

SCENE 1

SFX: Footsteps.

LOLA:

Straight through this section and... oh, this must have been where the cave-in was.

SFX: Comms rings. It is turned off.

LOLA:

Let's see, she must have left something.

Got it. Looks like a...part of a comms attachment.

SFX: Comms rings.

LOLA:

Vic. Stop calling.

VIC:

Lola, would you please tell me what the hell is going on?!

LOLA:

It's not something you need to worry about.

VIC:

Hey, you're completely alone in the Numitron and it's been over an hour! I think I have a right to be worried! Where are you?!

LOLA:

I'm in Station Kyrka.

VIC:

Are... Are Su-jin and Caine still there?

LOLA:

No. Not that I can see.

VIC:

Lola, you're freaking me out.

LOLA:

Vic. Please just trust me on this.

VIC:

You know I trust you on everything! I've trusted you with my life and honestly, I probably will keep doing that while I've still got one. But I only trust you when you tell me what's going on. You always tell me... Tell me what's going on.

LOLA:

Look, I can't tell you all the details right now. You know I don't talk much about my life in Glasshouse. But...it has something to do with that and the people I left behind. I'm sorry I can't say more than that.

VIC:

If that's all you can say right now, I get it.

LOLA:

Much obliged.

SFX: Footsteps.

VIC:

Hey, uh...you're going the wrong way.

LOLA:

I...

VIC:

You're gonna go get Su-jin and Caine first, right?

LOLA:

Yes, I'll go find them.

VIC:

Okay, uh...well, I told them to go through Faradize, so I'll see if I can find you another route. Hang on.

SFX: Beep beep.

VIC:

Lola? Hey, Lola!

Gah, fine. If she's not going after them, I will.



SCENE 2

SFX: Footsteps.

SU-JIN:

Can you make it down this next ladder? That's our last one.

CAINE:

Yeah, I... Yeah, I can handle it.

SU-JIN:

Sorry if I'm babying you. I sort of can't help it. I have two younger sisters...

CAINE:

Nah, no, it's fine for now. I guess being in that game messed me up more than I realized. Anyway, how long was I even in that thing?

SFX: Climbing down a ladder.

SU-JIN:

Not longer than an hour. Although that probably means Lola and Vic are worried half to death about us.

CAINE:

You think so?

SU-JIN:

Aw, come on Caine, you're friends with all of us.

CAINE:

That's...an...um, interesting thing to say.

SFX: Climbing down a ladder.

SU-JIN:

What, you don't believe me?

CAINE:

More like I think they know we can handle ourselves.

SU-JIN:

Hah, yeah. You're right. Oh, here's a security door. Just a moment...

SFX: Card swipe.

DOOR:

Access granted.

CAINE:

Oh, so your master keycard actually does work.

SU-JIN:

Not a master keycard, just one for the second-tier security of POTEN CO. And *of course* it works. Last time was a glitch.

CAINE:

We could have just used my knife again.

SU-JIN:

Yeeaaaah, no.

SFX: Footsteps.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

It was strange how you could trace the memory of the Metropolis through the datacombs—the sleek new stations becoming the old and crumbling outposts before your very eyes. All of it snaking its way back to these core rooms. First thing I noticed was the hum of the power servers—a long, low sound that thrummed behind your eyes and into your chest. As Su-jin and I stepped into the room, a tingle of electricity seemed to shoot down my arms and burst out my fingertips. This was the heart of the parasite. The core power system for Glasshouse, and more importantly, for POTEN Co.

SU-JIN:

Oh man. Don't look down, it'll make you dizzy.

CAINE:

Oh. Yeah. No kidding. So, Su-jin, uh... You think this platform'll hold?

SU-JIN:

Honestly, it might not. We went through an obscure entrance that's actually low to the ground comparatively. Look up and you'll see that the tech gets newer and sleeker—plus less prone to nuclear leakage.

CAINE:

Okay, so um... So where are we connecting the haustoria?

