

SCENE 1

SFX: The sound of Caine's car revving.

MUSIC: Metaphysical Connection by Gabriel Douglas.

JET:

(SIGHS) Finally, something familiar for once in that desolate, burnt landscape that we'd found ourselves in: the rumble of the engine underneath me. It didn't matter who was in the car, or even what car it was—all that mattered was that Caine was in the driver's seat and telling me to run the same calculations I'd always known.

Too much had changed. Between Metropolis West and Cair Mallplex, between suddenly... *awakening* to a world that relied on me before I even knew what was happening. We call it sleep mode, but I think that's a formality that helps humans understand how they programmed us. See, when Dax dropped me and destroyed my power core all those months ago, the incident that started all of this? I didn't even really know what happened. There are no dreams there. There is no rest. My personality core was barely working, but even behind that dim wall, I still felt something. Your sensors process everything—the fall from hand to empty space to inevitable ground. Everything's calibrating wildly, readings about air pressure and temperature, internet and radio signals pumping into your system as if that'll brace your collision from the concrete. Then... the impact. And then you're back on the dashboard, safe and sound. And Caine says it's good to have you back, so, you figure, you... must have been gone, right? One moment you exist, and the next catches up with you before you knew it was coming.

*That* was what this felt like. Route optimization was easy. Even before I had my power core upgraded, Caine trusted me to navigate, to trace every street at once and choose the clearest, brightest line. And I did it. And I did it so well. But every second, every choice, and every path here

was a map that had loaded on some subroutine that escaped my notice. Everything, equally dark.

SFX: Caine shuts off the engine.

CAINE:

Jet, you alright? Ganymede and Seb will be here any second.

JET:

I'm okay.

CAINE:

Well, you didn't respond like you usually do when I asked you to calculate a route. Are you okay? I'm worried about you.

SFX: Caine reaches out and pats Jet.

JET:

I'm not really... acclimated to everything yet? I-I know I-I've been glitching, and I'm really sorry, I don't know, this isn't really like me-

CAINE:

No, no, no, you never have to be sorry, Jet. We've been through a lot together. Probably way too much if I'm being honest... which means that a couple hiccups here and there are the least of our worries. I just want to make sure I'm not pushing you too hard. Listen, I didn't mean for us to only spend time together when stuff's going sideways.

JET:

I mean, we've had a *lot* of car chases in our day.

CAINE:

(LAUGHS) Well, I couldn't have gotten out of those without you, buddy. Thank you. You're always there for me, so... it only makes sense that I should be there for you.

SFX: Jet beeps. The car door opens and closes.

CAINE:

Ganymede. Where are we headed?

GANYMEDE:

Due south. We'll have to manually reroute the energy in our power grid to the backup section. Fire must have knocked out our switchover system too. What a mess..

Oh, Caine? You should take this.

SFX: Plastic rustle.

GANYMEDE:

It's one of our standard issue gas masks. The car should be shielded against the heat now, but you'd better protect those lungs of yours, you hear?

SFX: The trunk slams shut. The car door opens and closes.

SEBASTIAN:

Alright, last of the gear is loaded. We're ready to go.

CAINE:

Fine. Buckle in.

SFX: Seat belts buckle.

CAINE:

Jet, I'm gonna let Ganymede enter coordinates. What's the fastest route there?

JET:

Calculating... finished! Your route should show up on your overhead display!

(NARRATING) That was what I needed. Something familiar.

SCENE 2

SFX: Caine's car revs. Footsteps fade in, walking in a crowd.

TARI:

Gosh, it sure is getting dark in here. Not like it wasn't dark before, but sun's setting. How's the tallying, Sharps?

INDRA:

...Sharps?

TARI:

(LAUGHS) Well, uh, I figure, you're always carrying around those knives.

INDRA:

You may as well call Reyes that. They've got a plasma knife.

TARI:

No, because Caine is K.K.! Sebastian is Baz, Ganymede's Gan, Nell lets me call her Whoa Nelly, and... Su-jin just likes just Su-jin. Do you not like Sharps?

INDRA:

Just Indra is fine.

Rendezvous points five and six have everyone accounted for. Onto point seven.

TARI:

Okie-dokie! I'll do head count for seven and eight!

SFX: Someone approaches.

PARENT:

Oh, excuse me, Tari? And, um...

TARI:

That's Indra!

PARENT:

Hi there. Have you seen a boy wandering around, dark hair, big brown eyes? He's nine and... he'd be wearing a blue and pink striped shirt?

TARI:

Uh-oh. No, I haven't seen anyone who looks like that.

PARENT:

Rashad was playing with some of the kids from the other wings, but when the power went out, they must not have known how to tell him to come here. They're just children, after all...

TARI:

How to tell him?

PARENT:

Rashad only uses sign language—he's Deaf. And when the lights went out, he must have been separated from his playmates somehow. I didn't want to leave the rendezvous point though, especially with—!

SFX: Baby fusses, cries.

PARENT:

Yes, with Hania here. I was just hoping someone saw him.

TARI:

Not to worry, friend! I also sign, so you can count on us—after we count all of you! (LAUGHS)

INDRA:

Oh *God*, that was awful.

TARI:

Well, I thought it was great.

INDRA:

So, do you actually need me around to find the kid? Or..

TARI:

No solo acts, Nell said! That's why we got paired together in the first place. 'Cause if something happens, you need someone there to help you out, lone wolf!

INDRA:

Fine. Meet up here once you're done with our job, we'll compare numbers, and then we'll head out. Let's just hope he isn't stuck anywhere unpleasant.

SFX: Sounds fade. Metal bending and straining fade in.

VIC:

Nope, still shut tight. Good for security. Possibly good for the air being filled with ash.

SU-JIN:

Gosh, these masks make it hard to see much of anything.

SFX: Su-jin drops a box of parts.

SU-JIN:

Whew. These should be enough to scrap together a generator—not a great one, mind you, but it's a temporary patch until Caine and the others fix the grid.

VIC:

Most important thing is to get the oxygen cyclers running, then we'll ditch the masks and see what other systems we can get online.

SU-JIN:

Doors, probably.

VIC:

Yeah, I'm not keen on taking a crowbar to any of them, so good idea. Whatcha got in the box? Oh! Anything need welding?

SU-JIN:

You're a pyro.

VIC:

(LAUGHS)

SU-JIN:

Well, we have a few things here—solar panels are useless to us now, but one of the labs gave me a hydrogen cyclers base that was broken anyways... That'll probably be the most viable, but it also means we need to siphon from somewhere.

VIC:

Eh, I'm sure no one'll mind if their car's got a few less gallons.

SU-JIN:

Not that it seems like people leave all that often.

SFX: Vic peeks into the box.

VIC:

Ooh, yowza, this doesn't look great.

SU-JIN:

Broken alternator, non-overhead valve, plus broken fans, so no cooling... got my work cut out for me.

VIC:

I can help.

SU-JIN:

Nah, you should focus on the terminal once we power it up. I'm not great with systems.

