

SCENE 1

MUSIC: Dust by Tri-Tachyon.

SFX: A ventilator and a steady heartbeat on a monitor. Jet beeps.

LOLA:

What screen are you on... oh, there you are! What is it, Jet?

JET:

It has been four days since you brought xir in and xe still hasn't woken up.

LOLA:

Are you worried about xir?

JET:

Not like I worry about GROUP: ZERO ZERO and Caine. But I feel... sad. Even if xe did put me in danger before.

LOLA:

Xe's going to be okay.

JET:

You seem... uncertain.

LOLA:

Everything's always a little uncertain. I suppose that's just the way of life.

JET:

Life seems very complicated.

LOLA:

Hm. Yes, it pretty much always is. That's the nature of it.

JET:

Should I leave you alone? You look... thoughtful.

LOLA:

Yes, some alone time would be nice. Go spend some time with Vic. I'm sure he's dying to teach you another wholly inappropriate phrase for a bot your age.

JET:

I do not measure age the same way you do!

LOLA:

You're a funny one, Jet. I like you.

JET:

I haven't seen Caine for a while. I wonder what they're doing.

LOLA:

Well, we've all been very busy with work. And you've been getting integrated into all the systems here in Zero Zero. How's the screen jumping going? Are you getting used to it?

JET:

Yes! It's much better than being carried everywhere.

LOLA:

Good. I'm sure it is. I think Caine coming back for a little while today. Maybe you can surprise them by welcoming them in?

JET:

I'm so excited! I'll go tell Vic! Goodbye USER: Lola!

SFX: Jet teleports away.

LOLA:

If you can hear me, I hope you're doing okay.

I figure you must be sick to death of the music I've been playing in here. I'm sorry for leaving it on loop—it's what the plants like though and I don't really get patients in here as often as one might think. With all the firefights and the altercations with POTEN Co... but Zero Zero has thankfully stayed quite a mystery to most people. I guess that if everything goes according to plan, we'll be spreading our influence to more people.

Oh, you probably don't care about all that. I'm just rambling, ignore me.

INDRA:

(GROANS)

SFX: Lola turns off the music.

INDRA:

Where the hell am I?

LOLA:

I'm glad to see you're up, but you won't find any useful weapons in here.

INDRA:

Why did you take me here?!

LOLA:

Hang on, take a breath. Let me explain. One of my teammates accidentally tore through your cardioplate generator, so I took you back to my base to patch you up. You're still recovering.

Who are you?

INDRA:

I...

You're wearing prosthetics too.

LOLA:

Yes, we have that in common. I am sorry about disarming you—so to speak. Sorry, easy joke. But I couldn't have you slashing me up as soon as you woke up. I'll give it back to you soon.

INDRA:

Okay.

LOLA:

You didn't actually answer my question.

INDRA:

You don't need to know my name.

LOLA:

Well, I think you should know mine. I'm Lola Sunn.

INDRA:

Lola S... You're a Glasser.

LOLA:

So you've heard of me. That's unusual.

INDRA:

Yeah, well, word gets around, I guess. POTEN Co. says you died. But here you are in the flesh.

LOLA:

Indeed I am.

INDRA:

Why are you here?

LOLA:

So that's what gets you chatty. Gossip.

INDRA:

It's hardly gossip. It's curiosity. I mean, why in the world would a Beta class like you, probably loaded with cryptos and all the luxuries your little heart could afford, fake her death and disappear off to some secret base? Do you play here with all your other Beta and Gamma friends? Having fun pretending to be a Delta—or better yet, you all want to be 86'ers!

LOLA:

It's not like that.

INDRA:

Then what is it like, Lola Sunn? Tell me how you ended up here. Tell me why I shouldn't hate you.

LOLA:

Frankly, I don't care if you hate me or not. I'm not part of Glasshouse anymore and I don't need to justify myself to you or anyone else. All I believe in Zero Zero and its ideals.