SU-JIN:

Right over here. I know I said it was obscure and all, but it's one of the older passages. POTEN Co. uses some of its older blocks to service their information routing, so it'll be most useful for us to plug down here. And if I did it right and no one finds it, the haustoria will keep growing into the system. Like a plant!

SFX: Su-jin plugs in the haustoria.

CAINE:

So...uh...need any help with that, or...?

SU-JIN:

Nah, I got it. Besides, I thought you said you don't do that much hardware work? Except for Jet.

SFX: Typing

CAINE:

Yeah. I don't...yeah. I just feel like I kind of screwed up this mission for you. I mean you had to go around and rescue me.

SU-JIN:

What? No, that was my fault.

CAINE:

It really wasn't.

SU-JIN:

Caine.

CAINE:

(PATTER TALK)

It was on me! Look, you even helped me out back when we were in Celadon Carbonate. I feel like I keep running into trouble and you go around and save me from making a total idiot of myself. What am I, totally incompetent? I don't even know why you guys keep me around..

SU-JIN:

Caine, seriously. It's okay. Vic had to come around and get me out of messes plenty of times! You wouldn't believe what happened when I-

SFX: The haustoria pings.

SU-JIN:

All finished. Good job, little guy! Good luck!

CAINE:

Wait, we're done? This is over?

SU-JIN:

I said it'd be pretty quick. The hard part is getting here safely.

CAINE:

Well, alright then. Uh, then let's go. Do you think we'll run into Lola on the way out?

SU-JIN:

Err...before we go back, Caine, I kind of have to do something.

CAINE:

What? Did something go wrong? Did you leave something back in Faradize?

SU-JIN:

Uh, no. I have to return something, actually.

CAINE:

Don't tell me it's that map you got from Arcadia.

SU-JIN:

No. It's a power cord.

CAINE:

Wait, isn't that one yours?

SU-JIN:

I forgot mine when I went to go charge my powerpack to break that game so...I kind of...stole it from someone.

CAINE:

Oh. Nice.

SU-JIN:

No! Not nice! Look, stealing from a megacorporation is morally sound, but stealing from someone and throwing a flash bomb at them is a whole other issue!

CAINE:

You threw a flash bomb at someone?

SU-JIN:

Yes. And don't sound so happy about that, I feel awful. We've got to go find them and give it back.

CAINE:

Okay, yeah, but how exactly are we gonna do that? It wasn't easy figuring out a route down here, and they probably weren't even headed in the same direction as us.

SU-JIN:

Yeah, I know...

CAINE:

And they can get their own power cord. They're not that expensive.

SU-JIN:

It's the principle of the thing!

CAINE:

Su-jin, you said it yourself. Lola and Vic might be worried about us, okay? We've been gone for too long. We can't call them here. We should just head back.

SU-JIN:

I know.

CAINE:

Alright, fine, fine. I guess it's my fault you had to use your ray gun anyways. Fine, yeah. Let's look around.

SU-JIN:

Okay. Thank you.

CAINE:

B-but, Su-jin? Can we kind of make it quick? My brain is just all kinds of messed up and...

SU-JIN:

Yeah. I get it. Let's go find them.

SCENE 3

SFX: CLIENT 912 limps and grunts in pain.

HACKER:

You holding up okay?

CLIENT 912:

Oh my god, yes, how many times do I need to tell you that I'm *fine*.

HACKER:

You've just been wheezing the past five minutes and I really think we should take a rest or somethi-

CLIENT 912:

No! I am finding that power cord and that's final. And I'm gonna find that asshole who stole it and make them pay for this.

HACKER:

Look, we're travelling together, so in the interest of both of our wellbeing, I think we should take a break.

CLIENT 912:

Don't get that look in your eye.

HACKER:

What? What look?

CLIENT 912:

Pity. You're making me sick.

HACKER:

I don't pity you, I'm just saying some rest might do you good.

CLIENT 912:

Shut up. I'm ending this discussion.

SFX: CLIENT 912 collapses.

HACKER:

See, you're falling all over yourself—you must have overstrained your cardioplate when you were trying to fight that person.

