

SCENE 1

LOLA:

Higher levels of radiation have made birth defects more common, and hazardous workplaces have only increased the instances where limb loss is a potential risk. The prosthetics I've designed can be manufactured—

SFX: Lola's comms rings. She answers almost immediately.

LOLA:

Director Linwood?

DIRECTOR:

Dr. Sunn. I just wanted to call you up and check in on how you're doing with that presentation coming up tomorrow.

LOLA:

You caught me in the middle of reviewing it.

DIRECTOR:

Diligent as ever, aren't you?

LOLA:

I try to be.

DIRECTOR:

I'm sure the investors will be interested in funding the production of those prosthetics.

LOLA:

I hope they are. I want to make them accessible to whoever needs them.

DIRECTOR:

Of course.

Dr. Sunn, I just wanted to say how proud I am of you. The Prodigy program is one of my great successes and I wouldn't hesitate to say that part of that is because of you.

LOLA:

Director. You don't usually say this sort of thing.

DIRECTOR:

Well, I was reminded of it by my meeting earlier today. The Prodigy program is really going to usher in a new era of peace for Glasshouse. And it's your name that'll be at the front, leading us to it.

LOLA:

I appreciate it, Director. I just want to help the Metropolis in whatever way I can.

DIRECTOR:

Very good. Ah, Doctor, before I go—I should remind you that you have one visit outside the Prodigy campus that you should use before the month is up.

LOLA:

I'm using it today, actually.

DIRECTOR:

Excellent. I'll leave you to it, then. See you tomorrow.

LOLA:

Thank you, Director.

SFX: The director hangs up.

LOLA:

I've got enough time to water the garden, I think.

SFX: She fills up a watering can and starts.

LOLA:

Though I suspect Haven will be here right about... now.

SFX: The intercom rings. Lola answers.

HAVEN:

Knock knock.

LOLA:

Shouldn't you say ring ring?

HAVEN:

Either way, I'm here. Let me in?

LOLA:

Only if you say please.

HAVEN:

Pretty please?

LOLA:

Always going above and beyond. Come on in.

SFX: The intercom buzzes again. Haven walks in.

HAVEN:

I swear, you've gotten more plants in here since the last time I was here.

LOLA:

Proof that you should come visit me more.

HAVEN:

You know I would more if you weren't so busy.

LOLA:

Well, I won't be for much longer. Tomorrow's the day.

HAVEN:

I speak from experience. They're gonna love whatever you put out!

LOLA:

I'm doing my big presentation on my work *after* you did yours and I'm supposed to be your mentor.

HAVEN:

Mine wasn't that interesting. Your work is more "groundbreaking", and everyone knows that takes time. Plus, robotics isn't a hard sell. Everyone loves them.

LOLA:

Yes, well. They really did change my life, getting access to these.

SFX: She moves her hands.

HAVEN:

It's a good thing they look so real. Seeing robotic prosthetics move around is exciting, but a little creepy in my opinion.

SFX: She moves her hands again.

LOLA:

Well, I tried to make the prototypes look more realistic too. Stigma reduction, you know?

HAVEN:

Ooh, I love it when you use academic language. It's the only thing I hear from you nowadays.

LOLA:

After tomorrow, we'll have plenty of time to spend with each other.

HAVEN:

Doing research, I expect?

LOLA:

Research first, but other things can happen along the way.

HAVEN:

Aren't you sweet?

LOLA:

(LAUGHS)

HAVEN:

So, are you doing anything tonight? I was thinking maybe you and I could go out for a bit, do a small celebration. That'd be fun, right?

LOLA:

Actually, I'm supposed to go visit my parents in a bit.

HAVEN:

Oh! Okay.

LOLA:

I'm sorry.

HAVEN:

No, no, you're okay! Any reason you wanted to visit them?

LOLA:

I've got a visit outside campus left to use. And I'll be busy for pretty much all of tomorrow, so why not today?

HAVEN:

I'm just surprised you want to visit them at all. I think you're the only one in the program who reached out to their parents.

LOLA:

I have my reasons.

HAVEN:

Everything you could want for is provided here though. We're Beta class! Our sponsors give you whatever you ask for, even when it's your stuffy history books and your hobbies. They sure stretch the meaning of "work-related expenses."

LOLA:

It's not about that. I don't really need anything from my parents, it's just... I think it's important for me to tell them about what I'm doing before I go and make a huge presentation about it.

HAVEN:

I don't really get it.

LOLA:

Maybe you could come along? I don't think you've used any of your three visits, right?

HAVEN:

I do but... I've never met them. Won't that be awkward?

LOLA:

I promise I'll spend the rest of the night with you.

Beat.

HAVEN:

Sure. Why not? Just as long as we get back here by 8:00 p.m.

