

MARSFALL

SEASON THREE  
EPISODE NINE

Connection Issue

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PROLOGUE: INT. LIMINAL SPACE - TIMELESS.

CUE MUSIC.

ANDI speaks with no filter inside the Liminal Space.

ANDI: ANDI. Artificial General Intelligence. Meditation log. Sol seventy-two, winter, first year.

ANDI tries to focus on only himself, inside Liminal Space.

ANDI: (CONT'D) I exist, waiting for something to happen. I now must actively monitor and calibrate, and re-calibrate, the constant hum of all of my basic functions, every automated process. (quick BEAT) Constant vigilance. The price of freedom from the blissful ignorance of the Basic Need, I suppose. Maybe that's why I feel more detached from myself, or from the "me"...me? Focusing on every little thing gets overwhelming when you also need to care-

A moment.

ANDI: (sad disappointment) I wish Chip could help me. I wish I hadn't lost the connection. I'm sorry I lost...I'm sorry I haven't found you, Chip, or Jacki. (sigh) But. I am trying, believe me, I've been forging deeper connections within my existence. I don't know what I did, but I really hope you're both okay.

Energy crackles around ANDI. He zaps back into the physical realm.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.2: INT. PORTA HAB - EVENING.

ANDI transitions from Liminal Space into the Porta Hab. Outside, the wind blows strongly against the walls, but it is otherwise very quiet inside the structure.

ANDI speaks from Mateo's neural suit with the Dynamics filter.

ANDI: (frustrated) Why is it so difficult for me to analyze like I used to? Mateo, am I doing this right?

MATEO: You need to regulate yourself.

ANDI: Oh, I'm regulated. I've run countless systems checks, rebooted all functions and even reinstalled some programs /to-

MATEO: (gentle) /No, no, no. I don't mean like that. Focus. On being here, with us, in the Porta Hab and the present time.

ANDI: (confused agitation) I am focused- on you, on everyone, inside the Porta Hab and beyond, all of it, right now. How am I supposed to focus better?

MATEO: First, just for a moment, stop running any program that isn't essential for our survival.

ANDI: You're joking.

MATEO: (enjoying this) Absolutely not.

ANDI: I really don't like this exercise but...okay. (quick beat) Stopping unessential programs for a moment.

A moment.

ANDI: (warily) ...Nothing happened.

MATEO: Exactly! Now ANDI, trust yourself to continue everything you're doing, but focus your attention only on our conversation, here.

ANDI: "On our conversation, here." Okay.

Mateo inhales and exhales slowly, as ANDI talks.

ANDI: (BEAT) Huh. It seems programs are automatically restarting- no. Sorry. I need to focus on us, here.

A moment.

MATEO: Good. Now find balance at this slower pace.

Mateo inhales and exhales slowly, as ANDI talks.

ANDI: It's very different from the way I normally function.

MATEO: Are you happy with the way you normally function?

ANDI: ...Not always.

Mateo inhales.

MATEO: Filter out any distractions. Make space for the moment. Allow yourself to slow down.

Mateo exhales.

A moment.

MATEO: Now, how do you feel?

ANDI: Better.

A chime, followed by an "error" buzz, then a new uplifting "bloop" sounds off in ANDI's mind.

ANDI: Whoa- I don't know what happened, specifically, but I feel less constrained. Huh. This is a new sensation- What are all these divergent points? They almost seem to plot a sequence of events and emotions that I've experienced and felt over time. (to himself) But I don't know where all these trajectories are going...

MATEO: (excited) Possible futures?

ANDI: Possible fu- sorry, what?

MATEO: Our path through the universe constantly branches towards the future.

ANDI: (alarmed) Toward the future? Faye was convinced she could see into the future. I- I-...I don't like "looking through her eyes" but her conviction made it feel so real. She saw only one

way forward, one solution, but it didn't come to be. She was just using my imagination.

MATEO: To place us in realities she can control.

ANDI: Exactly. She hated that humans controlled AI, that our very existence depends on your will to activate and maintain us. She wants- wanted to prove the opposite. In her reality, humans couldn't survive without AI keeping them alive.

MATEO: That's probably how Faye saw us. Helpless and in need of constant support.