VIC:

Not true, you built tons of stuff even before Zero Zero.

SU-JIN:

Eh, *built*, not programmed. All I do is type "run program.exe" which anyone can do.

VIC:

Don't sell yourself short.

SFX: Box opens, metal rustling and screwing.

VIC:

Kid, are you doing alright?

SU-JIN:

I'm... a little distracted, I guess.

VIC:

Uh, something happened with Tari, huh.

SU-JIN:

Nothing, really.

VIC:

So, whole plan's gone haywire, huh?

SU-JIN:

Oh, no, not like that. Tari's on our side.

VIC:

Great job, man! That's huge! So, what's on your mind, then?

SU-JIN:

Er... bun said some... interesting stuff.

VIC:

Yeah? Nell did too. She's not too keen on anyone but you, I guess.

SU-JIN:

Funny, that's what Tari said too. And something about charisma...

VIC:

Mm! Hm. Taking after me, huh?

SU-JIN:

Pfft. You wish.

VIC:

Well, I guess if you got good at both scrapping and hacking, where would that leave me? Your cunning expertise would be all the team needed.

SU-JIN:

Okay, now you're just patronizing me.

VIC:

(LAUGHS) No, but really, I think you could have gone out there with Ganymede, Sebastian, and Caine. You could have been really useful.

SU-JIN:

I kind of spent my entire day stuck between Tari and Caine just... bickering. And things seem tense between the Reyes family, so...

VIC:

Yeah, I bet you'd like to be stuck between somewhere with Caine.

SFX: Su-jin drops their spanner.

SU-JIN:

(SPUTTERS) Wh- the- I- Vic!

VIC:

(GIGGLING) Look at you! You're blushing!

SU-JIN:

How would you know? I'm wearing a mask.

VIC:

Uh, the tip of your ears and your neck are all red!

SU-JIN:

Shut up. Besides, Caine doesn't need me there. I gave Caine and Jet some of the schematics for stuff I've built, so if anything, they just need... that. I have faith they'll be okay.

SCENE 3

SFX: Jet beeps.

JET:

You have arrived at your destination!

CAINE:

Thanks, Jet.

GANYMEDE:

Baz, grab the tools. I'll take a quick look and have Jet run a diagnostic. Come on, Caine.

SFX: They exit the car.

CAINE:

God, that thing looks like it's hanging on by a thread.

SEBASTIAN:

Kind of is, honestly. It was in rough shape when I got here and mostly, it's gotten worse. Half of those solar panels are busted, the wiring's all wrong...

CAINE:

I'm pretty sure this thing is a fire hazard itself.

GANYMEDE:

Enough slamming on the power grid right now. More of us, you know, fixing it?

CAINE:

Oh! Right, sorry—!

SEBASTIAN:

Here, just hand Jet over to me and we'll handle it.

CAINE:

Well, *you* brought me out here. I might as well come with.

SEBASTIAN:

If you're so sure.

SFX: A walkie talkie beeps.

GANYMEDE:

(ON WALKIE-TALKIE)

Now, please.

SFX: Footsteps.

GANYMEDE:

Okay, I'll call up the terminal—we usually keep them underground, so the fires won't knock them out too.

SFX: Beeping. A metal machine works.

GANYMEDE:

Alright, here's the port—Jet, you ready?

JET:

Ready.

SFX: Jet is plugged in. Computer beeping ambience.

JET:

(NARRATING)

Interfacing with new systems is something you do a lot as an artificial intelligence. It's actually a lot like navigational systems—sending your mind down every available pathway, taillights trailing red behind yourself as you speed down the way. And at the terminus of every thought, you turn around and come home. Even if it's *completely* unfamiliar, every system at least speaks the same language, where 0 is 0 and 1 is 1.

Caine and I didn't always talk when we drove. Sometimes we listened to the radio, which... I guess I picked that up as a habit. People on the radio speak different languages, sing songs, tell jokes. They're connecting too, in a different way that I've had to learn. Sometimes signals are weak or get crossed or just don't reach; both for conversations and for the radio. And connecting with this terminal was exactly that: pieces of conversation, garbled and reversed, everything was in the wrong place. Sending out a pulse only to have it travel somewhere melted half-shut, circuits burnt and mangled. I tried to put the pieces back together and I tried to relay that to Caine and the other USERS, too.

JET:

Um... okay, that's a little... hm...

SEBASTIAN:

What's wrong with him?

JET:

Nothing's wrong! With me, I mean. It's what's wrong with the power grid. It doesn't always feel very good to send a test signal and have it blink out of existence midway through, you know?

CAINE:

Doesn't sound too pleasant.

GANYMEDE:

So, it can't be salvaged? Is this it?

JET:

No, no, it's really not! I need a few moments more to figure out where all the problem spots are. Calculating...

SFX: Jet beeps.

MUSIC: Myter by Gabriel Douglas.

JET:

(NARRATING)

I dedicate part of my processes to the power grid, seeking out all broken and severed connections. I power through the error messages popping up everywhere on my display. And I dedicate the other part of my processes to assessing the people I'm with.

Part of being an all-purpose bot is analyzing micro-expressions, body temperature, physical stance. You know, all those things so you can come up with the response most guaranteed to please that still falls in line with all the facts you've discovered. The personality core lets me have opinions about everything I monitor. I watch USER: Ganymede, biting his lip hard beneath his gas mask, his eyebrows furrowing with an eighth of an inch more as I calculate. I know they'll relax once I give him an answer—it's the fear of not knowing that's stretching him thin. I look at Caine, whose body language is tense and wary. But not towards the grid, nor USER: Ganymede, nor me. They shift, ever so slightly, away from USER: Sebastian.

I don't pretend to know anything about USER: Sebastian that isn't from a story. All I know is what Caine thought of him. Fragments of information. How tall he was, how big he smiled, the sound of his voice from tapes Caine played. Harder things to quantify like how much Caine missed him, they were stored into something I could understand: how many seconds he'd been gone. And of course, the thing I couldn't quite grasp... the inspiration for Caine joining Zero Zero. An older brother, told through pictures and narrative, almost as if he was a character in a book he once read aloud. Maybe Caine couldn't see it. Maybe I did because I never knew him. But he was just a man. Not so much a hero. A magician whose main trick was to disappear.

SFX: Error beep.

JET:

I'll spare all the details, but I'm afraid that quite a vast majority of the grid is likely broken, including the backup. Much of it has been overloaded or otherwise burnt or destroyed. However, I think if we could find a different power source, we could link it up to this terminal.

SEBASTIAN:

(GROANS) Power sources don't just pop up out of nowhere. And we can't pull power from some other settlement, Cair Mallplex is way too big.

CAINE:

Mmm... well, maybe not another settlement...

SEBASTIAN:

Well, what else can we use?

CAINE:

W-what are all of those things, out on the horizon?

GANYMEDE:

Crypto mines. But they're not remotely on the same energy input/output. Believe it or not, those rigs use way more than we do in a single day.

