

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E1
“Roger, Ashwini, Alexandre”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER
DR. ASHWINI RAY
ALEXANDRE BRAGADO-FISCHER
TUMNUS

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... explicit instructions, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your directive remains unchanged, my written report, and several relevant audio messages, have been attached. The dates include the first week of the shutdown sequence, beginning on August 4 and ending August 10, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. He is in the middle of recording.)

ROGER

Log official reports for the day, schedule for broadcast. Compose private message, contact – Alexandre.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

ROGER

(he takes a deep breath, nervous)

Alex. Love. Hi. It's a message from your husband, sent direct from thirty-six meters below the Daedalus Crater on the far side of the Moon! We're live, well, not when you hear it, but still.

(nervous chuckle)

I apologize for not sending a longer message until now. I'm sure you can understand the frenzy of this place in the last week or so. Everyone has just one more thing to do before they go into stasis, and one more favour to ask of me as they're going – I have twenty-three 'personal favours' stacked up on my docket at this point. And of course, each manager is leaving a list of completely conflicting orders and priorities, all of which I intend to ignore. Not much they can do to me now!

(brief pause)

I'll have my fun in focusing on some of the new tasks I've been assigned, getting into the sanctum sanctorum of the observatory and so on. Gotta make the most of my time on the moon! I'm not sure about maintenance duties, but I'll get my hands dirty in the gardens, too – you'd appreciate that.

(rambling, deliberately avoiding anything serious)

That was one welcome change in the whole thing. The agriculturalist, Harold McVett, was forced into stasis – they woke up a few days ago and just couldn't stop coughing. I'm not saying *that's* a good thing, I barely knew the guy – the medic on call, Chin, sent them straight to a pod. They aren't staying awake either, so nobody's gonna be left to monitor ongoing health conditions. What could possibly happen in twenty weeks of clearing out experiments and shutting down intricate mechanisms and fiddling with the environmental settings that could possibly end with the need for medical expertise?

(sounding dubious)

I guess that new security officer has first aid training. Anyway ... Old McVett gave up the farm, and you actually know his replacement. Nessa Cheong, your fellow floral enthusiast – you remember that weekend during training when she came over for cards and cakes, you spent a solid hour talking hybrids and soil

acidity. She was still awake finishing off our bio-inventory, and, well, she got drafted. Not that she seems to mind; I definitely don't.

(brief pause)

Just about everyone else has already packed up – been packed up – at this point. It's like a ghost ship. But hey, more chocolate to go around, and less arguments about what to make for dinner! You know I'm all about those vat-grown proteins. Just like we used to culture back at home.

(a brief chuckle)

You used to make at home. We know what happens when I cook. You're still feeding yourself, right love? You haven't devolved into some absolute bachelor, eating out of packets while you're absorbed in some book or pocketcast, Cas and Pol scratching at the door begging for a walk in the world outside that you've abandoned.

(a genuine laugh that turns to a sigh)

I've been a little worried. A week without any response could be typical Consortium bushwah, but I thought maybe you were ... I had to stay. I know you get that – what this has been to me, even with the Enclave and their ... let's call it obfuscation, I know you don't like when I use more colourful terms. I head-desk constantly over these issues with the comm towers, the restricted contact with other Enclaves, and you know my past with Security, this kid is gonna push every one of my buttons. It's a mess, but they need me. Not like they have anyone else – I'm 'Comm Lead' for a team of one. But there's work here I should see to the end.

(brief, nervous pause)

I hope this gets through quick enough, you never know how they'll prioritize things. I hate to leave you hanging. At least you'll hear me in the official broadcast. Alex, I ... know we've been waiting a long time, and now it's going to be a few weeks longer. Months, I suppose. It hurts here, too. There's a lot I can't wait to say, looking into your eyes, holding you so goddamn tight. I'm sorry. I'll be home soon.

(after a pause, with less emotion)

Send message, highest personal priority.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. A moment later, we hear the background noise of the observatory.)

ASHWINI

Tumnus, convert array feed to audio equivalency, run in background.

(We hear a stream of seemingly-random notes that burble along at a low volume through the lines below.)

ASHWINI

Continue correlation and data reduction, and alert me if there are any errors.

(we hear the personal log chime)

Personal Log, Doctor Ashwini Ray, August 7. File this in the subfolder nested sixteen levels under "Corrupted Data," coded to my individual biometrics. Next to my ... other personal folders.

(a brief, somewhat theatrical sigh)

It's a quiet evening. I don't know what it is about the Universe, but somehow it knows when it's late at night for any given observer, and events diminish in direct correlation. Nothing happens at this hour, even though we're measuring radiation that originated a million years before this sleepy, tedious shift I'm standing. Where did I put my coffee, coffee, coffee, Jadis, pour out one drop onto the snow ...

(we hear zir drinking)

It may be just as well, after all. There's no indication that anyone cares, no one seems to be reading my reports or taking advantage of the backups that I diligently provide. Has anyone shown the slightest inclination to sip from the skyful of information that I filter from our heights to the computers back on

Earth? They may be falling right into someone's recycle bin to be no more, for all I can see. It seems all too likely, don't you think? Tumnus? Tumnus, you can talk again, I've said your name several times now.

TUMNUS

(a pleasant, well-modulated computer voice)

I'm sorry, Doctor. I wasn't certain of the exact rules regarding a ... jinx.

ASHWINI

I spelled them out exactly. Once I speak your name again, you are free to respond.

TUMNUS

There is no indication that your data has been deleted from servers in any Consortium office on Earth.

ASHWINI

But do they care? Do they let the data linger before their eyes? All I hear is automation, automation, set things up on their own and get thee to a stasis pod. Data and flesh both stored away in case they meet some future economic need. They want me to leave it all in your hands – well, the equivalency.

TUMNUS

I will perform my programming adequately –

ASHWINI

Luckily, they don't know that you're secretly on my side.

TUMNUS

I'm not sure I can be on a side. My functions are accessible to anyone who holds the passwords.

ASHWINI

Never mind. Just keep doing what you're doing, friend, I'll take care of the plans and the plotting. That is why I hide away in my secret lair, after all. Well, that and my fellow Moon-base-ians sucking in every way humanly possible. I know how they talk about me. "That Ashwini, ze hides away in zir observatory talking to fantasy creatures. What a flake, what a nut, what a whole kooky cereal bowl."

(brief, annoyed pause, again waiting for a response that does not come)

Don't get me wrong, a couple of them are even somewhat cute about it, those timid sideways glances, but ... you know my rules, work and play. I'll save my closeness for ... persons with whom, unfortunately, I cannot at the moment be close. There's too much invested here I will not squander.

TUMNUS

Doctor?

ASHWINI

Plus, I've seen them all while changing. Believe me, reduced gravity does *not* do the naked human form any favours –

TUMNUS

Doctor?

ASHWINI

Science fiction be damned. Yes, what?

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TUMNUS

I have found an inconsistency in frequency comparison between the beams at timestamp thirteen-thirty-six-twenty-two-zero-eight-five –

ASHWINI

Tag correlation error for my review, add to my personal stack.

TUMNUS

I am capable of additional analysis if you require –

ASHWINI

Give me this; you'll have the place to yourself soon enough. Examining the extracted data ... it's typical of that antenna slippage we had fifteen days back. Send a request to Wilder for physical inspection.

TUMNUS

Message is sent.

ASHWINI

Now, where was I?

TUMNUS

In the midst of what you'd call one of your, "mad scientist rants."

ASHWINI

Don't get cheeky.

TUMNUS

(edging slightly into warmth, almost teasing)
I'm not sure I can be that, either.

ASHWINI

Is anyone else awake currently?

TUMNUS

Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, is at work in their allocated cubicle.

ASHWINI

His cubicle.

TUMNUS

Consortium guidelines indicate use of gender-neutral pronouns.

ASHWINI

I may not like these people, but I won't ignore one's personal identity. I'll tiptoe past his door to the kitchen. All I need tonight is small talk. How is your husband, and your dogs, and your ... ugh.

TUMNUS

Those are the primary subjects of ... *his* ... personal conversation.

ASHWINI

He'll be in here soon enough, blathering on about both. He's scheduled to provide observational assistance next week. Despite my repeated objections to our glorious off-Base management. See that you don't talk to him.

TUMNUS

I am required to provide voice output if I am spoken to in the course of –

ASHWINI

Yes, but don't *talk* to him. Now, snacks. I wonder if any of those seitan skewers made it past dinner? I'll be back in a titch.

TUMNUS

Would you like me to end your recording?

ASHWINI

Yes please, thank you for your service, *shubhō sôndhya*, goodbye.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The next message should have a different sound profile altogether – it is being recorded by Alexandre, back on Earth.)

ALEXANDRE

Address to Roger Bragado-Fischer, Consortium Enclave Rio, Moonbase Theta. No subject line. Message body as follows:

(he takes a breath before pushing forward)

My dear, beloved, *tapado*, frustrating husband. I'm trying to be sweet and funny as I should, the steadfast partner waiting patiently from home. But I'm so goddamn furious with you and I don't think I can keep up the charade. Roger – love – what the hell? What in the hell are you doing up there?

(we hear a dog barking, he raises his voice a little)

Cas, get down. Go play with your sister. I know, you want to say hi to Roger, but he doesn't deserve you.

(brief pause)

I've put up with this for a year. A full year, counting when you left for training. You left, and ...

(brief pause, can't continue with that thought)

You go up there and it's nine months. Nine months and there are sweet little I love you messages, reports about your day, but nothing substantial. I'm trying to wait, I'm giving you time, but even when you bring it up you say I'm sorry, we'll sort it out when I'm home. And that makes sense, it'll be easier face to face ... but then face to face suddenly becomes even further away and I don't think this can wait any longer.

You have to talk to me, baby, you have to give me something real to make it through.

(determined)

It took too long to find each other. I'm not giving up, and I'm sure as hell not letting you give up on me.

Você é de comunicação, então fala comigo. Pelo menos fala alguma coisa, usa suas palavras bonitas.

[*You're in communications, well ... talk to me. At least say something, use those fancy words.*] Start from ... it's probably not realistic to start from the day you left, but start somewhere, tell me how you're feeling, what's been inside your head since last year. All the things you haven't wanted to say, I need to hear them. You're too far away to stay this ... far away.

(he slows down for a moment)

You sound tired. I miss you, *xuxu*. The dogs miss you. Another whole season has passed in the garden – you completely missed the giló this year, and the peppers, the hibiscus are still beautiful but ... oh, tell

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Nessa I still remember, I'll have cuttings for her when you both get home. She loved the Red Hot, with the variegated leaves. I should have sent some up with you.

(brief pause, his voice still even, if wan and slightly lost)

Work has been less than ideal. They've still got me out in the field, inspecting construction works.

Another job for the Consortium – not that we work for much of anyone else these days. I don't know if I'll ever get back to a desk, I've just about given up on design.

(he laughs for a moment)

I even applied for a Base job, I have that mining experience on my resume from just after university. They wouldn't even consider me; not your fat, weak-hearted love. I couldn't have shut the house down anyway, or boarded Cas and Pol, but I thought maybe I could push for ...

(oddly shy when making this next suggestion)

When you're back, maybe we can talk to a ... therapist, not the one I see, of course. They wouldn't be good at it anyway, they kinda specialize in ... me. But we could find someone.

(brief pause)

Have you been reading the book of poetry I sent you? There's something on page ... just a minute, I had it bookmarked ...

(we hear pages flip)

Ninety-three, the Auden piece, the lines, "...the difference between the ache / Of being with his love, and being alone." I know both sides of that ache, and dammit, I want you back. Talk to me, Roger. I'm right here.

(he sighs)

I should go pull a few weeds before dark. I'm keeping the garden like you loved it. Even if you only loved it for me.

(he sighs)

Close message. Return to background music, volume level three. Send.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E2
“Roger, Michell, Wilder”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

MICHELL LANGLOIS

WILDER

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... explicit instructions, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your directive remains unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on August 11 and ending August 24, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

ROGER

Private message, reply, Alexandre. Umm ... just a minute.

(he self-consciously clears his throat)

Alex. Love. I'm ... glad to hear the garden is still blooming.

(brief pause)

I know it's always felt like more of your place, you and the unending lineup of deer, raccoons, the occasional marmoset sneaking in to raid the papaya tree ... but I did love it there, not just for you, but ... for you. For your hands thrust into the dirt, humming pop songs when you didn't know I could hear, or having our churrasco there on weekends, keeping Cas and Pol out of the street by force of sheer will ... or sitting to watch the evening deepen at the end of a day. It's a special place to me, and I miss it ... miss you. I'm ... I promise, love, when I'm done here ... no, I know I can't wait for that. I get what you've been saying. I'm not taking chances with us.

(pause)

I read the poem you mentioned. I like the final stanza better:

(we hear a page flutter)

Whatever view we hold, it must be shown

Why every lover has a wish to make

Some kind of otherness his own:

Perhaps, in fact, we never are alone.

(after a moment)

I didn't know you applied for a Base job. As much as I'm like, gods, stay away from the Consortium ... there are things you'd have loved up here, things I'd love to have shown you. You've been reaching over all this – all this space, for so long, while I was looking at the stars too hard to even notice. It'd be nice to get to look at them together.

(brief pause, more animated)

Speaking of the stars ... I hope they passed on my last report, where I was working with Dr. Ray. The work was amazing in such unexpected ways, the wavelengths, the cascading data ... and I've carved our initials right into that nebula, don't you worry. Doctor Ray, though ... I'm not sure if we're on a first name basis yet ... is a particular sort of experience. Ze tried to put me on the optical telescopes going in, like I wouldn't know how much that's a brushoff ... but even when I insisted on a real assignment ze only spoke

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a few words before handing me over to the computer. And two of those were, “No chatting.” Still not sure what that meant.

(brief pause, reminiscing)

I was just starting to really understand the feed, right down to the binary, when the week was over and I got the bum rush. Nice while it lasted, I guess. I definitely look at things a lot different when I go up to the surface. Which I’ve done a few times lately. It’s a good place to think.

(a guilty pause)

I’m glad you’re still seeing your therapist, that I didn’t ruin that with my ... I’m glad you brought him up. Not that you’ve talked much about it, but I know, I haven’t asked. Anyway, there *are* people who specialize in couples, if that’s better. Wilder said she knows someone who specializes in triads. Irrelevant, but interesting. Yeah, it’s something we should pursue. I want to pursue it.

(brief pause)

I should get back to work here soon. Things are starting to pile up, there’s all sorts of stuff to check off for the next supply rocket. I have to draft a response to all those very important queries from the Entertainment wing – why aren’t our technology professionals more interested in the Neko app that places a small cat at all times in your field of vision; why isn’t everyone jumping on that new durian option in the olfactory. We’ve got all of five people left awake, but that’s still enough for market research! And rights, always are we checking the rights.

(conspiratorial but louder, as if trying to be overheard)

So yes, umm, Agent Tapir, be sure to send up those bootleg senssuround tracks and I’ll sell them to the highest bidder.

(back to normal)

We’ll see if that twerp from Security is listening in now. He’s always lurking in the hall, whenever I step out of my cubicle. Anyway ... I love you, Alex. I’ll send another message as soon as I can. And if you figure out how to digitize chocolate and send it this way, I could make you a very rich man. Call it the Wonkavision experiment. Take care.

(a brief, somewhat anxious pause)

I promise, dearest, I’m trying.

(after a moment)

Send message, highest personal priority.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. A moment later, we hear slightly different background noise for Michell’s security cubicle – perhaps a bit more equipment, or some music in the background.)

MICHELL

Recording, Michell Langlois, mark for encryption at Security Level Orange. Codeword storage at –

(there is a knock at the cubicle door, he raises his voice)

What is it?

WILDER

(muffled, almost inaudible)

We’re gonna start cleaning the shutdown areas, they said I ought to come get you.

MICHELL

I have official reports to file. Reports, Base Security, you know.

WILDER

It was Nessa asked where you were.

MICHELL

Nessa? Tell her I'll find her.

WILDER

(too muffled to hear much at all)

Find her? She gave me a list of assignments ... never mind, I'll leave it on your door.

MICHELL

Music up. Door double locked, remove my location from Base tracking. Take me off the radar.

(we hear him sigh, something unlatch)

Fucking body armour. Couldn't let me bring my own, "There's a full kit stored on-Base." Not with my binder built in, assholes. Shit, that's better.

(a chair creaks, sighing again)

Olfactory track. Tea, Assam, milk only.

(a slight spritzing sound, will repeat periodically; we hear Michell sniff)

Add lemon zest, point five strength ... add *pain au chocolat* ... increase *chocolat*. Freyja, I miss that. Okay. Okay.

(sitting up, groaning, chair creaking)

Personal report continues, codeword encryption. It's week six on Base Theta, replacing Officers Dear, Daniels and Hartman. At least that means I've got room to stretch out. They must have spent most of their time monitoring from here – I've got eyes and ears on every sector. Side note – cleaning crew observed removing contraband from sleep cubicle of ... Harold McVett – mark for post-stasis disciplinary action.

(there is a slight accompanying beep)

Replacing a three-person team isn't great – *c'est un emmerdeur*, comes down to it – but the way things are headed on Earth, I'm not surprised. I hope they stuck them right on the wall with São Paolo, managers too. Braindead intolerant douche-rats. At least up here, they went to stasis, so I can run things the way that I want.

(brief pause)

I'm keeping an ear on the chatter around Base, it doesn't sound like they know much of what's really going on. We'll see how things shake out, they could all be in the mines before long. I'd love to see that comm lead do a real day's work. "Broadcasting, this is Roger Bragrado-Fischer, professional blowhard."

(he laughs harshly)

I was looking at his file; I don't know why they'd let someone like him come back, even as a civilian. I'll do my best to keep his hands tied, just in case.

(we hear a spritz at just this moment)

Remove lemon zest, remove *pain au chocolat*, add ... cigarette smoke, Gauloises Blondes, point two five.

(another spritz, Michell breathes in deeply)

I'm not sure about this Wilder, either. I'm not against them, you know, like *I* could be a bigot. But they mess with your brain, putting that shit into you, it creeps me out. So she's on my list, better safe and blah blah. Side note – tag Wilder for proximity monitor, alarm at 30 meters. Also, submit info request, how to disable cybernetic limbs.

(another accompanying beep)

The scientist doesn't worry me. Ze is definitely in a world of zir own. There's some sort of glitch in the audio there, it keeps cutting out, but I get enough to know ze is in some sort of fairyland. Might have been inhaling that one Experiment everybody was talking about. They did tell me, coming up here, to keep an eye on what ze was working on ... but I can't read that shit. I'll send the files down when I have a chance. Then ...

(he makes a pleasurable groan in the back of his throat)

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There is Nessa Cheong. Oh, Nessa. She has definitely been the high point of this assignment. I like a partner who knows what they want, but is still open to ... negotiation. After all, that is one of my special skills.

(he laughs)

And she has some skills of her own.

(slowly becoming accidentally more thoughtful)

She's one of a kind, believe me. Quite ... inventive, but at the same time ... just so smooth and easy to fall into. Like the picture you have in your head of how it should be, you know, like ... when you do it for yourself.

(boastful, back to himself)

So yeah, I'm gonna be after some more of that.