INDRA:

Everyone's been talking about archived legends. Well, the datacombs didn't work and whatever crazy idea you have in your head about Zero Zero isn't worth my time.

LOLA:

Do you even know what Zero Zero stands for?

INDRA:

Well... uh...

LOLA:

I'm not going to preach to you, but you should know what you're dismissing before you do so.

INDRA:

I know what it is. I'm not stupid. Just some old union that POTEN Co. blew up, way before me and you were even alive.

LOLA:

That's right.

INDRA:

So why use the name?

LOLA:

It stands for something.

You're right. The classes are corrupt and it's not fair that just because I was allowed into Glasshouse's society, I was given more than others. But I'm trying to fix that.

SFX: Lola's comms rings.

LOLA:

I'm going to take this call. Please get some more rest if you can.

SFX: Lola walks away.

SCENE 2

SFX: Yelling in a crowded place. Caine walks.

ROSSUM:

Hey, Reyes. Long time no see.

CAINE:

Rossum!

ROSSUM:

Yep. Miss me?

CAINE:

Yeah...

ROSSUM:

Yeah, my account sure misses those cryptos you were supposed to get me.

CAINE:

Right. Right, sorry.

ROSSUM:

Well, no harm no foul. I know you'll get them eventually. So what brings you back to the neighborhood?

CAINE:

I've been laying low for a little bit, that's why I haven't been around. So...figured it was time to come back.

ROSSUM:

Got eyes around here, Caine. I hear that you've been smuggling and *not* from POTEN Co.

CAINE:

Hey, not so loud!

ROSSUM:

Come on. If I know, Dax probably knows too.

Hope you've got a lot of cryptos to bring back to him or you're gonna be in a hell of a lot of trouble.

CAINE:

Stop rubbing it in, Ross, you know I don't.

ROSSUM:

I just assumed you were selling whatever you were stealing. Or did you spend it all already?

CAINE:

You wouldn't get it.

ROSSUM:

You wound me, Caine. Whatever little crusade you decided is worth your time is *not* worth Dax's wrath.

CAINE:

It's not a crusade.

ROSSUM:

Yeah, that's what you said about the last few things you got it in your head to be a hero about. Least you dropped those pretty quick.

CAINE:

Well, this one is different. This one actually matters.

Look, I'm just gonna take whatever's coming to me. I'm sure I can handle it. It's Dax. By the way... you don't have a place for me to stay, do you?

ROSSUM:

Nope, sorry. POTEN Co. Correctors are cracking down on overcrowding tonight so it'd be stupid of me to put us both in danger.

CAINE:

Ugh. Great. That's the last thing I need right now.

ROSSUM:

Well, I've got to run. It was good seeing you again.

CAINE:

Yeah, sure. See ya.

SFX: Caine walks. Neon buzzing.

CAINE:

Home sweet home.

SFX: The fire escape drops down.

CAINE:

And fire escape sweet fire escape. The one reliable thing here.

SFX: Caine climbs up the fire escape.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

Here on the roof of the building I'd lived in for all my life, I could see the divide between all of Metropolis West and Glasshouse. I'd been to a lot of places through the Metropolis, but I always ended up back in the Tollbooth. Crammed with bots, junkers, and dealers; the skyline is plagued with the crumbling housing projects abandoned once they stopped making cryptos. Everything moves fast here: people begging on corners will be replaced with other beggars the second you blink. The cars, the bikes, and the droids chase each other in endless loops in the streets. Here, you quit running, it's like you quit living. You're lucky if you get the chance to settle down for even a second. And even here, in this building I'd lived in all my life...it hadn't really felt like home. Hadn't for a while.

CAINE:

Guess I'd better get back inside.

SFX: Window opens. The door opens.

DAX:

Look who decided to show up.

CAINE:

Dax?

DAX:

It's been a while.

CAINE:

Let go of me.

DAX:

I didn't hear you pull up to the warehouse. You parked somewhere else. Wanna tell me why?