CLIENT 912:

Shut up. And don't touch me! I can handle myself.

HACKER:

I'm just trying to get you back on your feet.

CLIENT 912:

Yes, and incidentally, I don't need you to.

HACKER:

What is wrong with you?!

CLIENT 912:

In case you didn't notice, I'm dying!

HACKER:

No, I mean what's wrong with you like why won't you accept the slightest shred of help?!

CLIENT 912:

Funny that you think I need any from a Glasshouse fraternizer like you!

HACKER:

We had this conversation.

CLIENT 912:

I should have suspected you were just like every other Glasser. Sterile, safe, insufferable bastards.

HACKER:

I'm from the Numitron—

CLIENT 912:

And what's worse is you're like every other miserable idiot in this city. You think I need to rely on you. Like that's not the weakest thing there is.

SFX: CLIENT 912 coughs aggressively.

HACKER:

Yeah, you know what the weakest thing is right now? You.

Ugh, let me—

CLIENT 912:

Say you're trying to help me. I dare you.

HACKER:

Yes, I'm trying to help you, you completely crazy—

SFX: Client 912 swipes at the hacker.

HACKER:

Agh! I can't believe you just... Oh, this is a lot of blood.

CLIENT 912:

Yeah, I still pack a punch even when I'm on the floor.

Who's weak now?

HACKER:

Okay, you're on your own. I need to get out of here.

CLIENT 912:

Fine, I'll figure out how to hook myself up *without* your power cord. Yeah, crawl away! Maybe someone will come help you down here. Or maybe they'll attack you just like that asshole did. Hahaha...!

SCENE 4

SFX: Walkie-talkie static.

VIC:

Lola, come in. Come in, Lola. This is Vic. Report position.  
What the hell... Ugh, I hate having to be the responsible one. Come in, Lola. Report position and *stay where you are*.

SFX: Crackle.

LOLA:

So, you're using the radio comms function.

VIC:

Yes, I'm using the *walkie talkie* function. We're out of comms range.

LOLA:

You came after me.

VIC:

Yeah, I did. You're being super irresponsible right now! Why are you going after some voice you heard instead of protecting your team, huh?!

LOLA:

I told you, you wouldn't understand.

VIC:

Maybe I don't need to understand to know that you need to cut it out. We're supposed to look out for each other!

LOLA:

As I remember, that's how you got that scar.

VIC:

What?

LOLA:

A team can function apart from each other. That's the point of a team—to achieve more together than I could by myself. If I need operatives in different places, I can't go watch

over them every step of the way. They pursue their task and I'll pursue mine.

VIC:

A team isn't anything without a leader. And right now, you're not being one!

You know, I can't believe you'd bring up... That's the whole reason we met each other. You said you admired that I'd put myself in danger if it meant I was protecting someone. I forgot about that until recently. And now... well, you're being a coward!

LOLA:

Don't. Don't you ever say that I'm a coward. I escaped from Glasshouse. I stole back everything I could from POTEN CO., I broke the hold they had on me because I knew people deserved more. I left my... I left *everything* behind and I'm the coward?

Don't even start with me.

VIC:

Lola, I... I'm sorry.

Somehow, I don't feel like I should be apologizing...but I'm sorry anyways. I'm just so worried about Su-jin and Caine. Y'know, 'cause Zero Zero is my family. My real family. It's the only place I have. I...

Can we just find them? Please?

LOLA:

I... suppose I can continue my search while we look for them. I'm in Station Jupiter. Come meet me there and we'll look together.

SCENE 5

CAINE:

Okay, Su-jin, this is a dead end. Again. Can we please go now?

SU-JIN:

Yeah, we can. Ugh, I just feel so awful about stealing this. I know it was for a good reason but that doesn't make it feel any less wrong.

CAINE:

Su-jin, if it makes you feel any better, we can double back around one more time.

SU-JIN:

...Okay. Sorry to totally waste your time.

CAINE:

Again, not a big deal. Especially since I wasted your time so...I guess we're even.