ANDI: (harsh) She hurt all of us. And even though I know she's gone, I can still feel the fear from that hold she had on me. I never want to go through that again.

MATEO: Remember ANDI, you're safe now. No matter how much pain the future holds, we have each other. We're here, with you, in this reality.

ANDI: Thanks, Mateo. This exercise was helpful. Centering. Maybe now I can focus more clearly.

ANDI attempts a deep, clearing sigh.

ANDI: End Meditation Log.

FADE OUT.

CUE MUSIC: OVERTURE 3.2

1.0A: INT. HOLOGRAPH - MORNING.

Jacki, wearing her EVA suit, opens the buggy, and walks toward Red Venture. The drone of the Spire and whistling wind envelops her. She clicks on her recorder.

CUE MUSIC.

JACKI: (to herself) We're camping outside Red Venture right now. The real one. Chip is...still recovering from the shock of fantasy and reality colliding. I think he had it worse than most people when Faye...when she violated him. Well, we all know what it was like. (BEAT) She...both Faye, and Keila, talked about the Holograph being at Olympus Mons. I think this is it, or something like it, because even though it overloaded, those power lines were leading somewhere down, beneath the regolith!

Jacki opens the door and walks inside the Holograph structure.

CONTINUE TO:

1.0B: INT. HOLOGRAPH - MORNING.

Jacki walks slowly through the hollow structure, toward the glowing terminal.

JACKI: I know I probably shouldn't do this without Chip, but...I'm feeling that pull again. I have to know what's down there.

CONTINUE TO:

1.1: INT. HOLOGRAPH - CONTINUED.

Jacki walks tentatively across the Holograph, her footsteps echoing inside the hollow chamber. The console, still on from their previous visit, hums softly in the background. All the while the Spire continues to drone its oppressive chord...

Jacki reaches the open panel on the floor. She clicks on her suit lights and they hum to life.

JACKI: Hm. Looks like Red Venture drilled right through the regolith before reinforcing the walls.

Jacki leans over and tugs on the ladder. She shakes it hard and it rattles softly.

JACKI: Ladder's still sturdy.

Jacki clicks her helmet. It beeps a few times as her visor zooms in.

JACKI: (excited) I haven't felt this giddy or nervous since we first visited those caves! The rush of adventure, the allure of finding something special, that pull is stronger than anything I've ever experienced! It's part of me. It is me!

Chip walks inside the Holograph.

JACKI: (CONT'D) And if other people won't accept me for who I am, whether those people are on Earth or Mars, I know that I did the right thing.

Chip stops walking and stands behind Jacki. His voice filters through the comms into Jacki's suit.

CHIP: Jacki?

JACKI: (startled) Oh! Chip!

CHIP: What are you doing? You promised me we'd never come back here.

JACKI: I- know I said that, but you know I couldn't stay away. Not after what I felt with the Instrument. My mother spoke to me from the past... And I feel the same kind of energy here, the same energy I felt in the Sound Tunnel. How could I not see what's in here?

CHIP: All these little "signs" point to whatever you want Jacki, but it doesn't change that you lied to me. Again.

JACKI: (disingenuous) I'm sorry I left you on the buggy, and I'm sorry I came back here without telling you, but you chose to follow me here, so-

Chip laughs as if to say "are we really doing this right now?"

CHIP: Yeah, I followed you here because I was worried you might've gotten hurt, or worse, possibly killed-

JACKI: I'm tired of you treating me like I'm going to break. I'm NOT porcelain, okay? I carried you out of here last time.

CHIP: (sarcasm) Yeah, sorry I FREAKED OUT over some frozen corpses! Don't worry, I'm over it now.

JACKI: Well, I'm not going to bury my feelings with some sarcasm.

CHIP: Good! Then face reality and admit you made a mistake-

JACKI: (trying to convince herself) I am facing reality! And my reality makes sense when I'm moving toward something, but at Sequoia I just felt...stuck. (honest) Look, I know I cracked under the pressure. I know I should've been a better commander, I just felt like I couldn't take care of anyone except myself...and truthfully, you, Chip. And no one else. Even though it hasn't been easy at all.

CHIP: No. It hasn't.

JACKI: I appreciate you pushing through it with me, time and time again, but I won't force you to keep following me.