CAINE:

Maybe I did, maybe I didn't. The only thing I know is it's none of your business.

DAX:

You've been running away every chance you get and once you come back to me, you start talking back? Funny.

SFX: Dax yanks on Caine's arm and they cry out.

DAX:

*Your* business, huh? Yours. Everything has to be about you, doesn't it, Caine? You selfish little nobody.

CAINE:

I told you, let go of me!

DAX:

You really think I don't know, all the shit you've been stealing from me under my nose!

CAINE:

You steal cryptos out of my account every day! As if you're not making enough by robbing other Epsilons! Agh!

DAX:

Who pays for everything? Who keeps this business running? Who makes sure you're not thrown in the streets or locked up by Correctors? Me! Everything I do is for you, Caine and you can't keep running away from me!

SFX: Caine kicks Dax.

DAX:

Haha, you are really testing me now!

SFX: Dax hits Caine and they hit the floor.

DAX:

Now stay there!

CAINE:

G-g-get off of me-get off of me!

DAX:

Promise me you'll stay here, Caine?

CAINE:

What the hell are you talking about? I'm not promising you anything!

DAX:

I need you here. You know that, right?

SFX: Caine breathes shakily.

DAX:

Either way, you're here until I say so.

SFX: Footsteps.

DAX:

Hope you like the new systems I installed while you were gone. You'll have plenty of time to appreciate them. Arm system.

SFX: Metal bang.

SYSTEM:

Room secured.

CAINE:

What the... Secured? Dax, what the hell did you do?

SFX: Metal bang. Caine tries the door multiple times.

SYSTEM:

Room secured.

CAINE:

Come on... come on! Let me out!

SYSTEM:

Room secured.

CAINE:

I know you can hear me! Dax!

SCENE 3

SFX: Typing. Jet sighs.

VIC:

Jet, buddy, I know you're moping over there, but I do have to finish analyzing the haustoria data at some point.

JET:

I know.

VIC:

Okay.

SFX: Vic types. Jet sighs again.

VIC:

Okay, what is it?

JET:

I thought USER: Lola said that Caine would be here again. It's been 73,592 seconds and they're not here yet.

VIC:

Wow. Wait, what time is it? I've been working on this code for way longer than I thought I was. I always lose track of time when I work.

Oh, that's right, Caine was supposed to be coming by today. They were gonna drop off another chip for you. I thought I just missed them.

JET:

Oh! They got another chip for me? How exciting!

VIC:

Yeah, uh...full disclosure, I haven't got a clue where they get them from. Kind of seems like every time they come back here, they have a new thing they're bringing by. I mean it's been super useful for developing all the big ideas Lola's got in her head, now that we don't have to barter for every part and resource...geez.

JET:

No clue?

VIC:

I mean, they're kind of cagey about stuff still. I know I gave them that whole lecture on trust, but I'm not gonna be an asshole and make them tell me every little thing they do.

JET:

Huh. That makes sense.

Are you going Home to find them?

VIC:

(LAUGHS) Uh, no. I don't live with Caine.

JET:

Oh! I'm so embarrassed. I meant—for me—I'm programmed to have Caine's residence as Home. That's what I mean by..

VIC:

No, no, I know. I've looked through your code.

JET:

I guess you must know me pretty well then.

VIC:

Aw, no, not really. A code doesn't tell you anything except how to do things. You see, I can't read your personality or your experiences through there and those are way more important.

JET:

Oh! I see.

USER: Vic, where is your home?

VIC:

Zero Zero base is it. Me and Lola both live here full-time.

JET:

Hm. I understand why Lola lives here but... why do you?

VIC:

Yeah, about that.

JET:

Oh, uh, I'm sorry. You don't have to tell me if it makes you uncomfortable!

VIC:

Come on, don't apologize. I'm sure you've been curious this whole time, but you didn't want to say anything.

JET:

I'm curious about everything!

VIC:

Yeah, exactly. What the hell, I'll tell you.