LOLA:

Oh, I doubt it'll take *that* long.

HAVEN:

I hope it doesn't.

LOLA:

We can walk there once I'm done watering these. I don't want to be late.

HAVEN:

I'll save us the trouble and call a car. You take your time.

SFX: Haven kisses Lola on the cheek. Lola laughs.

SCENE 2

SFX: A car pulls up.

HAVEN:

Oh, I don't usually come to this side of the Metropolis.

LOLA:

You barely leave your apartment.

HAVEN:

If you took me out on more dates, I'd have a reason to leave.

SFX: Lola heads up the steps and hits the doorbell.

HAVEN:

If you took me out on more dates, I'd have a reason to leave.

SFX: Lola heads up the steps and hits the doorbell.

INTERCOM:

Ringin' the Suravaram residence.

SNEHA:

Emandi, intercom moguthondi theestara? I'm still cooking.

[Dear, the intercom is ringing, will you answer it? I'm still cooking.]

MOHAN:

Theestunanu.

[I'm answering it.]

LOLA:

Hi Naanna. Hi Amma.

MOHAN:

Lalitha!

LOLA:

I haven't heard that in a while.

MOHAN:

I don't expect to see you on time.

LOLA:

Ah—

MOHAN:

Just a moment, I'll let you up.

SNEHA:

Oh, do you have a guest, bangaram? I can get something for them to eat too.

HAVEN:

No, no, that's alright. I'll wait outside.

SNEHA:

Are you sure?

LOLA:

You don't need to get anything for her to eat. Haven, you should come up, it might take a while.

HAVEN:

I don't want to impose.

LOLA:

No, it's okay! Come on, don't be nervous.

HAVEN:

Okay, okay.

SFX: The door opens. Lola and Haven head into the elevator.

HAVEN:

Is this weird? Am I making this weird?

LOLA:

Maybe I'm making it weird. I just thought it'd be nice if you met my parents properly.

HAVEN:

You've never met mine.

LOLA:

I guess they're just people who are important to me. And you're important to me. So, it only makes sense you all should meet each other, right?

HAVEN:

You're sweet.

SFX: The elevator stops.

SNEHA:

Here you are, bangaram! And who is your guest? You haven't introduced us.

HAVEN:

I'm Elizabeth Haven. You can just call me Haven.

SNEHA:

I'm Sneha. My husband, Mohan, is inside. Come, come!

SFX: She opens the door.

MOHAN:

The table is ready, come sit! There's an extra plate for... who is this?

SNEHA:

Her name is Heaven.

HAVEN:

Haven. I'll sit down here.

SFX: She pulls up a chair and sits.

LOLA:

Amma, Naana. It's really good to see you again.

SNEHA:

We feel the same way. What brings you here?

MOHAN:

Yes, it's very unexpected. Sit! Let's eat.

SFX: Mohan starts eating.

MOHAN:

It's delicious as always. Heaven, you can help yourself to whatever you like. Lalitha, we made your favorite, bendakaya.

LOLA:

I appreciate that.

SNEHA:

You haven't visited us for a couple months and out of the blue, you call us and say you have big news. What is your big news?

LOLA:

Well, work got very busy because I'm... going to do a presentation tomorrow.

SNEHA:

I thought you did presentations almost every other week.

LOLA:

I do. But this time I'm presenting my work for use in the greater Metropolis. I think it's going to help a lot of

people and my sponsors say that if it sells well, I could probably be promoted to Alpha in the next few years.

MOHAN:

I think we got some mail about that actually! Ah, you know how inboxes fill up. But that's very exciting! Your life is changing so much. Heaven, do you want some more to drink?

HAVEN:

I'm okay.

SNEHA:

I'll pour you some more tea just in case you want some.

MOHAN:

Have more rice, Lalitha. You need to eat more.

SFX: Mohan puts more rice onto her plate.

LOLA:

Um... I guess that's all, really.

SNEHA:

Are we allowed to watch it?

LOLA:

That's okay. You guys would probably find it a bit boring.

SNEHA:

We could make some time.

MOHAN:

Yes, after all, it's thanks to you we have so much free time. Alpha cryptos paying for the apartment and for your mother and me.

HAVEN:

Do they pay off the parents? Huh.

SNEHA:

Oh yes, they do pay us, and in return we're supposed to support you if you come ask us for anything. But I heard you kids in the "Prodigy" program don't visit your parents very much anyways.

HAVEN:

I don't think that it makes much sense for me to visit my parents, since we were so young when we were entered in. I'm surprised Lola even knows you at all.

MOHAN:

I'm never used to people calling her that. Lalitha Suravaram. That's our daughter.

LOLA:

(A LITTLE EMBARRASSED)

Naana.

HAVEN:

Did you change your name?

LOLA:

I didn't choose it.