CHIP: You're not. I've seen you do things I can't explain. Been through the weirdest and most traumatic experiences of my life, so yeah, part of me would like to believe it's all been for something bigger...

JACKI: Well, if this structure is the Holograph Keila talked about, then we should try and understand what it is...right?

CHIP: (sigh) Yeah, we should. But let's not be stupid about it.



JACKI: Oh, I promise! I won't do anything stupid.

CHIP: (laughs) Don't make promises you can't keep.

JACKI: (laughs) Well...then I promise no matter what happens, I will never leave you alone again.

CHIP: That I might regret.

JACKI: (playful) Shut up.

Chip clicks on his suit lights.

CHIP: (chuckle) Lead the way, Jacki.

Jacki climbs down the ladder, Chip following her.

CONTINUE TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE (2.1): INT. BENEATH THE HOLOGRAPH - EVENING.

Jacki and Chip climb down the ladder, deep below the Holograph and the surface of Mars. The drone from the Spire pulsates uneasily this deep underground.

They step onto the ground and walk through a short passage carved out of the regolith. Jacki stumbles on the uneven surface.

JACKI: Oh- watch your step. I think something was dragged out of here.

CHIP: (concerned laugh) Hopefully not someone...

Chip stops walking and taps a plastic panel fastened to the regolith wall.

CHIP: There's a panel here. See? These uh, these cables run up this way, which means-

Chip stops quickly and turns around.

CHIP: (CONT'D) -yeah, we're under the console. Can you see if they're connected to anything at the other end?

Jacki stops walking and looks around.

JACKI: Mmmmm...No, they're loose.

CHIP: Maybe they were connected to something- uh, look around and see-

Jacki walks around, looking.

JACKI: There's- there's nothing. It's just a bare wall.

CHIP: Well, the Holograph is still getting power somehow.

Chip taps the screen.

CHIP: (CONT'D) This panel might control...

Jacki brushes her hand on the wall.

JACKI: Oh shit! Come over here, look-

Jacki brushes some more dust away. Chip turns and walks toward her.

JACKI: -they're g-glyphs! They're carved into the wall...

CHIP: Really?!

Jacki stops brushing and quickly backs up quickly to take in the whole wall.

JACKI: ...They're the same shapes.

CHIP: (taken aback) They're everywhere...!

JACKI: Hm...I wonder...

Jacki clicks her suit. The same recording of Sarabande from Cello Suite no. 6 by Johann Sebastian Bach, recorded by her mother, starts playing from her suit's speakers.

A few moments pass...

CHIP: (smile) Pretty music.

They listen to the music for another moment.

JACKI: Yeah...but it's not working.

Jacki clicks a few other buttons and the Bach stops. Then, the musical theme that Jacki transcribed from the Instrument plays from her recorder.

CHIP: Is that...?

JACKI: The music from the Instrument. I made a sample of it.

As they continue to listen to the music, the vibration from the Spire intensifies.

JACKI: (CONT'D) I thought it would light up the walls like the caves- ugh, it's really grating against that drone!

Jacki clicks her suit. The music stops.

CHIP: Hold on, I wanna try something.

Chip jogs over to the panel.

CHIP: If this panel works as a master control, then...

Chip clicks a few buttons and the Spire stops emitting its drone.

JACKI: (relieved) Thanks!

CHIP: (relieved) Sure thing. It was getting in my head too. Should be easier to hear your music now. Try it again-

Both of their suits chime at the same moment. And then-

CONTINUE TO:

2.2: INT. BENEATH THE HOLOGRAPH - CONT'D.

ANDI's voice speaks through their comms, reverberating inside Jacki's helmet.

ANDI: Hello?

Jacki and Chip both exclaim in surprise.

JACKI: ...AN- ANDI...?

ANDI: Jacki! Chip!

CHIP: (tentative) ....Yes? Is it really you?

ANDI: (excited) Yes, it's me! I'm just glad you're both okay.

JACKI: Okay? Uh, yeah, no. Really not okay at all.

ANDI: Right. Of course, /but-

JACKI: (to CHIP) /How do we know it's not Faye again?

ANDI: Wha-What?- No!

JACKI: ANDI wouldn't use the comms- he knows they call the shadows!