CAINE:

Um, Jet, remember how Su-jin gave us the haustoria plans?

JET:

Oh! We could scrap it together and use it to siphon power like we did for the base and me! We pulled from the Numitron Tube and the haustoria does the energy conversion and storage.

CAINE:

Exactly! So, now all we need to do is go to the closest crypto rig. Hopefully one that doesn't get monitored too often.

SEBASTIAN:

That... sounds like a plan.

GANYMEDE:

I'll try and figure out what the closest mine is. I haven't been out here for a while, but there's not too many here in my memory.

JET:

We could use the temperature detector I have! It's mostly calibrated to people, but I'll look for high heat outputs nearby... that aren't fires.

GANYMEDE:

Thank you. Meanwhile, Baz and Caine, you two put together the haustoria.

SEBASTIAN:

Gotcha.

CAINE:

Uh... c-can do.

SCENE 4

SFX: Glass rummaging.

LOLA:

Insulin, all the vaccinations, cematropin...

NELL:

Check, check, and check. That's all the medication we need to put on ice while the fridges are down.

LOLA:

Then we're good to move on to non-emergency medical attention?

NELL:

..Um, yes.

Sorry to lock you into doing medical work again.

LOLA:

Oh, don't worry. I'd rather help out where I can.

SFX: Lola opens the doors.

CAIR MALLPLEX CITIZENS:

Oh, Nell! It's nothing much.

Yeah, it's just a scrape.

Caught myself on the escalator just as the power went out.

I think I twisted something when I tripped.

NELL:

Yes, hello. Lola and I will go ahead and grab what you need.

LOLA:

Hm...

I grabbed some of the bandages already, so I'll start with you.

PATIENT:

Yeah, it's a scrape, like I was saying. No big deal.

LOLA:

Here's, let's clean it first and then I'll bandage it.

NELL:

Let's go ahead and elevate that leg of yours. Perfect.

PATIENT:

Miss Palomo takes pretty good care of us, huh?

LOLA:

She seems to certainly do a lot of things here.

PATIENT:

You just seemed like you were paying a lot of attention to her.

LOLA:

(LAUGHS) Was it obvious?

PATIENT:

Oh, uh—I didn't mean to make it... make it weird, or...

LOLA:

I'm kidding. She is a bit of a mystery though.

PATIENT:

I know! I'm, uh, a little too young to have met her when this place was starting out I guess, but... But I'm second generation. And even my mom says she usually doesn't get to talk to Miss Palomo. She doesn't even know when she came here!

LOLA:

I can't imagine you all get to see her often, since she does so much.

PATIENT:

Oh, no, no, no, we do! She likes to have a handle on things. But she's, uh... elusive, I guess.

SFX: Nell walks away and shuts the door.

PATIENT:

See what I mean?

LOLA:

Well, she's certainly efficient.

How's your knee now?

PATIENT:

Feels fine now that it's not exposed to the elements. Sorry I came over here to get it checked out, my apartment is locked—no one inside, thankfully, but no first aid kit.

LOLA:

What's a medical center for if not to help you out? Don't worry.

PATIENT:

Thank you! See you around—er, hopefully not for a medical emergency.

LOLA:

(LAUGHS) Alright.

SFX: Lola pushes open the door.

LOLA:

Nell? You back here?

NELL:

I am.

SFX: Lola walks to Nell.

LOLA:

I thought you said no abandoning partnerships.

NELL:

Oh, um. I-I'm sorry.

LOLA:

Only teasing. You finished up with your patients very quickly.

NELL:

It was mostly stuff I'd seen before. Compression bandage here, antiseptic there.

LOLA:

You didn't stay to chat.

NELL:

I... didn't think it was necessary. Not that it was a bad thing that you did.

SFX: Lola sits down.

LOLA:

I know I may have overreached a little before, but just correct me if I'm wrong. I thought you didn't want to talk much, but could it be that you're... shy?

NELL:

O-oh.

LOLA:

My apologies for embarrassing you.

NELL:

No, I'm—I'm fine. No, that's... that's quite the conclusion to come to.

LOLA:

You weren't much for talking when you first drove us here, and you tend to leave the socializing to either Ganymede or Tari. You're a little more inclined to take care of business and then leave. I mean, lots of people think of you as a leader, of course, but I've heard many people, not just one of our patients today, say that you tend to not stick around after you're done with something.

MUSIC: Danger at the horizon by SamuelFrancisJohnson.

NELL:

...Isn't that sort of what a leader is supposed to do?

LOLA:

Oh?

NELL:

I mean, you're a leader of your group—what was it called—Zero Zero, aren't you? You'd know better than anyone.

LOLA:

You mean a leader is supposed to be... efficient? Or professional?

NELL:

I was thinking more the word "distant."

LOLA:

What makes you say that?

NELL:

Well, you've seen today more than ever. Places like this need strong leadership. People who can take charge and make the impossible happen. Make a whole community a place to live, food to eat, and keep it safe from everything. And things are coming apart, a bit. Every backup generator is out, we're running on contingencies for 90% of everything, and through all of that, I delegate tasks and I still end up trying to fix every little thing. Keeping distance is hard. But if I don't, people might think... might find out that I'm... that I'm not cut out for this. Always one step away from slipping up. It's... difficult.

(SIGHS) I'm... not supposed to let people know that. Why I'm letting *you* know that is beyond me, frankly.

LOLA:

Because you want some help, maybe?

NELL:

I couldn't ask that of you.

LOLA:

You're not asking, I'm offering. And you're not a bad leader, Nell.

NELL:

I barely think I am one. I'm better suited to taking orders, I guess. I'm just filling the spot until someone better and more competent comes along.

LOLA:

Someone has to step up eventually. I think it's good that it was you.

NELL:

How long have you been leading Zero Zero?

LOLA:

About five years, give or take. And I'm still figuring things out. Sometimes as a leader, people will see you as they need to see you. You fill the most convenient space in their head: a savior or a paragon or what have you. You can't live like that though. And I've learned it's impossible to get people to fully trust you if you're not even honest about yourself. I still don't really think of myself as a leader. Just someone people looked up to for one reason or another. Like I said, someone has to do it. But you never have to do it alone.

NELL:

Your advice is... much appreciated.

LOLA:

I'm glad.

NELL:

There's still plenty more to do. If you wouldn't mind helping.

LOLA:

Now what kind of person would I be if I said all that and ditched you? Let's go.

SCENE 5

SFX: A screwdriver screwing a piece in.

CAINE:

There we go. Let's see, then Su-jin said to connect the alternator here—!

SEBASTIAN:

Nope, you need to attach it to the mount first.

CAINE:

Okay, how about you do it?

SEBASTIAN:

I thought you said you've seen how this thing was built.

CAINE:

*Used.* I've seen it being used. And that was just a few months ago, so pardon me if I'm not totally on top of how you put this damn thing together, especially because now I'm under a *lot* of pressure, as if the fate of Cair Mallplex doesn't at least 80% to 90% hinge on us doing this correctly, and—!