I used to be part of a gang—it doesn't quite matter which one. I'm sure you and Caine have had your run-ins with some of them in the Tollbooth. Yeah, and in this gang, I was one of the leaders, and don't ask who with 'cause that doesn't matter either. I pretty much grew up around this gang and we were all pretty close. We were like a family. But it's dangerous work. I was our strategist but that didn't stop me from jumping headfirst into danger whenever I thought it'd be fun. Ah, was a stupid kid. It made me feel like I was part of something though. And at that point, I would have given everything to keep my gang safe. In the end it all fell apart. Lola found me after I'd lost my eye in a firefight and she fitted me back up with this one—doesn't work, but then again, I'm not in the field so it's not a big deal.

JET:

Is that when you joined Zero Zero?

VIC:

Oh god, no. I didn't join until a couple months after I'd met Lola. I was still trying to get back to where I thought I belonged, but... turns out they didn't feel the same way. Home, family—they're complicated. Maybe you'll have an easier time trying to figure it out than I did.

JET:

Maybe.

VIC:

Well, I've talked your ear off enough about me and that code's not gonna analyze itself. Take it easy, buddy. I'm sure Caine'll be back in no time.

JET:

I sure hope so. Later, USER: Vic!

SFX: Jet teleports away.

SCENE 4

SFX: Metal bangs as Caine hits the door.

SYSTEM:

Room secured.

CAINE:

Goddammit.

SFX: Caine starts their knife and hits the door.

CAINE:

Even my *knife* won't go through this stupid door.

SFX: Dax knocks.

CAINE:

Ah!

DAX:

Annoying.

CAINE:

Oh really? Guess I know what I'm doing for the next couple of hours!

DAX:

You really want to go another day without eating?

CAINE:

It's not like I haven't done it before.

SFX: Footsteps.

CAINE:

Dax?

Man. Now I'm missing out on *entertainment* too. Ugh, I can't believe I'm even saying that. No comms calls, no one else to talk to... God, I wish Jet was here.

SFX: Rummaging noises.

CAINE:

Something tells me I am not emotionally prepared to listen to these tapes under any conditions, but I am by myself and I have no adult supervision, so..

SFX: Caine pops in one of their tapes.

MARICEL:

Hello again, chromers and deckheads, hope your morning is going well. Word on the street is there's a tin can jamboree down in the Kvadrata. Hop over if you're looking for new parts and bring plenty of cryptos. In other news, traffic on the Missile is looking light today, but there's been a rash of Correctors on the Valley side, so watch your back if you don't want to get disciplined and all washed out. Keep your eyes to the skies as POTEN Co. sends some operatives to take care of the Berserker jockeys on the Subiro Hill--don't want to get caught up in all that.

CAINE:

Wow, this is an old tape. Berserkers broke up back in-

MARICEL:

I see you looking over here. Do you want to come talk? Oh, you're just as shy as your dad. Come on, come here--yes, Sebastian, bring them down.

YOUNGER CAINE:

Uh. Hi.

MARICEL:

This is my youngest, Caine. Say hi, anak!

CAINE:

Oh yeah, yeah. This is really, *really* old.

YOUNGER CAINE:

I already said hi, mom, seriously-

MARICEL:

Okay, okay, you can head back to the sound booth. Well, on to the music. This next song is my favorite. It's by the band-

SFX: Dax bangs on the door.

DAX:

Did you say something?

CAINE:

No.

DAX:

Hmph.

SFX: Dax walks away.

CAINE:

Geez...

I can't believe how old some of these tapes are. I thought for sure we'd lost some of them. Especially the ones with me, Val, or...Dax..

Maybe I *should* listen to more of these.

SCENE 5

SFX: Lola is watering the plants. She walks around and sings the song "Jo Jo Achyutanada Jo Jo"

LOLA:

Hello.

INDRA:

How did you know I was here?

LOLA:

You're very light-footed, but all that new equipment is throwing you off a little. I'm sure you'll be back to being perfectly stealthy once you're used to it.