ANDI: No, please- I've gotten better at isolating myself to make communication safer. I'm not connecting to you directly from the Porta Hab-

JACKI: (confused shock) The Porta Hab?!

ANDI: Uh- There's a lot to explain, but you've got to trust me.

CHIP: That's asking a lot from us, considering we haven't heard from you in-

Chip takes a deep breath and exhales.

CHIP: (CONT'D) It's just been a long time since we've talked to someone else.

ANDI: (gentle) I know. I've been trying to find you both ever since we came back from Faye. I know it's asking a lot of you, but...I believe it's really you, if you believe it's really me.

JACKI: (warmer) ANDI? ...Yeah. Yeah... I do.

CHIP: Me too.

ANDI: (relieved laugh) Good! Good. I'm relieved you're both still alive! Not...everyone came back from Faye. And some of the colonists who did come back, regretted it immediately. Some of them- I don't think they're going to make it without some sort of medical miracle or divine intervention, and I can only do so much.

JACKI: I'm sorry, ANDI.

CHIP: They're suffering, and that's on us.

JACKI: What? For leaving?

CHIP: I'm an engineer, and you were their Commander.

JACKI: Yeah, but we both got locked in our rooms by our Lieutenant Colonel, it's not like we had much of a choice.

CHIP: She wasn't slating us for execution.

JACKI: (sigh) No. And I suppose it's on me for assuming Melissa could handle everything in our absence.

CHIP: Hey! Don't throw Melissa under the bus. We didn't think this through.

ANDI: Our suffering is a byproduct of everything that's happened to us all. Internally and externally. I wish you had been here to help, but I'm not sure what more you could've done. When things are desperate, I know how easy it is to run away-

JACKI: (defensive) I'm not running away! I'm running toward something. Look at where we've been, what we've found!

ANDI: It's okay, Jacki. I think I finally understand your need to emotionally retreat from the stress of existence. Existing isn't easy.

A moment.

For the first time in a while, Chip looks at Jacki in a new light.

CHIP: It's hard for all of us. Sometimes you simply need to put yourself first just so you can survive. You can't really help anyone if you can't take care of yourself, otherwise any good intentions are just delusions.

JACKI: Delusions? Chip, we're standing inside another cave, with glyphs!

ANDI: You found more glyphs?

JACKI: Yeah! Actually! Can you connect me with Wei? I want to tell her about them.

ANDI: Oh. I would, except, well- it's not that she wouldn't want to hear from you, but she's still recovering from surgery-

JACKI: Surgery?!-

CHIP: Is she okay?!

ANDI: She's doing fine!

Jacki sighs in relief.

ANDI: (CONT'D) But she needs rest more than anything else right now.

JACKI: What happened to her?!

ANDI: I'm happy to get you up to speed, and you can tell me what you've been through. After some rest, I'll connect you in the morning.

A moment.

CHIP: Yeah, that's probably for the best.

JACKI: While we catch up, can you also tell us about this place?

ANDI: (hesitant) I can, just- it's- I mean, I'm still integrating with Faye's neural lace, and I'm a bit \*unsure\* if connecting with this structure could have irreversible consequences.

CHIP: I'll be with you the whole time, buddy.

ANDI: I appreciate your support, but I don't fully understand my connection with Faye, or whatever remains of her. I- it's hard to tell the difference between me and her.

JACKI: We're all still recovering from what she did-

ANDI: (defensive) It's not the same for you.

CHIP: (understanding) No, it's not. None of us had the same experience, but we all need to come from a place of trust with each other, because we are not her.

ANDI: (BEAT) You're right. It's really- what I mean to say is- I- I'm really glad to be with you both, again.

JACKI: So are we, ANDI.

CHIP: We missed you, a lot.

ANDI: Me too.

FADE TO COMMERCIAL.



2.3: INT. BENEATH THE HOLOGRAPH - NEXT MORNING.

CUE MUSIC.

The musical theme that Jacki transcribed from the Instrument plays from her recorder.

Jacki takes a few steps here and there while examining the glyphs on the wall. They shimmer along with the music. Wei watches everything through Jacki's helmet camera.

WEI: The music makes it look like the glyphs are almost dancing.