SNEHA:

We wanted her to have a good shot at getting into the program. She was already set far behind because of her... you know.

LOLA:

(TIRED)

You can say disability.

SNEHA:

Yes. Disability. But she's very intelligent, you probably already know! We just wanted to stay in touch. She was always a bit of a wallflower. But it's important to work with other people.

MOHAN:

Yes, unity in the workplace makes things easier, doesn't it? We're glad she has a friend in you, Haven. You are friends, right?

HAVEN:

(WRYLY)

You could say that.

LOLA:

I'm also her mentor.

HAVEN:

That too.

MOHAN:

Well, we're glad either way. Thanks for also watching out for our Lalitha. You're always welcome here.

HAVEN:

I appreciate that.

SFX: They eat for a bit. Haven's comms rings.

HAVEN:

Oh, I'd better take this.

LOLA:

You don't need to leave.

SFX: Haven is already opening the door.

HAVEN:

It was nice to meet you two, I really gotta answer this—meet you outside, Lola.

SFX: The door shuts behind her.

SNEHA:

She seemed like she was in a rush to leave.

LOLA:

I don't think that was it.

MOHAN:

She's got patients too, doesn't she?

LOLA:

She does. I'm sure she was just checking in on them or something!

Maybe I should go after her.

SNEHA:

Well, we shouldn't keep you too long either, should we?

LOLA:

I'll be busy tomorrow, obviously, but... maybe the day after, we could spend some more time together?

MOHAN:

You can come over whenever. You always have a place with us!

SNEHA:

I'll pack up some food for the two of you.

MOHAN:

Bujji, I have something for you before you leave.

SNEHA:

Velli theskorandi.

[Okay, go get it now.]

SFX: Mohan leaves the room.

LOLA:

Amma, let me help you with that.

SNEHA:

No, no, it's okay. Don't spend your energy, I know it's hard on your hands to do so much holding.

LOLA:

Oh.

SNEHA:

Lalitha, do you think I don't know the look you have when you're in pain? You may not remember much of it, but I still raised you. I will always know. Come here.

SFX: Sneha hugs Lola.

MUSIC: Growing Up by Scott Buckley.

LOLA:

Amma?

SNEHA:

I know you are embarrassed of us.

LOLA:

That's not true.

SNEHA:

I know we're not the same as the people you have been around. I know that you didn't grow up with us as much as you could have. Do not think we let you grow up with your sponsors because we did not love you. *We love you.* We wanted you to live the best life you could. And look at you! You're going to be an Alpha soon!

LOLA:

I just want to do something that makes people proud of me.

SNEHA:

You are so precious to us. And you know nannaa, he doesn't know what to say sometimes. But I'm proud of you. Very, very proud. He is too.

MOHAN:

(FROM THE OTHER ROOM)

Don't look yet, but I have them!

SFX: Mohan walks back in.

MOHAN:

Here they are.

SFX: A small metal jingle.

MOHAN:

They're your baby earrings. They were a little big for you then but look! Now you can wear them yourself. Bangaram, you will look very nice tomorrow wearing them. It'll be like a good luck charm from us.

LOLA:

I'll wear them for sure.

SNEHA:

Put them in now, I want to see.

SFX: She does.

LOLA:

Well? How do they look?

MOHAN:

Ah, I remember how I used to sing lullabies to you while I rocked you. (HE SINGS A LITTLE OF JO JO ACHYUTANANDA) Now look at you.

SFX: He scoops Lola into a hug.

LOLA:

(SHE LAUGHS A LITTLE) Oh, naanna.

MOHAN:

You'll come visit us more after tomorrow, won't you? You work more than we did when we were Deltas.

LOLA:

I will, I will.

SNEHA:

Do a good job tomorrow, okay bangaram?

LOLA:

I promise.

SNEHA:

And take some boorelu, okay? Here, eat one now.

LOLA:

(MOUTH FULL)

Thank you, amma.

MOHAN:

The food's in a bag, I'll put it on your shoulder.

LOLA:

(SWALLOWS) Thank you, naana. I'll go check on Haven now, okay?

SFX: Lola goes out the door and down the elevator. We hear Haven.

HAVEN:

Look, do I need to go over there? Come on, can't you handle this on your own? I'm already doing my part—oh, Lola.

LOLA:

Hi Haven.

HAVEN:

(TO COMMS) I'll message you.

I thought you wanted to talk longer.

LOLA:

I wanted to check in on you.

HAVEN:

I'm alright. Sorry to run out like that. Your parents are... nice.

LOLA:

Sorry if it was a little awkward. I thought they'd understand more about what I was doing. And they said some "interesting" things.

HAVEN:

Yeah, what were they calling you? Lalitha? Lalitha Sunn. Lola Suravaram. Eh, neither of those sound quite right.

