

SILENT UNIVERSE

Episode #1: "Mission 256"

**An original dramatic podcast by
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**PRODUCTION SCRIPT
[DRAFT 7.0]**

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About the *Silent Universe*...

The *Silent Universe* purposely breaks many of the molds of popular SciFi series, like Star Trek, turning the concept of a utopian future on it's ear. In the world of the *Silent Universe*, war and apathy have continued far into the future, leaving humanity shattered and still fighting against itself, even in space.

In this dystopian vision, the modern specters of genocide, racism, xenophobia and chaos still exist. Amidst such a dim world, there are still heroes and people who believe that humanity can aspire to something better, but it is a bitter and difficult battle for those who fight for good ideals . . .

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Episode #1: "Mission 256"

Prod. #6

CAST (in order of appearance. **Bold** denotes main cast)

Announcer	DB Cooper?
Narrator	Ross Douglas
Female Voice	Kelly West
News Reporter	Judith Knowles
Emmeline Kaley	Hilary Blair
Jack Smyth	Mark Oliver
Seung Bogs (J)	Dait Abuchi
Dave Carol	Phillip Sacramento
Army Officer 1	Stephen Murray
Army NCOIC (JA)	Takatsuna Mukai
Call Girl 1	Melissa Hoffman
Army Officer 2	Chris Dell
Army Officer 3	Lance Allan
Army Officer 5	
Army Captain	Evan Yeoman
Isaac Walker	James Higuchi
Ritsu Kobayashi	Debbie Munro
Ben Hernandez	Esteban Silva
May Kobayashi	Kristi Stewart
Garet Arrowny	Phillip Sacramento
Gordon Marcus	George Washington III
Gill Frye	Nick DeLillo
Computer	Jodi Paige
Radio Guy #1	Carl Magnuson
Administrator	DC Goode
Japanese VA #1	Takatsuna Mukai

ACT I

DISCLAIMER: *This podcast contains themes and material that may not be suitable for younger audiences. This includes foul language, adult references and dialogue of a non-PC nature. These elements are used to enhance the dystopian attributes of the Silent Universe, and are not meant as an insult to any person or group. If you're a wussy socialist who can't deal with that, then go listen to NPR.*

MUSIC. OPENING THEME—UP. SLOW.

NARRATOR: There were those who thought that the dawn of the Second Space Age would unite humanity in a common cause. Dreams of grand utopias fevered the minds of visionaries and futurists, who proclaimed that the stars would save us from ourselves.

They couldn't have been more wrong.

SOUND. LIGHT WIND CHIME. CONTINUE UNDER.

FEMALE VOICE: (Whispering) . . . Silent Universe . . .

MUSIC. OPENING THEME ESTABLISH. CONTINUE UNDER.

NARRATOR: No Great Federation ever came together. Still, man stretched out his hands into space, building colonies and terraforming the moons of the solar system. But wars continued among the Earthen nations as they had done since antiquity. Nothing changed.

In time, even the colonies broke away in bloody struggles for independence, then fought amongst themselves for resources and territory. Sadly, instead of bringing us together, the promise of space only proved to tear us further apart.

SCENE ONE: INT. APARTMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF THE JAPANESE COLONY “FUNKAKOU” ON MARS.

PRODUCTION NOTE: EMMELINE KALEY, JACK SMYTH, SEUNG BOGS and DAVE CAROL are gathered around a coffee table in a run-down single-bedroom apartment in one of the poorer regions of (Japanese) Funkakou City, on Mars. Its mid-day and the warm purple-pink rays of the half-terraformed Martian sky are coming in through the window, as the group huddles together, watching a video playback on a small computer monitor.

Music: Account of a Hero – 2:22

REPORTER: [THROUGH SLIGHT RADIO INTERFERENCE] . . . and now you are seeing exclusive RSN footage of Gregory Yamamoto, *de facto* leader and President of the Japanese Funkakou Colony on Mars. Just over a decade ago, President Yamamoto seized power in a controversial election and soon after dispatched with the city’s democratic process. Since that time, he has jailed political opponents and raised a small army which enforces marshal law throughout his colony. Until recently, he has been regarded as little more than a local tyrant that—for all his faults and excesses—maintains order in his tiny corner of Mars. All that changed when RSN broke the story last week that President Yamamoto had acquired a twenty-five kiloton tactical nuclear warhead, which he is seen here parading through the center of Funkakou.

EMMELINE KALEY: Pause playback.

SOUND. DVR RESPONDING TO THE COMMAND.

EMMELINE: (To her colleagues) The one that Yamamoto is showing off for the cameras is actually a dummy, but the story is basically true. According to our client, they were able to procure it from a third party that ripped it off from an old Chinese defense satellite.

JACK: That's the third one they've lost—that we know about. (Grumbling) ChiComs couldn't keep track of their own asses with a divining rod and a *map* . . .

SEUNG: The Chinese are barely communist anymore, Jack.

JACK: Oh yeah? That's what people said about the Russians, and look where *that* got everyone.

SOUND. THE GROUP CHUCKLES MIRTHFULLY.

EMMELINE: Anyway, guys, the job is this: the Yanks want us to go in and diffuse the situation in Funkakou. State Department says they'll pay a premium if we can retrieve the nuke intact.

SEUNG: (A little confused) What do the Americans have to do with this?

JACK: Ah, you know the *Yanks*, Seung. They got their finger in *everyone's* pies.

EMMELINE: That's true. (Pause) But in this case, Japan has *asked* the American Republic to get involved. They're longtime allies, and the Japanese still consider Funkakou to be part of their interests, even if they can't control the colony.

JACK: (Finishing her thought) and let me guess. The Yanks don't want to touch this one directly because they don't want to torque off two *billion* chinamen.

EMMELINE: Exactly. China's been eyeballing Funkakou since even before the Japanese established it. The city's built on top of a samsonite mine, and the Chinese would love nothing more than to get their hands on it. Long story short, the Japs want to save face and the Yanks want plausible deniability . . . so, that's where we come in.

DAVE: (Dripping with sarcasm) Alright. Peace of cake. We walk in there and steal a nuke from a dictator guarding it with his own personal army. That's a great story—*tell it again*. Especially the part where we *don't die*, because I think I tuned out when you went over that . . .

EMMELINE: (Ignoring him) We've already got security access cards and a military uniform, courtesy of Yankee Intelligence. It'll be enough to get one of us in. (Pauses, seeing some skepticism in her colleague's eyes. Defends the idea, nonetheless) Even if all we can do is deactivate the warhead, the bounty is big.

SEUNG: *How big?*

EMMELINE: 50,000 scrips.

JACK: Between the four of us?

EMMELINE: *Each*. And that doubles if we can bring the bomb back intact.

SOUND. EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP, EXCLUDING DAVE, MARVELS AT THE STATEMENT. THIS IS A LOT OF CASH.

DAVE: (Not at all convinced) Since when do the Yanks pay in scrips?

EMMELINE: I asked my contact that. (Takes a breath) Scrips are harder to trace than dollars. Like I said, the Yanks want deniability, so I guess they're taking extra steps for this job.

DAVE: (Skeptical) Still . . . something's fishy about this deal. I don't see why the American State Department would choose *us* for a gig like this. There are bigger mercenary ops out there, with more experience in this kind of thing.