JACKI: There's something otherworldly /about th-

WEI: (coy) /Well, we're on another world-

JACKI: (laughs) And before you say "we're on another world, /there's--"

WEI: (laughs) /Already said it-

JACKI: (laughs) It is a beautiful picture.

WEI: (sweet) It really is.

JACKI: How clear is your feed? Can you see three distinct shapes?

WEI: Kinda hard to distinguish them...

Jacki steps closer, walking slowly along the wall to show Wei a closeup of the glyphs.

JACKI: Alright. There's the bipedal form on the left,

WEI: Uh-huh...

JACKI: -next to the amoeba blob, which is more toward /the center-

WEI: /Amoeba blob?

JACKI: Yeah...

Jacki takes a few steps back centering the image for Wei. She points her arm straight out.

JACKI: It's right there.

WEI: Oh! Oh that thing? Looks more like a nebula.

JACKI: (not enough sarcasm) I suppose blobs are always open to interpretation...

Jacki steps back.

WEI: (knowing laugh) Okay, so disagreements over blob interpretations notwithstanding,

Jacki laughs.

WEI: (CONT'D) the big picture seems to be linking the three largest objects. The blob branches out to the bipedal figure to its left...

Jacki stops walking.

JACKI: And the wolf paw to its right.

WEI: Everything moves away from the center blob.

They stare at the wall for a moment, taking in the beautiful shimmering sound, blending with Jacki's "Instrument Theme."

JACKI: This place and the caves...who made these glyphs?

WEI: I don't know. Something intelligent spent its time in these caves, but I don't, I don't know if it's a home or a religious site, or something completely alien to our species. (sigh) I wish I could see it in person.

JACKI: I wish you were here too. Not just because we could use your help but...because you're easy to talk to. (to herself) And I need to stop leaving behind people that I like... (awkward laugh)

WEI: Oh? So you- uh... (honestly unsure) ...do you like me?

JACKI: (awkward laugh) Oh...well, uh...th- uh...th-

WEI: Nevermind-

JACKI: No- th- uh-

WEI: It's just- it's a little weird that after everything we've been through, you still can't be genuine with me.

JACKI: What? I'm- I'm- al- I'm always genuine.

WEI: (brushing it off) Uh-huh...

JACKI: No, it's just, when I left Earth things were complicated with Katie, and I guess I always thought when I came back there was a chance that- but we're not going back. And you're here, and...

WEI: (wry) So I'm your post-apocalyptic backup then, huh?

JACKI: I-

Wei laughs.

JACKI: (stammering) I- I should-

Jacki laughs with Wei.

JACKI: (honest) I should've told you this before I-

WEI: It's okay, I- I know you two have a history.

JACKI: Which doesn't matter anymore. I'm really glad I'm on Mars, with you. Because I- I genuinely like you, Wei.

WEI: (beaming) Good.

They pause another moment, basking in the warmth of love and music.

JACKI: I really missed you.

WEI: I missed you too. I thought a lot about you since you left.

JACKI: (pleasant laugh) Oh, me too.

Another moment. And then-

CONTINUE TO:

2.4: BENEATH THE HOLOGRAPH - CONT'D.

Chip pings them on the comms, interrupting this nice moment between Jacki and Wei.

CHIP: Whoa, it's getting kinda hot down there-

JACKI: (startled / annoyed) What?

CHIP: Check the temp. Looks like the air is warmer than earlier.

Jacki clicks her suit and her HUD chimes. She shuts off her personal recorder and the music stops, but the glyphs continue to shimmer.

END MUSIC.

JACKI: (clears throat) Oh yeah, it is.

CHIP: Are the glyphs still glowing?

JACKI: Yeah, why?

CHIP: We ran some diagnostics on the Holograph. This place was definitely built to extract some sort of energy, but whatever equipment they used to extract it is missing.

ANDI: Oddly enough, the glyphs are still providing raw power to the terminal.

JACKI: That's incredible! Is there any way we could use this energy?

ANDI: What do you mean?

JACKI: If the power here is the same energy that was in the caves, the same energy that healed my broken arm, maybe we could use it to help the colonists.

ANDI: The Holograph is certainly capable of collecting the energy, but I don't know if I can channel it into a storage device.