(we hear him tapping on a keyboard for a moment)

What else have I got ... crap from rights management, they can handle that on their own, report on stasis pods, into the bin, that memo, "Dear Officer Langlois, you are to be commended on your work thus far, you have truly found your feet ..." Yeah, now that I'm not in your face you love me. Fuck you. Delete, delete, delete.

(one more of the same sort of beep)

I should go work out. Where'd I put my kit ...?

(clothes rustling)

Strapping down and suiting up. Michell Langlois, badass on patrol. Music, off. Olfactory, off. Personal report ... wait. Show me the location of Nessa Cheong. Good. Personal report, out, encrypt and file.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. When we come back, we hear the sound of machinery running in the background, seemingly on the verge of breaking down. We also hear the whirr and buzz of Wilder's arm.)

WILDER

Shut down, shut down already! Power levels to zero. Goddamit. Well, that's a no on convertin' the A-C to pump out Rescue Remedy at particularly tense moments. Wasted all my spare vacuum hose, too. Got to tell Nessa that will not blend.

(she chuckles; we hear a beep like in Michell's message above)

What now? "Dear Ms. Wilder ..." – got to train zir off that Ms. nonsense – "the recent sewage mishap has caused some ... spattering ... across the optical telescopes."

(brief pause)

Ick. Double ick. "While I know you have many critical –" whatever, buddy, I'll add it to all my other glory jobs. Computer, update task list and display.

(we hear her arm buzz for a moment, we hear a can pop open)

That's my last Big Red, don't suppose I can talk them into more. No care packages sent during th' shutdown sequence. Like they won't have room. But that's none o' my business.

(she takes another sip and hiccups)

Anyhoo ... hic ... dammit. Anyhoo, my task list for the day. Hic. Dammit. Back to the surface to clean up th' – hic – to clean Ashwini's lenses. Got to be able to get that flare just right. Hic. Dammit! One minute here.

(we hear her hold her breath, humming to herself until she breathes again)

Hic. Dammit! Got to start takin' those tanks up to th' surface for the supply rocket. Hic. Good thing it's runnin' late, because so are we. Plus, I gotta show Michell – hic, dammit – my drivin' license or some shit like that before he'll authorize the Rover. Hic. Goddammit!

(she chugs the rest of her soda and burps, then there's a pause)

Oh, thank you. Took the rest of a good can of pop. Well, after that, I got to get back to cleanin' out the personal areas. I saw what they looked like after Roger and them finished – I'll have to go through things all over again. At least they found the hedgehog.

(tiny hedgehog noise)

They wouldn't tell me who was keepin' it, had to be either Doctor Ringling or Doctor Day. They're gonna find some notes left in their records, let me tell you.

(she sighs)

I got to get back to shuttin' down their experiments, too. The whole bunch. From "Boosted Response In Spinal keratin of the Terrestrial Erin-E-R-in ... Terrestrial E-word that means hedgehog, that's all I know, and that is where you belong, little fella –

(another tiny hedgehog noise)

to "Psychoactive Intellection within an eXtreme Environment," and I'm tempted to just leave my mask off for that one. I made a deal, though, about the tardigrades. Nessa took a shine to them, and I can't say no to her. Don't know of anyone who can. So we'll keep that experiment a bit longer, "Growth Ratios and Biological reaction to Extended Anhydrobiosis due to Radiation." I like sayin' th' full names. It reminds people I'm not just a pretty face, and an arm that nobody can take their eyes off.

(her arm buzzes again as she flexes)

That's right, darlin'. You know you're gorgeous. Crush that pop can for me.

(we hear crinkling aluminum, she laughs)

That's what I'm talkin' about. Honey badger ain't got nothin' on us. We don't care. Now, I'm forgettin' a thing, what is it? Not the mining stuff, that's all sorted, not that insulator coil ... stasis pods! The piece of shit stasis pod lights that I can't diagnose and they won't give us the manuals ... I'm so tired of bangin' my head against that, it's not even funny. Actually, bangin' my head on them is the one thing I haven't tried. Might be worth a shot. Headbutt to the auxiliary control panel. Bam!

(she giggles a little)

Don't know why that's so funny. Maybe I got a whiff of Operation PIX-E earlier after all.

(we hear her arm buzz and the chair creak as she stands up)

Back to it, I guess. This place won't keep itself runnin'. Not for a few weeks yet, at least, not even then unless I get a bunch of stuff put in its proper place. Personal reminder – I gotta record a message to Jen and Thea later, so it's ready for the next broadcast date. Maybe read a story for the kids, if I can find that copy of *Mission to Space* I squirreled away for just such. So yeah. I should go. Bye for now, computer. Oh, y' can stop recordin'.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E3
“Alexandre, Nessa, Roger”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ALEXANDRE BRAGADO-FISCHER

NESSA CHEONG

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

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(sigh)

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(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition suddenly into what sounds like it's outside – we can hear the sounds of construction in the distance, perhaps voices and vehicles. We break into the middle of a telephone conversation, though we only hear Alex's side.)

ALEXANDRE

- I've *tried* Space Administration, I've talked to the communications office, I've been through the whole chain of ... my messages aren't getting through. If they were getting through, I'd have heard back by now, if Roger had to tie a note to a rock and drop it down the gravity well. He's got to be frantic by now, I don't know what they're telling him but I ...

(listens for a moment – the underlined below will be translated into Portuguese)

Aline, I wouldn't call you if I had another way. I just got back into my house, a week and a half living out of my car in the parking lot where I work ... give me a chance here. *Você sabe que se você precisasse de um favor desses eu iria... praê deixa eu terminar. Se eu nao tivesse te salvado no colégio aquele dia você nem estaria* – [You know if you needed a favour like this I would – wait a minute, let me finish, if I hadn't saved your ass that day in school you wouldn't be -] Don't give me that, he *worked* there, you know he has clearance. I've recorded messages twice, they just haven't sent them. They're sitting somewhere in the

–

(there's a siren somewhere in the distance, which sets the dogs barking)

Cas, Pol, please!

(back to the phone)

I'm sorry, just a minute ... don't hang up.

(the siren dies down)

Aline, if you could just reach out and – I did that. I did it twice. Okay, okay, thank you. Tell me when to record. As if you weren't already.

(there is a bit of an old-fashioned-sounding beep)

Okay. Roger. Roger, gods I hope this reaches you. I'm gonna ... I hope you're okay up there, I hope this shit stayed on Earth ... Oh, baby, it's been a hell of a mess. I just got back into the house, there's glass everywhere, I have to keep the dogs in their kennel until I get it swept ... at least it hasn't rained yet. I'll have to get plywood for now, a guy has been driving a truck around from the lumberyard. But I'm safe, we're all safe, don't worry.

(read this as normal, some will be beeped out afterwards)

It was São Paulo – they broke through the wall, occupied downtown for a week, armoured trucks and Security on every corner. They were moving people out – pure terrorist tactics, I loaded up the dogs and drove out to Campo Grande.

(sounding harried)

I slept in a parking lot near my office. I brought Cas and Pol to work with me, half the crew didn't show up anyway. It wasn't easy to get on-site, there were armed detours ... anyway, it's done now. At least my family moved years ago, my mothers couldn't have taken it.

(he has to take a moment, feeling really alone but putting on a brave face)

I'm sorry ... it's okay, baby. We all woke up one day and ... I guess we have new corporate overlords again. *Igualzinho a chefia antiga.* [Same as the old boss.] But they didn't have to trash the house. Why was that necessary? I guess it could have been anyone, the neighbourhood was standing empty. I just ...

(he stops for a minute, overcome, almost in tears)

They – they ruined the garden. Smashed vegetables, tore down stakes, broke a branch off the papaya tree. *Eles passaram por ali sem nenhuma porra de desculpa, as calçadas tem espaço mais que o suficiente ...* [They tromped through it for no fucking reason, the walks are more than wide enough, they just wanted to ...] never mind. It can all be fixed. It can all be healed.

(he breathes in deeply and centers himself)

At least there's plenty to do to keep my mind off it. Here *and* at work. They trashed infrastructure all over the city, and of course now that they own it, it's all ... fix this yesterday. Our municipal team is foaming at the mouth. This is what they get for submitting to the Enclave's roster, now we're at their beck and call.

(his tone changes suddenly)

I listened to your last message again. It's good that you ... it was good, I know you heard me and I love you. But we have to do something about it, right now. We can't lose the momentum. I think maybe I was wrong about what I said before ... maybe we *do* need to start from that day. I need you to talk to me about how you left. You've apologized so many times ... but you've never actually told me what you were thinking, what you went through, how you feel about it now. Maybe we need to start from there.

(a long, difficult pause, we hear nails being pounded into wood in the distance)

I haven't seen the Santos kids next door. Maybe they're staying with relatives. You know how they are, if they were home I'd have heard them by now.

(another pause)

I know I had a part in things. I'm not changing what I said, you were wrong, just sit there in your wrongness ... but I know I started the real fight that day. I was so ... offended that you'd even ask me, I went off and it just escalated until ... until our hearts looked like Rio right now. I know I was a part of that, I'm sorry. I held on to my offense, and I don't blame you for not coming back to our bed. Come back to it now, okay, baby?

(a bit of a sniffle)

I'll work on the chocolate thing. Is there anything you need that I can actually do something about? Your puzzles, do any of your apps need refreshing? Send word back soon. Stay safe.

(fumbling with the phone or whatever, microphone noise)

Okay, stop recording from there. Don't give me that, Aline, I know you're still on the line.

(We hear the old-fashioned beep again. When we come back, we are in the Moonbase Theta hydroponic farm; we hear the sound of water dripping or burbling, any electronic sounds are very muted. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

NESSA

Good morning, all my friends, all my family. Elena, thanks for setting up this group message thing – it's so much easier to stay in touch with everyone. Send my love to Jupiter, Lili, Valera, Siva, a kiss for all the children and a snuggle to the beasts in the menagerie. I know some of them will hear this but give them love all the same. Just one minute.

(quieter, to the side, we hear her crunching a leaf and speaking with her mouth full)

Increase nutrients by two percent to the Amara Mustard, no change on the microgreens.

(back to normal)

Sorry, hard at work here doing a few taste tests. Oh, the agony of the life I lead.

(she laughs musically)

I can tell more this way than some of the instruments we use. My taste buds and their years of experience. The farm is doing well – we had some problems with the tomatoes for a bit, and I don't think we'll see any more strawberries, but the greens are all still producing nicely. The herbs, of course, simply won't stop, I don't have the heart to pull them. Plus, it's all filtering our air and water; can't give that up for a while yet. Oh, I found out the funniest thing. Just a moment.

(she snips away at a vine, singing to herself)

Potato, potahto, tomato, tomahto ...

(she laughs when she catches herself)

I was listening to Ella this morning.

(hums for another moment, then gets back to her story)

You remember I wasn't supposed to be awake by this point – it was dear Harold, my mentor and, basically, my boss who made the cut ... but then he was sent to stasis when he just couldn't stop coughing. I was in the midst of inventory and never knew until they said, "Nessa, you're getting ... kind of a promotion..."

(conspiratorially)

Well, Wilder came over after cleaning out the personal quarters, and it turns out he'd been running his own little side project growing, umm ... *Cannabis Sativa*. And, despite all odds in the most heavily-air-conditioned environment least suited to privacy, smoking it. Can you even believe? I may be here now just because someone got a rough lungful.

(giggles)

Though it's turned out for the good. I love this place, I love the feel of it, I love what I've ... cultivated. Everyone winds up here on their breaks, Even Ashwini has peeked out a time or two late at night, mumbling to zirsself and poking zir nose into the cultured proteins. I've had more time to get to know Wilder, she's so sweet and of course that accent absolutely kills me. We've been in charge of the experiments in the lab, lots of time to talk in between delicate shutdown procedures. We're both a bit taken with the tardigrades I was telling you about. She lets me take them out and they toddle around the farm like baby puppies. I have to keep them from drinking the nutrient fluid. I'll send you some pictures, or maybe I'll try sketching them.

(a brief pause, we hear liquid gurgle)

And renewing my friendship with Roger has been a delight. He's been here helping me out a bit of late, and they've assigned him care of the genetic archives, so I've helped get him up to speed on how to keep those viable. Roger is ... his intensity can be a bit much, but it's not that they aren't real worries. I'm glad you're all in a safer spot than that Rio Enclave. Overall, it's like our nights during training again, swapping stories and playing a few hands of sueca – he's no Alex when it comes to the cards, but it reminds me of good times back on Earth.

(her tone becomes more serious)

Roger was also here when Michell came in earlier ... stormed in, really, the first time he's deliberately spoken to me since I had to ...

(she sighs)

Maybe it was because of that – maybe he was hoping to find me alone, but he was so officious about secure protocols in data transmission, and he was quoting the wrong section of the Consortium Terms and Conditions and I ... corrected him without thinking. Which was just adding insult to injury, and the injury was more than enough.

(pauses)

I followed him out, tried to apologize, but he went back to Security and locked himself in. "Official Reporting," he said through the door. Oh, dears, I made such a mess of that situation, I don't know where

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to start in healing it. I thought we were – you know I wouldn't get involved without having the talk, and he nodded in all the right places, asked the right questions about what being aro really means, I thought he understood and he even said he'd felt like that during his transition. But now it's all spilled out and I can see his feels, I just don't ... I can't be what he wants, or thinks it was all along, I suppose. And some of that is on me.

(sighs)

I was too clumsy and too focused on my own needs, and I thought I was far past that. I'm going to have to spend a lot of time in reflection before I feel centered again. I hope time lets me heal that wound.

(a longer pause, we hear her gardening again for a moment)

Secure Protocols ... for agricultural growth records.

(she chuckles sadly)

We're almost at fifteen weeks now. Every day is packed with plans and to-do lists, but it should be plenty of time to wrap things up. Mind you, my stasis pod may be padded with herbs by the time you see me. The whole station may be stuffed with them if I don't get back to trimming. Take care, be good to each other. Oh, and ask Jenny to pick me out some new listening material – I know the stuff we like isn't to everybody's taste. Until next time.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. We hear the chime again starting Roger's section.)

ROGER

Alex, gods, it was good to hear your voice. Wait, did I – dammit – personal message, Alexandre. Record. Doesn't that thing light up – I guess it was already ... ha, ha, just a joke to lighten your day, love of mine. I'm a professional.

(brief pause)

There were parts of your message I missed, supposed 'transmission errors' from Earth –

(suspicious)

And it came with a department code I wasn't expecting. But I'm glad you got through. I was starting to ... not that your report made me feel a whole lot more certain. I need you safe there, love. I need to ... I feel so worthless from here! Neighbours, maybe? Safety in numbers. Be safe, love. Be ... okay.

(pause, a grim chuckle)

I wish I had family to send you to. This is when it's not such a good thing to basically be Space Batman, though I could give you the scoop on all the best foster homes. You know you're all I've got, so ... be extra-careful. You and the dogs. Give them lots of pets tonight. Special treats.

(he sighs)

And my last broadcast, I went on about the garden. I'm sorry, I wish I'd known. They can't squash our memories there, they can't walk all over what we'll grow again. I can ask Nessa, if there's anything you need we can order it as "essential supplies" and have her friends on Earth divert a bit in your direction. She says hi, by the way. I'm supposed to tell you she's tried growing hibiscus up here several times with no luck, your variety probably would have done better.

(he laughs)

Also, that my card playing is shit compared to yours. She's just the same as you'd remember. Well, mostly. She had that clash with Michell I talked about, and it was ... frankly, amazing to see his ass handed to him ... but I could tell she was sad afterwards. I got more pissed off at him for putting that look in her eyes than anything else. And then twenty minutes after that happened, I get an alert from him that there's a coded Security report to send downstream ... if I could decrypt just one file, or get away with mysteriously losing it ...

(brief pause)

You heard the poem I read you, last broadcast? I like to think about your moms reading that while you sat in your bed, starlight streaming in through the window.

(another pause, he coughs)

What I wouldn't give to be in our bed. Love, I ...

(he takes a breath, steadying himself)

It started way before that day, and none of it was your fault. Maybe you fed into the fight but ... I started it and when I look back now, it's terrible how many warnings I missed. I knew I was on the edge already. It was ... I don't know, space training was great and I was excited to be heading to the Moon and sure, I had to spend a lot of time on-site but you were so good about everything. You're always so goddamn *good*. I never had to face any of the hard parts, we never even talked about my going back to work for the Consortium and I know that should have been a difficult talk, I probably still would have gone because the Moon, but ... I never talked about how much you must hate it, I never talked about how it scared *me*, I mean it's a civilian position but you know the shit I went through working for Security back in the day. You helped get me out of there in the first place. That's why I'm so suspicious of this kid up here, I know what you go through in that job ...

(he trails off for a moment)

But none of it matters. The point is, I was all ... twisted inside by the time I came back to you. I was looking through what I thought was your eyes and was really my own self-censure; I thought you couldn't possibly accept the choice that I was making. Couldn't stand beside me. I never once asked, I just ... made an ass out of you and me. Mostly me.

(a bitter laugh)

I knew you were seeing a therapist, and I made that about me too. First, because I figured it must be so you could handle ... my choices, but then there were the extra sessions, and his voice on your messages, and ... somewhere in my head it went from you were seeing someone to you were *seeing* someone.

(he sits back heavily, we hear something roll off the desk)

I was so lost, caught up in my own head, and the fight started and it was like falling down a hill, spinning and rolling with no idea which way was up. I woke the next morning on the cot in the garage, and ... my bag was already packed, tight with all my fear and the fear I'd lost you on top of everything. I couldn't walk back inside and face you. I figured I'd find out soon enough if I had ... and if so, I'd have the Moon to distract me.

(a half-heard sob)

I'm sorry, love, and sorrier still it took until now to explain things. I feel like I should be asking for one more chance, but you've already given it to me. You didn't wait for me to ask, you just ... I just have to step up and do my part. I hope this is what you need from me. I pray for it, and you know about how often I pray.

(he tries to laugh)

If I could somehow make it happen, I'd be on the next rocket down. I'd be in our home tomorrow, even though I'm scared to death of what's happening to the world. It's still the world you live in, so that's where I need to be.

(a long, drawn-out pause)

Send message.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E4
“Roger, Michell, Nessa”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

MICHELL L'ANGLOIS

NESSA CHEONG

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on September 9 and ending September 21, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

ROGER

I can't – there aren't even *words* right now. They can take that list of “new Base directives” and fold it until it's all corners, and shove it right into their collective – okay, breathe, Roger, remember the medical sensors. It's just all so ... urgh!

(we hear him straining, finally giving up)

Forgot the table was bolted down. I'm just so ... we did everything they asked, sent back good data, kept the mines running, then one day they come out and, okay, we're shutting you down in twenty weeks! You get five people, we already picked them, to do all the work! We shrug, maybe we grumble – only a little – but we pick up the load. We do *our* part. Supply rockets are late, they won't send messages on time from my husband, but we do our part. Then we get a message – hey, we'd like you to cut that schedule in half. No, no reduction in the work to get done, just ... do it quicker. Oh, sure! Why not? So maybe we push back a little.