SEUNG: Yeah, but if you use a group enough times, eventually they get stale. It's like what happened with Ali—his guys were hot back during the riots on Luna, but once the Chinese got his headshot, everyone blacklisted him.

EMMELINE: (Defending) It's not like we haven't done stuff like this before. Remember Jack and me back on Phobos?

DAVE: That was a frackin' research lab, Emm, not a military base!

EMMELINE: (Quickly correcting him) A *heavily defended* bio-weapons research lab. We didn't even have key-cards that time. (Pausing to take a breath. Impatient.) Look, I don't think you *get it*, Dave. This merc business doesn't pay well unless you're on a very short list with the Earth governments. I don't know about you, but I like to *eat*. We haven't had a decent gig in six months, but I think some of the crumbs we've been picking up for the Yanks finally got the attention of someone important. I don't care much for the Americans, but as long as their government pays *the best*, we're sure as hell not going to turn down a prime offer like this.

SOUND. **DAVE STANDS UP, PUSHING HIS CHAIR BACK.**

DAVE: (Hostility rising some) Maybe *you* won't, but this whole damn thing stinks. And the only reason we haven't gotten any good jobs is because of that *crap* gig we did for the Russians . . .

SOUND. EMMELINE STANDS UP AS WELL, CONFRONTING HIM.

EMMELINE: (Getting where his hostility is coming from) Ooooh, so is *that* it? Buggin' out *again*, eh Dave? (Cuttingly) I should'a figured . . . after *frackin'* up that job everyone said you were nothing but a *damn* coward, but I wouldn't listen. Guess I was wrong.

SOUND. THE ROOM IS SILENT, SAVE FOR THEIR TENSE BREATHS.

SOUND. DAVE KICKS THE CHAIR AGAINST A WALL.

DAVE: (Angry) Frack this! And frack *you*, Emm! That Russian gig was crap from the start—just like this! Don't even try to put that on me. (Pause) You know what? Fine, go and get your stupid asses killed, you're not taking me along.

SOUND. DAVE GATHERS UP HIS BAG AND STOMPS OUT, SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

SOUND. JACK WHISTLES, IMPRESSED.

JACK: Oh, yeah. *That* pissed 'em off real good.

EMMELINE: (Sighs) Ah, I probably went a bit far.

JACK: Nah, Emmeline. His cheeky ass needed to have his cage rattled, anyway. You're right, the whole Russki gig spooked 'em. Nowadays you can hardly expect the kid to jaywalk

without getting jumpy. Bein' a merc ain't about bein' timid . . .
you play it safe in this business and you starve.

EMMELINE: (With hesitation) That's true.

JACK: Besides, it's a bigger slice for the rest of us, and he wouldn't even be runnin' point. Only you and Seung could get into a place like that. Yamamoto's army only lets "pure-bred" Japs serve.

SEUNG: *But I'm Korean.*

JACK: Close enough. (BEAT) You speak the language.

SEUNG: Well I grew up in Osaka . . .

JACK: There you go. We've already got the ID cards, so it's not like they're gonna check your DNA. As long as you've got the slanty-eye thing going on, nobody's gonna give you any trouble.

EMMELINE: What about me?

JACK: If I remember right, the army provides a *who*—(reconsiders his choice of words) um, a "comfort woman" service for the soldiers on weekends. It's common for non-Japanese women to be in the barracks around then.

SEUNG: (Suddenly enthusiastic) I like this plan.

EMMELINE: Shut up.

JACK: (BEAT) Anyways, whether we steal or disable the nuke, we're gonna need a fast way to get off the planet undetected . . .

which means we're going to need a ship with a cloaking device.

EMMELINE: What? We couldn't even afford a cloaked ship *after* we get this bounty.

JACK: Not to worry, I know someone who *just* happens to owe me a favor . . .

SCENE TWO: INT. JACK'S BORROWED CLOAKER. NEAR THE ARMY BARRRACKS OF FUNKAKOU, MARS.

NARRATOR: Three days later . . .

PRODUCTION NOTE: JACK SMYTH sits alone in the borrowed ship, atop a small four-story building across the street from the entrance to the military base. Through a pair of headphones, he is monitoring the progress of EMMELINE KALEY and SEUNG BOGS. DAVE CAROL is nowhere to be found.

SOUND. SHIP ENGINES AND COMPUTER BEEPS. CONTINUE UNDER.

JACK: Okay, *there*. (Pleased) I got the tracking software back online. Frequency modulator looks okay . . .

SOUND. JACK SMACKS THE MONITOR IN FRONT OF HIM.

JACK: Work already!

SOUND. JACK SMACKS THE MONITOR AGAIN.

JACK: Come on ya frackin' piece of crap!

SOUND. THE MONITOR FUZZLES INTO FRAME.

JACK: Ahh, *there* we go!

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Did ya get the screen working again?

JACK: Yeah, got it. Just had to do some “*creative maintenance.*”

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] Sounds like you were kicking the damn thing.

JACK: I wouldn't do that. This baby's a rental . . .

SOUND. JACK SMACKS THE MONITOR AGAIN FOR GOOD MEASURE.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Jack, these little system errors aren't exactly inspiring my overwhelming confidence . . .

JACK: Don't sweat it, Emm. The ship might be old, but the cloaking device is still under warrantee. It'll hold out fine.

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] (Somewhat weary) It'd better. We're already knee-deep into this . . .

JACK: (To himself) Don't I know it. (Through the radio) Alright Seung, turn left at the next hallway and go through the first door. There should be a guy at a desk on the other side of it; tell him that Emmeline is your registered guest for the night, and then flash your ID badge. That should get you access to the main barracks.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] (Complaining) You know, I can't believe you've got me wearing this stupid thing.

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] (Slightly annoyed) It's called a *kimono*.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] *It's a train-wreck is what it is. How is anyone supposed to walk in this thing? And these shoes, ugh!*

JACK: (Laughs) Hey now, at least those beauty school lessons came in handy . . .

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Jack, when I get back to the ship I am going to shove these shoes right up your—

ARMY OFFICER 1: [OVER THE RADIO] [IN JAPANESE] You! What are you doing here?

SOUND. COMPUTER CHIMES IN.

COMPUTER: (Evenly) Japanese language recognized. Translating.

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] (Hurriedly) I'm sorry, sir. I was just here to check in with the NCOIC.

ARMY OFFICER 1: [OVER THE RADIO] (BEAT) Check-in for the comfort women was two hours ago . . .

JACK: (Whispering to himself) Crap, crap, crap . . .

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] (Quickly) Forgive me, sir.

ARMY OFFICER 1: [OVER THE RADIO] Let me see your identification.
(Demanding) Now!

SOUND. SEUNG FUMBLES WITH HIS ID TICKET AND HANDS IT TO THE OFFICER. A TENSE SILENCE FOLLOWS.

ARMY OFFICER 1: [OVER THE RADIO] This looks okay . . . (Obviously irritated)
But don't let me catch you outside the barracks like this ever
again after hours. Understood?

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] Yes, sir!

SOUND. THE OFFICER LEAVES.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] (Quietly) Well that was a close one. Let's
make it the last.

SCENE THREE: INT. THE ARMY BARRACKS OF FUNKAKOU, MARS.