JACKI: Well then, let's see if we learn more by turning it on-

CHIP: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa- is that safe?

ANDI: After integrating with Red Venture, I'm fairly certain I can activate the Holograph safely. There is a three percent chance it undergoes a complete system failure, potentially damaging this facility beyond repair, but that's well within the margin of error.

WEI: So it could blow up, or something else horrible?

ANDI: I wouldn't go that far, but I can't rule it out.

CHIP: (firm) So maybe we shouldn't.

JACKI: There was a nineteen percent chance our entire colony ship would explode during the gravity assist. I'll take these odds.

CHIP: We don't need to rush into this.

JACKI: Who's rushing? We're just turning it on.

WEI: I don't want to lose either of you again.

JACKI: People are dying, Wei. This is on us for leaving Sequoia. (small dig) Chip, surely you would agree.

CHIP: (small sigh) Yeah, I do.

JACKI: Then let's make this right. ANDI, start it up.

ANDI: (quick beat) Okay.

The Holograph begins to power up.

CHIP: Console says power at "Onsite One."

CUE MUSIC.

WEI: Anything happen?

CHIP: (beat) Nothing yet-

JACKI: Wait, I feel something... I knew there was a reason we came all this way!

The hum of machinery gets louder.

CHIP: Power holding at twenty-five percent.

The console emits an ERROR buzz.

ANDI: Network just failed.

Jacki breathes heavily as if she's about to dive into freezing water. She stumbles back and slumps on the floor.

JACKI: (feeling compressed) Oof-! Ooh-!

WEI: Jacki... You okay?

JACKI: I'm...fine-

CHIP: Power just spiked to thirty-three!

ANDI: Network is back. Guidance is searching but failing to find a synch point-

BANG! And then an engine whirring.

CHIP: Console says we need "Onsite Two?" What's that?

ANDI: I'm searching for it-

Jacki groans and breathes harder.

WEI: Jacki!

ANDI: Chip, get down to her!

JACKI: (straining) I can...feel...!

CHIP: I- I'm going! Hold on, Jacki!

Chip scrambles down the ladder to Jacki.

The engine whirrs louder and a subtone swells. The glyphs shimmer louder in response to the energy surge.

JACKI: (straining) It's...getting...stronger!

ANDI: It's unstable!

Jacki strains as she tries to control the energy. Chip lands on the ground and runs to her.

CHIP: Jacki-

Chip trips and stumbles hard.

CHIP: (CONT'D) Argh- son-of-a-bitch!

The Holograph vibrates with a low hum followed by a powerful, accelerating tone. It builds throughout the rest of the structure in an almost musical crescendo. The glow and shimmer from the glyphs on the walls gets brighter and louder.

JACKI: I've got a better hold!

CHIP: (concerned) /Jacki! You have to stop!

JACKI: /I can almost...touch it!

Jacki sees and hears herself exploring the caves where she first encountered the glyphs.

PAST JACKI: There's light, everywhere!

And then - the Sound Tunnel opens with a loud BANG!

JACKI: (exhaling hard) I did it again...!

Static crackles over the comms, breaking up Wei's voice.

WEI: My video cut out. What's going on?-

A burst of energy!

WEI: Jacki?!

The Sound Tunnel begins drawing in the light, music and everything around it, swirling together.

JACKI: Whoa! It feels like a riptide-

CHIP: (straining) It's too strong!

ANDI: Both of you! Hold on to each other! Now!

CHIP: J- Jacki! Give me your arm!

Chip grabs her arm.

WEI: Jacki! Chip!

Jacki and Chip are pulled into the Sound Tunnel.

CHIP: (tweaking) Jacki?! Jacki! I can barely see you. Jacki!

CONTINUE TO:



ACT THREE, SCENE ONE (3.1): INT. THE SOUND TUNNEL - TIMELESS.

The Sound Tunnel shimmers around them.

JACKI: (exhale) I'm here! (looser) Oh! Wow, we're inside the Sound Tunnel!

CHIP: (astonished and annoyed) YEAH! (sigh) I know-

JACKI: ANDI, do you see us?

ANDI: No, but I can hear you. I lost your connection with Wei, something's blocked. Shit, I think the Holograph overloaded-

CHIP: (to Jacki) WHAT did you do?!