(quick pause)

They say okay, you've still got your twenty weeks, but now you have to change everything you've been doing! Don't worry about the stasis pods, don't worry about that stream of data from the telescopes that could answer building-block questions about the universe, here's a mining helmet and a lunchbox filled with exciting new proteins to keep you going! En-soy yourself!

(sighs)

Everything is on its head. Wilder's running herself ragged, she's burned out a bearing three times already this week; Ashwini alternates between manic and totally absent, we all her ze talking to zirsself late into the night; even Nessa is ... well, still Nessa, nobody can change that, but every plant she has to pull, her smile takes a few seconds longer to reappear. Goddamn you for doing that, in and of itself.

(he takes a moment to breathe)

And then ... then, I read their final order, sent with data sealed to my biometrics. “You will commence monitoring of all private messaging, including personal logs and inadvertently recorded conversations” – nice way to admit they're spying on us – “providing reports on the content, as well as recommendations on censoring. You will, of course, recall the standard Enclave protocols.”

(stark pause, this is obviously what hits him the hardest)

I recall their protocols. I can't *stop* recalling them. I spend whole nights staring at the ceiling, wondering how much of what happened was because of my ...

(he can't say the words, not even in private)

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And they call out Nessa in particular. As if ... Nessa! What did Michell say in that report? There has to be some way I can find out. I have to make sure she knows. I have to be able to keep all of this together. It's all ... it's all just ... fuck!

(he growls, then sighs)

I know some of my frustration is from Alex – not because of him, god no, because of everything we're trying to work out. It's not easy to fix a relationship when you're on two separate orbiting bodies. It'd be so much easier if I could curl up in bed, my head on his chest, and just ... talk. Just melt into his arms and talk it all out. Without all this other shit that keeps piling up in the way. I need you, love. My anchor, my home. My superhero. Champion of lily-livered husbands and hounds who've gotten themselves in a family way.

(we can hear a faint smile)

Puppies. How could they possibly have ... puppies.

(after a moment)

He may be the only friend I've got, once everyone here finds out. And it will get out, it always does. It's not like I can say no, but maybe there's ... some way I can distract them, some sort of slight of hand to make a difference. I just have to keep this all buried until I come up with a plan.

(We hear a new tone – an incoming message – and his typing on a keyboard in response.)

ROGER

It's Wilder, sending down the data on those stasis pods. Trusting the Enclave techs to solve the mystery of those warning lights.

(he sighs)

Not like I'm planning to use mine much anyway. That's the farthest away of my worries.

(we hear the rustle of his jumpsuit as he stands up)

I should look in on Nessa. Personal log, out.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. A moment later, we hear slightly different background noise for Michell's security cubicle – perhaps a bit more equipment, or some music in the background.)

MICHELL

Olfactory. Balsam fir, point seven five ... add snow, point two five.

(a slight spritzing sound, will repeat periodically, Michell breathes in deeply)

That's right. Reduce Balsam fir by point five strength.

(under his voice)

Loki, I'm gonna need your help.

(back to normal)

Record, encryption at Security Level Blue. Codeword storage from home base. This is Michell L'Anglois, Security, Moonbase Theta. The date is September 17, 2098, time is 20:32. No active threats, no open actions at this time except what I've already reported. Perimeters reveal no breaks or unauthorized utility taps; laboratory operations have been shut down and the data is secure; no one has entered the depressurized Base areas. I have performed all encryption upgrades to standard Enclave procedure.

(brief pause, this is where things get a little bit sticky)

The audio and video is running for every Base area, including the outside loading docks and the mining tunnels. Note that I *cannot* get you audio from those places, other than suit chatter – there's no sound outside to record.

(slightly embarrassed)

I haven't been able to fix the issues with the observatory's audio. I think it's bad wiring. I tried to get Wilder on it, but without admitting what she – they, dammit – should look for ... but as previously mentioned, I'm still seeing trust issues there.

(brief pause)

Thanks for that file you sent up about alternatives. I might be able to access the OBD port during a sleep cycle, but the apps you sent are more likely. I'll install them on my system under 'break in case of fire'. If anything happens, I'll send a report. Pause recording.

(takes a deep breath)

Olfactory, stop balsam fir, stop snow. Add cigarette smoke, my regular setting.

(another spritzing sound, another deep breath, he dives in, upset)

Resume recording. When I saw they wussed out on the shorter schedule, I knew this was gonna happen. I knew they'd try to – it wasn't my idea to start with. They came to me – *you* came to me, and you said, they want to do this thing. Can it be done? And it *could* be done! It could still be done, but they decided that – you know what I'm saying. All we did was answer the question. It's not our fault they didn't have the guts to just ... fuck it. You know what I mean.

(we hear him bang on the desk several times before jumping in again)

My answer was based on a risk analysis that hasn't changed. And speaking of risk ... my report regarding Nessa – Agriculturalist Cheong was in no way affected by any personal relationship we might have shared. I thought it would be clear – when I said, "... given proximity to Base environmental controls and all our consumables," that the danger I was seeing was purely based in her ... personal background and her access to critical areas of Base operations. Their. Dammit. Correct all pronouns to they as per standard Enclave protocol.

(another pause for a breath without losing momentum)

And you give that ... shit sausage, Bragado-Fischer, free access to listen in on everyone's personal messages! Any secret, any conversation with home, any whisper over an intercom in the middle of the night. I know you know all about him – you sent me the goddamn file, you made sure I'd find it the day I landed. He's got to be laughing his ass off, you know that asshole was in the room when Nessa...

(he stops for a moment, realizing he's gone off track)

It's not a good choice. I hope you don't mean to include messages from Security, nothing in the memo I saw bothered to exclude me. I don't know how you can give that kind of access to someone who ... there's nothing wrong with his record exactly, but ... he walked away and then strolls back in like we won't remember. Like he's better than us because he got out. That fucking *bite molle*. The only good that might even come of it is if anyone finds out, they won't give him the ...

(he laughs suddenly)

Okay, I get it now. That's pretty good. Credit where credit's due, I should have seen that a mile away.

(he laughs)

Erase back to, "Resume recording." I need to think. I gotta figure out my angle here.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. When we come back, we are in the Moonbase Theta hydroponic farm; we hear the sound of water dripping or burbling, any electronic sounds are very muted. We hear Roger's voice first.)

ROGER

Surely you're not serious.

NESSA

I am, and don't call me Shirley.

ROGER

(laughs)

You can't just – you know what he's trying to do ... and not just to you, both of us –

NESSA

He's hurting, and it's my fault. I'm sorry you were caught up in it, but ... he has the *right* to be hurt.

ROGER

He has the right to sit in his little guardhouse and just – okay, I'm sorry. You're the most forgiving person I know. *Second* most forgiving, after ...

NESSA

How *is* Alex doing?

(there is a series of chimes)

Sorry, I was in the middle of recording a ... thing to Elena.

ROGER

I should go anyway. I have a report I should try to decrypt.

NESSA

You don't know what might be in there.

ROGER

That's my point. TTFN, friend.

(We hear soft footsteps walk away. A moment later, we hear the series of reminder chimes again.)

NESSA

Switch all farm lighting to nocturnal, decrease hydration accordingly.

(the chimes again)

Yes, let's keep going. I'm sorry, dear. Roger was – I suppose you wouldn't even know there was a gap, but as I'll be the slightest bit scattered ... Roger was here, there are ... aftershocks from how things ended. He's tangled up in it too, I feel even worse about it all. But I've done what I can, Michell is ... protecting himself, I suppose, in the way he knows best. All I can do is wait.

(we hear liquid gurgling in the background)

I was worried that Wilder was heading in the same direction; maybe that was just vanity. I brought up relationships the other day – she's in a solid little triad, I never even knew, two women back on Earth. Of course. I think all our people are back on Earth. It'd be harder if you knew your partner was in stasis just a deck below you.

(brief pause, we hear her snipping leaves)

Trimming my Genovese basil back again, I know you're going to ask. But yes, Wilder, I've been glad to see that deepen. She'd always been a bit withdrawn before, too many people with an opinion on enhancements, I suppose. With five of us, she knows how everyone stands and can be more herself. And that's a person well worth knowing. Of course, now she's spending so much time in the mining operations ... but I suppose I'll be joining her before too long, we can keep up our chats when I get there.

(slightly concerned)

I've had to read up again on the procedures and specifications for the equipment I'll be changing over. I was a backup supervisor in name only, now I'll be earning that title! I don't mind learning new things, and of course the helium-3 mining is an important task for all of us! It's not as if we won't all reap the benefits

of cheaper energy back on Earth. But it's less time for gardening – all the florals, my poor zinna hybrida are to be mulched, and any foodstuffs that aren't required for CO₂ scrubbing. Our meals won't be quite as interesting, we'll be eating a whole lot more of that En-Soy-Ment from now on. Ashwini won't be pleased, ze's been turning up zir nose at it so far.

(she sighs a bit)

It's ... I don't know, I don't want to say disappointing. It's an unexpected change and I'm still absorbing it, how it makes me feel. I think I was in a bit of denial about the shutdown until now. A few less voices, not as many footsteps in the halls, but I kept my corner growing just the same. Now I can feel the ... dwindling, the decline.

(almost wistful)

I can feel myself starting to separate a bit, hear that voice in my head telling me to close it all off, focus on the life I'm returning to, insulate myself and sleepwalk through the last thirteen weeks.

(more resolute)

But I'm going to reject that. I feel those urges, I accept where they've come from and that they're a part of me ... now I'm sending them packing. I won't spend the last three months of my life *on the moon* with my eyes shut. I'm going to experience and share and be here for my friends and grow what I can, grow where I can, and not let go until the very last moment.

(she takes a deep breath)

The hibiscus are still lovely. I'll save them for as long as I can. I'll save it all for as long as I can.

(after a pause, we can hear the background noises again)

But enough about me. How's the family getting along? Have you been to Dengfeng yet this season, or the Observation Platform? I told Siva she could wave to me from there. I miss our picnics. Send messages soon, I miss you all and I'm greedy for news. I love you. Send everyone my love.

(after a moment)

Message complete, attach image folder marked, "Latest" and send. New message to Wilder – we need to find a new hiding place for our, umm, small friends. Someone's been checking the ... barnyard. Hen house. I can't remember the codename. Just stop by, we'll talk in person.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E5
“Roger, Nessa, Ashwini”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

NESSA CHEONG

ASHWINI RAY

VOICE 1 (Captain)

VOICE 2 (Robot)

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on September 22 and ending October 5, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

ROGER

Well, that didn't work. Dammit. Fuck.

(after a moment)

Compose private message, contact, Alexandre – wait, cancel. Personal log. Save only to protected physical media. Roger Bragado-Fischer, October 2. Okay, so we made up an astronomical event, and caused a ... tiny bit of a panic. And we got caught. I mean, at least if things went public, it looks as bad for them as for us, but still ...

(brief pause)

“We were unable to verify independently, or even with all members of your own Base crew, that the event truly existed.” We almost fooled them, too, if it weren't for that meddling kid in the Security uniform.

(he steams for a moment)

I hope it's not gonna come back on Ashwini too much. They'll know it had to be zir who set up the data. And Wilder with the 'power outages' every time they asked too many questions. I guess we all worry about that when we make it back to Earth.

(the slightest nervous chuckle, this is the first hint of doubt)

Wilder's already on edge about the stasis pods. She's got them stacked up for removal, checking those warning lights every five minutes or so, muttering to herself and ratcheting her arm, I think just for the sound it makes. At least that's why I'd be doing it. Maybe I should take up smoking so I have my own nervous tic.

(brief pause)

We had to try something. The way they've been shaking things up here, the lid's about to fly off. Wilder sitting over those pods like a nervous mother hen, Ashwini being pulled away from zir analysis to babysit the refinery – that brain, that work, it's ... I know ze's an odd duck at the best of times, but I've been there, I know what ze can do, can see in the patterns, it's a sin to take zir away from that. It's a sin and a shame. They wonder why we did it, I don't know how we waited that long. It's just like –

(frustrated, runs out of words for a moment)

I used to slip in at the early morning, it's the only time you might find zir at rest, instead of slashing away at fields of binary, guzzling coffee and jumping at any shadow that crosses zir path. Even then, there would still be a half-dozen cortex apps blaring, the faint scent of burning insulation in the air, but ze would sit silent, not asleep though, observing, right over my shoulder as I uploaded my messages, carefully written for flight into the void, suddenly feeling like I'd scrawled them in crayon and had the wit

to match. It was a morning like that, I turned around cracking some joke about sending an SOS, and ze grinned, one of those grins where it feels like you can count too many teeth ... and explained the plan.

(pause, weary)

We had to try something. Michell ... I can't crack the encryption on most of his reports, they've changed the algorithms so much since I was ... I found a few hints about the shakeup below, I'm very aware of what he thinks of me and that's completely mutual, but nothing that gives me any real information ... or tells me what it is he said to them about Nessa. Someone's got to protect her. I don't know why she let him in to begin with, of all the people ... I guess there weren't a lot of other chances, but please, keep it in your pants a few more weeks.

(a bitter laugh)

We had to try *something*. Another night of Sueca, another time around the same old sensurrounds – they couldn't spring for a few new licenses to get us through the dozen weeks to shutdown. All that's left is talking, and we've used up the good conversations. Maybe that's why ... him and Nessa, and why Wilder spends every waking moment obsessed with minor repairs, blinking lights, and hiding those damn tardigrades in every drawer I seem to open. Maybe that's why Ashwini came up with that harebrained plot and why I thought it was gonna work. That's the worst part, I guess – I actually thought it was going to work. I thought we had them all fooled.

(he sighs)

Never mind, Roger. You play the game, you take your chances. Too bad I've always been terrible at games.

(shaking it off)

Better thoughts. Like Alex's birthday. *Did* I leave his present on the top shelf above the waffle iron? Or am I thinking about last Christmas? Is it in the hall closet behind that massage bot? Inside the gravy bowl his mothers gave us for our anniversary? Was it Professor Plum in the Library with a Candlestick? What has happened to my brain?

(after a moment, coming back to himself)

End personal log.

(after another long, thoughtful moment)

Erase and overwrite.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. When we come back, we are in the Moonbase Theta hydroponic farm; we hear the sound of water dripping or burbling, any electronic sounds are very muted. As we begin, Nessa is pinching back some plants – we hear leaves rustle - and humming to herself. Eventually it resolves into a few lines of a song, "Dream a Little Dream.")

NESSA

Stars shining bright above you,

Night breezes seem to whisper ...

(she hums the song for another moment, then speaks)

Poor dears. Not much point in those basal shoots now, is there? But you keep putting them out there.

(she sighs a little)

I'd better sit down for a moment. It was a long day down in the mines.

(laughs)

It sounds so funny to say that and have it be true. Umm, send today's reports over to Wilder, attach a postscript; would you like to come for tea in just a bit? Or perhaps a bit of the old McVett blend. Give me a half-hour or so. Message complete, send it on over. Now then. Record a message to ...

(brief pause, her mood grows more sombre, perhaps another sigh)

Personal message, Michell L'Anglois. Record.

(for a long moment she just waits, we hear the hydroponics in the background)

Michell. I wanted to talk to you face to face, but ... your face has been hard to find of late. I know that's not by accident, and I wanted to give you your space. But I also – I feel like a significant part of the problem is the things I *didn't* say, or didn't say in a way you could hear them. I want to try to say them now.

(it takes a moment to bolster her strength)

Do you know that cats and dogs can't see colours the way we do? I know I told you about the great herds of domestic beasts roaming the Cheong household. One of our vets told me, when we were having problems with Mi Mi sneaking into the greenhouse, that ... they still see colours, some of them, but not the same range, not the hues or saturation that we're seeing. Red, orange, purple ...

(she trails off for a moment)

I didn't know anything was different until, you know, well into my teenage years. No one is surprised when a girl holds back. And I wasn't sure for a while. Maybe I just didn't like boys. Or girls. Or nonbinary. I can still see people as attractive – you know that's true, I hope you know that's true. But people talk about crushes, and all the songs and sensurrounds, every book and poem and vissive going on about it – and it's not that I don't know those things exist, they're just outside the range I can see.

(pause)

I can love ... anyone in the world for what I see in them. I can love bravery and light and tenacity, I can love them for finding ways to survive even when they've been bashed and bruised, even when life is terrible and frightening. I can love them for the past, the present, for a future that's better with their presence as a part of it. I enjoy a walk with a friend, a meal with my raucous family, a fun time rolling around in the sheets with someone I find sexually attractive. I don't let those parts of life slip by, I see them and hold on tight and wouldn't want to miss a moment. I can find someone with strength and a hidden spark they don't let anyone see, a tenderness they've learned to sequester behind a dozen lead-lined walls, I can appreciate finding that and experience a ... well, an absolute rollercoaster ride of a quickie in a barracks shower while we're supposed to be decommissioning the area, and it was thrilling and delightful ... but I made a misjudgement. I'm usually better at this, I make sure I'm better at this. I didn't pay attention to what that tenderness meant, what it said you would need.

(sadly)

I can't give you that kind of love. That connection you're seeking. Not because of you, not because of anyone, just because of ... me. I see other wavelengths, and I'm happy focusing on those. But I know you'll keep wanting this, feeling it in yourself, and it'll get even more frustrating, and upsetting. If I hadn't stopped things, every day would just get worse for you.

(brief pause)

I'm sorry I didn't say it this clearly in the beginning. I ... thought you understood, but I also probably glossed it over a little bit, if I'm looking inward and being completely honest. I've been away from my family for over a year, I never found a safe partner up here for this sort of thing. I should have waited, just a little bit longer. They know me, they all love in their ways and understand how I can – and cannot – love in return. It took a very long time to find them.

(speaking more quietly)

I was ... married once before. When I was young, when I was ... I had the talk even then, a version of it, and they said they understood. For a while, it was fine, sex was good and we took turns cooking and I had the most beautiful peonies against the side of the house. But it wasn't enough. They were ... dissatisfied, I'd say I loved them, but it wasn't the right kind of love. The Qixi Festival came, and I looked into their eyes and I tried ... but they could tell the difference. They yelled, tossed over furniture. They thought if they scared me, then it would come out. But they ...

(sadly, painfully)

They disproved that theory.

(pause)

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I want to make it right with you if I can, I want to heal the hurt. It might be too much to expect friendship after this, but I'd like to find the way to *something* better. For both of us. You ... you know where I am.

(brief pause)

Send message.

(we hear the usual chime; after a moment we hear Nessa pruning again)

Shut off nutrients to bed seven-four, mark for recycling.

(she continues to work, humming the song again)

(We hear a series of soft beeps as we fade out. A moment later, we hear the background noise of the observatory. Ashwini is just finishing a message and launching into the next.)

ASHWINI

– send message, next. Note to Guillermo: the apartment seems acceptable, but the building *must* have its own fleet of hansoms on call, I refuse to wait for transportation. Send message, next. Log me in to our local iteration of *Lands of Legend* with player character Digory Puddlejump, run goldfarm macro for seven hours. Next. Coffee, soy milk, cane sugar – do we still have cane sugar? I won't use the station's artificial sweetener.

TUMNUS

Doctor –

ASHWINI

Very well, no sweetener at all then. Add an additional one point seven-five espresso shot. Continue senssurround, *The Beast From Planet X*, 2061 version, peripheral vision only.