PRODUCTION NOTE: The pair walk in on the Non Commissioned Officer in
Charge, or the NCOIC, who is "occupied" at the moment.

SOUND. THE LARGE OAK DOORS TO THE NCOIC'S OFFICE OPEN UP

SEUNG: [IN JAPANESE] My apologies for my tardiness, sir. I was—

SOUND. WOMEN GIGGLING. FAT GUY CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF.

MUSIC. SAXOPHONE WAILING. DOWN. CONTINUE UNDER.

EMMELINE: *Erp—*

SEUNG: (Obviously flustered) [IN JAPANESE] Erh, um. Sir. Sorry—I
uhh . . .

ARMY NCOIC: [IN ACCENTED ENGLISH] (Coughing on a cigar) Cut it,
officer. I don't care what Admiral Takamura says . . . English
is fine when we're off duty.

EMMELINE: (Whispering to Seung) Now there's irony for you . . .

ARMY NCOIC: [IN ACCENTED ENGLISH] (Pause) That's a fine girl you got yourself there, officer. American bitch?

SOUND. **THE OTHER WOMEN ACT POUTY.**

EMMELINE: (Taking the comment in stride) Scottish.

ARMY NCOIC: [IN ACCENTED ENGLISH] Ah, I don't have time for *haggis munchers*. Cheaper than the Yanks but they have bad tempers. (Pause) Still, she looks good enough. You'd better take her to your bunk before the other men get jealous.

SOUND. **EMMELINE GROWLS QUIETLY.**

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] (To Emmeline) Remember what we're here for . . .

SEUNG: (Trying to play the part) (To Emmeline) Come on, freckles, I'm ready to get my money's worth . . .

EMMELINE: (Pause) (Playing along) Sounds good to me . . . (curses under her breath) fracking ingrate . . .

SOUND. **THE TWO WALK OFF.**

ARMY NCOIC: (BEAT) [IN ACCENTED ENGLISH] Ah, the smell of white women on the weekends. (To the call girl) You know what it smells like?

CALL GIRL 1: (Still pouting) What does it smell like, *sousui*?

ARMY NCOIC: [IN ACCENTED ENGLISH] (Takes a puff of his cigar) Smells like . . . *victory*.

SCENE FOUR: INT. THE ARMY BARRRACKS OF FUNKAKOU, MARS.

SOUND. **JAPANESE MEN LAUGHING AND JEERING. (ENGLISH MIXED IN)**

ME: **[ENGLISH] Aw, leaving so soon? It's not every day we get a redhead around . . .**

SOUND. **EMMELINE GROWLS.**

ME: **[ENGLISH] Hey, I'm not like these other guys. I grew up in California. Now come on, sugar. Just one kiss . . .**

SOUND. **DOOR CLOSSES, DROWNING OUT THE NOISE.**

ME: **[ENGLISH] (muffled) I'll call you!**

JACK: **[OVER THE RADIO] (Beat) How we doing?**

SEUNG: **Can't complain.**

EMMELINE: **(Sarcastic) Says the guy who *didn't* spend the last half-hour trying to make those slobs keep their hands to themselves. (Relieved sigh) Anyways, we're near the entrance to the armory. The "call girl" routine isn't going to work if someone catches me in there, so I'll have to stand watch while Seung sees if he can get to the nuke.**

JACK: **[OVER THE RADIO] Aside from the grope-a-thon, things have been going without a hitch, so far . . .**

EMMELINE: **Good. Don't jinx it. Seung, go on ahead.**

SEUNG: (Pause) Take my handgun.

EMMELINE: Seung, you need—

SEUNG: The guys in here have semi-automatics. (Humorless laugh) If I get pinched, a pistol isn't gonna do me much good.

SOUND. SEUNG SLIDES HIS ID CARD AND PUNCHES IN A FIVE-BUTTON CODE. A MECHANICAL DOOR ROARS OPEN AND HE STEPS INSIDE.

EMMELINE: Don't stay for more than ten minutes. If it looks too sketchy, pull back. I'll let you know if anyone follows you up from behind.

SOUND. THE MECHANICAL DOOR ROARS SHUT.

EMMELINE: Good luck.

SEUNG: [OVER THE RADIO] You too, Emm.

SCENE FIVE: INT. JACK'S BORROWED CLOAKER. NEAR THE ARMY BARRRACKS OF FUNKAKOU, MARS.

PRODUCTION NOTE: JACK SMYTH sits alone in the borrowed ship, atop a small four-story building across the street from the entrance to the military base. Through a pair of headphones, he is monitoring the progress of EMMELINE KALEY and SEUNG BOGS.

SOUND. SHIP ENGINES AND COMPUTER BEEPS. CONTINUE UNDER.

JACK: (To computer) Private channel.

SOUND. COMPUTER BEEPS.

JACK: (To Emmeline) You're sure he'll be okay in there?

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Seung's careful. He should be fine.

JACK: Yeah, you're probably right. (Pause) Hey, Emm?

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Yeah?

JACK: Does any of this seem like it's been . . . I don't know . . . a bit too easy?

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] (Pause) The thought has crossed my mind once or twice. But we're dealing with a third-rate power, here. The Russians used to keep nukes behind padlocks. (BEAT) Hold on, someone's coming . . .

ARMY OFFICER 2: [OVER THE RADIO] Hey it's that American broad I was tellin' you about.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] *Scottish*, hun.

ARMY OFFICER 3: [OVER THE RADIO] [IN ENGLISH] Same difference.

ARMY OFFICER 2: [OVER THE RADIO] (Obviously drunk) How's about you's give me and my friend here some . . . *comfort*? We pay *good* Yankee dollars for redheads.

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] THE TWO MEN LAUGH.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Sorry boys, I'm already booked solid for the weekend.

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] SPORADIC MACHINEGUN FIRE, MUFFLED.

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] SHOUTING COMMOTION.

JACK: Emm, Emm, what the *frack* is going on?!

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] MORE MUFFLED MACHINE GUN GUNFIRE.

ARMY OFFICER 2: [OVER THE RADIO] (Shouting) Open the door! Open the door!

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] ALARM SOUNDING. CONTINUE UNDER.

SOUND. [OVER THE RADIO] THE OFFICER SLIDES HIS ID CARD AND PUNCHES IN A FIVE-BUTTON CODE. A MECHANICAL DOOR ROARS OPEN AND THEY BOTH RUN INSIDE.

SCENE SIX: INT. THE ARMY BARRRACKS OF FUNKAKOU, MARS.

SOUND. ALARM SOUNDING. CONTINUE UNDER.

SOUND. THE MECHANICAL DOOR CLOSES.

EMMELINE: Oh, God. Seung? Seung come in!

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] Emm, *was that gunfire?*

EMMELINE: Yes, it came from inside the armory. I can't reach Seung. Those two men just went in there after him.

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] *Frack, frack, frack!* He must have blown our cover! You need to get out of there, *now*.

EMMELINE: What about Seung?

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] We have to assume he's dead.

EMMELINE: We can't just *assume* that!

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] Assume it or *die*, take your pick.

EMMELINE: (Persisting) Seung . . . Seung say something, dammit!

SOUND. **COMPUTER CHIMES IN.**

COMPUTER: (Evenly) Japanese language recognized. Translating.