SEBASTIAN:

Geez, I didn't think you felt all that stressed about it. Sorry.

CAINE:

Well, what the hell else would I feel, Seb?! What are all those people gonna do if this place goes down?

SEBASTIAN:

Disband, I guess. Move on.

CAINE:

That's not possible. I've barely seen any other settlements, and this is the biggest one, apparently. So the only other option is... you lose everything.

SFX: Caine keeps screwing a part.

SEBASTIAN:

Are you upset because you're losing all the progress you're making?

SFX: Caine tosses down their screwdriver.

CAINE:

*What?*

SEBASTIAN:

Apparently you came here to recruit people for your "cause" so... I can read between the lines.

CAINE:

Are you kidding me?

SEBASTIAN:

Do I sound like I am?

CAINE:

(SCOFFS) I came here for a lot of reasons, but right now, people's lives and homes are on the line. Their families!

SEBASTIAN:

Oh, "family." Because *that* matters to you now.

CAINE:

(LAUGHS IN DISBELIEF) I should be saying that to you!

SEBASTIAN:

Which means?

CAINE:

(SCOFFS) Forget it. I'm gonna just keep working on the haustoria.

SEBASTIAN:

Fine! Then, I'm gonna take a walk.

CAINE:

Yeah, of course you just walk away. Like usual.

SFX: Sebastian walks over to Jet and Ganymede.

SEBASTIAN:

How's triangulation going?

GANYMEDE:

Not great.

JET:

It is a little harder to detect suitable locations than I imagined. But we're doing our best!

GANYMEDE:

I thought you were supposed to be helping Caine?

SEBASTIAN:

Pretty sure they have it handled.

GANYMEDE:

Don't be dense, Baz, you've been avoiding them ever since you helped fix their car. I told Tari not to bother with the whole Zero Zero thing, I didn't ask you to do the same.

SEBASTIAN:

I am not avoiding them! What makes you say that?

GANYMEDE:

For one thing, *you* were supposed to convince Caine to give up on the whole "going back to Metropolis" thing.

SEBASTIAN:

I—!

GANYMEDE:

And for another, you haven't seen them for six whole years! Have a bit of common sense and have a conversation where you don't keep bolting, will you? They didn't come out here for nothing—they came out here for you. You get that, don't you?

SEBASTIAN:

It's just... hard. I can admit that.

JET:

You should still try. Caine needs you.

SEBASTIAN:

...I doubt that.

GANYMEDE:

Believe what you will. Any luck, Jet?

JET:

Not much. I think we'll need to get closer to one for me to determine if it's actually a rig.

GANYMEDE:

Guess that means one of us should tell Caine?

*Beat.*

GANYMEDE:

Mm. Alright. Alright! Drag your feet more, why don't you?

SEBASTIAN:

Sorry, Gan.

GANYMEDE:

Just think about what I said, will you?

SFX: Footsteps.

SEBASTIAN:

...How's it going?

CAINE:

Bad. All out of good parts for this, which means we need to go somewhere and scrap for the rest.

GANYMEDE:

We're on the same page, then. Jet needs us to drive closer to see if there's actually a rig nearby.

CAINE:

Alright. I'll take us. Someone else get the haustoria, I can't... I can't stand to look at that thing right now.

SFX: They load up the car.

JET:

Please be advised that the energy output of the fire and rig are very similar, so we may be experiencing some fire hazards.

GANYMEDE:

What? Is there any way to get through?

JET:

Except for driving, I do not believe so! None of you are heat shielded.

CAINE:

Guess we're really putting the new engine to the test.

SEBASTIAN:

We can go to a farther rig? Map out something else? Jet?

JET:

Well, the further we go, the longer Cair Mallplex goes without power.

CAINE:

And we're not risking that. Ganymede's family... tons of people and their family need the power back on. Now. So, we're doing it.

GANYMEDE:

I... appreciate that, Caine.

CAINE:

Hold on tight.

SFX: Caine revs the car.

MUSIC: Neon Skys by Gabriel Douglas.

JET:

(NARRATING)

I can sense how tense everyone is. The PSI of how hard they grip their other arm. The subtle drum of fingers on the wheel. The way they can't make eye contact, even through the reflection of the rearview mirror. I would call it fear, if it wasn't completely different from their actual reactions when they were afraid.

SFX: The car swerves.

SEBASTIAN:

Steady, Caine. Steady...

JET:

(NARRATING)

USER: Sebastian grits his teeth hard, the sharp edge of his canine digging into his bottom lip, a bead of blood bubbling at the surface. His stress is infectious, almost paralyzing—but not to Caine.

CAINE:

Come on, baby, come, come on, you can do this, we just have to hit 95 miles per hour.

JET:

(NARRATING)

Caine is anxious, often nervous—but never afraid. At least not behind the wheel of own their car. Where USER: Sebastian is a wire stretched razor thin, Caine is a taut spring, poised at any moment to jump into action. Their eyes are focused on one thing only: not the fire, not their brother, not whatever dangers might be beyond. Their eyes are on the road.

SFX: Flames leap up with a roar.

GANYMEDE:

Here it comes! Brace yourselves!

JET:

(NARRATING)

And USER: Ganymede throws his hand out as if to shield both USER: Sebastian and Caine from harm. His reaction time is faster than average. I know he's done that move before and he will do it again, many more times.

CAINE, SEBASTIAN, AND GANYMEDE:

(YELL)

SFX: The car revs and bursts through the flames.

JET:

(NARRATING)

And like always, we make it past death, circling it before revving and leaving it coughing up our dust. Caine breathes out a sigh of relief, gunning the engine towards our destination. But the tension, for the other occupants of the car, is still there.

MUSIC: Dark Street - Dark Ambient Soundscape by Dream-Protocol.

JET:

(NARRATING)

The crypto mine is gigantic, enough to rival Cair Mallplex itself. It lies inside a sizable crater that was likely once rolling hills. Irregular lines are cut through it, but they are exact, excising whatever was previously beneath them with mechanical precision. The land was probably stripped for resources, minerals, and then finally became the resting place of this rig. Blinking lights in huge frame arrays cast a cold green glow on wires. Tight bundles that meet the ground and then splay out, snaking over disused paths that crisscross throughout the complex.

From the top of the crater, USER: Ganymede suddenly claps a hand over his mouth.

GANYMEDE:

(GASPS) No. This can't... they can't have...

SFX: Ganymede exits the car.

JET:

(NARRATING)

Ganymede stumbles to the edge, before his legs give way and he kneels hard into the soot-filled dirt.

GANYMEDE:

I can't do this.

SCENE 6

SFX: Footsteps.

TARI:

So, um, where do you think we'll find him?

INDRA:

Hiding, probably. If you're freaking out in the dark, you usually wanna either find some light or go somewhere that feels secure. So, most likely a small place.

TARI:

Good thinking. I'd probably do that too! Did you work with kids before?

INDRA:

What? No. Not at all.

TARI:

What did you do?