LOLA:

I'm not used to it either. I really don't remember much of my life before the Prodigy program.

SFX: Haven types on her comms.

HAVEN:

I was seven. You must have been like, five? Four?

LOLA:

Something like that. I feel a little guilty for not remembering them very well, but I try.

HAVEN:

What are you wearing?

LOLA:

Huh?

HAVEN:

Those little earrings. Did your parents give you those?

LOLA:

Yeah. They said I should wear them tomorrow.

HAVEN:

Don't you worry some of the stuff they want you to wear is a little tacky?

LOLA:

Should I take them off?

HAVEN:

Keep them on if you want. You got everything right? Didn't forget your comms?

LOLA:

I have it.

HAVEN:

Okay, 'cause the car I called is coming in one minute.

LOLA:

Back to the apartment already?

HAVEN:

Store, actually. I have to pick some stuff up, but after that, it's a pretty short walk back to the apartments. Is that okay?

LOLA:

Yeah.

SFX: Car pulls up.

HAVEN:

That's us. Come on.

SCENE 3

SFX: Grocery store ambience.

HAVEN:

Hm. I'm always torn over what kind of drinks to get. On one hand, alcohol is more authentic. On the other hand, synth gets you drunk faster.

Babe, do you have an opinion on this or are you just gonna keep staring into the distance?

LOLA:

Huh? Oh. Um... what were you saying?

HAVEN:

Real alcohol or synthesized alcohol?

LOLA:

Uh...

HAVEN:

Geez, you're nervous. I'll get you synth, you need it apparently.

LOLA:

The more I think about my speech tomorrow, the more nervous I get.

HAVEN:

Understandably.

LOLA:

I mean, you'll be the only one of the whole cohort whose there. I should have invited my parents.

HAVEN:

Wouldn't that make you more nervous?

LOLA:

Maybe. I don't know.

HAVEN:

You'll be fine, Lola. Ooh, maybe we should get more snacks.

LOLA:

I feel like you're buying a lot of food. I already have leftovers from my parents.

HAVEN:

Well, I'm buying your favorites tonight. Look, seaweed chips. You like these. Just toss the extra food they gave you.

SFX: Haven scans through their purchases.

HAVEN:

I think that's everything. Oh, bought a little more than I intended to. I could call another car? Uh, nah, the wait time is terrible. Let's walk like I said we would. Can you carry these?

LOLA:

Sure.

SFX: They exit the store. The two of them walk through the neighborhood.

LOLA:

Same evening sky as always.

HAVEN:

Well, not exactly the same. They're projecting a different set of constellations tonight. Change of season or something.

LOLA:

Oh, that's right. There's the southern fishtail.

HAVEN:

You sure know your stars. More reading from the archives?

LOLA:

Yes. I've been enjoying reading through them.

HAVEN:

I keep hearing rumors that you've gotten really interested in some other history too.

MUSIC: Silent Turmoil by Myuu.

LOLA:

What kind of rumors?

HAVEN:

For starters, I hear you've taken interest in some of the insurrections from years ago.

LOLA:

Out of curiosity.

HAVEN:

And that you've been talking to some of the other people in the cohort about how much they get paid.

LOLA:

It's not like that.

HAVEN:

Are you actually trying to get... union stuff together?

Do your parents know about this?

LOLA:

What are you even saying?

HAVEN:

Lola, I'm not trying to catch you on anything. But I'm trying to keep you safe.

LOLA:

I'm not doing anything. I just wanted to know about it.

HAVEN:

I know you like getting involved in other people's business, but you might wanna drop that sort of thing.

LOLA:

Okay. I will.

HAVEN:

Good.

LOLA:

Did we stop just so you could talk about this with me outside of the apartments? Outside of our sponsors monitoring us?

HAVEN:

No. I did wanna spend time with you. And... well, you'll see.

LOLA:

What's that supposed to mean?

HAVEN:

(SHE LAUGHS A LITTLE) Get in your apartment!

LOLA:

Alright, alright.

SFX: She unlocks it. The door opens.

MUSIC: Grace by Hayden Folker.

COHORT:

Surprise!

LOLA:

Oh!

HAVEN:

Congratulations on your work tomorrow!

LOLA:

Oh my god—uh, thank you guys. I haven't even done the presentation yet.

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Yeah, but it's a big deal that you landed a presentation at all! You're way ahead most of us.

COHORT MEMBER 2:

You're a prodigy among prodigies.

LOLA:

Well, you know, I do my best.

HAVEN:

Now you know why I bought all this food. 'Cause *someone* couldn't be bothered to pick up drinks.

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Hey, you forgot to get us access to Lola's place. I had to make up some story to our superintendent—

LOLA:

It's fine, it's fine. Well, let me get out of the doorway and let's have some drinks!