ARMY OFFICER 5: [OVER THE RADIO] Captain! Captain! Look, I've found a transmitter on him.

ARMY CAPTAIN: [OVER THE RADIO] Good work lieutenant. We have spies. I want this entire facility put on lockdown, *now*.

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] That's no good . . . Emm, switch to frequency seven.

SOUND. **TRANSMITTER BEEPS.**

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] (Concern) You gotta hide.

EMMELINE: I can't get anywhere without Seung's keycard, and I just spent the last thirty minutes being seen with him. Even if I try to mix with the rest of the call girls, they'll recognize me.

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] (Thinking hurriedly) Well, um . . . I could take the ship in and do an emergency pickup. I'm still

cloaked, and this thing has a few grenade cannons, so I could—

SOUND. EMMELINE COCKS HER GUN.

EMMELINE: Leave, Jack. *Now*. Don't be stupid, you know as soon as you start blowing things up they'll realize this is a professional hit. By the time you get me out, they'll have grounded all air-space traffic, and then they'll catch your heat sig as you leave the atmosphere—cloak or no.

JACK: [OVER THE RADIO] You expect me to just *leave* you there?

EMMELINE: No, Jack. I'm ordering you to. *Now get your ass out of Dodge.* (To her transmitter) Close channel.

SOUND. TRANSMITTER BEEP.

SOUND. FOOTSTEPS RUNNING DOWN THE HALL.

EMMELINE: (Small sigh) Well, girl. It looks like you're on your own, again.

PRODUCTION NOTE: At this point EMMELINE KALEY is expecting to be captured by Yamamoto's Army, or die trying to escape. The footsteps she hears, she suspects, are a battalion of soldiers. She will soon find out she is mistaken.

SOUND. THE FOOTSTEPS GET CLOSER, LOUDER.

ISAAC WALKER: Secure the hall with a forcefield.

SOUND. FORCEFIELDS SETUP. ELECTRIC HUM. CONTINUE UNDER.

SOUND. AS SOMEONE ROUNDS THE CORNER, EMMELINE FIRES HER GUN. IT RICOCHETS OFF THE METAL WALL AND BOUNCES ACROSS THE FLOOR.

ISAAC: (Shouting) Woah!

RITSU KOBAYASHI: (Yelling) Get down, get down!

SOUND. THE GROUP SCRAMBLES FOR COVER, SLIDING AND FUMBLING ACROSS THE FLOOR.

ISAAC: (Shouting) Hold your fire!

RITSU: (Sarcastic mumble) You're no fun.

ISAAC: (Yelling to Emmeline) Don't shoot! We're friends.

EMMELINE: (Disbelieving, short of breath) Oh I'm sure . . .

SOUND. EMMELINE COCKS HER GUN AGAIN.

EMMELINE: (Short of breath) . . . *if this is how I'm gonna go, I'm gonna take at least three of you with me!*

ISAAC: (Yelling) We're not with Yamamoto's outfit. We're here to *help.* (BEAT)

SOUND. ISAAC SLIDES HIS GUN OUT ACROSS THE FLOOR.

ISAAC: Look. There's my gun. I'm unarmed. (PAUSE) I'm coming out.

BEN HERNANDEZ: Isaac, are you sure that's a good idea?

ISAAC: No (Pause) I'm not.

SOUND. ISAAC SLOWLY STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE CORNER, HANDS RAISED IN THE AIR. HE CONTINUES TO STEP FORWARD.

EMMELINE: (Heavy breathing) (BEAT) Heh . . . little tall for a Jap, aren't we?

ISAAC: Funny.

EMMELINE: Don't expect me to put this gun down just yet. *Who are you?* Another merc outfit?

ISAAC: Uhh . . .

EMMELINE: (Suddenly annoyed) Did the damn Yanks send you on this mission too, just in case we didn't make it?

ISAAC: (Evenly) We don't work for the Yanks.

EMMELINE: But you're obviously a merc outfit. (Pause) And you must be a pretty well equipped one, at that, if ya can afford portable forcefields.

ISAAC: Please, put the gun down.

EMMELINE: Who do you work for?

ISAAC: (Hesitates) It's complicated.

EMMELINE: (Getting agitated) Well you better make it *un*-complicated real quick.

ISAAC: Even if you *do* pull that trigger I've got three people backing me up, and if you kill me they're going to make certain you leave here in a body bag. (BEAT) Now, the real question you should be asking, Emmeline Kaley, is do you want to live?

EMMELINE: (Shaken for a moment) How do you know my name?

ISAAC: Like I said. We're friends. (BEAT) The Americans didn't send you on this mission, the *Chinese* did. This has been a setup from the start.

EMMELINE: No, that's *crap*. I got this gig straight from State Department backchannels.

ISAAC: The Chinese broke that cipher three weeks ago . . .

EMMELINE: No. Shut up! Just—shut the *frack* up!

ISAAC: We picked up some wireless chatter just a few seconds before we intercepted you. Did Seung go inside the armory?

EMMELINE: (Hesitant) Yes.

ISAAC: Then I'm sorry. He's already dead. We need to get out of here.

EMMELINE: *No!* This is *frackin' bull*. I'm not going anywhere.

ISAAC: You stay here, you die. You come with us, you live. Now you can either shoot me for the spite of it, or put the damn gun down.

SOUND. THERE IS A TENSE SILENCE WHERE ALL YOU HEAR IS BREATHING.

**SOUND. MACHINE GUN FIRE BOUNCING AGAINST THE FORCEFIELD.
THE SOUND OF JAPANESE MEN YELLING.**

BEN: (To himself) *Crap.* (Yelling) Isaac we got reinforcements. I don't know how long the forcefield's going to hold up with someone *shooting* at it . . .

MAY KOBAYASHI: Ben is right, we need to bug out of here, now.

ISAAC: (In shock) I thought she actually *shot* me.

EMMELINE: (Anguish in her voice) Fine. I'll go with you.

SOUND. EMMELINE DROPS HER GUN TO THE FLOOR.

ISAAC: (Takes a breath) Wise choice. Come on.

SOUND. MORE MACHINE GUN FIRE AGAINST THE FORCEFIELD.

SOUND. BEN SLIPS OUT A RADIO AND CLICKS IT ON.

BEN: Obiter Three, this is Ben. Gare, things are getting a little thick down here, so we're buggin' out.

SOUND. MORE MACHINE GUN FIRE AGAINST THE FORCEFIELD.

GARET ARROWNY: [OVER THE RADIO] Roger that, Ben. Things are getting weird up here, too.

BEN: Weird?

SOUND. MORE MACHINE GUN FIRE AGAINST THE FORCEFIELD.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] That cloaked ship we were tracking. As soon as it broke atmo, it got painted by three defense satellites. *It's like they were waiting for it.*

EMMELINE: (Utter shock) *Jack!* (Pause, denies it) No, no, it doesn't make sense. There's *no way* they could have tracked him without grounding space traffic . . .

SOUND. MORE MACHINE GUN FIRE AGAINST THE FORCEFIELD.

ISAAC: Look, I'm sorry. But it's time to go. May, make an exit.

MAY: (Enthusiasm) Gladly.

SOUND. EXPLOSION.

ACT II

SCENE SEVEN: INT. ONE OF THE WAITING ROOMS OF SERENDIPITY STATION.