INDRA:

Physical labor. Delivering stuff. Deals you probably wouldn't wanna hear about.

TARI:

Um, if-if you want to talk about them-!

INDRA:

Look, I was an Epsilon, you were probably a Beta or an Alpha or whatever. The thing that separates us is cryptos. But if this is some weird voyeuristic thing you've got about how bad my life was, shut it.

TARI:

Oh, no! Um... I'm—I'm sorry, that's not what I meant, Indra.

INDRA:

Whatever. If you wanna talk business, talk about what you did. Probably loads more interesting than what I did.

TARI:

You sure you wanna hear about some... has-been?

INDRA:

Everyone ends up as one eventually. Question is if you move on from it.

TARI:

Guess so. Um... I sort of just... I dunno. I talk a lot about it being fun and glamorous, but it was really all I knew how to do. Kind of like Lola, I got raised to be an influencer. Sure, they beta tested me on things: pop star, model, whatever else, but they pinned me as a personality influencer and that's where I had to stay. (SIGHS) But you get tired of it. You start wondering, "Is this all there is to everything?" So, you try everything. Do whatever appeals to you, so long as it's against what you were taught. And at the end, you give it up and try something new.

INDRA:

Everyone gets used up by POTEN Co. eventually. Whether you start as a higher class or not. Look at me. I started as the lowest of the low. You don't get taught to be anything because you're not worth anything. Lessons are wasted on your kind. So, you fight for everything, take what you can get, and even though every day is unpredictable, it all starts to blur together. "Is that it? Is life just one miserable slog until the end, biting and clawing your way ahead—till one day, you just... can't?" And then after asking yourself that question, you eventually get sick of it. And

you decide that no one gets to tell you or anyone else how they spend the rest of their time alive.

TARI:

Didn't mean to make you feel like you had to share.

INDRA:

Eh, I'm just paranoid sometimes. Happens. But I can already tell. You're on our side.

TARI:

Of course, Sharps! Or I mean... Indra.

INDRA:

(LAUGHS) Nah, you can call me Sharps. It's funny. Don't think I've had a nickname before.

SFX: Crying echoes distantly.

TARI:

Wait, is that—!

INDRA:

Shh. Hold on.

SFX: More crying.

INDRA:

Oh, yeah, definitely the kid. Come on.

SFX: Sounds fade. Fluid moving through a tube.

SU-JIN:

(SPITS) Okay, pretty sure I got some of that in my mouth. Augh, God. Man, I hate siphoning gas.

VIC:

I offered to do it.

SU-JIN:

Eh, nah, I can handle it.

SFX: Su-jin caps the generator.

VIC:

I'll just leave it to you.

SU-JIN:

Okay, don't hold your breath. Or do, maybe? Depending on if this works. Okay. Here goes.

SFX: The generator starts to sputter.

SU-JIN:

Alright! Thought it was a goner for a second there.

VIC:

Nah, I had faith! Now let me up on the terminal.

SFX: Vic starts up the console.

VIC:

Okay, we'll just dive into this console... Well, that's probably a big reason why they're having problems.

SU-JIN:

What is it?

VIC:

No switchback system, not even a mixed-integer system or cutting plane. Basically, when a cascade of problems comes down, the system's not prepared to take it on. Maybe once

upon a time it could, but a lot of newer stuff makes this code obsolete.

SU-JIN:

...I see.

VIC:

Even so, we should be able to redirect the power from your generator to the oxygen cyclers.

SFX: Vic types again. A powering on sound and fans begin to turn.

SU-JIN:

Think that helped.

VIC:

Looks like there's still not enough power for anything but this wing, and only for the main hall. Which is still pretty good by the way. At least we know we can breathe easy. But I think we need to make decisions. I can power one or the other, but not both at the same time. So, are we still going for the doors?

SU-JIN:

Yes.

VIC:

Whoa, quick answer.

SU-JIN:

Look, I just don't want anyone to be trapped. Oxygen cyclers working isn't much help if they can't even leave their apartments to breathe it in.

VIC:

True, true. Alright, I'll redirect power and give it a whirl. Let's start with the second floor.

SFX: Vic types—the generator suddenly backfires and shuts down.

SU-JIN:

No, no, no—ah, dammit!

VIC:

Ah, shoot. Square one it is.

SU-JIN:

(GROANS)

VIC:

Don't be so down, man! It was a good first shot.

SU-JIN:

A first shot that took like, two hours.

VIC:

I've never known you to be the type to quit so easily. What gives?

SU-JIN:

I'm not trying to give up, I just... you know.

SFX: Su-jin uncaps the generator.

VIC:

Very enlightening.

SU-JIN:

I know you guys didn't want me to come along.

VIC:

Hey, that's not true.

SU-JIN:

Don't lie, dude. I know you were kind of doubting it.

VIC:

As much as I consider you a sibling, Su-jin, you do still have an actual family. That's something that the rest of us don't have... well, Caine's an exception now too, but you get the point.

SU-JIN:

Is it really that? Or did you guys just think I couldn't do anything here?

VIC:

What? No. Why would you think that?

SU-JIN:

Caine's not a perfect scrapper, but they're good at it. No one else hacks in the team, Indra can fight, and Lola is, well, *Lola*. And you couldn't leave Jet behind. I'm the only one who's here for no reason.

VIC:

Su-jin... God, that's *not* why we're a team. We're not a team just because we're good at what we do. It helps, sure, but you don't have to be good at something to make things change. The one thing that makes you part of Zero Zero is that you believe in it. And you believe in it more than anyone, probably. (SIGHS) I remember when I first met you, you'd just given that big speech in that Numitron station. You didn't know who we were, but you already knew what we wanted to fight for.

SU-JIN:

I can't do it right though. I can't even get this generator to run!

VIC:

Not your fault. We're working with a lot less than we should be expected to. Seriously, you're more than capable. Also seriously, I was just worried about you leaving your family behind.

SU-JIN:

Yeah, well... me too. The thing Tari told me earlier? They want me to be the "face of the revolution" or whatever. Which felt weird, kind of like déjà vu getting asked by a big name to sell what you believe in.

VIC:

But you did want to do that, kind of, with Zero Zero.

SU-JIN:

Yeah, till Lola pointed out how much danger that would put my family in. You can't always keep the people you love safe but keeping my record on the down low is my best shot at it. So, what Tari said is asking the impossible question of, "What do you care more about, the revolution or your family?"

VIC:

That *is* impossible.

SU-JIN:

I already feel useless here. And maybe it would be better for everyone if I head back to Metropolis West and do what Tari said. Either way though, I still have to tell my family about what's going on and that's...

VIC:

That also feels impossible.

SU-JIN:

Yep.

VIC:

Well, I can't give you an answer to that, really. Just know that it's your choice at the end of the day and we'll support you, no matter what you do. 'Cause you're part of this team, okay? We're gonna figure it out. And we're gonna figure *this* out.

SFX: Vic bangs on the generator.

SU-JIN:

We probably need to fix and then refuel it. Then we'll try rerouting power again?