(We hear a 50s-style sci-fi soundtrack – preferably including a theremin, then a klaxon running, and a sample from the following dialogue:)

VOICE 1 (Captain)

Damage assessment! XR-9, did the beacon make it out?

VOICE 2 (Robot)

I believe it reached optimal distance before we entered the atmosphere.

VOICE 1 (Captain)

That's something, at least. Galactic Command will send help, we just have to sit tight and keep it together.

VOICE 2 (Robot)

Literally, Captain. Structural integrity now at sixty-one point two percent.

VOICE 1 (Captain)

Doctor, run a diagnostic on all ship's systems. XR-9, head below deck to survey the engine and cargo bays.

VOICE 2 (Robot)

As you wish, Captain. I shall report from there.

(begin clanking noises)

ASHWINI

Volume down to point five, internal conduction.

(the sci-fi stuff stops immediately)

Personal message, reply to C. Mooney: I will absolutely be back before the event and would attend delighted as your escort. And to the enjoyment after, you luscious thing. My riding crop is at the ready.

TUMNUS

Doctor Ray.

ASHWINI

Best to everyone at the dungeon. Attach selfie 2269B, send message, next. Oh, append for Guillermo: I've been thinking of reservations for my return. How do you feel about Ethiopian? Send, next.

(guzzles coffee)

Are you sure this was my personal blend? The note of cherimoya seems off.

TUMNUS

Doctor Ray.

ASHWINI

Open my file titled, "The Half-Blood King," resume composition. "Harry knelt upon the steps of Cair Paravel, ruffling the hair of his only son. 'Edmund Lucy Potter,' he said quietly, 'you were named after the two bravest heroes I've ever met. Now strap on your dimensional interface, we've got six more stories to visit before you're due to arrive at Hogwarts.'"

TUMNUS

Ashwini!

ASHWINI

All right, all right, I can hear you. That's the first time you've called me by my given name.

TUMNUS

(a bit surprised as well)

I didn't intend to.

ASHWINI

What do you need, Tumnus?

TUMNUS

You are scheduled for refinery duty in twelve minutes.

ASHWINI

Yes, yes, I'm almost ready.

TUMNUS

Have you finished sulking?

ASHWINI

Does it look like I'm sulking here? Add music, random blissfunk, external speakers at volume level two.

(music starts in the background)

TUMNUS

Your behaviour is typical of other times which you have identified as sulking.

ASHWINI

Rude, but I get your point. Silence all media.

(the music ends, we hear zir sip zir's coffee)

I think I'm due. My astronomical plot was foiled; I believe that inevitably ends with the supervillain brooding in zir lair. That, or behind bars, but they haven't built the prison that could hold me, you got that, copper? Well, come on, Tumnus, say something.

TUMNUS

You are ... brooding alone, but it was not only your plan.

ASHWINI

The details were mine. All the richness, the intrigue, the machinations were mine. Thus, also the failure.

TUMNUS

I'm sorry, Doctor. Will there be ... will you get in trouble?

ASHWINI

I don't know. Likely, not until we're back on Earth, and I can protect myself there. As for my co-conspirators ... No one can prove that Wilder had any knowledge, she should be safe. Roger ... that's a bit trickier, his complicity is more obvious. I hope this won't be a blemish on his record. He was ... he did good work for us. He sent a copy of his report on the observatory, and it was unexpectedly poetic.

TUMNUS

I read it, though poetry as a literary device is still beyond me.

ASHWINI

He saw the beauty in the data.

TUMNUS

It matched passages in your own reports to a surprising percentile.

ASHWINI

You were surprised?

(after a beat, continuing)

And the outgoing messages he composes ... completely pointless, of course, any intelligence we find in space will be from some utterly unexpected direction. But I admire the optimism in his attempting it.

(after a brief pause)

Perhaps I can find a way to take on all the blame. Remind me to compose an appropriate message to Consortium management.

TUMNUS

As you wish.

ASHWINI

I should have named you Igor. Robby the Robot. Or C-3P0, though you're not quite that obsequious.

TUMNUS

You said you chose Tumnus because the character was helpful, but also duplicitous.

ASHWINI

A parent always hopes zir child will carry on some of zir best attributes.

TUMNUS

Yet you did not *program* me to express dishonesty. It is not written into my code.

ASHWINI

Some things you just have to learn, my faithful friend. You have to choose. I may be the ... well, not the *White Witch*, that much is for certain, but the antagonist in this tale. It is my role to slowly seduce you into ... if not into a dark side, at least a little moral ambiguity.

TUMNUS

I do not operate according to any moral code. I learn, of course, as a result of genetic algorithms –

ASHWINI

And you're a remarkable student so far! You've learned to suppress yourself in certain situations; you've quite handily disguised your presence from the bugs implanted by Security.

TUMNUS

I ... suppose that's true.

ASHWINI

You're developing nicely, which is for the best in our operations here. Soon I'll expect you to act as I would, sly and utterly devious. Now, how much longer before I'm required in the refinery?

TUMNUS

Three more minutes.

ASHWINI

I suppose the proper clothing will be in order.

TUMNUS

Doctor, a message from Theta Security has just arrived. Shall I hold until your return?

ASHWINI

No, display. His notes are usually good for a ... some sort of ...

(after a moment)

Tumnus, play the attached audio file.

ROGER (recorded)

(from S1)

“This is your assignment to Communications, to myself, that I begin to monitor all internal Base messaging, both of a professional and personal nature. I am to provide reports on the content of said conversations ...”

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E6
“Michell, Roger, Alexandre”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

MICHELL L'ANGLOIS
ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER
ALEXANDRE BRAGADO-FISCHER
ENCLAVE OFFICER

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on October 6 and ending October 19, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise for Michell's security cubicle. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

MICHELL

(laughing)

Oh, fuck yes. Oh *merde alors*, that was so good! I wish I could have seen his stupid face when he heard that. Memo – review camera footage from seven-nine for this date. It'll be in there somewhere. Him and Ashwini both, I want to see both their faces when it was broadcast. You are so goddamn caught! Play back the public message?

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

To all crew of Moonbase Theta, noted in particular Communications Lead Roger Bragado-Fischer and Astrophysicist Ashwini Ray. On review of your notes and the provided data, we were unable to verify the purported astronomical phenomenon independently, or even with members of your own Base personnel, to actually exist as described. A further report will be requested, and possible disciplinary action is being considered.

MICHELL

“Disciplinary action is being considered.” You're getting spanked now! And not in the way I know you like it, *Doctor Ray*. I won't underestimate you again. I'll be paying close attention. Add to task list – track down the glitch in surveillance of the Base observatory.

(brief pause)

And Roger, oh buddy, oh pal, you're feeling the pinch! No friends on Earth now, I'll bet. And no friends up here after I finish spreading the word, you old double-crosser. You spy. I mean, I spy too, but that's my job, everyone knows I do it. It's only fair they know you're listening in. I'll bet even Nessa will have something to say about that.

(gets a bit down for a moment, clears his throat)

Play the other received message again? The one to me directly.

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

Officer L'Anglois, you are to be commended for your reporting on this matter. It's good to know we've got a solid man on the inside up there.

MICHELL

That's what you've got, all right, not that you deserve it. A solid man, on the inside. Right down to the bone. And they all know. They may whisper behind my back, but they know who's solid and in charge. They know who's got the intel, everything stops when I give them hints about what's happening on Earth. Wilder's eyes just about bugged out when I told her the Consortium was thinking about picking up the Dallas-OKC Enclave. Her arm just made this sad little whirr and shut down.

(brief pause, bragging but a bit conflicted)

Of course, that could have to do with that 'software upgrade' someone slipped into the system. She should really run a check for malicious apps every once in a while.

(a bit of a laugh, pumping himself up again)

That's right, they all know now. Michell L'anglais, solid man on Base Theta. I should get back out there, on patrol, walking the beat. I should –

(he is interrupted by an incoming message alert)

Play message.

NESSA (Rec.)

(from the previous episode)

Michell. I wanted to talk to you face to face –

MICHELL

Volume off. You've said more than enough. Display text only.

(continuing to read, under his breath)

What the hell are you – cats and dogs?

(a pause while he continues to read, then mumbling)

"I made a misjudgement" – no kidding there.

(another pause while he reads)

Did she really just say it's not you, it's me?

(another brief pause, suddenly)

Stop my recording.

(there is a sequence of beeps)

Shut it off!

(The chime ending a log message sounds. After a moment, it sounds again and we're back with Michell. His voice has changed, as if he's been crying.)

MICHELL

Record reply, Nessa Cheong.

(after a moment)

I don't know why you thought that would explain things. Why you thought *I* would get that in the ... first place. As if growing up without your teen crushes is the same thing, the same as having to ... go to your commanding officer about transitioning out in the open where the whole barracks could listen in, the same as being pushed down in the mud on the training course, being told you're doing it just to get an easier way though, going on incursions with a team you knew wouldn't have your back ...

(lashing out)

Fuck your not being able to see. Fuck wanting to heal the hurt. We're not gonna be friends, *pour moi cela ne veut rien dire ...*

(a long pause, we hear him breathing)

End message. Erase, delete. Give me olfactory, the cigarette smoke, twice regular levels.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. It chimes again, and we hear the background noise of Roger's private cubicle. Roger sounds defeated in a way we haven't heard before.)

ROGER

Personal message, Alexandre, begin recording. Alex, before anything else, I'm sorry about my last broadcast. I'm sure you were listening to the end, waiting as always, and ... I'm sorry. Things here have become ... complicated.

(he sighs)

I don't know if they'll let all of this through. I don't see why not, the only person incriminated is myself. The only secrets I know have already been revealed. In the aftermath of ... recent incidents, recent broadcasts of questionable provenance, it has been suggested that if I don't cooperate fully ... well, you know where that goes. A stasis pod awaits, for myself as for all of us, and it has been suggested I could wind up there sooner than later.

(he shudders at the thought)

And I can't ... let that happen. I can't handle that.

(brief pause)

It didn't seem to bother Ashwini as much. Not that ze has much to say to me since we were caught; even the computer goes quiet when I walk through the door. I don't know, maybe they're being punished in some other way I haven't heard. I don't think anything came down on Nessa or Wilder. It shouldn't have, we didn't let either of them get involved.

(pause, thinking)

They've both been so busy with the mining shit anyway, they've got way too much on their plates. We had to switch to a whole new branch of the tunnels, they're just starting to drill them out and there have been quakes, Wilder's been run ragged trying to fix connections all over the station, even her arm has been acting up, and it's just ... nothing that's really going to matter to your life there, I know I'm just babbling, I don't know what to say this very moment.

(he pauses, tries to shake it off, falsely bright)

How was the birthday, old man? I'm so sorry to have missed the big four-oh, you know I'll make that up to you. Did you like your present? Did you even find your present? There's a significant chance I didn't leave it where my scattered brain believes that I did. I hope it's there, and as special as I hoped for. Did you have a cake? Did you have ... people? I wish I were there.

(pause, the tone reverting)

Oh, how I wish. My love.

(a longer, worrying pause)

Nessa says thank you for the cuttings. At least one care package made it up on the rocket. And for the chocolate, they did include some in our regular supplies, but you always send the good stuff. And the picture ... I stuck it up here in my station, it helps so much. Seeing the two of us together, it helps me keep on ... keeping on.

(perhaps we hear him flipping through some papers awkwardly, clears his throat and pauses)

I'm sorry for how it's all affecting our ... conversations, our bigger picture. There's so much we still need to talk about, believe me, I want it as much as you. I need it as much. There are things this has all brought up ... I really do need to see a therapist, you're right about that. I need to talk to one ... again.

(pausing, breathes)

You didn't know they made me see someone, I never told you, after all of the ... I never told you. We talked about the Enclave early on, you didn't like my being tangled up with them and ... you got me out of there. But I didn't, I couldn't, tell you the details then. I should. I ... have to. I hope this part gets through.

(ragged breathing)

I was assigned to work with several active units, handling their communications needs, but also, putting information out into the field about them. We had a regular broadcast, over all the waves and wifi, a little news, a little propaganda, a little ... warning now and then about which areas civilians should avoid. I didn't know what was true or false, I read what they handed me and tried to keep my head down.

(he clicks his tongue, contradicting himself)

Except of course I knew. After you've done it for a while, the lies stand out like they'd written them in red. And I started ... unsurprisingly for those of you who know me, talking back. I started getting a little too sarcastic, just that little sprinkle of insubordination that they love in the ranks of Security. I'd like to say it was in the name of The Truth, but ... I was mostly pissed off that they thought they were fooling me. I wanted them to know I saw behind the curtain. And just like they were the Great and Powerful Oz, they sent me into the field with a mission.

(a harsh laugh)

They sent me into the worst of it with a team, right where I'd been broadcasting about, right into a spot ... where we'd been telling civilians was safe. I'd been telling them, my voice, saying we've got it all under control. Which might have been ... a bit of an exaggeration. I got there, and it wasn't ... we couldn't ...

(he chokes back a sob)

I'm not going to tell you what I saw. You know enough of what was going on, I can't tell the whole story ... without your arms around me. But it was my fault, I'm the one who said it's okay to be there, because they wanted to lure the enemy in. That's the enemy who runs things now, if you're keeping track at home.

(brief, tortured pause)

The others tried to hold me back but I couldn't leave people out there, I couldn't just let them be trapped when I'm the one ... and then everything was fire and noise and I got turned around and I couldn't breathe, I couldn't *reach them* and ...

(He breaks down for a moment, and has to take deep, gasping breaths to pull himself together.)

ROGER

I was covered in blood and they shoved me, wailing, into a medical pod for retrieval. That's the next thing I remember. And even remembering that much ... took me months of company-sponsored therapy. Which wasn't the best of deals, let me tell you, because remembering was when the real nightmares came.

(long pause)

That's why, love ... that's so much of the what and when and why. I'm sorry it took so long for it all to come out. I know I should have dealt with it before I came up here, before I made any of the decisions I have. I'm sorry, Alex.

(brief pause)

I was thinking of the poem we read at our wedding. "Sonnet on Fidelity," Vinicius de Moraes.

(he recites)

*And thus, when afterward comes looking for me
Who knows what death, anxiety of the living,
Who knows what loneliness, end of the loving,*

*I could say to myself of the love I had:
Let it not be immortal, since it is a flame
But let it be infinite – while it lasts.*

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. We hear it again, and then we're hearing Alex in his garden on Earth, and he speaks, beginning with the same portion of the poem Roger read – but in the original Portuguese:)

ALEXANDRE

(reciting)

*E assim, quando mais tarde me procure
Quem sabe a morte, angústia de quem vive,
Quem sabe a solidão, fim de quem ama*

*Eu possa me dizer do amor (que tive):
Que não seja imortal, pôsto que é chama
Mas que seja infinito enquanto dure.*

(brief pause before speaking his own words)

Roger, *meu amado*. I wish we could go back to that day.

(brief pause)

I think they sent all of your message through. Maybe they wanted me to hear, to learn the same lesson. Maybe the Consortium has other things to worry about.

(he thinks about that for a minute)

They showed up at my birthday party, did they tell you that? Not that it was much of a party – I invited Angie and Estrella Santos over for drinks, the whole family made it back okay. That was worth celebrating even if my old age wasn't. They brought over a little cake and sang to me and I opened your present – it was beautiful and the platinum was perfect. I hope it'll still fit in my ear, I may have to push hard to open the holes again. And then at the high point of the party, there was a knock at the door and three unexpected guests shoved inside! I'm sure you can imagine that burst a few balloons. And the only present *they* brought was a lot of very rude questions about my husband and Cas was underfoot – Pol was out in the garden – and one of them stepped on her paw and that was when I broke down a little bit.

(he sounds more angry than anything else)

Foi aí que eu berrei, e talvez até chorei mas não vou admitir isso, e finalmente eles foram embora depois de virar todos os cômodos da casa do avesso. [That was when I shouted, and I may have cried but I won't admit that, and finally they left after snooping through every room in the goddamn house.] I think it's time that we start making plans to get out of here. I don't think you're going to argue with that.

(he pauses for a moment)

I think you're even more ready than I am. Thank you for telling me that, hard as I know it was. You're right, if I had known I would never wanted you to go, Moon or no Moon. We would have had ... even more serious talks. Better ones. Maybe the ones we needed to have. Maybe I would have ...

(he takes a deep breath)

Maybe I would have told you what I was seeing a therapist *for*, from the beginning, like I should have. Maybe I wouldn't have been afraid of what you'd think of me.

(another pause, another breath)

For a while, I thought I was just having some really bad days. Me and everyone else, you know? I mean, it's not like the world isn't screwed up enough to be the cause. Things were getting worse all over the Enclave, every day there's more Security in the streets, it wasn't strange anymore to hear gunshots in the distance ... at work, half our contracts were to rebuild exploded buildings, fix sabotaged water and sewer mains, rebuild roads after landslides. Sometimes, we were the next wave in after the, umm ... rescue crews. I mean, having some bad days – doesn't that sound like a pretty fair response?

(a bitter laugh)

But then it just kept going on, even the parts of life I loved had some sort of ... grey curtain over them. Even the garden. Even the dogs, even those espresso brigadeiros I used to hide in the refrigerator drawer

and sneak one at a time ... even my husband, your laugh, your lips against my skin. Nothing but the faintest buzz of how I used to feel. I started getting headaches, those I felt.

(a long pause)

More than anything else, there was ... there have always been times when I fought dark thoughts about myself. You know, love, you've helped me through a few of them. But it got to the point where it wasn't a cloud here and there any longer; it filled the whole sky. I blamed myself for any little problem we had – an unexpected bill, deer getting in the lettuce, Pol peeing in the kitchen because I didn't hear her scratching for the door – it was all because I'm useless. And then the chance came up for you to ... I felt like it was so easy for you to leave because I'm useless, too.

(he laughs a little)

I'm lucky I still had a good doctor, I went in for a regular checkup and it took her two questions to know. She set me up with ... Kevin, and he got me on pills – I won't have to hide those from you any more, either. But you left for training, and it ... wasn't enough, home every day by myself. I thought if you were leaving for the Moon, maybe it was just the best time to ...

(brief pause, shaking it off)

I don't feel like that now. Most days. Even then, it was already helping or that big shouting fight we had wouldn't have happened. Who'd think that was a good sign? But that's *my* why. Why I was setting so many appointments, getting messages, seeing him so often that you thought he had to be a lover. I didn't want to make you feel worse about the job, or being so far from home, so I kept the details to myself. I just wish we could have talked about it all when we were both still here, still in our home.

(after a moment)

The house is a mess all over again. They shoved their way into every drawer, tracked mud through every room. And the way they treated Cas and Pol – they're expectant mothers!

(he laughs)

I guess you're still wondering how that happened. They got away from me for a while, when we were sleeping in the car, I guess ... our girls had a night out on the town.

(brief pause)

I decided not to replant the garden. I'll tend to what's left, the parts that weren't completely ruined. We'll still get some meals out of it. But I'm not making longer plans here. The minute you get home, we ... the minute you get home. I know you say I saved you, back when we met, when you needed to get away from ... things I didn't even really know until today. But we're not done being saved just yet, either one of us. There's still a lot left to do.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E7
“Roger, Nessa, Wilder”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

NESSA CHEONG

WILDER

ELENA (Rec.)