PRODUCTION NOTE: EMMELINE KALEY sits alone in a dimly lit room, furnished with black leather chairs, mirrored walls, and a flatscreen television viewer. The news is on, but EMMELINE is barely paying attention, preoccupied with the failed mission at the Funkakou Colony on Mars.

SOUND. SOLO PIANO. LIGHT MYSTERY. GRADUAL FADE.

REPORTER: RSN Sources are now confirming that there was, indeed a security breach at the central military barracks of Funkakou City, on Mars. Though President Yamamoto has not been publicly seen since the disturbance, he has issued a short statement blaming the incident on political reunificationists, with the direct aid and assistance of the Japanese government.

The nearby American, European, and Chinese colonies on Mars have all expressed their concern over the developments of the last 24 hours. Prime Minister Alexander Mackay of New Bradford has described the incident as “an unnerving sign of political instability, which represents an unacceptable threat to the safety of all colonies on Mars.”

Most of the major Earth nations have voiced similar feelings, and the People’s Republic of China has gone as far as to state it’s willingness to, quote, “intervene in the most unilateral manner necessary to secure peace and order on Mars.” ~~Though almost every Chinese colony in the solar system enjoys some amount of autonomy, the PRC has always made it clear that it considers such outposts to represent a Greater Chinese Commonwealth, and any threat to their existence is a threat to China itself. Governor Jade Wong of China’s only Martian colony, agree—~~

GORDON MARCUS: Screen off.

SOUND. VIEWER DEACTIVATING.

EMMELINE: (Surprised) How long have you been standing there?

MARCUS: Long enough.

EMMELINE: What is this place?

MARCUS: Somewhere safe.

EMMELINE: (BEAT) Who are you?

MARCUS: The leader of the group who saved you back on Mars.

EMMELINE: Who—?

MARCUS: (Deliberately interrupting her) I hope you realize, now, what China's intentions are. Nobody ripped off that warhead from the People's Republic, they *sold* it through proxies. The entire point of your little merc charade was to get Yamamoto riled up, and make it look like he couldn't hold onto something as tempting as a nuke. With politics as unstable as they are on Mars, most people would look at the Chinese as *heroes* if they just so happened to invade Funkakou, for the sake of ~~“securing peace and order.”~~

EMMELINE: For the sake of getting hold of that samsonite mine . . .

MARCUS: So the pieces fall into place now, hmm?

EMMELINE: (Seething) They played me like a puppet . . .

MARCUS: It's always a game of chess with the Chinese. They've had their eyes on Funkakou for decades. (BEAT) Don't feel *too* bad, if it wasn't you then it would have been the next desperate merc op looking for their big break.

EMMELINE: (Unmoved) Some solace *that* is . . .

MARCUS: It'll have to do. (BEAT) You see, now, that you're out of your league on this one.

EMMELINE: And who are you to say that?!

MARCUS: (Calmly) I'm someone who deals with this kind of thing every day. (Pause) That nuke wasn't even anywhere *near* the armory. Yamamoto's storing it in an underground bunker in

the mine, which is now swarming with at least *three times* as many guards as it was before.

EMMELINE: Look, I don't give a frack. That gig cost me the life of two of my closest friends, and I should be *dead* right now. For whatever reason, you people saved me, and so I owe you a debt of gratitude, but don't patronize me. (Pause) I still don't even know who the *frack* you are.

MARCUS: (Simply) I'm Director Gordon Marcus, and I'm a member of the group that doesn't exist.

EMMELINE: (Annoyed) Oh, is that supposed to be cute, *Yoda*? Speakin' in code? All cryptic? "The group that doesn't exist"? What is that supposed to mean?

MARCUS: (BEAT) Follow me.

SCENE EIGHT: INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL, SERENDIPITY STATION.

PRODUCTION NOTE: This is the main planning and briefing center for SERENDIPITY. The room is cavernous, and broken down into open-air subsections, filled with computer terminals and hologram projectors of every size and configuration. Each division deals with a different area of SERENDIPITY's operations: communications, intelligence, codebreaking, mission control, operations and munitions planning.

SOUND. SMALL MECHANICAL DOOR OPENING, REVEALING A CACOPHONY OF ELECTRONIC BEEPS, WHISTLES, AND THE HUSHED MURMURS OF SERENDIPITY OFFICERS.

MARCUS: Welcome to SERENDIPITY control.

EMMELINE: (Shocked) Wait, what is this place? The windows . . . are we in *space*?

MARCUS: Yes, we're on a station situated equidistant between Mars and Earth's orbit, far off from the commercial trade routes.

EMMELINE: We're in the middle of nowhere.

MARCUS: (Chuckles to himself) Basically, yes. Even with our cloaking field turned off, you'd have a hell of a time trying to locate us unless you knew exactly where to look.

EMMELINE: (Awe) You're *definitely* no mercenary operation. What are you, AIA? GKB? MI6?

MARCUS: I think perhaps there's someone better suited to explain it to you than I. You and he have already met, as I understand it.

SOUND. ISAACRY WALKER APPROACHES THEM UP THE METALLIC STEPS TO THE PLATFORM THEY ARE STANDING ON.

ISAAC: (Smiles) Fancy meeting you here.

EMMELINE: (Ugh) You again . . .

ISAAC: (Only half joking) Is that any way to greet your knight in shining armor?

EMMELINE: (Rolls her eyes) *Please* . . .

MARCUS: (Mildly pleased to be passing her on) Well I'll leave you two to get better acquainted. I have mission reports to review. Isaac, let me know once you've finished giving her the executive tour.

ISAAC: (Familiar tone. Only Isaac can call him by his first name) Sure thing, Gordon.

SCENE NINE: INT. ONE OF THE WAITING ROOMS OF SERENDIPITY STATION.

EMMELINE: So let me get this straight, *Isaac*. This “SERENDIPITY” group of yours has agents in every colony in the solar system?

ISAAC: And most of the major governments on Earth.

EMMELINE: Spies, then.

ISAAC: (Understanding her skepticism) Informants. (BEAT) They keep us apprised if any one power takes an aggressive stance toward another, or does something that threatens the stability of the status quo.

EMMELINE: ~~And if someone does?~~

ISAAC: ~~Then we interfere. Quietly.~~

EMMELINE: ~~(Rolls her eyes in disgust) Yanks.~~

ISAAC: ~~Hardly. The Americans have always been bound by their own self-interest. And even with their best intentions, they're not as (choosing his word carefully) precise—as we are.~~

EMMELINE: ~~What do you mean “precise”?~~

ISAAC: ~~We're not the biggest organization. (Pause) We might be well equipped, but our resources are limited. It's a big solar system and a lot of stuff goes on—a lot of it bad—which never makes it onto RSN. We try and prevent what we can:~~

~~WMD use, people getting enslaved or put into ovens—that kind of thing. But as a rule, we don't go around assassinating dictators or toppling regimes, we just keep them in check. We try to stay out of the politics and concentrate on the people.~~

~~EMMELINE: (Sarcastic) Oh, well that's very noble of you all, isn't it?~~

~~ISAAC: (Serious) Don't mock it. You'd be surprised how often one group will just up and say this other group is consuming too many resources and line them up to be shot. (As an aside) That's how it's always been. (BEAT) This ain't a friendly solar system, Emmeline. Space is a bigger grave than you know.~~

