tab on the market and make sure they're not bringing that in. Especially not to Caine.

Oh, Caine. I don't know what to do with you sometimes. I haven't seen them for a couple days--they keep doing this little disappearing act before I get the chance to talk more with them about their shortage in cryptos. That interest is gonna build up.

SFX: Dax opens Caine's door.

DAX:

Their room hasn't changed since they were twelve. Still keeping all this stupid trash.

SFX: Rustling.

DAX:

Tapes, tapes...the Reyes family really never knew how to get rid of all these obsolete things.

SFX: A tape clicks into a player.

MARICEL:

...come back to the 0700 for Ansible Radio with your host, Maricel Reyes. I hope you're listening out there, Epsilons and millionaires...

DAX:

Maricel...you never knew when to shut up, did you? You both never knew when to stop, no matter what it was. I guess that worked out well for me, but...hmph.

SFX: Beeping.

DAX:

Where, oh where are you, Caine? Hiding? Running away again? Well, I don't need to chase you. I know where you go. And I know who you'll come back to at the end of the day. Because no matter how many secrets you think you can keep from me, I'll just keep peeling back your layers, bit by bit, until I figure out what you're up to.

BENJIE:

...We'll always be watching over you!

DAX:

So where are you now?

SCENE 3

SFX: Highway traffic. Someone skates and listens to a funky tune. They shake a spray-paint can and spray the wall.

SU-JIN:

Looks pretty good if I do say so myself. And I do say so.
"Looks pretty good, Su-jin." Thanks, Su-jin. Haha.

SFX: Su-jin skates around again for a second. Their comms rings.

SU-JIN:

Oh, shoot. Heyyy, Eun-hi!

SU-JIN:

Just underneath the Missile, as usual. Just tagging some stuff. Don't worry about me too much. Yes, I know you "can't help but worry about me, you're my sister." Haha, glitch, got you, now you owe me a drink.

SFX: Su-jin skates.

SU-JIN:

I know. Sorry I'm not home more often. And I know that talking through videocomm isn't enough sometimes. (BEAT) Are Ji-yeong and Min-seo there? They're probably asleep by now, huh? No, no, no, don't put mom squared on the phone, I can't talk with either of them.

I just don't think they'd understand right now. Mom squared and Min-seo would *kill* me. And Ji-yeong's only 18. (BEAT) Yes, I know that's only two years younger than when I started with Zero Zero. I just...

Do you remember when we were like, 12 and 14? And we went off for a day, like trying to see why mom squared asked us not to leave our district? We didn't even go that far. Just to Bright Alteco. Spent the day running around and yelling off of cliffs just to see how far our voices would carry. And then *eomma* caught us sneaking back into the garage and got super mad. Asked what we were doing out after dark. And then we had to tell her about how we'd gone...haha, how we'd gone to see the sunset from "the highest part of Metropolis West." 'Cause I mean in the end, that's what we really wanted to do, was see all the things that you can't see when you're stuck in one place forever. And god, wasn't it

the most beautiful sunset you can remember, Eun-hi? Wasn't it?

I'm sure they both still think I'm the trouble child. Just 'cause I'm the middle child, haha. I don't know. I don't want to be stuck in one place forever. I don't want all of us to be stuck and pretend that things are okay—they're *not* okay. I don't want mom and *eomma* to be stuck wondering every day if the garage is gonna get shut down because of Celadon Carbonate. I don't think it's fair that you didn't get to keep working towards becoming an engineer or that if we keep just lying down and taking it, Min-seo and Ji-yeong are gonna have to give up on their dreams too.

I know I'm keeping being in Zero Zero a secret from everyone. But please, *please* don't tell them until I'm ready to tell them.

Thank you. I promise I will. When the time's right.

SCENE 4

SFX: Beeping. Jet's start up sound, then an electric whoosh.

VIC:

There he is!

CAINE:

Hey, Jet!

JET:

Voice module and personality core activated! Status report time start: 0.3 seconds! What's up, Caine?

CAINE:

Hey, Jet. How's processing those coordinates going?

JET:

It's...interesting. With the power of my new core, I've been able to tap into more of my functionality, but these coordinates are a little bit...mmm...outdated. I'll keep working on it! Promise!

VIC:

He's really developed since the last time we booted him up.

CAINE:

Of course, he has! He always had it in him.

VIC:

Jet, you got a time estimate on how much longer it'll take?

JET:

Processing!

SFX: Whoosh.

JET:

Time estimate, time estimate...I don't know, I'm not really sure! If I carry the one and the three...ugh! Life was so much simpler when the only thing I'd get asked was "Find us the fastest route out of here." Oh, Caine, we're really in it now. Add the six and the four...gah, User: Vic, why'd you

have to hook me up to all these different things?! What does this even do?

SFX: Beep!

JET:

Oh, okay, it's in charge of my lights. Okay. That's...haha, good to know? Subtract the five-hundred fifty-five...I had no idea when Caine wrote me a whole personality that it came with...whatever this is! I don't even know that I had some of these emotions and I don't even have names for them. They all feel like some sort of secret thing that I've tapped into and I have no idea how to deal with it! What is this?

SFX: Beep. A tune plays.