SU-JIN:

I just-

SFX: A metallic clang.

SU-JIN:

Get behind me.

SFX: Knife activates.

CAINE:

Who's there?

HACKER:

Hello?

SFX: Ray gun loads.

SU-JIN:

You better drop any weapons you might have. We're both armed.

SFX: Footsteps.

SU-JIN:

Wait—it's you!

HACKER:

Hey, flash bomb guy. Funny seeing you here.

SU-JIN:

I'm really sorry about that.

HACKER:

Well, you did say you were going to give it back.

SU-JIN:

Uh, right, right. Power cord. I'm going to get it out of my bag, just a second.

CAINE:

why are you just sitting in the middle of—oh shit, you're bleeding.

HACKER:

Uh...yes. I have been for a hot minute. I'm...just resting.

SU-JIN:

Oh no, that's a lot of blood.

HACKER:

Hey, that's what I said!

SU-JIN:

We gotta take you somewhere—I've got a friend who's a medical professional—

HACKER:

Is her name Haven? That's not a doctor I'd like to see.

SU-JIN:

What? No. You're delirious. Caine help me get him up, we need to take him with us.

HACKER:

I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm—ouch—I'm okay.

SU-JIN:

Sorry, sorry.

HACKER:

I can get myself to the medic station—I saw them earlier while I was taking my friend down and I can manage a shortcut.

Speaking of friends...look, can you do me a favor? The person who hurt me...well, he's not doing too well and in spite of myself, I'm actually worried about xir. How good is your doctor pal?

SU-JIN:

She's the best.

HACKER:

You think she can help xir out?

SU-JIN:

W-Well...

HACKER:

Since you, uh...stole my cord and all.

SU-JIN:

Um—

CAINE:

We'll do it.

SU-JIN:

Caine.

CAINE:

Lola's gonna be down here anyways. It's okay.

SU-JIN:

If you say so. Hey, if you can't find that medbay, just let us know, okay? Come meet us near Station Kyrka.

HACKER:

Gotcha. Thanks, fellas. Xe's probably in the next station,  
so...good luck. You'll need it.

SCENE 6

CAINE:  
(NARRATING)

Exhaustion and guilt weighed on me, familiar but heavy all the same. Emotions I'd thought I could leave behind in Arcadia—but it slowly dawned on me that I'd probably have to carry those for the rest of my life. It felt like I'd never leave the datacombs—the endless stations crumbling into nothingness, the harsh fluorescent buzz casting dark shadows on everyone. Everything, falling apart.

Like xir.

CAINE:

It's—

CLIENT 912:

You. I hope that sickening hacker didn't send you my way. Or maybe I should be glad. I get the chance to beat the shit out of you.

SFX: Ray gun loads.

SU-JIN Not a chance.

CLIENT 912:

Bring a blaster to a fistfight, huh? Sounds fair. I'll take you—

SFX: Client 912 coughs.

CAINE:

You're still hurt, aren't you?

CLIENT 912:

If your little friend hadn't fought me, I wouldn't be here. Actually, if you hadn't chased me for your little bot, I wouldn't be here either. So maybe I'd better take the both of you on.

SU-JIN:

We can just talk this over!

CLIENT 912:

The time for talking has long since passed, pal. Let's finish this.

SFX: Su-jin fires their ray gun.

CLIENT 912:

Either that was a warning shot or you just can't aim!  
Little misfire.

SU-JIN:

I-

SFX: Client 912 knocks the blaster from their hands.

SU-JIN:

How did you get here so fast-?!

CLIENT 912:

Like I've said before—part machi—(XE COUGHS AGAIN)

SU-JIN:

Please, just let my friend take care of you. She's got prosthetics, she'll know how to help you.

CLIENT 912:

Haha!

SFX: Client 912 swings at Su-jin.

SU-JIN:

Ah!

CAINE:

Su-jin!

CLIENT 912:

So many people just want to help me today, don't they?!  
Well, that's just what *she* said and look where I am now!

CAINE:

You're bleeding!

SU-JIN:

It's not too bad, but it does hurt.