INDRA:

I hope so.

SFX: Lola hums the song she was singing.

INDRA:

I know that song.

How do you know that song?

LOLA:

My parents taught it to me.

INDRA:

But it's Metropolitan. Not from Glasshouse.

LOLA:

I learned a lot of things when I was living in the Dome. How to activate surgical nanobots, when the optimum time to treat radiation sickness is, the intricacies of the human body. But the things that are closest to my heart haven't got a thing to do with any of that.

POTEN Co. tried to get rid of things that were too different. They tried to hide my disabilities, my culture, and presented me as someone who was just different enough

to be... *special*. I was detached from everything that made me myself. I'm trying to hold on to all of the things I was forced to let go of. It's really hard.

INDRA:

You're not like other Glassers.

LOLA:

I'm only different because I *decided* to break free. I want to show other people that they can do that too.

SFX: Lola waters the plants again.

INDRA:

Give me that.

LOLA:

The watering can?

INDRA:

I'll... help you finish watering these.

LOLA:

Thank you.

SFX: Indra waters the plants.

LOLA:

Don't feel like you're indebted to me or anything. I took care of you because you were hurt. It doesn't matter if it was one of my operatives that injured you--I would have helped you all the same.

INDRA:

Sure you would.

LOLA:

I won't hunt you down for cryptos either. You're up and walking, and your vitals are all relatively stabilized. I only ask that you don't disclose this location to others,

unless they need our help. Or if they're interested in joining Zero Zero.

INDRA:

I... I've got nowhere to go.

LOLA:

You're also welcome to stay here until you figure out what you're doing. I would ask that you help out, but you seem to be pretty proactive with that already. You watered this much faster than Vic would have.

INDRA:

I mean, I don't think I have anywhere I could go. It's been a rough couple of years, I'll tell you that, pal. There's no one left out there who'd give two shits about where I am or where I end up. So I think it just makes the most sense if I join your... organization or club or whatever you call it.

LOLA:

Look, before you say anything else, I want you to remember—you do *not* have to pay me back. You can live here and not be part of Zero Zero. Just think about what Zero Zero means. You know more than anyone how I've waxed on about it. But I don't want you to join if you don't believe in it.

Besides, I still don't know your name.

INDRA:

...Right.

LOLA:

I know that names and identities are important here. I completely understand if you want to keep it a secret. But I haven't got anything to call you.

INDRA:

I... I haven't said it in a long time, but...

My name is Indra. That's all.

LOLA:

Indra. That's a beautiful name.

INDRA:

Yeah, well, don't wear it out.

SFX: The two of them laugh. The wind blows through the  
windchimes.

SCENE 6

SFX: Door opens.

SU-JIN:

Hi Lola, Hi Vic, I'm just here to grab some stuff before I head-

JET:

USER: Su-jin!

SU-JIN:

Ah! Oh, Jet, it's just you! You scared the heck out of me.

JET:

Have you seen Caine?

SU-JIN:

No, I've been at home for the last week. I thought they'd dropped by a couple days ago to-

JET:

No, no, no! They're not back yet! And I keep getting blocked from their comms!

SU-JIN:

Hang on, calm down!

JET:

Ugh!

SU-JIN:

Hey, hey, you're okay. You're okay.

JET:

Sorry, I just... I'm just nervous!

SU-JIN:

No, no, I get it. I'm getting kinda nervous too—you said you're blocked from their comms?

JET:

Yes. After Vic hooked me up, Caine and I would chat on comms, but they haven't answered me at all! I'm afraid something bad has happened to them!

SU-JIN:

Do you want me to call them?

SFX: Jet beeps affirmatively.

SU-JIN:

Okay, give me a second, I'll try it out.

JET:

Thank you!

SFX: Su-jin dials Caine's comms.

CAINE:

Huh? Su-jin?

They're not blocked by the security system. Heh. Well, so much for me being completely cut off.

SFX: Dax speaks over a loudspeaker.