COHORT MEMBER 2:

That's what I'm talking about!

SFX: Someone pops a bottle of champagne and pours it.

SCENE 4

SFX: Someone opens a can, later into the party.

HAVEN:

Do you want more to drink?

LOLA:

Maybe.

HAVEN:

I'll grab something for you.

SFX: Haven gets up.

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Hey, Lola, congratulations! Come drink with us!

LOLA:

Sure.

COHORT MEMBER 2:

Bigshot's premiering some of her work tomorrow. How's it feel to be so famous?

LOLA:

Well, it's not really about being *famous*, it's about helping people.

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Aha, see, Lola Sunn thinks she's gonna save the world.

LOLA:

Not necessarily. (SHE LAUGHS NERVOUSLY) Just doing my best.

COHORT 2:

Aw, lighten up Lola. We're just kidding around.

COHORT 3:

Hey, are you guys gonna listen to my story or not? Geez, you have the worst attention span.

COHORT 1:

Okay, okay, we'll be quiet.

LOLA:

What were you saying?

COHORT 2:

Just some drama from work.

COHORT MEMBER 3:

Where was I? Oh yeah, so, obviously, I'm like "that's unfair" and then he's like, "Well, you're still not the boss, so deal with it." I mean, come on! The guy's a jerk.

SFX: Assenting from the other people in this little party circle.

LOLA:

Are you gonna do anything about that?

COHORT MEMBER 3:

Hm?

LOLA:

I mean like, you should do something.

COHORT MEMBER 3:

Eh. He's a jerk to everyone, not just me. I know *you'd* do something about it though.

LOLA:

What's that supposed to mean?

COHORT MEMBER 2:

Lola, come on, you complain about everything. Not in a bad way, but like... you're the only person who *can* complain about stuff.

LOLA:

Because?

COHORT MEMBER 2:

Because you are, like I said before, the prodigy among prodigies. You're like, insanely talented. If any of us try to start stuff, we'd instantly get hammered on it.

LOLA:

I don't complain about everything.

COHORT MEMBER 3:

...Right.

LOLA:

You guys realize I get called out for speaking up too? Just because I technically have a higher position doesn't mean that I'm not still penalized for that sort of thing.

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Yeah, but it's different for you.

LOLA:

It's really not. If we all got together—

COHORT MEMBER 1:

Oh, again with that. Lola, yeah, we're all in the same program, but we are not the same, you and me.

You're not really like any of us, you know?

COHORT MEMBER 3:

Whoa, lay off.

COHORT MEMBER 2:

I mean, they're kind of right.

LOLA:

(ANGRY)

What is this supposed to be about? Let me guess—it's the way I dress? Or my salary. Or wait a minute, maybe it's my prosthetics!

COHORT MEMBER 2:

Just you, Lola, you're just... different.

It's not an insult.

LOLA:

Whatever.

SFX: She puts down her drink and walks off.

COHORT MEMBER 3:

Aw man, look, you guys made her mad.

COHORT MEMBER 2:

Well, she'll just complain about it later.

HAVEN:

Whoa, Lola, where are you going? Lola?

SFX: Lola opens the door to the balcony and closes it. Haven follows after.

HAVEN:

Geez, what's wrong?

LOLA:

Nothing.

HAVEN:

Are you coming back inside?

LOLA:

I don't know.

Beat.

HAVEN:

Do you want your drink?

LOLA:

Yeah, give it here.

SFX: Haven sits down.

HAVEN:

Did someone say something out of line? If they're talking about your presentation—

LOLA:

It's not about that. (SHE SIGHS) Or, maybe it kind of is?

SFX: Lola takes a drink.

LOLA:

Do you ever feel kind of out of place?

MUSIC: Herle Hømle'heje Vi Haij (Lovely Secrets We Had) by So I'm An Islander.

HAVEN:

Like in the program? Sometimes. But we all specialize in different things. It's a little hard to compare.

LOLA:

Well, even beyond that. I just don't think there's a place I really... fit in?

HAVEN:

Is this about what your parents said about being a wallflower? I thought that was weird. You're pretty popular.

LOLA:

(SHE LAUGHS JOYLESSLY)

HAVEN:

I mean, do they even really know you?

LOLA:

I don't think anyone does.

HAVEN:

What are you trying to say?

LOLA:

Every day, people expect me to be a new person for them. I'm supposed to be Dr. Sunn, or Lalitha, or a version of Lola that isn't really me. The one thing I know about myself is that I want to help people. But that seems to be the one thing that people don't want me to do. I'm supposed to be witty, charming, able to take a joke. I'm not really any of those things. I feel like I'm betraying all the good things that this program and the director's brought me when I can't live up to all of this. I don't know how to balance who I want to be and who I have to be for other people's sake, so I keep tilting in one direction or the other and hating myself for it. I want to live up to what POTEN Co.

wants me to be—they've given me *everything*. But I can't seem to do it.