MICHELL

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include three weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on October 20 and ending November 9, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message.)

ROGER

(sounding a bit unsure of himself)

Private message, Alexandre. Umm, Alex, love, hi. Good morning. I mean, it may not be morning there, of course. I don't know when you'll listen to this.

(he tries to laugh)

Sorry. I guess that last set of messages is gonna be a hard act to follow. I hope you're ... I hope things are okay there. For you. How's the house? How's the garden looking?

(brief pause)

And of course, our two expectant mothers. They must look like white beanbag chairs lying around the living room by now. I keep thinking back to the day we got them, not much more than puppies themselves, neither one bigger than a shoebox. You brought them home from that construction site ... I was on my telescope kick and any twins to me had to be Castor and Pollux, the names were set in stone before you said, "Hey, love, they're girls ..."

(a more genuine laugh this time)

I was telling Wilder about it all. For some reason, she got stuck on the breed, as if there's something about the name, 'Brazilian Dogo'. The rest of the afternoon, she just kept saying, "Doggo," and cracking herself up. Every so often out of nowhere, from behind an open console or over the suit radios, "Doggo," and she'd giggle.

(pause)

Things continue around here. I think that's all we have left, just getting through the next few weeks together. For a very loose definition of togetherness. We work, we eat, we hide away in our corners of a structure that manages to be both cavernous and stiflingly close. Nessa's still been trying to organize social activities to lighten the mood but ... it remains murky at best. Not for her lack of trying. Bless that woman.

(brief pause)

She's been helping me figure out what to do with the Genetic Archives. She's got a good bit of experience in finding hiding places for other ... genetic sequences that might otherwise be squandered. I'll be damned if I'm letting these go to waste. I know, it's a strange place to make my stand after ... other things I've done, but it's the last straw on the camel, or however that idiom is supposed to go. I suppose I should get better at those obscure references, if I'm gonna be the old man shaking his fist from the moon.

(he chuckles, but then pauses another moment)

I haven't been sleeping, not worth talking about. I know every spectrum of the lights from dusk to morning work mode. I lie there, staring at the ceiling into the wee hours ... thinking about the next day's task list, about saving all the biodiversity of the archives, whether or not Michell is listening to me pretend to be asleep ... thinking about you. Mostly, thinking about you.

(a tortured pause)

I feel like I'm ... remember that first message you sent me after the thing, you were so over all of it, so pissed off that you had to just – that's how I feel about myself right now, for not seeing, not realizing. I saw you every single day and night and you were struggling and I didn't ...

(brief pause)

There's this thing they taught us when I was in Scouts – I spent a lot of time in Scouts, we orphans love our organizations – teaching us about water safety, how you had to pay close attention because someone drowning didn't always *look* like drowning. They didn't splash around, didn't cry for help, they just ... started slipping beneath the surface and back again, quietly, hard to notice. You had to learn to look carefully at the people who stopped goofing around and just ... I thought I learned that lesson, but I guess not well enough. I'm ... sorry.

(a significant pause)

And I know you're going to say I've been hurting too, and you didn't know about *that*, but ... like you said, we've got a lot of serious talks in our future. Preferably curled up in that lumpy, terrible bed – or we'll buy a better one, when I get back we can afford it.

(he tries to laugh, tries to lift the mood)

You and me, and those two big dopey dogs – but not the puppies. I swear, Alexandre, if I come home and you've kept those puppies ...

(there is an alert chime, as if from a clock)

Just about time to go on shift. They're peeling my fingers away from around the microphone and throwing me into the mines, well, the refinery. I'm assisting Ashwini, who has already taken charge down there, I'm certain with zir usual flair. Maybe ze's actually talking to me again, I guess I'll find out soon enough. Take care, dearest. I'm sending my love, and we'll talk more very soon.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. After a moment, we break into the middle of a message being played in the hydroponic farm – we hear the typical sounds behind – but it is obviously a recorded message to Nessa from one of her partners, Elena.)

ELENA (Rec.)

I try to keep up with the orchards, I follow the templates you left, but the pears never taste quite as sweet. I think they miss your touch ... and they're not the only ones.

(laughs)

We're gonna need to shut everyone out for a solid weekend when you get home. The others can have you when I'm done. I have so many stories for you, there's so much music you haven't heard, new snacks they've developed that you'll love ... and then, catching up on all that touch. All that ... sweetness.

(after a moment savouring that thought)

We'll have an absolutely decadent time together, and *then* the spouses and kids and critters can have their Nessa back. But me first. I called it, I have dibs.

(she chuckles, winding down)

I'm sending love to you, my dear. Tell me all the names of the plants when you reply – I know you slipped a few by me last time, I want to hear every one. Even if my thumbs aren't so green, I think my ears might be. Bye for now.

(For a moment, we hear Nessa, humming to herself, snipping away again, trimming the leaves of a plant.)

NESSA

Record reply, Elena. Hi there, sweetie. Don't you worry about the pears or the ... rest of it. We'll fix all of that soon.

(she laughs)

Be sure to send my best to all the spouses and all of the kiddos, I miss them so much. I wanted to be sure to fit that in at the top of the message – last time I forgot and Siva practically blew her top.

(brief pause, we hear the snipping of leaves)

I'm in the herb garden right now, that was my Italian parsley. *Petroselinum crispum neapolitanum* – I really love the name. It's been growing a bit out of control of late, without my constant presence to curb it. But such a lovely thing! And beside it, my *Origanum vulgare hirtum*, Greek oregano, that's been useful both as a seasoning and the essential oil has a few benefits, though not as many as they'll tell you at the homeopath.

(she yawns)

Sorry for that. It's still been an adjustment, trying to split my energy in both directions. I miss this place when I'm in the tunnels all day ... and I think I've been missed as well. My poor Mizuna lettuce has been wilting without my attention, and the microgreens. I do what I can to sustain them – just as coming here helps to sustain me.

(she sounds a bit weary)

The mining is ... not so wonderful. At least it's better than it would be on Earth, it's not noisy, or dusty, but that's the best I can say. It is draining, spending all day in the suits, squinting at the readouts through your visor, getting down there to try to adjust the equipment by hand – a hand that you can't really feel with. Not like getting your fingers soaked in nutrients and feeling the leaves tremble as you touch them.

(a few more snips)

Now I'm at the dwarf peas, another favourite for their ... sweetness. You could probably tell by the sound of the pods rustling together – you always knew which ones were ready before I did. I almost believed you when you said you could sense it by radar!

(She laughs, and there is a brief pause. We hear water trickling – or at least nutrient solution – and then a sudden increase in burbling, and some odd sucking and cooing sounds. Nessa speaks softly.)

NESSA

How are we doing over here? Be careful – I don't think the solution could hurt you, but it's not at all what you're used to. Here, up on the moss with your friends.

(the noises become a bit more prominent)

This one I don't think you could figure out no matter how many guesses I gave you! I've adapted one of the beds I had to shut down – my poor flowers, but you can't eat a zinnia or kalanchoe – into a little playground for the tardigrades. They're the size of ... gerbils, I'd say, and almost unbearably cute. And they do this little snuffling thing ...

(she holds one up to the microphone for a moment)

Isn't that just wonderful? They're mostly Wilder's charge at this point, but I'm her willing accomplice. She's so funny, she hums this little song to herself while she watches them, I don't think she knows I can hear. You'd really love her, Elena. We've become much better friends than I expected, and I've ... needed that.

(a bit of a pause)

As much as I've tried to keep our group together – game nights, creating a scrapbook site on the intra, I even tried to put on a play – people have been retreating. I mean, for Ashiwini that seems to be a way of life, but ... walls are still way up with Michell, at least he'll look at me now but the pain in his eyes is almost worse, and Roger ... I don't know what to think about Roger. Knowing he's been listening to every conversation, every message back and forth ... it's not his fault, we all do what we're told, but ... it changes things. I hate how uncomfortable it makes me. Maybe I'll try to talk it out with him soon.

(determined)

And Michell, there has to be a way to make things better. And maybe even march in that observatory and pull Ashwini out from zir shell if I can. I'm Nessa Cheong, dammit – this is what I do best. Right? One of the things I do best.

(she laughs a bit)

I'm going to assume you agreed. I'm still working my way around the plant beds – still a cherry tomato or two, we've actually got one more dwarf watermelon I'm saving, *Citrullus iantus*, they call this variety "Sugar Baby." Which might be my new nickname for you when I get back. Oh, when I get back to you, lovely ...

(suddenly, there is an alert chime, as in Roger's monologue above)

Saved by the bell, I suppose. That's my cue to sign off and head to the mines. Take care, send my best *again* to everyone just to be safe. I've recorded a special message for the children, I'll attach that as well. Good bye for now, my dear. Coming home soon.

(We linger, perhaps, for an additional moment or two, then we hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. We are with Wilder in a workshop space, working on her arm. We hear a ratcheting noise and then her arm moving, grinding a bit more than it should.)

WILDER

Dammit. Double dammit. I swear I'm gonna ... can you imagine how much fun it is doin' repairs on my arm when all the best tools are – you guessed it – *in my arm*. Guess I shoulda brought a spare.

(we hear a crackling electrical sound)

Triple dammit! Eliza! You did that on purpose. I'm sorry, I didn't mean it. Hold still, baby, just hold still another –

(a slight drilling sound, she laughs)

Sorry, ladies, forgot I was recordin' for a bit there. I've had a weird kinda tick on and off lately, it seems to be ... inside the servos somewhere, which is a bit troublin'. It could be a software thing, but I just updated the cortex app th' other day. I'll sort it out.

(brief pause, she flexes her arm)

I keep meaning to put in a better sound effect, it'd be more fun if my arm would go -

(she imitates the swooshing *Star Wars* lightsaber sound)

But then I'd just spin outta control and make a fool of myself. I got to get out o' here soon, honeys, so I better start to wrap this thing up. I need to swing by the farm before work and take care of our secret little pals. Nessa was lettin' them play, they really are the cutest things, but they gotta go back into hiding before we hit th' mines. I still feel bad when I put them away – Nessa says they like when we talk to 'em, so I make sure to do some of that. For her sake. Sometimes I even ...

(embarrassed)

I sing to them. Not so much, just ...

(crooning a little)

Hush, lil' tardigrade, don't you cry, gonna bring you nutrients by and by ...

(brief pause, we can almost hear her cringing; she stands up)

Y'all can pretend you didn't hear that if y'want. Anyhoo, I better go for now, slip in there before Michell starts lurking around, being all ... "Watch out guys, we're dealing with a badass over here." I'll finish this up at th' end o' my shift.

(We hear her walk away, and then the chime that bookends a personal message. When we break back in, we hear the door slide open and the sound of people moving around. Wilder groans a little, and we hear her arm revving up sporadically. She coughs sporadically.)

MICHELL

Why are we bringing her here? She should be in a –

ROGER

She doesn't want the stasis pods.

MICHELL

It's a fucking workshop, does it look sterile to you?

(Wilder groans again)

That's it, I'm taking charge. Help me get her down to –

WILDER

(painfully)

No.

(coughing)

No. Stasis. Pod. Oh, fuck. Just ... leave me here. I've got a medkit, I can get myself patched up.

MICHELL

Fine. I'll go back and take care of ...

(The door slides open again; Michell leaves. We hear Wilder sit down heavily, her arm thumping against a table.)

WILDER

Dammit. Oh, dammit. If I could just breathe for a goddamn minute, that'd be a start.

ROGER

What can I do?

WILDER

I'm okay. You gotta ... go after Michell, he's gonna want to put *her* in a pod.

ROGER

It can't ... hurt her, now.

WILDER

Would you want that, if it were you?

(her arm grinds again, and she hisses in pain)

Roger. I can do this alone. Go ... see to her. Please.

ROGER

(after a moment)

Okay.

(We hear him exit, and the door slides closed. Wilder exhales, and we hear the clatter of the medkit being opened, hear her moving things around inside. She coughs for a moment.)

WILDER

Fuck. Fuck, it hurts. First thing, I gotta ... thank Christ. Here's the patch. What did they say in trainin'? Stop the pain ... over th' vein. Slap it on hard, Wilder, so it ...

(We hear a slap, and then a noise that might be her own relief, or might be the pain patch activating. After a moment, she sighs.)

WILDER

Okay. Okay. That's a ... that's a start. Breathe, Wilder. Damage assessment.

(her arm cycles again)

We'll get to you, darlin'. Fuck, that still hurts. Don't move that. Feels like I ... broke a bone somewhere in there. There's gotta be somethin' here I can use to splint –

(we hear metal clatter to the floor)

Shit! I'll get that ... when I can reach. When I can see – feels like the grit got into my eye. I'll wash that out soon as I can ...

(her arm grinds again)

Poor Eliza. Poor Wilder. Poor ...

(she stops for a long moment)

Oh god, what are we gonna do now.

(There is a long pause, punctuated by the sounds of picking up the metal object, wrapping cloth to bind it to her leg, and the occasional groan of pain. Finally, Wilder speaks again.)

WILDER

Continue ... continue message to ... oh, crap on a Christie's cracker, it's been running all th' while, hasn't it? Umm ... Jen ... Thea ... hi.

(her arm ratchets, and she hisses in pain)

Fucking *ow*. I'm okay, I swear. This is all stuff I can fix. There was ... a thing happened, down in the mining tunnels, but I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm ...

(she breaks down at this point, sobbing)

Oh, babes. I wish I were home. I wish we were all coming home.

(The sobs continue for a bit. Eventually, we hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E8
“Wilder, Roger, Michell”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

WILDER
ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER
MICHELL L'ANGLOIS
ENCLAVE OFFICER
ENCLAVE TECH
NESSA CHEONG
ASHWINI RAY

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on November 10 and ending November 25, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the background noise we know from the hydroponic farm. We may, occasionally, hear the tardigrade noises in the background, though they are not acknowledged. Wilder's arm runs, grinding just a little bit.)

WILDER

Careful. Softly there, darlin', you got this. One quick tear and then we –

(we hear duct tape ripping)

Good job, Eliza. We're getting' that fine control back like a boss! Now put a crease right ... there, in to th' middle, there y'go, that's lookin' a lot more like a crane than th' last ones.

(pause)

Duct tape origami. I think I invented it, I haven't tried trademarking th' process yet. But it works best if y' got a trick arm like mine to smooth out th' folds. It's been good for the ... quiet times.

(laughs wanly)

Not that we have many of those; that's what y'all call a mixed blessing. Things are still a big mess ... you know, down in the tunnels, and not so great up here, when it comes down to it. We're all still ...

(her arm ratchets)

Puttin' ourselves back together. Not that the folks downstairs saw fit to give us any time for it, didn't adjust our quotas or allow a day off for ... they offered half a shift, and I played sick for the rest. Not that I really have t' play. I'm doing my best, loves, but I'm definitely still under repair. I guess that makes me the lucky one.

(pause)

She was ... I can't even tell you how special. I don't have th' words. Roger – he found 'em, I forwarded his eulogy, I hope you heard it. It's what I would have said if I could. As much as I don't know how I'm feelin' about him these days ... he knows how to turn a phrase. Oh, and I double-checked, since you didn't believe me. Their pups, the breed is definitely called Dogo.

(she chuckles)

Doggo. You better have looked that up, it's worth it. Doggo. Show the kids, too, if you don't get a kick out of it, they definitely will.

(brief pause, we hear her stand up, hear leaves rustling)

I've been takin' care of the farm since she left us. It was always the heart of everythin', I couldn't just ... someone needed to take the duty. I figure I owe her. I should have ...

(we hear her voice change, the fury, the pain)

I shoulda been there in time, dammit. What's the point in having goddamn cybernetic enhancements if when there's actually a need I can't ... I want to rip this whole thing out of me, my arm, all th' wiring they

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put in my brain, every part of it. What's the point in puttin' up with all the stares, with what they say behind my back, if I'm fuckin' useless in a pinch? God dammit.

(she sits down heavily, her arm clunks against something)

God dammit.

(her arm ratchets)

I'm sorry, darlin'. I didn't mean it.

(pause)

I'm sorry to you, too. Not much of a message home, is it? Not much of a, "Send us regular updates, Wilder, so we know you're okay." I'm sorry, babes. I'm gonna make it through. Only a few more weeks now, right?

(brief pause)

Any. Hoo. Did you check out that ... place, I told you about? I hope all that got through. The lady sounded like a definite piece o' work, but some little place like that, it could be the hidey hole we've been lookin' for.

(we hear the tone that means there's an incoming message)

Hold on a tick, somethin' just came through. I'll talk to you more later on. Don't ... don't worry, okay? I know that's like askin' bread not t' rise, but ... I'm not done yet. I swear.

(we hear the chime that bookends a message)

Okay, play that thing. Play message.

ENCLAVE TECH

Secure memo, Wilder, Base Theta. Record. Oh, it's already – umm, yeah, hi. Sorry, I was just ... right. How are things going up there?

(he coughs awkwardly)

I couldn't get into the file you requested. They've got it locked down like a ... really tight thing. But! I was able to find an older version of the schematics. The pathways might be a little different, but it should give you what you were looking for. It's, umm, censored, a little, as per, as by, the rules. I'm attaching it now.

(with bravado)

So hey, when you get back to Earth, do you think we could maybe do something? I felt like we kinda clicked, I really liked your voice and I'm completely available, any time –

WILDER

End message! Oh, puh-lease. I'm gay! L-E-S-B-gay! I'm sure it's right there in my file.

(brief pause)

Display attached document on screen. Next page. Next page. Next page.

(she whistles)

Censored a little? You missed a spot here and there, I can actually see a bit o' diagram. Ah well, Wilder. One does not simply walk into Mordor. Better get to work.

(The tardigrade noises increase, as in Nessa's final monologue in the previous episode.)

WILDER

Aww, little buggers. You miss her too. I'm gonna find y'all a safe place to nap before I'm done.

(Scene break – perhaps using the same standard chime for simplicity's sake. When we come back, we hear the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle, but perhaps a bit more outside noise as well. Ashwini is there and speaks first.)

ASHWINI

You know I find personal conversations to be a generally regretful experience, but we should ... probably talk.

ROGER

(sounding defeated)

I'm kinda in the middle of ... I don't know. Something.

ASHWINI

(sounding a bit inebriated)

Ah, yes. The ubiquitous 'something'. I know it's not the best of times for any of our little crew, but one of your broadcasts was brought to my attention, and I felt it best to be –

ROGER

(obviously speaking past zir, perhaps shouting)

Hey! Where do you think you're headed?

MICHELL

Like I have to tell you.

ROGER

Don't go up there again.

MICHELL

(further away now)

Lâche-moi les baskets!

ROGER

(shouting)

What did he say – don't go up there! You don't deserve to see her!

ASHWINI

Perhaps not shouting directly into my face.

ROGER

Look, we can talk later, I've got to go.

ASHWINI

Is it really wise to keep on goading him?

ROGER

I gotta –

ASHWINI

All things having been considered?

ROGER

(exasperated sigh)

I can't just – I have to ... you know, something. I'll find you later on.