CLIENT 912:

"Just a little Haven help! That's all you need to get back on your feet again!" I wish I'd never been that desperate!

SU-JIN:

Caine, watch out!

CLIENT 912:

And I'll never be that desperate again!

SFX: Caine's plasma knife powers on. The two clash in a fury of plasma and metal.

MUSIC: Caine's Theme by Eli Ramos.

CLIENT 912:

What?!

CAINE:

Don't think you're the first person with mods I've ever fought!

CLIENT 912:

Little firecracker, aren't you!

CAINE:

I'm not gonna kill you, but you're not getting off easy.

CLIENT 912

Well, take this!

SFX: Client 912 swings at Caine.

CLIENT 912:

Well, you're a fast one! Ducked right under that.

SFX: Rattling.

CAINE:

Stop fighting. You're gonna get hurt.

CLIENT 912:

I'm not gonna quit just 'cause you ask nicely.

CAINE:

How about because you'll die if you don't?

CLIENT 912:

Not if you... die... first!

SFX: Client 912 swings at Caine and Caine's knife rips through their cardioplate.

CAINE:

Oh god. Oh no.

CLIENT 912:

You...

SFX: Client 912 collapses.

CAINE:

What did I do? Su-jin, what did I do?

SU-JIN:

I don't know. Is xe dead?

CAINE:

Oh no. Oh no no no no.

VIC:

Caine! Su-jin!

SU-JIN:

Vic?

VIC:

What the hell happened? You two are way off route and—  
whoa, whoa, whoa! Did you...? Lola! Get in here!

LOLA:

If it isn't what I'm looking for, then I'm not— Vic, you found them.

VIC:

Uh, a little more importantly, someone's collapsed here—  
help me out!

LOLA:

Right. I'll analyze their vitals.

VIC:

Come on guys, let's find something to make a stretcher from. Any metal beams, preferably with no pointy bits..

SU-JIN:

Right.

CAINE:

Got it.

LOLA:

Unconscious, still breathing, symptoms of exhaustion seem evident... they've got a decreased heart rate, but hopefully linking one of my prosthetics and draining the battery power from it will regulate their heart rate. I'm going to remove the cardioplate once we're back at the base, but it might destabilize them if I take it off now, even with the damage that's been done to it.

CAINE:

I panicked, I-

SU-JIN:

It's okay. Xir cardioplate was already broken—it's not your fault!

CAINE:

Don't tell me what's not my fault!

LOLA:

Zero Zero, I need you to focus! This person is in a dire state and I intend for us to keep them alive, regardless of who they are.

VIC:

Alright.

LOLA:

I'm sorry, Vic. You were right—I wasn't being a leader. But we're going to get this person back to base. Together.



SCENE 7

SFX: Medical equipment. A door opens.

LOLA:

Oh—Caine. I didn't think I'd see you still up in the med bay. I'd assumed you'd be resting.

CAINE:

...I'm fine?

LOLA:

Su-jin told me a little bit about what happened. You were hooked up to a neural class VR without any preparation—that can be very jarring for some people.

CAINE:

Well, I'm still alive.

LOLA:

I'm glad for that. And that you didn't get hurt while you were protecting Su-jin. They're fine, by the way—that gash they got wasn't terrible—

CAINE:

Ugh, I'm the worst.

LOLA:

What do you mean?

CAINE:

I just—I feel so guilty. If I hadn't gone down with Su-jin to the datacombs, they wouldn't have had to come rescue me, and then we wouldn't have run into *xir* at all. We would have completely avoided this whole mess in the first place.

LOLA:

Su-jin didn't put it that way at all.

CAINE:

That's because they're so goddamn nice they make excuses for everyone. Even someone like me.

LOLA:

Caine, we all have parts of ourselves that we're not proud of. I was an idiot today and I nearly got all of you in some serious trouble—it's only because there was a crisis that I recognized where I was failing. It's okay to fail sometimes. It's okay to make mistakes. We are not the sum of our faults.

CAINE:

..Yeah.