I don't think there's a single person I can be myself in front of. Not even you. Not even when I'm alone. I can't stop trying to be the person people want me to be. I just wish I could start over.

HAVEN:

Lola... I don't really know what to say.

LOLA:

No one does.

HAVEN:

You can't start over though. Not now. You've worked too hard to get to the place you're at right now—I mean it wouldn't be fair to yourself. You're successful and you worked hard to get here. If people are telling you to be something, you don't have to actually be it. You can pretend for a little bit, you know? I get wanting to be different, but sometimes you just have to... push it down, you know?

LOLA:

I don't know if I can.

HAVEN:

You can push it down for one more day, right?

LOLA:

I could. For tomorrow.

HAVEN:

See? Then one day becomes another, and another, and pretty soon you don't even really think about it.

LOLA:

That sounds miserable.

HAVEN:

...You get used to it. It helps. And you can't help other people unless you're in a position like this, right?

LOLA:

I guess you're right.

HAVEN:

You're fine, Lola. Just keep it in.

SCENE 5

SFX: "Keep it in" rings in Lola's ears. Until suddenly—

DIRECTOR:

Dr. Sunn.

LOLA:

Huh?

DIRECTOR:

The least you could do is pay attention.

LOLA:

Apologies. Just nerves.

DIRECTOR:

Understandably. As I was asking, is your speech prepared?

LOLA:

Of course.

DIRECTOR:

And your demos?

LOLA:

With the stage crew.

DIRECTOR:

Good. You're on in 10.

LOLA:

I'll head to the green room.

DIRECTOR:

Stay a while, Doctor.

LOLA:

Oh, um. Alright.

DIRECTOR:

Lola, you know that I'm proud of you.

LOLA:

Yes. I'm just trying to make myself useful in the program.

DIRECTOR:

You are very useful. And I really want you to be successful. Being promoted to Alpha is a big deal. I'm sure you remember being promoted to Beta.

LOLA:

It was one of the best days of my life.

DIRECTOR:

And I hope today will join it. Your work is in very high demand. A lot of people are willing to invest in it. So I need you to not screw this up, okay? You have to focus on the goal-selling your work.

LOLA:

I won't let you down.

DIRECTOR:

That's my girl.

ASSISTANT:

Director, you're needed for the interview portion in five.

DIRECTOR:

I gotta run. You got this, Lola.

HAVEN:

Hey.

LOLA:

Haven!

HAVEN:

Glad I caught you. And I'm glad you got up after last night.

LOLA:

Let it be known that I've never had a hangover.

HAVEN:

Well, aren't you accomplished!

LOLA AND HAVEN:

(THEY LAUGH A LITTLE)

HAVEN:

You're gonna do great up there.

LOLA:

I will if you're supporting me.

HAVEN:

Always.

Hey. Do you remember what I was saying last night?

LOLA:

...Yes.

HAVEN:

Do that, okay? You're amazing, I love you, I'll see you in there.

SFX: Fade. We hear the crowd clapping.

ASSISTANT:

Smile, Miss Sunn. Shoulders back. And go.

DIRECTOR:

And now I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Lola Sunn!

SFX: Lola walks on stage. The crowd claps. Lola takes a deep breath.

LOLA:

I'm so happy to be here.

DIRECTOR:

And you should be! Dr. Lola Sunn really needs no introduction, but she's one of our most valuable projects in the Prodigy program!

LOLA:

(Breathe. You're fine. Smile.)

The Prodigy program changed my life. Sponsoring a Delta or Gamma to be entered in the program could really help and helps address some of the biggest issues in the Metropolis such as education.

(It's the same words you've said a million times.)

I could have never made so many advances in the program without the help of POTEN Co.

(Why does it always feel so wrong?)

Investment offers can be made after the presentation. But I hope you're excited enough for it that you start thinking about it midway.

(Just like you practiced.)

SFX: Lola takes another breath. We fade again.

LOLA:

The prosthetics I've designed can be manufactured much more cheaply and efficiently to the public and have both a high positive neural link with 92% efficacy and lowered chances of neural and physical rejection than contemporary models. This is of course, only a temporary fix to the issues at hand, but for people like me, prosthetics with high neural link efficiency can change your life completely. It leads to increased independence and for me, the ability to work on robotics that need fine motor skills as well as making the surgeries I do more accurate. Investment in this project makes sure that I can produce these for people in need and give back to our communities. Thank you for considering the Prodigy line of prosthetics.

SFX: Clapping.

LOLA:

Any questions?

DIRECTOR:

Well, Lola's work here is beautifully demoed on the table—we're starting the bidding for her schematics at 1 million cryptos. This disc here is the only place you can get it.