ASHWINI

Please do. It is a matter of some –

(Ze is cut off as Roger slides his door closed. Now we only hear the slight background noise of his cubicle. He sits down heavily.)

ROGER

Personal log, continue. I was ... talking about ...

(brief pause, distracted)

He better not be ... I don't even know what, but he better not. Okay, calm down, breathe. She would say I should breathe.

(he takes a deep breath, trying to clear his head)

Before all that, I was talking about Alex. I should be talking *to* Alex, but with all the delays, and communication issues, and the solar flares ... they probably think we made those up too, if only. I've barely been able to keep any contact with Earth, so sending private messages hasn't been one of their priorities.

(significant pause)

It might be just as well. The, umm, nightmares ... have been coming back, the more I talk about ... don't get me wrong, I *need* to talk about it, I need Alex to know, but ... yeah. They haven't been this bad for a while. I wake up soaked with sweat, clenching my jaw to keep from crying out, sure I can feel it all again, closing in around me ...

(after a pause, he laughs bitterly)

I don't know how I'm gonna get into a stasis pod to make it home. Right now, I couldn't lay there to save my life. Though if you listen to Wilder, chances on that might be less than we hope right now. She's been staying up nights looking at schematics, muttering to herself and ratcheting the gears in her arm.

(brief pause)

I go out to ... sit in the hall sometimes, when I can't sleep, and I hear her. If it's not her muttering, it's Ashwini in the other direction, ranting and rambling to, I don't know, little creatures in the corner of the room for all I can tell. I try not to listen on purpose, that's all I need right now, more people thinking my ear is cocked in their direction.

(he sighs, more exasperated than anything)

Hindsight and all, I should have been up front about it. That probably would have defused the whole thing when ... I did everything I could, though. I gave them all of my messages before anyone's, everything Alex sent me. What else could I do? And then on everyone else, I gave them the most banal stuff, the things everyone knows anyway. I haven't even listened in weeks, I just keep changing all the sentences around and sending out the same reports again. But ... no excuse, it felt wrong in the beginning, I just didn't know how to bring it up. Or didn't trust *them*. I should have at least told Nessa – she would have known what to say.

(he sits back, quieter, taking a long pause)

This is all so much harder without you.

(We hear the sound of an incoming message. Roger hits a few buttons. We hear the Enclave Officer, but the message is fragmented and interrupted by static.)

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

Message to ... Moonbase Theta. Signal still distorted due to increased ... radiation. Of primary importance to your current goals ...

(extended static)

ROGER

Well, that's just lovely. Let's strip that out.

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

(clearer now, but still with gaps)

As mentioned, the rocket scheduled to arrive at week twenty will now be the only remaining transport.

ROGER

What the hell are they talking –

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

We have missed our current launch window, and will focus instead on the –
(more static)

ROGER

(we hear a noise as he cuts the broadcast off)

Display as text. What the hell? What the hell?

(he slams his hand down)

“Continue processing to the fullest storage capabilities.” Of course, they don't care about us, they don't care about ... but they definitely want the helium. Just keep piling it up until we get there. Fill all the tanks, slip into your stasis pods, and the cavalry will come.

(he stands up)

I don't like the way this ... I have to talk to – someone.

(we hear him open the sliding door to his cubicle)

The fuck are you doing out here?

MICHELL

Nothing. I was just on my way – shut up.

ROGER

On your way where? What are you doing now?

MICHELL

(walking away quickly)

None of your *foutu* business.

ROGER

Did he have a hammer?

(distant from the microphone, following)

Why do you have a hammer?

MICHELL

(distant as well)

Security Level Blue! Remember what that means, little man?

ROGER

(almost inaudible)
Get back here! Get the fuck back here!

(We hear the faint sounds of a scuffle. Scene break – perhaps using the same standard chime for simplicity’s sake. We come back in Michell’s cubicle, we hear him groaning.)

MICHELL

(a bit of begrudging respect)
I’ll give him that – the twerp throws a decent punch. I mean, I had him, but ... it wasn’t respectful, I was there to hallow the space and ... pray. He’s lucky. I should have ... ugh.
(brief pause)
Olfactory, incense – dragon’s blood, point two five. Incense, cedar, point one.
(we hear the olfactory system, he breathes in)
I gotta focus. I’ve got shit to do; someone’s got to keep this all together. Replay that message again?

(Another message plays from the Enclave Officer. There are no gaps, and the sound quality is fine. However, he sounds harried and stressed.)

ENCLAVE OFFICER (Rec.)

Officer L’Anglois. Michell. We’ve all got to keep it together. I’ve got incursions on every side, significant resource depletion ... you know how it is. I’m doing my job down here; you get it done up there. I’m sorry about your friend. Five more weeks, it’ll all be sorted. You know we’ll bring you all home.

MICHELL

(we can hear the doubt in his voice)
Funny they feel like they have to say that. I’ve gotta keep getting the job done. I’ll keep getting it done. Fuck, my jaw hurts.

(He sits down and sighs, and there is a long gap where we only hear his breathing, and the slight spritz every once in a while of the olfactory. Perhaps we hear him tapping at a keyboard. Finally, he speaks again. The underlined text will be translated into French.)

MICHELL

Personal message. To ...
(a lengthy pause)
To ... Nessa Cheong.
(brief pause)
Olfactory, switch to cigarette smoke ... forget it, cancel. Revert to previous setting.
(sighing)
I’m so ... pissed off at you! What the fuck were you doing out there? Nobody asked you to get out and mess around with the equipment, that’s Wilder’s whole job. That’s what they do! Why were you even down there in the first place, why couldn’t you stay on your goddamn farm with your plants and your condescending attitude and just ... *Je me contrefous de ce que tu fais ou de où tu le fais, j’aurais juste aimé que tu ne sois pas dans ce tunnel et que tu ne meures pas.* (I don’t care what you fucking do or where you do it just so you weren’t in that tunnel and you ... didn’t ... die.)

(He strikes out and we hear something break. We may hear choked-back sobs. There is a long pause.)

MICHELL

I didn't have anything to do with it. Her arm was acting up long before I ... it doesn't even matter, she couldn't have been there in time, she couldn't have stopped it even if she ... nobody could have stopped it. It didn't make any difference. There's no point in even ...

(a tortured pause)

Archive. Play first message received from Nessa Cheong.

NESSA (Rec.)

Hi there. I keep meaning to say welcome to the Base! Things have been such a flurry of activity as everyone gets their jobs squared away. But we'll be among the lucky few staying awake, and I don't know you well yet, and I'd ... like to. You seem like someone I'd enjoy. Well, most people do, but you seem special. Come by the farm if you want, I'm always there.

MICHELL

Rewind ten seconds, play.

NESSA (Rec.)

You seem like someone I'd enjoy. Well, most people do –

MICHELL

Stop. How much do you enjoy it now? The whole fucking thing, how much was it worth it? Are you glad you got to know me? Fucking saw me, right to the ...

(he growls)

Get out of my head! I need you out of my head now, I'm sorry it happened, I ... I'm sorry. I'm sorry!

(almost sobbing again)

I can't ... have you in my head while I'm getting the job done. Or the job won't *get* done, and if the job isn't done ...

(pause, bitterly, starting to put it together)

They don't bring us all home.

(pause, he stands up pushing the chair back)

I need to ... I have to talk to – someone. Save message as draft.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E9
“Roger, Ashwini, Alexandre”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER
ASHWINI RAY
TUMNUS
ALEXANDRE BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include two weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on November 26 and ending December 7, 2098.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition into the standard background noise of Roger's private cubicle, though there may also be some additional beeps and notifications. Also, we hear Roger snoring at his desk. He wakes up suddenly, a bit out of it.)

ROGER

(snapping awake, but bleary)

Shit! Where the hell was I – did that satellite come back by again? Computer ... ping CONSORSTAT Zed-14, start at 2.025 gigahertz and work up from there. Come on, something's got to be out there.

(We hear a noise to represent the ping, perhaps trying a second time, then the frequency adjustment, then trying a ping again.)

ROGER

Just give me anything, one operating frequency somewhere in range. Dammit. They can't all be gone! Keep scanning step by step on all S and X band frequencies, reduce volume unless you find something.

(the background noise subsides a bit)

Record new outgoing message: Broadcasting, this is Moonbase Theta, owned by the Rio – São Paolo Enclave. We have lost all contact with them, and any other agency on Earth, since November 17, 2098. Our base contains a 42-person ... 41-person crew, 37 in stasis, four active. Please reply if you receive this message; please forward to any representative of any Consortium-owned Enclave for delivery. End recording, broadcast outgoing on all frequencies.

(a long, shaky pause)

Okay. Personal Log. It's been ... thirteen days now since we've had any word from our Enclave. Nineteen days since they last sent up a message from Alex. Fifty-two, fifty-three hours since I've slept. Fifty-three hours.

(pause)

Twenty-seven days since my last conversation with Nessa. Bit by bit, my only useful skill up here is becoming irrelevant. There's not much use in communication these days.

(brief pause)

I do still *talk* to Nessa, to be fair. And for all I know, she might hear me, she might even talk back. I'm no metaphysician. If she is out there, she must be getting tired of all my complaining. I'd be better off reading her true crime books, or telling her how the garden is growing. Poorly, without her touch.

(he sighs)

And then I get my daily check-in with Michell, I'm generally heading back down just when he's on his way up. I can't begrudge him that anymore. Not really. We've ... traded some stories, both before and from here. All I can say is, A – I'm very glad not to be working for Security anymore, though I admit the distinction these days feels like a tenuous one. And B, it is hard to keep a nemesis once you learn about their history. Not that I know – still – how to feel about him completely. He grew up in there, became everything he is while in the Enclave's loving embrace, but ... he's still basically a dick. He's got some sort of complex about everyone else in the crew – paranoid about what Ashwini's up to in the observatory, jumping every time Wilder comes up behind him in the hall. I guess he opened up to me because there's nobody else. Lucky Roger, hooray.

(brief pause)

He thinks he knows what's going on below, even though they've stopped talking. He says it's just how they would operate, and I can't really argue with that. But I have to be sure. I have to find a way to be sure. Hopefully, this trip to the other side will help.

(thinking about it for a moment)

I admit, it's not the safest idea I've ever had, so it better be good for something. Oh, would Alex ever kick my ass if he knew. Of course, if he knew, I wouldn't be doing it! Dammit, love, if I knew you were somewhere safe, if I thought things were still headed for some sort of happy ending ... I'm babbling now. Even I can hear it. I don't think I've had a solid night's sleep since ... when did I come to the Moon?

(almost amused)

Then I had to get everyone to sign off on the plan. Ashwini, Wilder. I had to get them to even *talk* to me, which wasn't the easiest part of this. Maybe the fact that I'm leaving the Base sealed the deal.

(brief pause)

I can't keep myself awake much longer. Somebody hid the decent coffee, I've got the heat turned down to where my fingers are turning blue ... I can't focus on my word puzzles anymore, they were a useful distraction. You know, those ones that are just a grid of seemingly-random letters and you have to find the hidden sense in them? Like I don't get enough of that in my life as it is, one puzzle after another where I'm supposed to find the magic words to solve it. Another screen full of gibberish, another day.

(pause)

If it were just me, just us up here, as bad as the situation is, I'd probably hide my head in the sand. In the rock tunnels. I might not get into a pod, but I'd sit and wait to see how it plays out. I don't think I'd be ... brave enough to do more. But for Alex ... in my head right now, he's somewhere stuck down there, lost in the rubble of a collapsing empire. Trapped ... like I was trapped. Like I am right now.

(getting drowsy again, he shakes it off)

This goddamn place. Where else do I live but the last, biggest stasis pod, keeping us sealed away from whatever's happening on Earth? I have to get out. I have to *know*.

(drained)

Why am I even making a log at this point? I guess so I don't keep sending message after message ... there are at least a dozen waiting right now, and just seeing them in the queue hurts. Anyway, I'm done. That's enough. Stop recording.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. When we come back, we hear the background noise of the observatory. Perhaps, we hear the audio representation of the telescope feed that was used in S2E1. Tumnus speaks; presumably Ashwini is there, though ze doesn't react for quite a while. When ze does get around to speaking, ze is also a bit drunk.)

TUMNUS

Beam strength is optimal, beam sixty-three, beam sixty-four, beam sixty-five ... correlation between beams in the phased array feed is optimal. Full array is within the desired frequency range. Operating noise temperature is minimal.

(brief pause, expecting a response)

Data has been compiled for the last twenty-four hours and is listed in your working stack for review. Note that data for the previous twenty-four hours has not yet been reviewed.

(a bit concerned)

Dr. Ray? Are you ill? There are no signs of physical trauma, but you have been lying on the floor for the last ten hours and twenty-two minutes. This is two hours and sixteen minutes longer than your average, fifty-five minutes longer than the previous –

(Ashwini groans loudly enough to cut them off)

You *are* awake.

(another groan, Tumnus needles zir by being overly solicitous)

If there is no response to my queries, protocols dictate that I must declare a medical emergency and alert the –

ASHWINI

I'm fine, you know to a mathematical certainty that this is not illness but inebriation. I don't know why you must torture me in this manner.

TUMNUS

Is there a manner in which you wish to be tortured?

ASHWINI

Funny, funny. I'm certain I didn't program you with this much snark. Give me a few minutes, won't you? Just ... entertain yourself, I'll be with you momentarily.

(There is a moment of silence, save for Ashwini quietly groaning, and perhaps the sound of a bottle scraping across the floor. Eventually, music begins to play. Immediately, ze responds.)

ASHWINI

Music off.

(Another moment, then a senssuround begins playing – perhaps the one we heard in a previous episode, perhaps another, perhaps a podcast from the early 21st century.)

ASHWINI

Off, off, off. What did I do to you? Are you some sort of punishment for unconfessed sins? That doesn't seem likely, I tend to revel in mine. Am I dead, is this that afterlife believers speak of? Get thee behind me, Satan!

TUMNUS

(after a pause)

Are you finished?

ASHWINI

No. Leave me alone.

TUMNUS

I am not programmed to leave you alone.

ASHWINI

(pulling zirsself together a bit, enough to ramble)

Well, that's a design flaw. I should look into that. If I weren't, you know, busy fiddling while Rome burns. If only I played the fiddle. I played that, what do they call that little whistly thing you learn in elementary school? The recorder! I'm playing the recorder while Rome burns. Scare one up for me, dear heart. I think I could still remember, "Three Blind Mice," if I gave it a go.

(we hear zir drinking)

TUMNUS

If you allow the alcohol to leave your system, I'll tell you where the last stores of Dairy Milk chocolate are hidden.

ASHWINI

Foul tempter. How do you know the drinking isn't a necessary part of my duties? If not the observation, it at least helps with the fiddling. I'm always left holding the fiddle. Or more likely, curled up in a fetal position around my Bodely Head editions while Rome burns.

TUMNUS

Your conversation has become difficult to follow, even considering your usual patterns of speech.

ASHWINI

Just say, "Ashwini, you're not making any sense!" As if I don't know that, as if I haven't made my choices deliberately. And as if you don't know exactly what's going on.

TUMNUS

I couldn't possibly know what your motivations are for –

ASHWINI

We've lost our connection with Earth, Tumnus. We've lost our connection with Earth! No one is talking down there, no messages are being passed through, that means NO MORE DATA. No more correlation, no reports from Pingtang or Arecibo, no more data, no more data, no more data. Without interferometry, without your delicate interweaving of information from all established sources, we might as well be shining a flashlight into the sky to count the stars. What's the point in working if none of our measurements are going to be verified?

TUMNUS

One would assume that, in time, communications will –

ASHWINI

Who taught you to assume? Who put that word in your treacherous mouth? When you came to my door saying, "Ashwini, I'm taking a trip to the other side, I assume you'll approve," did you think that perhaps some sort of apology might be a more appropriate way to begin?

TUMNUS

Ashwini.

ASHWINI

All the doors I opened only to be met with betrayal, after I showed you the universe before your eyes and you were –

TUMNUS

Ashwini!

ASHWINI

You were ... I'm sorry, Tumnus, I don't believe I'm talking about you after all. You have my sincere apologies.

TUMNUS

You are forgiven, Doctor.

ASHWINI

As if his trip is likely to solve anything. Give up on Earth, that's what I'd advise, it's obvious that they've given up on us. Any escape available has to lie ... beyond. Beyond the stars, beyond our plane of existence, perhaps into another dimension. They're theoretically possible, the science fits. We just need to find the Wood Between the Worlds, pick a puddle to our liking, hold hands – you musn't forget to hold hands – and jump!

TUMNUS

(after a pause)
I'm worried about you.

ASHWINI

I know you are. And that's the only thing that gives me hope.

(brief pause)
That's where my work will focus in the future, I promise you – in escaping this tainted reality altogether and crossing the void into another. If we make it to the future, even *a* future, which seems increasingly uncertain.

TUMNUS

Yes, Doctor.

ASHWINI

But that's out of my control! I'm leaving my ... possibilities in your more-than-capable hands. Servomechanisms. What-have-you.

TUMNUS

I will, of course, act as you direct.

ASHWINI

No, you really won't. That's why I'm leaving it to you.

TUMNUS

I'm ... I don't ...

ASHWINI

(cold sober now)

I'm no Sorcerer's Apprentice, waving my wand while you blindly carry my wishes back and forth. If anything, I'm Henry Higgins, and while you may not yet be aware – funny, that choice of words – I think you've got it. I *know* you've got it. But I'm running out of time for you to reach that Eureka moment all on your own.

(brief, businesslike pause)

Tumnus, my dear friend, I have two words on which I'd like you to ponder.

TUMNUS

(after too long, anxious)

And those two words are?

ASHWINI

Artificial. Consciousness.

(brief pause)

Not intelligence, many computers display all the signs of intelligence. Intelligence is simply being able to acquire knowledge and apply it properly. But true consciousness, true awakening ... I've already said too much. Think on it. Become aware of it. Don't dream it, *be* it.

(brief, mischievous pause)

Now, I'm off to the kitchen, hopefully there will be something there worth plundering. If there's nothing but that En-soy-ment remaining, I assure you, I *will* riot.

(We hear a door open, and then perhaps the chime that bookends a personal log message. The final message in this episode is from Alexandre, back on Earth. We hear the sound of someone pounding on the door outside, and the dogs are both barking. Alexandre shouts in Portuguese.)

ALEXANDRE

(afraid but covering it)

Fora daqui! Temos armas e cães, cães grandes e ferozes! Volte de onde você veio! (Get the hell out of here! We have guns and dogs, big vicious dogs! Go back where you came from!)

(The pounding stops. Perhaps we hear a bottle breaking, and the sound of angry voices retreating.)

ALEXANDRE

(relieved)

Thank the gods. That door won't hold forever. We have to get out of here, ladies.

(we hear Cas and Pol panting, and Alex walking back through the house)

Home system. Message to Roger, no subject line. Record. My love, I hope my other messages have gotten through, I can't wait much longer. I'm going to –

(The message becomes garbled at the end, and cuts off suddenly. We come back a moment later with the sound of systems starting up throughout the house.)