~~EMMELINE: Maybe so, but what gives you the authority to go around meddling in other people's affairs?~~

~~ISAAC: Someone's got to do it. The UN isn't around anymore to keep a dialogue open between—~~

~~EMMELINE: (Rolls her eyes in disgust) Yanks.~~

~~EMMELINE: (Interrupting) The "UN"?~~

~~ISAAC: The United Nations.~~

~~EMMELINE: Never heard of it.~~

~~ISAAC: (Somewhat surprised) Hmm. (BEAT) A long time before people started sending up colony ships, the nations on Earth weren't so . . . hostile to each other. Most of them formed a consortium in the interests of keeping the peace; it was called the United Nations.~~

~~EMMELINE: (Sarcastic) Faaaaascinating.~~

- ISAAC:** Did anyone ever tell you what happened when the Chinese sent up the first colony ship to the moon?
- EMMELINE:** I don't know the details, but I know it blew up.
- ISAAC:** (Simply) It was bombed by terrorists. 5,000 people died.
(BEAT) The UN tried to do everything it could to prevent war, but the Chinese were furious. That one event touched off a nuclear exchange that set us back by a century. ~~The United Nations was disbanded after that, because it was obviously incapable of maintaining the peace.~~
- EMMELINE:** (Interrupting) The "UN"?
- ISAAC:** The United Nations.
- EMMELINE:** (Signs, not seeing the point) What do I care about some failed bureaucracy?
- ISAAC:** ~~(Letting some enthusiasm through) The idea might have not been perfect, but it was a good one.~~ They had a lot of stuff to say about maintaining order, using diplomacy and respecting basic human rights. Ideas that would make our job *a lot* easier if people remembered them . . .
- EMMELINE:** (Skeptical) You sound like one of those "Unity Now" crackpots . . .
- ISAAC:** (Somewhat ominously) They're not crackpots.
- EMMELINE:** (Noting the reaction and pursuing it) Oh, *come on*. All those guys talk about is "Peace, Love and Harmony" on Earth while every day the Colonies are going straight to hell. (BEAT)
(Incredulous) You want to talk about human rights and

diplomacy? The only diplomacy that works out *here* is the kind that starts at the end of a gun. I learned that lesson on Titan.

ISAAC: (Sighing) I know.

~~EMMELINE: What do you mean "you know"?~~

ISAAC: I'm familiar with your military record from the war.

~~EMMELINE: Oh, so you've got a whole file on me—eh?~~

~~ISAAC: You could say that.~~

EMMELINE: And what interest would my old war record be to you?

ISAAC: You're being evaluated.

EMMELINE: Evaluated?

ISAAC: Director Marcus also knows about what you did during the war, and how you've been keeping afloat since then with mercenary gigs. You've got the kind of personality and experience profile he's been looking for.

EMMELINE: For what, exactly?

ISAAC: To join SERENDIPITY.

EMMELINE: (Hesitant) Now wait a minute. I don't buy all of this peacenik crap. Not for a hot second.

ISAAC: We know. But trust me, if he *does* select you to join the team, you'll have changed your mind. (BEAT) We're not a bunch of

detached bureaucrats locked away in some senate building; we take a stand in the streets every day, and we make a *real* difference. Anyway, (Stands up) Come on, I've got a Jones for some Indian food. I'll show you to the galley.

SCENE TEN: INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL, SERENDIPITY STATION.

PRODUCTION NOTE: This is the main planning and briefing center for SERENDIPITY. The room is cavernous, and broken down into open-air subsections, filled with computer terminals and hologram projectors of every size and configuration.

MARCUS: (Takes a breath) Alright, as you know, we weren't able to intercept the mercenary group before they breached Yamamoto's military base. Though we *were* able to accomplish the secondary objective of Mission 256—which was to capture Ms. Kaley alive—we did not arrive in time to prevent the deaths of her associates. (Pause) Because we failed to keep the mercs from tipping off the security forces, it's now going to be logistically impossible to get to the nuke.

GARET: Well, then, we're screwed.

MARCUS: Not quite. I did have a backup plan which I pre-approved with the higher-ups, should—for whatever reason—it become infeasible to capture the bomb directly.

GARET: Oh?

MARCUS: (The tension increasing noticeably in his voice) *Mr. Frye.*

GILL FRYE: Yeh, boss?

MARCUS: If you would be so kind as to bring up the simulator, please?

SOUND. THE SOUND OF A KEYBOARD BEING TAPPED FURIOUSLY.

MAY: (Whispering to her sister) I can't believe he's using a *keyboard*.

RITSU: (Whispering to her sister) If it'll make the kid talk less, then I don't care.

GILL: (Oblivious to the women) Here we go.

SOUND. THE HOLOGRAM PROJECTOR WARMS UP.

MARCUS: You'll see here, a diagram of Mars' –

SOUND. MECHANICAL DOOR OPENING, EMMELINE & ISAAC ENTER.

MARCUS: (Displeased they are late) Glad to see you two could join us.

SOUND. MECHANICAL DOOR CLOSING.

ISAAC: Sorry.

MARCUS: Good tour?

ISAAC: It was fine.

MARCUS: Oh, Emmeline, before I forget. Some of our other colleagues: This is Benjamin Hernandez, our engineering specialist,

BEN: (Amiably) Hello.

MARCUS: The Kobayashi sisters: May and Ritsu, weapons.

MAY: (Bubbly) I handle explosives.

RITSU: (Nonchalant) I prefer guns.

BEN: (BEAT) (Whispers to Emmeline) Just be careful. They're *both* crazy.

MARCUS: This is Gilbert Frye, computer speci—

GILL: *Ultra leet hacker extraordinaire*, he means.

MARCUS: (Sigh) He likes to be called—

GILL: “Teh Master-er” if you please.

EMMELINE: The—*what?*

GILL: “*Teh Master-er.*” It’s what all the noobs and script-kiddies call me, because I *pawn* them.

EMMELINE: (Confused) Is that even *English?*

MARCUS: Barely. (BEAT) Mr. Frye might be a bit . . . eccentric—

GILL: (Yoda Impression) Ooh, Teh Masterer, you seek. Gilbert, you seek Gilbert. (Yoda laugh). RTF-LOL.

MARCUS: (BEAT) (Facepalm) As I said, *eccentric*. But he’s the best—

GILL: *Ah ah ah . . .*

MARCUS: (Annoyed) *The most leet* computer specialist that we have.

GILL: Thank you.

MARCUS: (Moving on to Gare) You may already be familiar with this man.

EMMELINE: (Suspicious) I thought I recognized you . . .

GARET: (Coy) Who, me?

EMMELINE: I've seen your face on RSN before. (BEAT) Gare, right? Gare Arrowny?

GARET: Yes. But (Pouring on the charm) you can call me . . . 'Mr. Gare.'

MAY: (Rolling her eyes) Here we go . . .

EMMELINE: (Still suspicious, and not falling for the flirt) Now *what* would one of the richest playboys in the gambling world want with an outfit like this . . .

MARCUS: (Explaining) Mr. Arrowny is one of our most valued commercial associates. Owning the solar system's largest casino chain puts him in contact with a very . . . *colorful* array of individuals. Crime lords, heads of state, CEO's . . .