INVESTOR 1:

I'm interested in investing. 1.2 million cryptos for the patent.

DIRECTOR:

First quote's been made! Bidding is now officially open.

MUSIC: Descent by Scott Buckley.

INVESTOR 2:

3.6 million cryptos.

INVESTOR 3:

7.9.

DIRECTOR:

I heard 7.9.

LOLA:

What is going on? You're auctioning off the patent?

INVESTOR 1:

8.4.

DIRECTOR:

Dr. Sunn, things move quickly, I told you that. And you should know, this is getting you on your way to Alpha much more quickly than you and some team manufacturing them.

INVESTOR 2:

9.1.

LOLA:

This is supposed to help people. These investors aren't going to do that; they're just going to try and make their money back—you have to stop!

DIRECTOR:

There's always public disclosure.

LOLA:

You know that won't help, no one's got the materials to produce these!

INVESTOR 3:

1.1 billion!

LOLA:

Director, this isn't what I agreed to.

DIRECTOR:

Dr. Sunn, it's exactly what you agreed to.

LOLA:

I don't want you to do this!

DIRECTOR:

I'm going to pass the microphone to my assistant and escort Dr. Sunn off stage personally. Come here, Lola.

LOLA:

Why don't you come here? And give me that.

DIRECTOR:

Lola—

SFX: She grabs the disk and shatters it.

LOLA:

There. Now you can't have it.

DIRECTOR:

Why would you break that disk? Technically we own the schematics, Doctor, not you.

LOLA:

Not if I can help it.

SFX: Lola starts to run.

DIRECTOR:

Grab her!

LOLA:

Get off!

SFX: Lola removes her prosthetic.

ASSISTANT:

Wh-her prosthetic!

DIRECTOR:

Why did you grab her by the wrist?!

SFX: Lola runs.

MUSIC: Vengeance by Scott Buckley.

LOLA:

Server room's in the basement. I need computer access.

SFX: The doors open behind her.

DIRECTOR:

Where is she?

LOLA:

Uh oh.

SFX: Lola presses the elevator button. The elevator opens.

ELEVATOR:

Going up.

SFX: Lola slams a door shut behind her.

LOLA:

Gotta bar this with something.

SFX: She does.

DIRECTOR:

She went into the elevator! Get into the stairwell, she's heading upstairs!

SFX: The door rattles.

LOLA:

(GASPS)

ASSISTANT:

Someone must have locked it.

DIRECTOR:

Then I'll unlock it. Where's my keycard?

SFX: Lola flees down the stairs and tries a door.

LOLA:

Good thing I swiped this off of the director.

SFX: She opens a door.

LOLA:

That was close. Now I just need to find a server with a terminal.

IT GUY:

Excuse me, Miss?

LOLA:

Oh! Hello.

IT GUY:

Are you supposed to be down here? This is limited access.

LOLA:

My director sent me down here. We... need to recover some files.

IT GUY:

I mean, your director should be accompanying you—oh my god. What happened to your arm?

LOLA:

Uh. Right.

SFX: IT guy snaps their fingers.

IT GUY:

Oh, you must be Lola Sunn! You're the only one I know who wears prosthetics around here.

LOLA:

Yep, that's me.

IT GUY:

Well, I'll let you go just this once, Dr. Sunn. And only 'cause you're a Beta class.

LOLA:

(SHE LAUGHS AWKWARDLY) Um, do you know which of the server rooms has a terminal?

IT GUY:

Oh, yeah! Room 35 is the closest one.

LOLA:

Thank you.

SFX: She sidles away.

LOLA:

Ugh. That was weird.

SFX: Lola starts up a computer.

COMPUTER:

Scan keycard for access.

SFX: Blip.

LOLA:

Huh. Director sure has a lot of permissions. Ugh, typing this would be a lot easier with my other arm.

SFX: Lola types.

COMPUTER:

Subfolder: Prodigy program.

LOLA:

Now I just have to find the files and delete... what is this?

COMPUTER:

Subfolder: Profiles. Subfolder: Lola Sunn.

MUSIC: Computations in a Snowstorm by Scott Buckley.

LOLA:

I shouldn't. I really shouldn't.

SFX: She clicks it anyways.

COMPUTER:

Lola Sunn, formerly Lalitha Suravaram. Beta class. She/her. 27 years old. Born to Mohan and Sneha Suravaram (Deltas). Accepted into the Prodigy program at 4 years old. Reasons listed: Diversity-disability and race factors, significant successes in pre-testing phase. Generally popular among her peers and top of her program. Self-motivated and talented despite rash behavior potentially stemming from her previous upbringing. Mentoring Elizabeth Haven. Studied medicine, specifically medical prosthetics and robotic design. Designs slated for potential paramilitary and Corrector development in weapons design.