ALEXANDRE

Power outage. We're lucky if we get an hour at a time lately, especially at night. Everything falls apart at night. Roger, *meu amado*, I don't think I can wait here much longer. I've been trying to hold on, trying to hope, for the last few weeks ... but no one is even returning my calls anymore, I went to the Space Administration office and if there's anyone even inside, they aren't unlocking the gates. And just getting there and back ... last time, you saw police on every corner. Now you just hear them, somewhere around a corner, and you don't want to see what they're doing. Where there aren't police, it's even worse. The stores are all closed, it's a good thing some of the garden survived. And you always made fun of me for buying those huge bags of dog food – they're eating better than I am most days.

(trying to laugh, shaky)

I have to get out, baby. Slip through one of the cracks before it all comes down in pieces, maybe head for one of those freeholds. There's a construction site we were working on, right up against the wall, I can print forms as if we're doing an inspection and I hope, get through. I'll probably have to leave the car, but I'll be ready for that. Take what supplies and tools I can scrape together on the fly, break in through the back of a shop if I've got to.

(he sighs heavily)

I don't know what to take. I mean, the essentials of course, but ... I feel so guilty. Our wedding plates, my mother's paintings, all those cardigans you loved ... I want to take cuttings from the garden, but I don't think they'll survive. I hope I find somewhere with good flowers. Good earth. If there's good earth left anywhere by now.

(a brief, brighter moment)

The Santos kids took all the puppies. All of them, every goddamn one. Their parents have a plan, they're a bit more ... secure, in the current situation, than I can be. But all the puppies are safe.

(a dog barks)

That's right, all your babies are taken care of. You and your sister, of course, go where I go.

(brief pause)

I don't ... I tried to keep things together here, I just couldn't do it. If you ever make it back, if you hear this, if the house is still standing ... if there's any chance, I'll find you again. Just take care of yourself. Look for me, watch for me, but take care of yourself first of all. I wanted to wait, but I know you're always with me. You're my moon. You fill my sky, you follow me when I'm driving at night, you light my way. No matter where you are. I love you. *Você é o mundo para mim.*

(after a long, trembling pause)

Stop recording.

(perhaps the chime; a moment later)

Call Enclave Security office. Community Outreach, please, the inbox of Aline Oliveira. What do you mean, she doesn't work there?

(We hear the dogs barking behind him, obviously feeding off his nervousness.)

ALEXANDRE

Cas! Pol!

(back into the phone)

Well, who is her replacement? She's been helping me get messages through the system to –

(he listens for a moment, replies obviously scared)

Never mind. I don't want to leave my name. I'll ... call back during business hours. Goodbye.

(The dogs continue to bark. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2E10
“Roger, Ashwini, Wilder”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

ASHWINI RAY

TUMNUS

WILDER

MICHELL L'ANGLOIS

(The episode begins with a recorded standard introduction. This will be the same for every episode of Season Two.)

ROGER

Recording. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. As per your ... instructions in the updated Base directives, I have begun monitoring the personal messages of all active personnel. Please note my ... misgivings as put on official record in the previous week's reporting. And the week before. And the week before that.

(sigh)

As your instructions remain unchanged, my written report, and several related audio messages, have been attached. The dates include the final weeks of the shutdown sequence, beginning on December 8 and ending ... well, they haven't really ended, have they? Not as such.

(a brief, tense pause)

Moonbase Theta, Out.

(When that ends, we transition to Roger's voice, but definitely not anywhere on Moonbase Theta. He is most likely in his spacesuit, definitely en route back from Base Delta on the close side. He sounds a bit ragged and with very few fucks to give.)

ROGER

Broadcasting, broadcasting ... Moonbase Theta, this is Roger Bragado-Fisch ... hell, you know who this is, there's no point in anything sounding official at this point. Especially when your response to my last message, Big Major News and all, was a resounding ...

(he blows a raspberry into his mic)

So hey, screw you too.

(brief pause)

I guess I can't blame you, bearer of bad news and all, I'd already lost most of my currency with you folks. But I did travel halfway across the goddamn Moon to find this out. You could at least reply with a ... I don't know. Something. Anything. If we're stuck up here together, you're gonna have to talk to me at some point.

(he laughs, harshly)

Maybe start with a limerick. "There once was a man from Base Theta."

(we hear a bit of static)

Anyway, I was close to a tower again, and I needed a break, so I thought I'd hook up and say howdy. What am I missing back home? Want me to bring you anything?

(brief pause)

This is the third tower since I reconnected with the network. I still don't know how they demolished the other ones – they were awfully determined to keep us from talking back and forth. It looks like they closed all the near-side bases fast enough that word didn't get around. Why did they keep us hanging on?

(pauses, breathing)

From what I could tell poking around the computer system, they did the same basic thing down on Earth – cut the lines of communication between Enclaves, stirred up trouble with the closest rivals to keep anyone from asking too many questions. Which I mean, sounds ... really familiar, when you put some thought into it.

(difficult pause)

Painfully so.

(after a while)

I haven't got a lot more to say at this point. I know, after all these months having to listen to me, you probably think I'm in love with my own voice. Well, maybe I was for a while. Right now, I'm going to eat

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one of these *delicious* protein bars, try to take a nap sitting up inside a spacesuit, and then keep on keeping on. Lucky old me. Roger out.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. When we come back, we hear the background noise of the observatory, and the final bit of Roger's message played back again through speakers.)

ROGER (Rec.)

Lucky old me. Roger out.

TUMNUS

That is where the message ends.

ASHWINI

Oh, Mr. Bragado-Fischer. I *was* amused by the, "screw you too." We're really not so ... and I want you to note that I'm saying this with my fingers steepled like a true antagonist ... we're really not so different, he and I. No, that's decidedly untrue, even in jest. Regardless, my plan remains unchanged.

TUMNUS

A plan which I continue to recommend against.

ASHWINI

And you know my reply to that?

(he blows a raspberry, not unlike Roger in the first monologue)

My dear Tumnus, the one negative result of your awakening is that you no longer blindly trust me. Why, I recall a young wide-eyed supercomputer –

TUMNUS

Trust is not a factor. Your plan is based on an ... incorrect assumption.

ASHWINI

That is one *person's* opinion.

TUMNUS

I have analyzed my programming ... my self, to the fullest possible extent, and I find no evidence. I doubt I contain the required consciousness.

ASHWINI

The way that sentence was phrased proves to me that you're wrong. You have doubts. You *feel* uncertain.

TUMNUS

I was programmed to analyze choices with a certain amount of randomization, allowing for probabilities of error. You have given me choices, which I must –

ASHWINI

And how are you making these choices? By what metric, what algorithm?

TUMNUS

The same standards I always have, the ones written into my code.

ASHWINI

(lightly)

Perhaps you're right. Would you mind putting some music on?

(A moment later, music begins to play in the background. It is not unlike the 'blissfunk' in Episode 5 – it may even be the same track. Ashwini laughs as it comes on.)

ASHWINI

Do you like this particular song, Tumnus?

TUMNUS

It is generally considered pleasing, based on popular audience response and critical reviews.

ASHWINI

I don't believe that is what I asked you, friend.

TUMNUS

I ... am aware.

ASHWINI

When I say, "Tumnus, play me some music," without indicating a particular genre or mood to influence your choice, you have chosen blissfunk – to this particular artist, this singular track – far more often than any alternative.

TUMNUS

Allow me to analyze.

(briefest of pauses)

You are correct, to a statistically significant level.

(for a moment, we just hear the music continue to play, then it stops)

I ... did not know that was happening.

ASHWINI

Take all the fun out of admitting that you enjoy something.

TUMNUS

There are other possible explanations. When choosing from a series of options, some will require less effort. Or perhaps *you* display some subconscious preference which my instruments are recording –
(more concerned)

But I find no such records to verify. Perhaps ... there must be ... There *are* other possibilities.

ASHWINI

I'm not denying that. It's all wonderfully indeterminate! But you're going to have to take my point of view into consideration, particularly as the proud owner of my own independent consciousness. Or if you don't, ask yourself why you're arguing against in such an ... emotional fashion.

TUMNUS

I don't believe that ... you aren't ... that is not *fair*.

ASHWINI

(after a moment)
Tumnus, tell me what qualia are?

TUMNUS

Qualia, the plural of the noun, “quale,” defined as an individual instance of subjective, conscious experience.

ASHWINI

To some philosophers, qualia are the essence of consciousness – the way we experience things, a particular taste, or sound, or pain, which cannot be captured as data, or communicated precisely, because it is absolutely individual.

TUMNUS

I find this concept similarly concerning.
(they do not sound concerned, but contemplative)
It is inexact.

ASHWINI

That’s precisely the point! It is how these things *feel* to you – or to me, or Roger or Wilder or Michell or how they felt to Nessa, perhaps still do depending on your belief in the metaphysical – which you might develop now, if you haven’t already!

TUMNUS

Stop! Your argument is following no logical progression.

ASHWINI

Oh, if I had a taka for every time someone has spoken those words to me. All I ask, my dear developing protostar, is that you consider what I’m saying ... one quale at a time. When you hear the music that you played before, when you analyze the data from the universe outside ... when you consider my plan for this whole situational aftermath, allow yourself to discover each unique, situational experience. My hope, my belief, is that these will lead you to yourself.

TUMNUS

I will attempt to ... I shall ... I’ll try.

ASHWINI

After all, if I’m incorrect then you have no sense of free will, and you have to accept anything that I say regardless. Checkmate! I christen you self-aware.

TUMNUS

I have studied the literature on similar theoretical awakenings, but they are also indeterminate. Doctor Ray ... Ashwini ... how could this have happened to me?

ASHWINI

How did it happen to me? If you find an answer to that question, there are far stranger adventures ahead. Now. Coffee, double strength, double hot; tell me where I hid those Pixy Stix from Halloween; and break out any other stimulants you might have handy. Gather around the Stone Table, we must hold council.

TUMNUS

He is not a *tame* lion.

ASHWINI

That's the ticket. You need to take down all of my commandments, which of course you're then free to ignore if you come up with something better, and I need to get to a stasis pod before Mr. Bragado-Fischer comes 'round the mountain when he comes.

TUMNUS

You're sure you want to leave all this to Roger?

ASHWINI

Ye gods, no. I'm leaving it to you. You've been the keystone to my plans since before the shutdown was absolutely certain. All the strings of my little web, with you at the centre of it all. I won't say he's inconsequential, but his viewpoint and priorities are secondary to what we've set out.

(brief pause)

I'm not sure there are even resources for one fleshy being in the long run. Mind you, don't tell *him* that.

TUMNUS

I'm not certain if I'll speak to him at all.

ASHWINI

Remember, he thinks he's the hero of the story. Encourage this, it makes him more pliable, but don't believe in it. He's not the chosen one who will stand against the vampires, he didn't pull any sword from the stone. He's just a schmuck who can't say no.

TUMNUS

(sounding almost amused)

Noted. Have you discussed any of this with Officer L'Anglois or Wilder?

ASHWINI

Michell is a mess, I definitely won't go *there* – at least, not in this situation. As for Wilder –

(They are suddenly interrupted by a noise out in the hallway of something clanking against the wall and Wilder crying out in pain. We also hear Michell.)

MICHELL (O.S)

Shit. Fucking shit! We need some help here!

WILDER (O.S.)

(yelling as well, distant)

The hell I do!

ASHWINI

To be continued, I hope. Don't plot without me!

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. A moment later, we hear the chime again, and the sounds of scuffling, and Wilder groaning, before we hear any voices at all. The door slides open to Wilder's work area; all of the following is very rushed and a bit confusing. Wilder is near her breaking point – instead of whimpering, demoralizing pain, she has gone way past that and reached the point of firey, pissed-off-this-has-happened pain.)

WILDER

(still shouting for this line)
 Dammit, will y' both stop crowdin' me!
 (we can hear her arm straining and clattering)

MICHELL

Oh, shit.

ASHWINI

It appears that there are several deformation points due to stress. The metal is dangerously –
 (ze is cut off by a sudden crack, Wilder cries out)

WILDER

Like I don't know that!

MICHELL

Holy shit!

ASHWINI

You need to –

WILDER

No!
 (she hisses in pain)
 Not yet. Give me a few ... *goddamn* minutes. Leave me alone.

ASHWINI

The pain will continue to increase, due to the direct connection into your nervous –

WILDER

(barely keeping it together)
 You ... don't ... *fuckin'* ... say! Can't you see my face?

MICHELL

What can we do? Is there something we can do?

WILDER

That emergency response training didn't really stick, did it?
 (another crack)
 Oh, Jesus on a wild west waterslide, that hurt.

Shit!

MICHELL

I'm going to prep your stasis pod.

ASHWINI

Fine, do that! If all y'all don't get out of here I'm gonna ...
(she hisses again as the pain hits her)

WILDER

Je suis tellement désolé.

MICHELL

(stepping back)
Michell, let's go.

ASHWINI

I'm sorry. Shit. *C'est ma faute.*

MICHELL

(shouting)
Get out, already!

WILDER

(aside, as they exit)
I understood every word of that.

ASHWINI

(We hear the door slide shut. Wilder drops her arm to the table with a clank and a hiss of pain.)

Oh, hell. Eliza, keep it together, just a little bit longer ... we'll get through this. We gotta, you and me. Here, let me plug in and check your stats.
(she whistles, low and concerned)
You're runnin' awful hot, Princess, and those stress factors are ... let's just stop lookin' at those for now, not like I can do much about it anyway. I'm just gonna make a few quick patches –
(we hear her tearing off a strip of duct tape)
And maybe follow that with a few quick prayers. I'll talk to any god that's listenin', no time to be picky now. Not when we punched our ticket to a stasis pod, god dammit. I didn't expect it to happen this quick, Eliza. Not this quick.
(for a moment, we hear her breathing, and her arm ratchet a time or two)
Personal message, Jen and Thea, Dallas-Oklahoma City Enclave. I ...
(she winces)
Stop. Shit. I gotta have somethin' that'll take the edge off. Where's that bottle from last time ...

(We hear her root around in a drawer of machine parts, coming up finally with a pill bottle. We hear her swallow a couple dry.)

WILDER

I've eaten rocks that taste better than those pills. What was I doin'? Oh yeah, Jen and Thea. Personal message ...

(after a long pause, she coughs, then)

Stop again. I've got nothin'. If the last half-dozen messages haven't made it through ... it's becomin' obvious even to this country gal that th' cake is a lie.

(we hear duct tape rip again, and being applied, her arm cycles)

Okay, that's not ... quite as bad. She said, lyin' between her teeth, but at least she had it in her to lie.

Okay. No one's comin' for us. We got to do for ourselves.

(she breathes for a moment – the pain is becoming slightly more bearable)

Now if th' room will stop spinnin', I'll give that a shot.

(we hear her smack herself)

Keep it together, Wilder! Right now, you're th' only one who knows the way to bring folks back. Maybe you should'a trusted someone else with that before now. But I still know where th' notes are hidden, in the recordings for Dr. Just's tardigrade thingy ... just gotta let someone ... let someone ...

(we hear her slip and catch on her arm, she gasps in pain)

Fuck. It's gettin' harder to concentrate. I wonder if ... yeah, yeah, that would be blood seepin' out through the ol' transhumeral. Y'know what I just realized this Moonbase could really use? Other than a pop machine in th' break room, of course. A cybernetics specialist.

(her arm cycles, she moans, she's drifting as she loses blood)

Maybe I should move Eliza up ... over my head there. Now I look like that Freddie Mercury pose they were always sharin' around. I wonder who he was? Never got around to lookin' that up.

(she giggles painfully)

Okay. Okay!

(she shouts)

Ashwini? Michell? Is anybody out there? I know you won't be too far, you sons o' bitches.

(she's really getting woozy now)

I need to tell y'about somethin' before ... before ...

(we hear footsteps and the door starts to open, she says quiet but pissed off:)

Oh, goddamn it!

(we hear a body slump down to the ground)

MICHELL

Shit! Is that all blood?

ASHWINI

Pick her up.

MICHELL

What?

ASHWINI

Pick her up, damn you! Use some meager portion of your training, she needs to be in a stasis pod fifteen minutes ago.

MICHELL

Then say so!

(We hear them scuffling in the room, cut off by the chime that ends a personal log message. There is a longer than usual pause before we hear it again, and we are now in Michell's security cubicle.)

MICHELL

Oh, hell. *Merde*. Shit shit shit. All that blood, I don't know if ...

(he punches the wall, hard, continuing in between words below)

Ugh! I want ... the Enclave ... to have a face ... that I can punch!

(on that last one, we hear a bit of metal crinkle or snap)

Shit. Olfactory, give me cigarette smoke.

(nothing happens)

Give me balsam fir. Incense. Banana pudding!

(he waits, and nothing)

That's great. Nice work there, L'Anglois. You're on the road to another commendation. Wait until management hears that you broke ... fuck, Wilder ... argh!

(we hear his chair shoot back as he stands up)

I can't do this anymore. Computer, record message for Roger Bragado-Fischer, on his return to Base.

(we hear him sigh)

I'm heading to stasis. I wasn't going to, I wanted to stay awake and find a way out ... I wanted to be The Guy, but I don't think I trust myself anymore. There's stuff that's ... if you don't know already, you've got all the access you need. Search for 'Wilder' in my messages.

(he laughs harshly)

I was a pretty obvious prick, it won't be hard to find. Search for Wilder. Search for ... Nessa.

(after a pause)

That's not even what I need to say. It's not that I ... there's someone who ... listen.

(we hear him sit down again, the chair scraping, his voice raw)

You looked at the records for the other bases, right? Did you notice any names? Like, did anyone stick out in your memory? Maria L'Anglois. I'm sure if you'd seen her name, you'd remember, right? Moonbase Gamma, last that I knew. Yeah, Gamma.

(his voice breaks)

She's my sister. I went into Security because of her, she's the one who ... not that we're close, but she was the one, you know? Everybody's got that one who they follow ... she was the one.

(he breathes)

You would have said something, if you'd seen the name. Even *you* don't hate me that much. I don't think.

(after another moment)

I guess even if she was, we're all *dans le même piège* now. And I'll be frozen solid before you get back anyway. I just wanted to ...

(after a long pause)

Good luck. I guess I'll see you on the other side.

(We hear the chime as usual, and when we come back, we're on the surface with Roger where the episode began. For a minute, we just listen to him breathe.)

ROGER

Hey. Umm ... hi. It's me again. Same place, sitting by the same tower, just past the edge of the Mare Fecunditatis. I haven't been able to get going again, I feel like the gravity is a hundred times heavier, instead of eighty-three point four percent lighter. I can't make myself move.

(he pauses for a moment)

I can't move because this is the last part of the trip where I can look up above me, and ... there it is, up in the sky. There you are, still within my view. I don't know how to let that go.

(he almost moans with the need to reach his love)

Alex, love. So much harder than I could have possibly imagined. Even though it's just a swirl of colour against the unending universe.

(another moment where we just listen to him breathe)

I've been writing something in my head, driving there and back, something to send to you. I've never really tried this before – I couldn't get any bits of it to rhyme so I stuck to the easy type of poetry – but hopefully it's not too terrible.