LOLA:

And besides, you helped Su-jin out a lot today. You can think whatever you'd like, but personally? I think we couldn't have done this without you.

Sounds like our guest is about ready for the operation. It looks like xe's stabilized for the most part. Why don't you get some rest?

CAINE:

Gladly.

SFX: Door opens.

CAINE:

And uh...thanks, Lola.

SFX: Door closes. Whirring.

LOLA:

Okay, prosthetics for surgery attached. Now to begin...

SFX: Beep.

LOLA:

Audio log for surgery on patient 339. Reportedly, xe uses xe/xir pronouns. Xe was found collapsed in the datacombs with symptoms of exhaustion and bradycardia and was carried to Zero Zero with a supplemental power supply—one of my battery powered prosthetics—until xe was placed in Zero Zero's medical bay. Xe's previous tracheal attachment is connected to our oxygen supply of which I still have to thank Caine for smuggling out of their employer's warehouse. The outside of the tracheal attachment appears to have some abrasions and looks as if it was previously

junked before being used as a supplement to the lung system which...also looks junked. It appears that the power to this system is remotely controlled. The item of further interest is the cardioplate. It is supplemented with three wire groups, all of which have been covered in a metal tubing, likely to protect them. They connect to an old POTEN Co. style generator circa year 30021—certainly before my own time and certainly jettisoned once better models existed. It's sustained some damage due to the plasma knife Caine used to defend themselves. I'll be replacing this cardioplate with a 3D printed style lifted from my blueprints, which will be easier if I can read the serial code. It looks like despite the damage, it's still—

It's still... visible. It reads HH-912. It looks like this was modified by Dr. Haven Penders, my associate during my time working for POTEN Co. She... she always installed comms links to her physical installments to keep in contact with her patients when they needed it. I don't believe it.

It's here. I could call her right now if I wanted to. I could see my—

I need to remove this from the patient and install a new comms. Knowing Haven, this is likely a B0K2 model. Those were her favorite. I'll select to print my S4N model to replace it.

The comms link is wired directly into the cardioplate and appears to draw its energy from the same source as the tracheal attachment and the cardioplate itself.

...End audio log.

SFX: Beep.

LOLA:

If I want to use it, I need to salvage it.

Contacting Haven would give me the opportunity to learn about what's happening with POTEN Co. Why she would be outside of Glasshouse? And she can't have gotten to 912 patients in just... And on the other hand, revealing my location to Haven could be dangerous. It's frankly unethical for me to keep a patient's tech, let alone use it without them knowing. I could say that it was destroyed when Caine cut through it...or I could say nothing at all.

If he asks, I'll tell him.

But if he doesn't...

SFX: Rustle.

LOLA:

Got it.

SFX: Beep.

LOLA:

Resume audio log. The S4N should be finished printing, so I'll be starting the operation shortly. Hopefully I can give this person a little help.

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 on our website at [undertheelectricstars.com](http://undertheelectricstars.com) or find us social media: we're @utes\_podcast on twitter and undertheelectricstarspodcast on tumblr. You can also find us on Patreon at [mxeliramos](https://www.patreon.com/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: Chaitrika Budagamunta as Lola Sunn, Kevin Paculan as Vic Vass, Christine Kim as Su-jin Yi, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, and Rey Angel as Client 912. Additional voices were provided by yours truly and Erik May. A special thanks to Jordan Davis and Fran Carr, \$20 patrons, and to Ezra Lee Buck, a \$100 patron on our Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.

A quick announcement: our mother network, Aster Podcasting Network, is hosting an event this year! It's called Scary Stories and we will be helping you edit, audio engineer, and publish your scary stories as audio fiction episodes during October. If you're a writer or a voice actor, check us out on twitter @AsterPodcasting for more details! I've been with Aster Podcasting as a voice actor since July 2017 and I applied as a writer/director/audio editor with my horror piece, "HA HA HA" about a year ago--which is also when I started writing Under the Electric Stars. I really couldn't make this show without the help of the network and I really hope this event will help you all to share your stories too.