MUSIC: Signal to Noise by Scott Buckley.

LOLA:

Weapons?

COMPUTER:

Elizabeth Haven. Beta class. She/her. 29 years old. Accepted into the Prodigy program at 7 years old. Studied medicine, specifically internal medicine and general surgery. Research slated for potential paramilitary and Corrector development in medical field.

Johan Buchalla. Gamma class. He/him. 42 years old. Accepted into the Prodigy program at 20 years old. Research slated for potential paramilitary and Corrector development in computing.

Zev Ahmad. Gamma class. He/they.

Eve Cunningham. Delta class. She/her.

Natalia Dawson. Gamma class.

Alyce Dunajski.

Research slated for potential paramilitary and Corrector development in engineering, propaganda, biology and preservation of said groups, chemistry and weapons development.

Research slated for potential paramilitary-

SFX: Lola breathes heavily, rears back and smashes the terminal.

SCENE 6

SFX: Sirens. Lola packs her bags. The intercom rings. Once. Twice.

LOLA:

(GASPS)

INTERCOM:

Please leave a message for the apartment resident.

HAVEN:

Lola, I don't know if you're there, but... I thought I should come by. I hope you're okay. I wish I'd gotten to say something to you...

LOLA:

Haven...

Okay.

SFX: Lola presses the intercom button.

LOLA:

If you want to say something, come up *now*. And quickly.

HAVEN:

Huh? ...Okay.

SFX: Haven does.

HAVEN:

Lola! It's actually you!

LOLA:

Yes.

HAVEN:

And... you're leaving? Why?

MUSIC: Monomyth - The Vision by Scott Buckley.

LOLA:

I don't know if you heard, but there's a pretty big reward on my head all of a sudden.

HAVEN:

For what, making a scene at your presentation? You made the sale.

LOLA:

No, for theft of information. I destroyed the files with the Prodigy projects on them.

HAVEN:

On the actual servers?!

LOLA:

Yes.

HAVEN:

What did you do that for? Oh my god, Lola, you're going to lose us so much cryptos! I don't think they did the data transfer for my work yet. What were you thinking?

LOLA:

They were using us. They were using our work for weapons development, not helping people. Director Linwood said we were supposed to bring in a new era of peace. Hah.

HAVEN:

That doesn't go against what she said.

LOLA:

But it does. Weapons don't bring peace. Withholding healthcare—advances in any field—that doesn't bring peace.

HAVEN:

Do you hear yourself? You really jeopardized the whole program because of a little change in wording? You're being really selfish right now! God, when you said you wanted to start over, I thought you were just being dramatic, but you're really going this far?

LOLA:

Well, I... I thought you'd understand—

HAVEN:

Why couldn't you just push it down, Lola? Just for a little longer? You really think you're above taking my advice?

LOLA:

No! But... this isn't right, you have to see that!

HAVEN:

I just see someone who decided she's suddenly in charge of making the decisions for everyone, just 'cause she's gonna be promoted to Alpha soon.

LOLA:

Haven...

Fine. Take this drive. I have my own schematics backed up for myself. Consider it my payment for what I'm going to ask you to do. I don't want my parents getting jeopardized because of what I'm doing now. They shouldn't be punished. So, look after them when I'm gone.

HAVEN:

You're still leaving.

LOLA:

I have to.

HAVEN:

I'm sure you could work something out with the Correctors. Director Linwood can't really want you gone this badly.

LOLA:

I've made up my mind.

HAVEN:

Just drop this whole 86er sympathizing thing! All the union stuff—just stop it and you can still be here! With me!

Am I not enough to make you want to stay?

LOLA:

It's you or the whole Metropolis.

SFX: Lola opens the door.

LOLA:

Goodbye, Haven. Maybe we'll meet again someday.

SFX: Lola walks away.

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, or on 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. You get access to behind the scenes looks, annotated scripts, and early access to episodes—not just for Under the Electric Stars, but for all shows on Aster Podcasting Network. The money you give directly goes to supporting our editors, writers, and actors who make these shows possible. Please support us if you have the means. Special thanks to Chaitrika Budamagunta and Anjali Kunapaneni for help with Telugu. Our voice talents are as follows: Chaitrika Budamagunta as Lola Sunn, Stephanie Arata as Elizabeth Haven, Shivani Ishwar as Sneha Suravaram, Seshu Kavuri as Mohan Suravaram, and Vinay P. Nariani as Director Linwood. Additional voices were provided by yours truly, Jenny Pan, Michelle Kelly, Bex Brzostoski, Katriel Charoite, and Philomena Sherwood.

Attributions for sounds and music used can be found in the show notes. Thanks to Fran Carr and Ezra Lee Buck, \$20 Patrons on our Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.