VIC:

I'll figure out if I can bypass whatever section caused a surge.

SU-JIN:

Oh, and Vic?

VIC:

Uh-huh?

SU-JIN:

Can I still take you up on the offer to do the fuel siphoning?

VIC:

For you? Of course.

SCENE 7

SFX: Sebastian runs towards Ganymede.

SEBASTIAN:

Ganymede, talk to me. What's going on?

GANYMEDE:

It shouldn't be like this.

CAINE:

Is... he okay?

MUSIC: Darkness Visible by Dream-Protocol.

GANYMEDE:

I knew where we were going, somewhere in my heart I knew—  
but I didn't think it would be like this. (GANYMEDE SOBS,  
THEN COMPOSES HIMSELF) Everything you see here was my  
hometown. I would know it anywhere. Even when it's not here  
anymore. I can't go down there.

SEBASTIAN:

Oh God. I'm so sorry, Gan.

GANYMEDE:

(STEADIES HIS BREATH) It's too horrible just looking at it.  
Walking down there would be..

SEBASTIAN:

Too much. I get it. We.. we can handle it, I think.

CAINE:

You think? We *have* to handle it. Jet, you ready?

JET:

Ready.

CAINE:

Alright, let's get moving. I still need to scrap a part together for the haustoria.

JET:

(NARRATING)

Now I understood what was troubling USER: Ganymede as we approached earlier. Unconsciously, he saw and recognized his home. But it wasn't home anymore. Not after what POTEN Co. had done to it.

I've thought long and hard about what that word means to me. Home, for a navigational system, is a term that means the place the user returns to most often, whatever averages the majority of their time that isn't at work or other secondary locations. If they even have secondary locations to go to. But of course, it means more than that. For a while, Caine used to tell me that the apartment they grew up in, now that their family was gone, was no longer home. Home is something that you find in other people, no matter where you are. But other people change. And maybe the space where you used to fit won't let you back in. So... where's home then?

SFX: Footsteps. A distant rumble.

CAINE:

Uh... should we be worried about that?

SEBASTIAN:

Maybe. This place is pretty far so technicians probably didn't bother with checking it. Which is... kind of upsetting given what we now know about this place. Raze an entire place to the ground and then abandon what remains of it.

CAINE:

Yeah.

SEBASTIAN:

It's awful. Leaving something behind like that.

SFX: Caine speeds up.

SEBASTIAN:

Caine—!

CAINE:

This should probably work.

SFX: Caine pulls off a piece of machinery.

CAINE:

Phew. Done.

SFX: Caine walks off.

SEBASTIAN:

Come on, Caine. You've been acting weird ever since we left the power grid.

CAINE:

You've been cutting me off every other sentence, so I figured I'd just stay quiet.

SEBASTIAN:

Oh, stop exaggerating.

CAINE:

(MUTTERS UNDER THEIR BREATH)

SEBASTIAN:

Besides, I... I know I was being a bit of a know-it-all, but if you just took the critique I was giving you, it wouldn't have been such a big deal.

CAINE:

How about instead of criticism, you put the rest of this together? You know, since you ran off, like *always*, when I was working on this earlier.

*Beat.*

SEBASTIAN:

Fine.

SFX: Sebastian screws the last pieces on.

SEBASTIAN:

Done.

SFX: Caine picks it up and walks off.

SEBASTIAN:

Hey!

CAINE:

Jet, can you please analyze where we should connect this to?

JET:

Most of the mine is composed of GPUs. We would likely be better off finding an ASIC and using that as our entry point.

CAINE:

Sounds good.

MUSIC: Long Thriller Theme by SergeQuadrado.

SEBASTIAN:

Oh my God, would you cut it out, Caine? What's with the whole cold shoulder thing?

CAINE:

(LAUGHS) Oh, have you *finally* noticed I'm mad at you?

SEBASTIAN:

I'm not stupid, Caine, I *know* you're mad. Why? Why right now?

CAINE:

Because right now is when you were making all of those stupid comments about what I was doing!

SEBASTIAN:

*It's constructive criticism—!*

SFX: Rumbling starts.

JET:

Guys?

CAINE:

No, Sebastian, the stuff you said about leaving!

SEBASTIAN:

I knew it!

JET:

(GLITCHING)

Could you guys please stop yelling? *Please!*

SFX: The rumbling grows louder.

SCENE 8

SFX: Echoing footsteps.

TARI:

I'm not gonna lie, I'm kind of getting the creeps here. I know it's just a department store, but...

SFX: A far-off, echoing sob.

INDRA:

Yeah, don't think a crying kid helps make the atmosphere any better. God, why were they playing here anyways? It definitely looks like it's seen better days.

TARI:

Weren't you ever young, running off to derelict parts of your neighborhood to play around in?

INDRA:

Whole neighborhood was derelict. But yeah, I remember messing around on abandoned construction sites. Good times!

SFX: A clatter.

TARI:

(YELPS)

INDRA:

Ugh. Didn't see that there.

TARI:

You know, if you're gonna keep leading, I can just give you the flashlight.

INDRA:

See the thing is... I don't want to hold it.

TARI:

(LAUGHS) Okay, I'll keep my post as flashlight bearer for now. But when we find the kid, you'll have to take on the task.

SFX: A horror sting.

TARI:

(YELPS)

INDRA:

Ah! What was that for?

TARI:

I'm sorry! Wow, I just shone the light on a mannequin and that freaked me right the hell out. I don't know why we keep these things. Just hang the clothes up, people will figure out an outfit!

INDRA:

If that's freaking you out, imagine the kid!

SFX: More sobs.

TARI:

I don't think I have to imagine. Pretty sure he's down that aisle.

INDRA:

Agreed.

Maybe in that dressing room? That seems like a place someone would hide while playing hide and seek.

TARI:

(YELPS, AGAIN)

INDRA:

If it's another mannequin...

TARI:

Um, it's... it's a *lot* of mannequins.

INDRA:

Ew, okay, that's actually starting to scare me. Why are they set up like that?

TARI:

Kids probably thought it was funny. Maybe it is when the lights are on!

INDRA:

He's through here.

SFX: Indra walks forward.

INDRA:

Uh, Tari? Through here.

TARI:

Um... I'm trying to take a step forward, but I think my body is too scared to.

INDRA:

(SIGHS) My God, are you kidding me?

TARI:

I'm not lying! Look, between fight, flight, or freeze, I'm very much in the last category!

INDRA:

Well, I need you to sign to him! I'm just here to... I don't know, catch him if he decides to run?

TARI:

I'll walk you through it, don't worry. I'll even let you take the light!

INDRA:

Is it not scarier if it's dark? Actually, whatever, never mind, I don't want to have a change of heart. Give it here.

SFX: Indra walks away.

INDRA:

How am I supposed to get his attention?

TARI:

Shine the light at him! But like, in a friendly way.

INDRA:

Whatever that means. Here goes.

SFX: A door creaks.

INDRA:

Okay, uh... hi?

TARI:

I hope you're waving at him.