DAX:

Don't touch that.

CAINE:

Dammit. Spoke too soon.

SYSTEM:

Remote access of communications system.

CAINE:

Good, maybe he'll be distracted while he listens.

SU-JIN:

Caine?

DAX:

Who is this?

SU-JIN:

I—uh—shouldn't I ask you the same question?

DAX:

Tell me who you are. I can have this comms traced in ten seconds flat.

SU-JIN:

Ten seconds? Come on, you're talking Celadon levels of tracking for an Epsilon. You wouldn't be able to swing that if you tried.

CAINE:

Good, Su-jin, keep on stalling...

SU-JIN:

Plus, comms tracking can be pretty unreliable, especially when I do this.

SFX: Beep!

SU-JIN:

Neat signal scrambler, huh? Pretty ineffective for everyday use but I like to go above and beyond.

DAX:

Hmph.

SU-JIN:

You must be Dax. I've heard a lot about you and none of it good.

CAINE:

Put these two together..

DAX:

Well, maybe you'd better return the favor and tell me about yourself.

SU-JIN:

I think I'm good. How about you let me talk to Caine?

DAX:

And what are you going to do if I don't?

SU-JIN:

I mean, *my* signal's cloaked, but yours is pretty clear. I could always bring a couple friends over, see what happens.

DAX:

Now you're just bluffing.

SU-JIN:

You really want to take that chance?

CAINE:

Oh god, threatening is *not* your style, Su-jin.

Well, it's now or never. Can't believe he wired the camera to this room to a panel I could access.

SFX: Caine activates their knife and cuts the wires to the camera.

CAINE:

Okay, that should mean no video feed--sure I could have done that a little more elegantly, but... shoulda, woulda, coulda.

SFX: Caine grabs a tape.

CAINE:

Dax's old audio logs that he ended up storing with our tapes. Never bothered to check back these ones, I guess.

SFX: Caine slots one into their radio.

CAINE:

Please be a voice lock, *please* be a voice lock...

DAX:

(DISTORTED ON TAPE)

Disarm system.

SYSTEM:

Request processed. Please enter passcode to continue.

CAINE:

Goddammit, Dax!

DAX:

What the--system, request video feed reactivation.

SYSTEM:

Please enter passcode to continue.

DAX:

Stupid two-factor authentication...

SU-JIN:

I mean, it is more secure that way.

DAX:

Hm...

SFX: Four beeps.

CAINE:

Four numbers... and it sounds like...

SFX: Caine enters the same beeps. The door unlocks

CAINE:

Hah! Dax probably expected me to just use brute force. Which I kind of... kind of did with my knife. You know what, that— you know what, I don't have to explain myself.

SU-JIN:

Well, this conversation was a bust. I'm coming there to find Caine.

DAX:

Oh, I'd like to see you try.

CAINE:

Okay.

SFX: Caine opens the door and starts running.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

I didn't watch my old home disappear beyond the horizon I left behind. Never even turned around. Didn't think of what I'd do without my comms, without my radio or any of my other belongings. In one hand, I gripped my knife. In the other, the keys to my car. I mean, there wasn't any future or past—all of it had condensed to a single bright thought in my mind: run.

MUSIC PLAYS.

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 on our website at [undertheelectricstars.com](http://undertheelectricstars.com) or find us social media: we're @utes\_podcast on twitter and [undertheelectricstarspodcast](https://www.tumblr.com/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, where you can support our lovely cast and crew if you've got a couple extra dollars. Our voice talents are as follows: Chaitrika Budagamunta as Lola Sunn, Robin Guzman as Jettison, Rey Ángel as Indra, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, David McGuff as Dax Pastore, Rey Vargas as Maricel Reyes, Kevin Paculan as Vic Vass, and Christine Kim as

Su-jin Yi. Additional voices were provided by yours truly and Erik May. A special thanks to Jordan Davis, Fran Carr, and Ezra Buck, \$20 patrons. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.