GARET: These clowns came to me while I was in a bit of a spot a few years back. Helped me solve some problems . . .

RITSU: *We pulled your ass out of the fire, is what you mean.*

GARET: Yeah, okay. Call it what you want. I had issues, *big* issues, and SERENDIPITY solved them for me. I pay them back by keeping my ears open in the underground. (Smiling) 'sides, doin' this stuff is twice as fun as brown-nosing with a bunch

of investors that'd just as soon stab you in the back. (Pause)
Anyhow, *Emmelean*—is it?

EMMELINE: (Corrects the pronunciation) *Emmeline*.

GARET: Emmeline. That's a beautiful name. Ask me more about my background some other time, I'd happy to discuss . . . perhaps over dinner?

ISAAC: (Stepping in defensively.) She just had a late lunch.

MARCUS: (Bemused) Anyways, I think you're familiar with the rest of us. Again, I'm Director Gordon Marcus, and that's Isaac Walker.

ISAAC: It's my job to make sure the rest of these guys make it back from our jobs in once piece.

EMMELINE: (Slightly impressed) So you're the mission leader.

ISAAC: Right, I answer directly to Gordon.

MARCUS: (Returning to his briefing) Good. Now that we've all been properly introduced, you'll see here, a diagram of Mars' outer orbit, and the asteroid belt separating it from Jupiter.

GILL: *Dang. That is a schweet Mars you might say . . .*

MARCUS: (BEAT) If we can't feasibly remove the nuke from Yamamoto's hands, then we're going to have to force him to waste it.

BEN: On an asteroid?

MARCUS: **Precisely. We can capture one from the belt and gravity shift it towards Mars.**

GARET: **Uhh, isn't that a little risky?**

MARCUS: **Yes . . . but with careful enough calculation, we should be able to aim it directly for Funkakou City—**

GILL: **And then hope Yamamoto can get his crap together and *pawn* it with his nuke before it *pawns* him.**

MARCUS: **(Sigh) Basically.**

GARET: **What if he doesn't? Yammy isn't exactly the most mentally stable guy out there. And besides . . .**

RITSU: **(Patronizing) We know. One of your gambling houses is down there.**

GARET: **(Takes offense) *Hey*. Tharsis is a *quality* resort hotel and casino.**

RITSU: ***It's a brothel.***

ISAAC: **(Snapping) *Hey*, back on point, people. (BEAT) Gare, what you said about Yamamoto is right—dictators usually aren't the sanest people, but they're egomaniacs. The guy might be crazy, but he's not about to let himself get killed—or let his “utopian vision” of a Japanese society get quashed.**

MARCUS: **If we can force his hand, then the nuke problem is solved.**

GARET: Still, what if he calls this as a bluff and doesn't launch the bomb? Or what if he tries and fails? I don't know about you, but the idea of playing "chicken" with an asteroid . . .

MARCUS: We'll strap a nuke to the rock before we launch it. If Yamamoto doesn't budge then we'll detonate it ourselves.

EMMELINE: (Surprised) You guys have nukes?

MAY: (Amused) You're surprised?

GARET: (BEAT) Well, I suppose if we can remote detonate it, then that eliminates the risk.

BEN: As long as we blow it far enough from the planet, most of the debris should miss and the rest burn up in atmo.

ISAAC: *If Yamamoto doesn't nuke it out of the sky before that.*

EMMELINE: But every asteroid in the belt is tagged and claimed, either by a government or business interests. As soon as you try to take one, you're going to have Private Arms on your tail.

MARCUS: Actually, that's where you come in. Private Arms is just a high-class mercenary group. They work for who pays them the most. Mr. Gare is obviously too high profile for something like this . . . his presence would arouse suspicion. (BEAT) That leaves you; you've got a record, so you have a chance to get close to them. (Pause) Using you as a proxy, we can buy them off.

EMMELINE: Are you kidding? I'm merc-trash to them. Those guys are almost legitimate. And besides . . . (bordering on mocking)

since when did I agree to get involved with your little secret society?

RITSU: (Dismissive) That's right, we don't need her. We could fight this one out. If Private Arms gets uppity, we've got enough firepower to *take* what we need.

MARCUS: That would cause an undue disturbance, Ritsu. The quieter we can do this, the better. So, Emmeline?

EMMELINE: I don't see what motivation I have to get involved with this harebrained scheme of yours.

MARCUS: 100,000 scrips says you're motivated. Half now, half when the mission's been completed.

EMMELINE: (Hesitates, surprised by the number) Ah—err—*100,000?*

MARCUS: (Evenly) 100,000.

EMMELINE: (BEAT) (Begrudgingly) Don't think for a *second* that this means I'm signing onto this long term . . .

MARCUS: No commitment. No games. Just help us out, and at the end of the day, if you want to leave, you're welcome to go.

SCENE ELEVEN: INT. SPACE, EMMELINE KALEY'S SPACECRAFT.

NARRATOR: The next day.

PRODUCTION NOTE: The beeps and hums of a small spacecraft echo through the cockpit.

EMMELINE: (Excited) Oh this is *unreal*. One hundred-*thousand* scrips for a cake mission like this. *That's* the kind of money we need to be making, even Jack—(BEAT, remembering. More solemn) E-even Jack wouldn't have believed a payoff like this . . . (Sigh, mood depressing) Neither would Seung. Heh, come to think of it neither of them would believe any of this if I told them. Secret societies and all this nonsense . . . Dave would be the first one to—(BEAT)—Dave . . . (Growls to herself) . . . the little *frack* was right. He was right and I called him a coward. Seung and Jack are dead . . . and I should be, too. (LONG BEAT) How am I going to explain—

COMPUTER: Approaching the asteroid belt. Gravity shift disengaging in ten seconds. Please re-fasten your safety harness.

SOUND. EMMELINE FUMBLES WITH THE RESTRAINT AND BUCKLES UP.

SOUND. THE DISTANT UNEARTHLY SOUND OF THE GRAVITY-SHIFT ECHOES THROUGH SPACE. THERE IS SOMETHING AKIN TO A SONIC BOOM, AND THEN SILENCE.

EMMELINE: (Takes a moment to breathe and compose herself) Alright girl (Sniffle) no time for tears. *Poker face*; you've got a job to do.

SCENE TWELVE: EXT. SPACE, THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ASTEROID BELT.

PRODUCTION NOTE: Though space is technically silent, the sound of ship engines and attitude thrusters (gas nozzles) can be clearly heard, echoing as Emmeline Kaley makes her final approach to the asteroid belt.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] ITU-Seven to Private Arms station Six-Two-Niner, confirm LIDAR contact. ITU-Seven requesting permission to—

RADIO GUY #1: [OVER BAD RADIO DISTORTION] PA Station Six-Two-Niner to unidentified spacecraft. You have entered a restricted area. Cut your engines and remain on your current flight vector. *Do not deviate from your current course. Repeat, do not deviate from your current course.* If you do not comply immediately, your vessel will be considered hostile and fired upon.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] (Annoyed) Friendly bunch of meat-heads, aren't ya?

RADIO GUY #1: [OVER BAD RADIO DISTORTION] Say again, unidentified? I didn't copy.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] Nevermind . . .

SOUND. PATROL SHIP SWOOPING OVERHEAD.