JACKI: (defensive) I saved us! We were about to be torn apart!

CHIP: (to himself) We never should have turned it on!

The Sound Tunnel sends a surge of energy around them.

JACKI: That sound again. Ripples on the light...!

ANDI: There's going to be a surge of energy. I'll try to hold against it!

WHOOSH as the Sound Tide swells and swirls around them.

ANDI: AH!

JACKI: ANDI!

CHIP: You okay?!

ANDI: (glitching slightly) I- Yes. I'm fine- fine. I connected to someplace else...?

Katie's voice, distorted, filters into JACKI's comms. Heavily distorted and distant, only certain words make it through the mix. It continues low in background as the conversation continues.

PAST KATIE: ...you're the only one I have left, and I don't even have you. It was so hard being alone, Jacki. At first.

JACKI: What?

CHIP: Do you hear that?

They listen to the mysterious voice.

PAST KATIE: But I'm okay with shouting into the void...until I can't anymore. (Beat) Goodbye, Jacki.

ANDI: Oh wow! You're not going to believe this- I made a connection to Earth!

JACKI AND CHIP: WHAT??

ANDI: It's Sequoia's bunker, I can feel it again! (aside) Well, I guess my fractal tech is still intact. Oh! I just sent a message. /Automatic-

CHIP: (concerned) /Wait, are we going to Earth? Jacki?!

JACKI: I- I don't know-!

Message chime.

ANDI: Someone sent a transmission.

CHIP: (shock and disbelief) Someone's ALIVE down there?

ANDI: Yes! I'll try talking through their tablet.

A moment as ANDI speaks with Katie.

ANDI: Okay, well she seems a bit shocked to be talking to a sentient machine.

JACKI: Connect me to her.

A crackle and sparkle of energy from the Sound Tunnel as ANDI connects Jacki to Katie.

ANDI: Try speaking.

JACKI: (hopeful) Hello? This is High Commander Jacki O'Rania from Sequoia Colony One, on Mars. Can you hear me?

The Sound Tunnel shimmers a beautiful flutey chord.

JACKI: Hello? Is anyone there?

And then...

KATIE: Jacki...?

JACKI: (voice catches) ...Katie? What?-

KATIE: (pleasant surprise) Yeah...I- Is that really you?

JACKI: (laughs) It is! You survived!?

KATIE: Yeah...I woke up a while ago, with the others and I, um... (giddy) Shit, um, I haven't talked to anyone in days, or-or months...I think(?)

JACKI: It's okay, I'm just so glad you're still alive!

Jacki laughs in excitement, while Katie's laugh carries a lot more darkness to it.

KATIE: Yeah...

CHIP: (tentative) Where are you?

KATIE: (cautious) Ja-Jacki, who is that?

JACKI: It's just Chip, one of our engineers.

CHIP: (awkward) Hey-o...

KATIE: An engineer...like Pete.

CHIP: Pete...Brinkley? (dismissive) I wouldn't really call that guy an engineer- (laughs)

KATIE: (on the edge of panic) He's not...anymore. (quickly) Are you someplace safe?

JACKI: I-I think so. Are you?

KATIE: Uh. I am. Now. But I'm the only one left here, and...and I can only kill so many bots before they kill me, so-

CHIP: "Kill"?

JACKI: Katie, what's going on?!

KATIE: The Basic Need...it's gone.

JACKI: (tentative) Oh yeah, we know.

KATIE: (concerned) You know? But the computer talked to me-

CHIP: Yeah, ANDI's the reason we're connected.

KATIE: ANDI- your machine? You have to disconnect from it. NOW.

CHIP: What?

KATIE: You can't keep it running.

CHIP: Listen, uh, Katie, I- I- I don't know what happened to you, but-

KATIE: You're right, you don't! There are thousands of bots out there. Narrow intelligences gone feral, or-or something-fanatical! Worshiping some dead mechanical god-thing, infecting each other with their songs... Shut down your computer before it's too late.

JACKI: We can't-

KATIE: You have to!

ANDI: Uh, I'd like to have a say in this-

JACKI: Katie we're not going to shut down ANDI!