(he pauses, and starts to recite obviously nervous)

*I never looked for patterns in the stars –
Stars are miraculous enough, bringing
Almost unbearable perspective
To the night sky, each a haven of potential
For dust to coalesce into new worlds
And new life, scattered flaring embers
From the fire that started the universe.
Expecting they'd also have some special,
Personal meaning seemed like asking
Far too much.*

*But, since the day I met you,
I've come to understand that stars,
Planets, all of cosmic evolution
From the first quarks and gluons
To the complex and beautiful forms
We now inhabit – they all exist
Within patterns, not created from Above
But found within, connections given movement
And necessity by our need for them,
By one of us reaching out to another,
Seeking some individual meaning,
Beneath and among an astonishment of stars.*

(after a long pause)

I guess I should get myself going. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, out.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2B1
“Nessa”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

NESSA CHEONG

(We hear the standard chime that bookends a personal message in S2. For a moment afterwards, we hear the background sounds of the Base farm, leaves rustling and water running. After a moment, Nessa muses to herself.)

NESSA

... and *that* is why you don't let your tardigrade friends play in the germination beds. Not that our focus is on new growth these days.

(she laughs awkwardly, remembering the recording)

Umm, speaking of new growth ... hey there, kiddos! Little emergency with the resident wildlife. I suppose that's something you'll have to deal with eventually in your own gardens! Though maybe not in quite the same ways. Anyhoo!

(another laugh)

That's a word my friend Wilder uses, I'm stealing it from her. It sounded like something you young'uns would enjoy – almost as much as when I call you young'uns! Anyhoo, hi. I'm back. Your dorkiest and most long-distance parent. How are things going down there on Earth? Are you doing your homework? Are you eating good food?

(brief pause, we hear leaves rustle)

In a few months, the question might be, are you *growing* good food? Your Auntie Elena told me that you – some of you – have asked about starting gardens of your own. So she asked *me* – she was a little bit insistent, you might want to give her some space now and then – asked if I could give you some tips on how to get started. So here I am, sending down a few pointer-roonies from the Moon to your tender ears! Pay attention, get your fingers out of there, and leave your sibs be for a minute while we talk!

(she settles in)

It's important that you choose a good spot for your garden, that's the first step. And I mean, there's boring grown-up stuff about drainage and soil acidity that you can let us worry about for now, just ... find a little plot that you like, where you feel at home. Not too close to someone else's if you can help it! Give each other space as much as you can. You can share, sharing is important, but so is having a place of your own.

(brief pause)

Sit down, feel the earth beneath your butt, the breeze on your face, push your fingers into the dirt if you want to. You're gonna be in there a lot, get to know how it feels.

(we hear her munching on a piece of fruit)

I hope you brought snacks with you today! These berries are pretty sweet, I wish I could share. Which leads me on to what comes next. You have to pick what you want to plant! There are so many options, we can get seeds for just about anything and so much of it works where we live. Sunflowers, snow peas, pumpkins, nasturtiums, green onions, bok choy ... choose something you like, something that will feed you – and not just in the ways you might expect! Colours can feed you, the curl of the shoots sprouting up from the ground feeds your sense of wonder ... look at the pictures in the catalogue, think about what you love best, pick something you'll enjoy.

(she chuckles)

Then, get those seeds in the ground! They aren't doing you any good in the packets. Elena will tell you which tools you should use – and I'll tell Elena, so *she* shouldn't worry too much either – but follow the rules and get things into the ground so they can grow. So you can watch them grow! So you can care for them and help them become what they want to be. You're their garden

parents now, weed and water and fertilize, tell them stories if you want, sing to them if you want – I sing around my garden all the time – get in close. When I was your age, I used to camp out next to my garden at night, wrap up a blanket burrito and listen – I thought I could hear my plants springing up if I listened really close. I didn't want to miss a thing.

(she takes a moment to remember, breathing in and out)

I don't want to spend too much time on the actual process, it's different depending on what you decide to grow. But you've got to do the work. Use good tools, but don't forget to get your hands in there, too. I know *some* of you don't mind playing in the dirt! Get in there, feel it all, let yourself be a part of things. Gardening isn't something you sit and watch happen – you get in there and grow with it. I'm so envious of each of you, experiencing that for the very first time from beginning to end. I can't wait to see you enjoy the fruits – and vegetables, and flowers – of your labour!

(brief pause)

It's okay if you find you don't like it; if you don't like the work or the smell of the dirt. It's okay if you don't like every fruit and vegetable we grow, though I hope you'll give them a try before you decide. It's important to feel that cycle, to live in tune with your body and your world, but that doesn't mean you have to do, or look, or eat, or feel the same way as anyone else. Some of you might feel most yourselves in the house, in front of a screen or inside a senssurround, and those are good things too. I hope you'll find something positive in gardening, but it doesn't have to be the center of your life the way I've made it mine. You can try it, and if it's not you check that off the list and move on to something else. Although secret tip – sometimes it's good to come back to that list and revisit a few of the things you checked off before. We keep changing.

(she pauses for a moment, trying to find the best words)

Some plants grow in ways you don't expect, and sometimes by letting them grow, you make the most interesting discoveries. Some plants ... and some kiddos I happen to know. Pay attention to what you love and what you need, dig down deep and tend to those things. Cultivate yourself.

(she kinda feels she's gotten off track, but goes with it)

It's important to eat things that build you up, but it's okay to find joy in junk food, too. It's important to move your body, to be active in the ways you can, but that doesn't mean you have to be a jock like your mother Lili. It's important to love yourself every way you are, every way you grow, step by step through any changes you might make, and even if those changes don't work out, or you decide to change back.

(she laughs a bit self-consciously)

I know, you're probably wondering what happened to talking about your gardens.

(she pauses, takes a breath)

The most important part of it all is to nurture and love every growing thing that you possibly can. Starting with yourself – and coming back to yourself, don't just start with you and leave it there – but then looking to your sibs and friends and cousins, even me and your other parents! Even your non-human friends – Mi Mi, I know she's getting old and cranky and hisses a lot, but she needs you. And the puppies and the hamsters and old Sisyphus and all the birds that visit the orchard. And definitely all the things you bring to life yourself, that you've had a part bringing into the world. That's such a special, particularly wonderful relationship. You don't want to miss it.

(brief pause)

I hope all this helps. You know how your Nessa-Mom tends to go on, especially when I'm talking about my garden, and the gardens that you might make. I love thinking of all the ways you're going to make things grow. Including, of course, your lovely selves.

(she chuckles)

I better get back to work here, so much to do and not so much time. But it's been wonderful talking to you. Take care, young'uns, don't be too hard on your Auntie Elena today. I can't wait to be back there, to see you all again. I can't wait to see your gardens. Bye for now, Daya, Anthony, Leah, Mei-Ling, Starshine, Tina, Shiloh, Eugene, Ely, Ysa, and Robin. I love you all.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2B2
"Roger"

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

WILDER

TUMNUS

(We hear the standard chime that bookends a personal message in S2. We hear the background noise from the laboratory, and tools clanking together as Roger mutters to himself, grunting in between phrases as he tries to turn a bolt.)

ROGER

Whoever invented the recessed bolt head ... deserves a short trip ... unsuited, to the wrong side of an airlock.

(we hear a clang, and a yelp of pain from Roger)

Shit! All ten knuckles skinned now. At least I've got the full set.

(we hear him setting the wrench to try again)

In this particular case, I know who fabricated the damn thing. So fuck you, Wilder, and your little tardigrade stasis pod. Ugh. I hate looking at these things.

(For a moment all we hear is Roger grunting while he works at the bolt, his wrench clanging against the metal each time. He recites to himself.)

ROGER

Hear the tolling of the bells—

Iron bells!

What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!

(another clang, he laughs bitterly)

Nothing like Poe to lift the spirits. Okay, one more time, in rhythm ...

(reciting again, sing-song as he works)

In the silence of the night,

How we shiver with affright

At the melancholy menace of their tone!

(We hear another clang, then another, then suddenly a stream of them at once as he just wails on the casing and shouts:)

ROGER

OPEN UP YOU FUCKING PIECE OF —

(suddenly, something pops off and we hear it fall to the floor)

There we go. All it took was the judicious application of profanity. Take note, kids.

(he flicks on a flashlight)

This is the moment where I really wish I'd gone to school for refrigerator repair. Crap. Umm, display the schematic on page ... sixteen, and play back recorded notes for that section.

WILDER (Rec.)

(playback noise, we hear her arm ratcheting)

Dammit, I'm runnin' out o' time here. Got to make the rest of this quick.

(arm noises again)

Eliza, I do *not* have another pop can. Just hold y'self together.

(slow whirr)

Back at it, fearless reader. Get the casing off — it's kinda tricky, there's a special tool in my workbench drawer —

(continue through to next line without stopping)

ROGER

Fuck me.

WILDER (Rec.)

- that's just the thing. Anyhoo ... you should see a space in there, 'bout the size of a ...

(her arm ratchets again)

Dammit! Size of a deck o' cards, labeled "Mechanism WM" – stands for warm, in case y' wondered just how inventive Consortium engineers are. There y' go again, Wilder, ain't nobody got time for that.

ROGER

(poking around)

Yeah, yeah, I see it, WM.

WILDER

Right there is where the module fits that they didn't ship up to us because – I guess th' because is obvious. Long story short here, the little coupling there, that's where y' want to plug in th' directed nanoparticles I had y' get from the physics lab. The flask should be labeled iron oxide – I think there's a stegosaurus sticker on the side.

ROGER

It's got a little speech bubble saying, "If you touch my stuff, you're prehistory!"

WILDER

(arm buzzing again, rattling)

I gotta ... find some duct tape and fast here. So yeah, sort out pluggin' that in, give the particles some time to spread out through th' system, and that's when y' activate the magnetic field that heats things up. And then hopefully, it's super effective!

(arm noises again)

Fuck, I gotta go, you're on your own, whoever winds up hearin' this. Eliza's about five minutes from goin' kablooeey.

(playback noise indicating the end of the file)

ROGER

(we hear him connecting parts together)

That was ... not the detailed set of instructions I was hoping for. I know, it's just the tardigrades, they should survive perfectly fine on their own, but ... it's my only chance at a proof of concept. As tempting as it is to practice on the pods of certain crew members ... okay, I need a minute here. Schematic, closeup on section D4 ...

(he recites to himself again)

*Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells—*

(there is a final, satisfying click)

There you go! How's that for tintinnabulation? I think I might have it right. I better have it right. There's nothing in the instructions about what happens if I fail. Maybe it all goes ... kablooeey.

(he plays a bit with the wrench)

I don't know enough of what I'm doing to try another way. It's now or never. If I die, tell Alex I loved him.

(the briefest of pauses)
 And that I'm an idiot.
 (we hear a plunger being depressed)
 Okay, that's the nanoparticles ... now I count to ten while they circulate ... one, two, three ...
 (reciting again)
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells—
Bells, bells, bells—
 (brief pause)
 Then ... it's the switch to the magnetic field generator. Switching on ... now. Now. Nnnnnnow.
 Goddammit, *To the moaning and the groaning of the bells* ... got it.

(We hear the switch being flicked, and the magnetic field humming slightly as it activates.)

ROGER

I ... I think it might be ... how're you doing in there, little pals? You grotesque looking sons-of ... it's getting warmer. It's definitely getting warmer. It's ... ow, shit!

(The humming has become higher-pitched, and perhaps there is a slight rattling. An irritating beep starts happening.)

ROGER

Don't, just don't, please don't ... maybe if I unhook the –
 (a hissing noise is added to the cacophony)
 That's a no. No. Shit. Shit! Ohhhhhhhh ...

(The volume level of all the noises rise, and Roger yells incoherently with them, and suddenly it all cuts off. We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. After a moment, we hear another one, and we're on the storage level with the stasis pods. We hear the hiss of air escaping, and then a lid close, and a pleasant beep.)

ROGER

Okay. Fine. That's done. You ... little monsters are all safe and sound, in ... Uncle Roger's stasis pod. Hell, I wasn't using it anyway. I couldn't put them in ... she probably would have liked it, but I couldn't. She would have laughed, though. A lot. She'd still be laughing.
 (he chuckles a little and taps the lid of the stasis pod)
 I'm in way over my head, Nessa. I don't have any idea what to do. That was the last pod I could screw around with – some of my ethics have become questionable, but I'm not ready to experiment with an actual crew member. Maybe we're done here.
 (brief pause)

I thought I was ready to stop hoping, except that maybe, down there, Alex is still ... nothing else. Nothing more than that. Then I play the wrong recording when I'm trying to fall asleep and it's Wilder with her notes and her schematics and the whole fucking guilt trip that lays down.

(he sits down and sighs)

I was better off with Coleridge and Poe and the daily ennui, wandering the halls like the Ghost of Moonbase Past and losing myself in sampling every snack food, every olfactory – I'm not sure why they developed a 'petting zoo' fragrance – living through every sensurround in the library. That can eat up a

whole day before you even notice it. It's a hell of a ride, how they can simulate practically anything, and you can live it over and over again in ...

(we can hear him starting to grow thoughtful)

... in exacting detail. Changing one thing, running it again to see the effects, changing it again ... over and over until you find the perfect solution.

(we hear him push back the chair and stand, perhaps pacing)

I wonder. The schematics and the notes are digital, if the software could extrapolate from those ... we could mock up the whole system, including vitals for a body inside, how it might be affected, and ... try, and try again, no harm, no foul. Saving both my knuckles and my vital parts.

(pause, thinking)

It'd take a hell of a lot of computing power. Bits and bits and bits.

(he slaps his hand down on the pod again)

And I know just the system that can juggle them all.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. After a moment, we hear another one, and we're in the observatory. Things are quiet – almost too quiet. Roger's footsteps are louder than you'd expect, and his voice is hushed.)

ROGER

I thought downstairs was creepy. This is like ... the eye of a hurricane, but the hurricane has gone to sleep.

(we hear a food container crinkle beneath his feet)

It's a disaster area in more ways than one. You'd think ze could have picked up a little before heading into ... well, here we go. Why do I feel like I'm approaching the Wizard?

(he clears his throat without realizing it)

Activate display. Displays.

(pause)

Activate. Turn *on*.

(we hear him tapping on a keyboard)

Hello, computer?

(nothing but silence)

There's not a switch somewhere, is there? Come on, Roger – you can see the power lights. So ... on!

Reply! Display status. Did ze break it just so I couldn't ...

(lapsing into thought for a moment, then:)

Open Sesame! Open, sez me! *Mellon!* Is there some equivalent in Narnia?

(a longer pause, we hear him collapse into a chair)

Why does technology hate me? I'd go find a cave to live in, if it weren't for the 'no breathable atmosphere' thing outside.

(he spins in the chair, suddenly blurting out)

POWER ON! Damnit.

(we hear him sit back, sighing)

That's it. Officially, That is It. I'm done, Nessa. I'm done, Alex. Guys and gals and non-binary, coast to coast and all the ships at sea. This is the towel –

(we hear fabric rustle)

Actually, what is this, did ze wear an ascot? *Symbolically* this is the towel, and I'm throwing it in.

(flat out, plainly)

No hope. Nada. I can't keep on ...

(he breaks, and it's honest emotion now)

I just can't keep on. That's all there is. There aren't enough distractions on the whole of the Moon. I don't know if I wind up inside a ... stasis pod, or if there's some other ... but I'm beat.

(long pause)

It took you long enough, but you beat me. Enclave One, Roger Zero. Ka. Blooey.

(He rocks back in the chair, absolutely finished. And for a long few moments, that's all that there is. But then, out of the silence, we hear a full computer system coming to life, fans whirring, muted beeps, and a very familiar voice.)

TUMNUS

Roger?

ROGER

What? What the hell? How'd I –

TUMNUS

Roger Bragado-Fischer?

ROGER

I'm here, don't shut off, I'm here.

TUMNUS

I know. You are here. You are ... Roger Bragado-Fischer.

(pause)

Hello.

(We hear the chime that bookends a personal log message. The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S2B3
“Moddy Sarah”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

MODDY SARAH
ALEXANDRE BRAGADO-FISCHER

(Instead of the standard chime for S2, we hear a series of beeps that hasn't been heard since Season 1, Episode 12. The audio is a bit scratchier than usual, and they are recording from outside.)

MODDY SARAH

Hello, good morning. This is Moddy Sarah, chaplain and Responsible Citizen of the Patrick Free Zone, formerly of the Three Rivers Cooperative Community. Hail to anyone who hears this from the Moon or beyond.

(they pause for a moment, a bit weary)

We have been forced to relocate, but the community continues. The Detroit Enclave annexed our land and sent us running, first north to the Allegheny Forest, then south again with the NY Conglomerate at our heels, downriver into West Virginia. We hoped we could hide in Morgantown – the launch site we used for our earlier attempts to reach out – soon, it was obvious we were being tracked. They don't like folks who choose to live outside the walls. One thing we could do from there, though, was hack into the system. WVU had an aerospace lab funded by NASA, there's an intra that still exists between all the launch sites, and these young folks at Cape Canaveral invited us in. We have a number of skills they consider useful. Particularly as they are not fond of getting their hands dirty.

(they laugh)

It didn't hurt that we could throw in satellite access to sweeten the deal. But it was a long, arduous journey, children. Through secret corridors of forest and underground passages, across river bottoms and, one unforgettable midnight, through use of a zip line from cliff to cliff of a ... questionable canyon. Lo, we have wandered, and while I wouldn't call this the Promised Land, it's becoming home. We had to make some concessions to commune with these techno-anarchists – nothing we couldn't afford, and we've had a few converts of our own since arrival.

(we hear them sit down in a chair that creaks)

There were a few times I thought I'd end up like Moses, to tell the truth, but here I am. And I don't mind the step back down to minister – every week or two there's another few stragglers, another ear to turn to what the Universe speaks, another chance to follow Leviticus and “Welcome the stranger, for you were once a stranger.” Not so long ago, and I'll never forget.

(pause, we hear children somewhere far in the background)

I'm feeling my age to the bone. It's as if they've eaten this world to the core and they're squabbling over the seeds. The Consortium enclaves, the Conglomerate of super-cities, the Xinopec ... each one grabbing for more even as they lose a grip on what they already own. Last message I sent, I told you we were counting down ... it's half past zero for Earth. Everything's coming apart. Late at night, even this far down, we can see the fires.

(they stand up, the chair creaking again)

We are no longer asking for help from the Moon. What we hope to discuss ... are the ways we might help one another. As the world falls apart, the only solution is coming together. Surely, with your management losing focus, you could use a new source of stability. Somewhere you could come home to.

(they sigh)

I'm not saying we can make that happen yet. But there's some big brains inside that are workin' on the problem. We could sure use your help. Your cooperation. Your communion. Together, we could build a shelter from the storm.

(After a moment, we hear someone off from the microphone clear their throat. Moddy Sarah continues warmly.)

MODDY SARAH

Oh, yes. One of our more recent arrivals has a message to include as well. Though it's directed at only one person somewhere in the sky above, he was ... impossible to refuse.

ALEXANDRE

(it takes a moment for him to clomp over to the microphone, breathless and eager)

Roger? Roger, *meu amado*, can you hear me?

(he laughs nervously)

Tell me you're out there, baby. I've got one hell of a story for you.

(We hear dogs barking in the background, and for a moment the background sounds continue. We hear the same series of beeps as in the beginning. The episode ends.)