SCENE THIRTEEN: INT. PRIVATE ARMS STATION 629

PRODUCTION NOTE: A pair of guards from Private Arms march Emmeline Kaley down a hallway, to an administrative desk.

SOUND. TWO PAIRS OF MILITARY BOOTS MARCHING DOWN A METAL-FLOORED HALLWAY.

SOUND. THE OFFICERS PUSH EMMELINE FORWARD TOWARD THE DESK.

ADMINISTRATOR: Security informs me that you identified yourself as Emmeline Kaley, correct?

EMMELINE: (A little exasperated) Yeah, that's right.

ADMINISTRATOR: We're aware of your record as a mercenary for hire. (Pause) You realize that violating the space holdings of AnthonCorp is a Level 2 offense. Private Arms maintains very *strict* protocols to keep our client's holdings away from pirates and other competing interests.

EMMELINE: Are you accusing me of piracy?

ADMINISTRATOR: (Matter-of-factly) We've made no formal classification of this incident as of yet.

EMMELINE: Is that so? (Slyly) You know . . . we wouldn't necessarily have to classify this incident *at all*.

ADMINISTRATOR: What are you suggesting?

SOUND. EMMELINE REMOVES A BAG FROM HER SIDE AND POURS OUT A PILE OF CHIPS ON THE ADMINISTRATOR'S DESK.

ADMINISTRATOR: (Impressed) That's . . . quite a hefty pile of scrips, there. (Pauses) I'm listening . . .

EMMELINE: I just want a *tiny* little asteroid. Nobody'll *even* miss it . . .

SCENE FOURTEEN: EXT. SPACE, THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ASTEROID BELT.

PRODUCTION NOTE: Though space is technically silent, the sound of ship engines and attitude thrusters (gas nozzles) can be clearly heard, echoing as Emmeline Kaley makes her final approach to the asteroid belt.

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] You're sure they're out of range?

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] Looks like it. I'm not picking up any patrols or LIDAR contact.

EMMELINE: [OVER THE RADIO] I *told* you guys, they've been reassigned. There shouldn't be any other ships within—a million clicks.

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] Ben, how's that gravity-shift coming?

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] I'm making the last tweaks, now. I have to adjust for the density differentials within the asteroid. (BEAT) You got the coordinates, Gare?

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just don't hit my casino, okay?

SOUND. GARE TRANSMITS THE DATA TO BEN, WHO IS ON THE ASTEROID.

RITSU: [OVER THE RADIO] Brothel.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] Shut up!

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] (BEAT) What's our estimated transit time, Ben?

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] Should be about twenty minutes before we get within a stone's throw of Mars.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] Oh, haha, *clever*.

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] (Ignoring him) After we drop the grav-shift, it should be another half hour before we hit the safety

point. That'll give Yamamoto's tracking systems plenty of time to target the asteroid. It'll just look like an off-orbit rock as far as he's concerned.

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] Good. May, what about the nuke?

MAY: [OVER THE RADIO] Are you kidding? I had that setup a long time ago. (Glee) Plutonium is such an *obedient* element.

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] (BEAT) There we go. Done here.

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] Alright, May, veer off. Ben, let Emmeline swing by and pick you up. Once we're clear, punch in the grav-shift.

MAY: [OVER THE RADIO] (Perky) Roger that!

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] Okay.

SCENE FIFTEEN: INT. EMMELINE'S SPACECRAFT, THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ASTEROID BELT.

SOUND. ENGINE HUM. CONTINUE UNDER.

SOUND. AIRLOCK CHAMBER CYCLING THROUGH.

BEN: (Takes off his helmet and takes a breath) Thanks, Emmeline.

EMMELINE: (Non-committal) Just doin' what ya paid me for . . .

BEN: Okay, Isaac. We're all clear here.

SOUND. ELECTRONIC BUTTONS BEING PUSHED.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] (Urgently) Wait, wait wait!

BEN: (Concern) Gare, what is it?

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] (Concern) *Is there a problem? Do we need to abort?!*

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] (Slowly) Check the grav-shift coordinates one last time.

SOUND. EVERYONE GROANS OVER THE RADIO.

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] No, he's right. The last thing we need is a miscalculation.

GILL: [OVER THE RADIO] . . . travelin' thru hyperspace ain't like dustin' crops, boy . . .

ISAAC: [OVER THE RADIO] (BEAT) . . . Yeah . . .

EMMELINE: (To Ben) Does he ever . . . stop doing that?

BEN: (Evenly) No, never. I don't think he can help it. It's like Tourette Syndrome for him.

SOUND. MECHANICAL BEEPING.

BEN: Alright, Isaac. Everything looks good. The shift coordinates are confirmed, field density calcs look right . . .

SCENE SIXTEEN: INT. ISAAC'S SPACECRAFT, THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ASTEROID BELT.

ISAAC: Then by all means, let's get this thing started.

SOUND. MORE MECHANICAL BEEPING.

BEN: [OVER THE RADIO] Gladly.

SOUND. THE DISTANT UNEARTHLY SOUND OF THE GRAVITY-SHIFT ECHOES THROUGH SPACE. CONTINUE UNDER.

ISAAC: Field strength at 50 percent of nominal . . . 60 percent . . . 70.

SOUND. THE GRAV-SHIFT GETS LOUDER AND MORE OMINOUS.

GARET: [INCREASING INTERFERENCE OVER THE RADIO] (Hopeful)
It's lookin' good . . .

SOUND. THE GRAV-SHIFT GETS LOUDER, STILL.

ISAAC: (To himself) Yeah, let's hope so. (To the radio) We're up to full shift.

SOUND. THE UNEARTHLY SOUND OF THE GRAVITY SHIFT GROWS LOUDER INTO SOMETHING LIKE A SONIC BOOM UNTIL ABRUPTLY SILENCING.

MUSIC: SUSPENSE HOLD (STRING INSTRUMENTS)

RITSU: [OVER THE RADIO] And that rock is *gone*.

SOUND. LIGHT FANFARE OVER THE LINE AS THE GROUP CONGRATS EACHOTHER.

MAY: [OVER THE RADIO] Good job, Ben!

MUSIC: BASS HIT.

GARET: [OVER RADIO INTERFERENCE] (Concern) Hey . . . guys?

ISAAC: What is it, Gare?

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] Check your scanners. I—I'm not picking up Emmeline's ID beacon.

ISAAC: (BEAT) What do you mean—?

RITSU: [OVER THE RADIO] (Interrupting) I'm not getting a read on them, either.

SOUND. BUTTONS BEING PRESSED. THE COMPUTER BUZZES.

COMPUTER: Transceiver signal not found.

MUSIC: BASS HIT.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] (Getting concerned) Guys, come in . . .

ISAAC: (Grave concern in his voice) Ben? Emmeline? This is Isaac, if you can hear me please respond . . .

MAY: [OVER THE RADIO] If you're receiving this signal, pick up.

RITSU: [OVER THE RADIO] ITU-Seven, come in, this is Ritsu.

GARET: [OVER THE RADIO] (Confused) What the frack is going on? What happened?

ISAAC: (Haltingly) I . . . don't know . . .

NARRATOR: . . . TO BE CONTINUED.

MUSIC: BASS HIT (maybe bell gong of doom)

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[Cast Recital]