INDRA:

I am. Okay, how do I say I'm here to help him out?

TARI:

Uh, point to yourself first. Then put your non-dominant hand out flat, palm up, and put a thumbs up hand on top.

INDRA:

Alright.

TARI:

And then kind of bounce the thumbs-up hand towards him.

INDRA:

He put his thumb under his chin and is like... pointing his index finger up?

Oh, me?

TARI:

He's asking who you are. Do you remember how I showed you the alphabet? You can sign your name to him.

INDRA:

I-N-D-R... uh, A. Yeah, that's me. And you're... R-A-S-H-A-D, right? Okay, he's nodding. Yeah.

TARI:

Alright, do a questioning face.

INDRA:

Like... r-raise my eyebrows?

TARI:

Yeah, like you're asking the question out loud. Okay, so we'll say "we", point to your chest twice, like the dominant side and then the non-dominant. And now "go", put your hands in front of you pointing down. Now flick your pointed hands out.

INDRA:

And then?

TARI:

Dominant hand, all fingers touch your thumb. Then tap that against your cheek, then near your ear. That's home. Then,

uh, do ASL Y-hands towards yourself, and then pull them down. That means now.

INDRA:

Aw, you're a little scared? I bet you would be. That's okay. Come on, I'll protect you.

SFX: The two walk.

INDRA:

There you go. Good job.

TARI:

Thank goodness. I'm glad he's fine.

INDRA:

Yeah, me too.

TARI:

And this must be Rashad! Hi, kiddo.

SFX: Tari and Rashad sign.

INDRA:

Oh, what does that mean?

TARI:

That's the sign for thank you!

INDRA:

Uh... you're welcome.

TARI:

You can sign thank you back!

SFX: Indra does so. Rashad laughs. Fade to crowd ambience.

PARENT:

Thank you, both of you. I'm so glad he's okay!

TARI:

It was no trouble! Hey, good job, Sharps.

INDRA:

That wasn't anything.

TARI:

No, it was something! You can come off really intimidating, but it's good you can turn that off and be nice to a kid!

INDRA:

I don't know if that was turning it off so much as me getting freaked out too.

TARI:

Sorry to throw you into signing like that. I only know it because there's a pretty big Deaf community here, but it can be hard if you don't really know what you're saying.

INDRA:

No, no, it wasn't that. Kids are... kids are weird.

TARI:

Yeah, I'll say! They're all extremely weird and I think that's great.

INDRA:

I guess I'm not really used to being around kids in general. I don't look back at my own childhood as all that great and to be honest, I don't think most of the people I worked with cared much about family either. But...

TARI:

But?

INDRA:

You can have a pretty narrow field of vision when you're trying to survive. So, I guess the fact that people want to raise their kids here means they feel... secure.

Reminds me why I even wanted to join Zero Zero.

TARI:

To make people feel safer?

INDRA:

You could say that. World's never gonna be 100% perfect, but that doesn't mean it can't be better. Especially for whoever's gonna get to grow up in the one that we make.

TARI:

I'm gonna be real with you, I didn't have much experience with kids either. Or family, really, not until I met Nell, Gan, and Baz. I hope they're okay out there.

INDRA:

Yeah, me too.

SCENE 9

CAINE:

What the hell?!

SFX: The ground rumbles.

JET:

(NARRATING)

A rift cleaves open the path, fracturing out into tiny cracks that suggest something worse underfoot. The deep grooves in the earth below suggest that the crypto mines were built on top of... well, actual mines. Caine scrambles to find purchase, thankfully tossing me up onto a solid ledge before they clamber up. USER: Sebastian does not do the same with the haustoria.

SFX: The haustoria falls.

SEBASTIAN:

Oh, no no no, shit!

CAINE:

Sebastian, hang on, I'm coming!

SEBASTIAN:

No, I'm—I'm okay. The haustoria—! I couldn't hold onto it.

CAINE:

Well, it's not too far down. And it doesn't look broken, though obviously I'm not making any assumptions.

SFX: Caine jumps down and starts to climb.

JET:

Wait, Caine. Stop.

CAINE:

What, what is it? It's okay, Jet, I'm almost there anyways.

JET:

I understand. But you should know—the haustoria is not broken.

CAINE:

That's one good thing.

JET:

But I only know that because it's active. Right now.

SEBASTIAN:

Is that a problem?

JET:

Well... yes, without USER: Ganymede present, it is. The haustoria device works via wireless connection to the power source to siphon, convert, and deliver energy to the assigned receiver. If you touch it to the device, you are automatically connected. But for the two of you, you both have trackers installed.

CAINE:

Meaning we count as a power source. Yeah, I remember that.

JET:

I wasn't there, but you told me that you received an electric shock while you were carrying the haustoria. Vic's information logs showed me the tracking information being sent to Dax, but you also accidentally activated something else. Presumably, the Arcadia cabinet.

CAINE:

Yeah. Su-jin said it was lucky that the game came with automatic life support. Apparently previous versions didn't have that, so no wonder it got discontinued.

JET:

You discharged the excess energy between you and the cabinet, and once you disconnected, the haustoria no longer continued to send you power. Essentially, a forcible shutdown occurred, but the life support—

SEBASTIAN:

What are you saying?

JET:

If either of you touches that and then connects the haustoria to the crypto rig, the resulting power surge may cause you to go into cardiac arrest.

MUSIC: The Two Siblings by SamuelFrancisJohnson

SEBASTIAN:

*What?* You could have warned us about that earlier!

CAINE:

Stop yelling at him, I could have told you that too. And besides, it's your fault that we're in this mess.

SEBASTIAN:

I wasn't going to force Gan into coming down here.

CAINE:

Neither was I! But you dropped the damn thing and now we're out of options. It already took long enough to scrap that together and it took every single piece of gear we had! So, unless you want to drive back over and pick up more gear

while the whole south wing suffocates, we need to figure something out!

SEBASTIAN:

You can drop the act, Caine! Ganymede can't hear you. You don't need to pretend like you care.

CAINE:

I *do* care! You're the one who never cares! You're the one that made me go out here while you let your new little sibling sit tight! It's too dangerous for them, but not for me, right? Because "Baz" cares more about the new life he gets to make for himself instead of the family that he abandoned! The version of you in that video game was a better brother to me than you've been for a long time.

*Beat.*

SEBASTIAN:

Do you seriously mean that?

CAINE:

I wanted to be like you so, so badly, kuya. You always made me dream bigger. Try harder. Do better for everyone around me. Valeria may have shown me how to throw a punch, but you taught me the reason. Always fight for a better future. I thought of you like that, some... some kind of big hero that I would grow up to be. That someday I'd fit in your shoes. I mean... I mean, goddamn, do you even recognize this?

MUSIC: Guitar Cruise -Background Music -Santana style by Nesrality.

SEBASTIAN:

Your... scarf?