JET:

Oh. That's just my Space Pinball application. I knew that. Divide by 382...square root, natural log...Oh wait, shoot. Backtrack. Where was I? Space Pinball. Yeah. Ever since I've gotten all that extra power, it's like parts of my brain keep waking up and making me have to relearn how to think all over again. I barely know which part of me is doing what function! Is this what an all-purpose bot is supposed to be able to do normally? I don't think most of them have this kind of a personality code. Was I not normal before? Am I normal now? Too many questions. I-I'm filing those away for later. Focus on the now. Diagnostic check. What am I feeling? I'm...happy I can finally say what I'm trying to say without borrowing words, even though I still have to every now and then. But now I can borrow words from User: Vic and User: Su-jin and User: Lola, too! And Caine talks a lot, so it makes it easy for me to communicate to them. At least I know one of these emotions. I'm happy. I'm happy that I can talk with everyone and let them know what's on my mind. Mind... Oh, right! I'm supposed to be thinking about something. Shoot, I forgot what I'm supposed to be doing again! All these new functions...processing..

SFX: Whoosh.

VIC:

Is he okay? He just flashed his lights and turned on Space Pinball. And now he's stuck on his loading screen. What is it with Space Pinball anyways?

CAINE:

Oh man. He's stressed out.

VIC:

Poor little guy. Oops.

CAINE:

Hey, Jet, it's okay. We can wait.

SFX: Whoosh.

CAINE:

It's okay. We can wait.

JET:

Oh! Right. Right. Caine! I was looking up something for Caine! Okay. Back on track. Processing...finished! It will take approximately one month for me to finish pinpointing these coordinates!

CAINE:

Thank you, Jet! You know, you've been working really hard lately. I know you're probably confused. How about this: I'll let you take a little break and then we'll both get back to work soon. See you later!

JET:

You're welcome! Phew. Everything's okay. Caine's right. I'll just take a break and figure out whatever all this is. Oh! And that's what this emotion is called. Confusion. Well, I've cracked at least one of these secrets. And now...well. Pbbbbtt. I think I'm gonna enter sleep mode for a bit.

SFX: Jet powers down.

SCENE 5

SFX: The wind. Windchimes. Then we hear Vic walk up the stairs.

VIC:

Lola, I got that watering can for you, so you can take care of the plants up here! Oh, sorry, I didn't realize you took your arms off. Do you want me to water them for you?

LOLA:

I would be much obliged. Wearing the ones with the better grip technology tires me out Neuromuscular connectivity and all that. I left my simple arms downstairs

VIC:

Nah, don't sweat it. I got it.

SFX: Vic starts to fill up the watering can.

VIC:

You really go to the trouble of purifying water for these things? Kind of seems like more trouble than it's worth.

LOLA:

They're not just things, they're plants. They're special. And if I may remind you, we do eat some of these. And I prefer my salads with less uranium byproduct in them.

VIC:

Good point. Well, really, if you say something's worth the trouble, you're probably right. That's what I figure.

LOLA:

And that's all you've picked up in the years I've known you?

VIC:

Pretty much.

SFX: They laugh.

LOLA:

Well, Vic. Now that I'm sure the sound of our laughter has scared away anyone within a twenty-foot radius...

VIC:

Hey, my laugh is charming.

LOLA:

...can we talk about what happened with that person in the Kvadrata? You said you saw someone with a cardioplate.

VIC:

Yeah, and it was all messed up too.

LOLA:

Did you see if it was from POTEN Co.?

VIC:

Uh, no. I mean the generator part looked like it could have been, but whoever used it put the serial code...HH 900-something?

LOLA:

Interesting. I'd like to keep better tabs on this H.H. character.

VIC:

I can get started on that right now.

LOLA:

No, no. I've actually got something more important for you to do. Our processing power's been down in the last couple days.

VIC:

Well, that's what'll happen when you mine it from moguls all the time.

LOLA:

Yes, well, if we're ever expecting to get this operation off the ground figuratively and literally, we need to get a little more sustainable with that. Jet's probably taking a long time because he simply doesn't have the energy to handle it, let alone his own burgeoning personality.

VIC:

I noticed.

LOLA:

I'd think the best thing for us to do is for us to infiltrate the Numitron Tube and plug ourselves into a real system. So, I'll need you to write up a program...

VIC:

Already on it, Lo. I'll leave the watering can up here and give you some peace and quiet.

LOLA:

Much obliged.

SFX: Vic puts the watering can down and steps down the stairs.

LOLA:

I feel bad keeping secrets from Vic and the rest of them. But isn't that what a good leader is supposed to do? I don't know. What do you think, coriander? I'm not expecting to you respond, I know you're a plant. But there's something to it, I think, burying some of the things you worry about so no one sees them. And before they bloom, you can take care of all the bad things about them, so only the good things grow.

What are you doing, Haven? What's happened at POTEN Co.?
And how much time have we got left?

SFX: The wind picks up and the windchimes play again.

END EPISODE.

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars. If you liked this episode, please share it with your friends and rate and review it wherever you're listening to us. You can find us 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: Stephanie Arata as Haven, Rey Angel as Client 912, David McGuff as Dax Pastore, Christine Kim as Su-Jin Yi, Kevin Paculan as Vic Vass, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, Robin Guzman as Jettison, and Chaitrika Budagamunta as Lola Sunn. Additional

voices and music were provided by yours truly and Angelica Ramos, my sister! A special thanks to Jordan Davis, a \$20 patron on our Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.