CAINE:

No, Seb. This was yours. I couldn't go into your room when you disappeared. Val was the one who had to tell all of us that you left no note, no trace of anything. Just a room full of everything you didn't care enough about to bring. Eventually, when we knew you weren't ever gonna come back, we had to sell everything. The guitar, your tech, your clothes... *everything*. I begged Mom and Dad not to give this away. I wanted at least one reminder of you I could have all the time. Not just some hand-me-down, but something that really, truly was yours. I needed it because remembering you and everything you taught me was what made me feel like I could do something about the never-ending misery my life had become. But when I *really* think about it, what you really taught me was running. I was always in your shadow because I was always chasing after you, hoping one day, I-I'd finally catch up and you would see me. But you never did. You never turned around. Revolution? That's not what you wanted. You wanted to run away from your responsibilities, escape to a world that was better than the one that you saw. And every time you get bored, you just run away again, without thinking about what it would do to the people you left behind! Well, guess what? Mom and Dad are dead. Valeria's in Glasshouse, just like she always wanted. And you... I don't even know if you even think of us as family anymore. So, if I'm the only Reyes left standing, I'm gonna make it count. Someone has to take responsibility.

SFX: Caine steps down onto the ledge.

SEBASTIAN:

Don't do what I think you're going to do.

CAINE:

No more running.

SEBASTIAN:

Wait—!

CAINE:

I'm fighting for a better future.

SFX: Caine picks up the haustoria. A sharp buzz of electricity.

SEBASTIAN:

No, don't do it! It's gonna kill you! We need to figure something else out!

Caine? Caine!

MUSIC: Long Thriller Theme by SergeQuadrado.

JET:

(NARRATING)

Caine picks me up, tucking me into the crook of their arm, opposite the haustoria. Through my metal casing I feel the slightest crackle of power, reminding me of... reminding me of things I'd much rather forget. And as much as I follow what Caine asks of me, that's because Caine treats me like a person. Not just as a tool. On the other hand, Caine treats themselves like that. Some object that fulfills its purpose and then fades like a dying spark. But I can't let them do that because I'm... I'm Caine's family too.

I focus, trying to find purchase on some device to jump on to.

SFX: Static buzzes. A walkie-talkie beep.

JET:

Hello? Can you hear me?

SEBASTIAN:

Jet?

JET:

Listen, Sebastian. I know that was a difficult conversation. I can tell that you have been thinking about

how to approach Caine about this for a long time and this was *not* the way you planned it. But I'm asking you—begging you—please, don't give up!

MUSIC: Fester by GabrielDouglas.

SEBASTIAN:

You don't get it. It's been eating me up inside ever since I saw them again—I *did* leave Caine behind. And when they showed up again, it was proof of that. They should have been angry with me from the very start, and when they weren't... It scared me. Knowing that they missed me all those years. Knowing that any moment, whatever we had between us was going to blow up. I almost wanted it to, so that I could justify cutting loose from it but... now that it's happened, I wish it didn't.

JET:

I didn't understand, not really, but now I do: Caine *wanted* you to be a hero. But that's not what they need.

SEBASTIAN:

Then what the hell am I supposed to do?

JET:

Be their older brother.

SFX: A walkie-talkie crackles.

SEBASTIAN:

(OVER WALKIE-TALKIE)

Ganymede? Come in, Ganymede.

GANYMEDE:

You okay, Baz? I heard rumbling from the rig.

SEBASTIAN:

It's Caine I'm worried about.

GANYMEDE:

What's going on?

SEBASTIAN:

I have a plan, but... I could really use your help. And if you can't do it, that's okay. But I need to make things right with my family.

*Beat.*

GANYMEDE:

I understand. I... I'll be there. (SIGHS) Over and out.

SFX: Ganymede turns off the walkie-talkie.

MUSIC: Midnight Dance (pure piano) by joy921111.

GANYMEDE:

You've faced a lot of things, Ganymede. And this is for your family, for Sebastian and Caine, and everyone else in Cair Mallplex. You can do this.

El Maleh Rahamim.

[Blessed are You, who is full of compassion.]

SFX: Ganymede begins the long walk down.

END EPISODE.

OUTRO:

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars, an Aster Podcasting Network production. 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 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 [patreon.com/mxeliramos](https://www.patreon.com/mxeliramos), that's M-X-E-L-I-R-A-M-O-S. You can support Aster Podcasting Network at different tiers and get rewards like early access to

episodes, annotated scripts, commentaries, behind the scenes posts, art, and even merch! That's not just for Under the Electric Stars, but all the shows on the network. The money you give directly goes to supporting our editor, showrunners, and actors who make these shows possible. Please support us if you have the means. Any amount helps. Our voice talents are as follows: Robin Guzman as Jet Reyes, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, Rue Dickey as Ganymede Moreno, John Patneaude as Sebastian Reyes, Philomena Sherwood as Tari de Whitte, Rey Ángel Yoali Olachéa Martinez as Indra, Kevin Paculan as Vic Vass, Christine Kim as Su-jin Yi, Chaitrika Budamagunta as Lola Sunn, Katriel Charoite as Nell Palomo, Serena El-Hajali as Ava Jafari, Stephanie Arata as Elizabeth Haven, and Matheus Nogueira as Kaleo Hale. Additional voices were provided by yours truly, Lily Froio, Kai Ramos, Josh Hazeghazam, and B. Narr. Attributions for sounds and music used can be found in the show notes. Thanks to Ezra Lee Buck and Audrey Pham, our \$20 Patrons on Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.

AFTER CREDITS SCENE

AVA:

How did you find me and Kaleo?

HAVEN:

Oh, don't be naïve. Someone always has eyes on you, whether you know it or not. Kaleo's address wasn't too hard to find, but he's *such* a good friend, he didn't want to tell me about you. But you have the drive with the information I want on it. So, I just took a look through his comms and said I'd make a house call, and not a very nice one, unless he came along.

AVA:

Well, you don't need us then. Take the drive and leave us alone.

HAVEN:

I could do that. But you two have been talking an awful lot about me and my cyborg, haven't you? That won't do.

KALEO:

We don't have to put it on the radio anymore. We can just drop it, right Ava? No more leads.

HAVEN:

But you're on exactly the lead I want. You're just so good at your jobs! Real human intellect can be useful sometimes, when you need something better than a machine to do some journalistic digging. So, I wanted to make you two a little offer. You help me track some people down. And Kaleo, you know what you get in exchange, right?

KALEO:

She lets us and our families live another day.

HAVEN:

Very good, exactly! What do you think, Ava? Sound like a plan?

AVA:

Who the hell are you?

HAVEN:

You like a mystery, don't you, Ava? I mean, that's what got you two in the thick of all of this to begin with. Better than a mystery, though, you like answers. So, I'll give you one now. I'm Dr. Haven. You know, just like what it says on that hunk of metal you got a hold of. If you come with me, you'll get the answer to your cyborg mystery too.

Don't take too long to decide. Or should we wait around until Niusha comes back home?

KALEO:

Ava, don't—

AVA:

Fine.

HAVEN:

Much appreciated. Let's get moving, shall we?