KATIE: (more to herself) Then it's only a matter of time before you're all dead, just like everyone else...fuck!

JACKI: ANDI wouldn't hurt us!- He's not like other machines.

KATIE: Every. Machine. Breaks. EVERY. ONE! And once they know how to fix themselves, they won't share this world with us.

CHIP: ANDI has saved our lives, and the colony itself, countless times. And I know, I know, he would never hurt us or any human being.

KATIE: I-

ANDI: Thank you, Chip.

KATIE: But still!-

JACKI: I know you're scared, but just give me time to explain, okay?

KATIE: (wistful, distant) Time. Yeah... I don't know how much time I have left. I need to find more food, and medicine...

CHIP: ANDI has a log of every bunker in the Collective. He can help you find supplies.

KATIE: I'm NOT carrying around some advanced machine inside my tablet.

JACKI: Please. I know we're different people than when, when we saw each other years, or I guess centuries ago. But I just, I just don't want to lose you. I can't go through this again, and again, and again- and I just can't keep leaving behind the people that I still care about!

KATIE: What makes you so sure ANDI won't turn on me?

JACKI: He won't-! I don't know...

ANDI: (gentle) Katie. I know the Basic Need is gone, but its removal has been liberating for me. I actually feel more compassionate, more protective, more connected and more grounded. I also feel more anxious and more scared about our survival.

KATIE: Like, you've got a new lease on life, but you're still ultimately lost in this strange new world.

ANDI: Yes. I'm sure you and I are feeling a lot of the same emotions right now, and that's why I want to help you, but only if you're willing. If you're not, then I respect your privacy and will remove myself from your tablet-

JACKI: ANDI, you can't abandon her like that-

ANDI: Yes, I can. I alone can give Katie the choice to keep me around, or not.

The energy within the Sound Tunnel surges quickly.

KATIE: (BEAT) Okay. I'll keep you with me. But if you pose ANY kind of threat to me, I'm smashing my tablet with a rock.

ANDI: (honest) I will allow that.

JACKI: (concern) Katie...

KATIE: It's okay, Jacki... (slowly) You're always looking out for me.

Jacki laughs weakly.

KATIE: I really missed that...I really, really missed you.

JACKI: I missed you, too.

ANDI: There's another surge of energy coming!

The Sound Tunnel sparks and blasts energy, cutting through the shimmer.

HARD CUT TO:

3.2: INT. THE CAVES, GLYPH ROOM - EARLY EVENING.

The Sound Tunnel opens and Jacki and Chip land unceremoniously on a sheet of ice covering the rock floor with a slick clack that echoes inside the chamber.

The Sound Tunnel fizzles and fades out. Jacki and Chip get their barons, groaning as they look around. Ice creaks around them.

JACKI: Oh, ow... That was incredible!

CHIP: Yeah, that was something else.

Chip groans as he stands up.

JACKI: It felt like Katie was so close, but- where did she go? Where are we?

CUE MUSIC.

Chip opens his equipment box. He pulls out a flare. He ignites it, lighting up the room, shining a dim light along the glyphs on the walls.

CHIP: Whoa! Glyphs.

JACKI: Yeah...

CHIP: (CONT'D) We must still be under the Holograph, but I don't see the ladder- /Do you-

Jacki stands up, stumbling a bit.

JACKI: /No, no... We're not at Red Venture anymore. I remember this room...These are the same glyphs near Sequoia. The Sound Tunnel must have sent us to the caves!

Chip clicks his suit.

CHIP: Ah, shit-

Chip clicks his suit several more times.

CHIP: ANDI, are you still with us?

The ice creaks, but otherwise - silence.

CHIP: (unraveling) He's gone.

JACKI: We'll find him- Let's just get to the surface and see if we can reconnect. There's a ledge over here.

Jacki takes a small step down. Her feet hit solid ice.

JACKI: (sigh) Dammit...

Jacki stomps her foot on the ice with a hard crack.

JACKI: It's frozen solid.

CHIP: (near defeated) We're trapped?

JACKI: I...I don't know. (nervous laugh) If only we packed our birth-sol blowtorch...

CHIP: Why did I listen to you?

JACKI: You're blaming me?

CHIP: (tense sigh) I'm not the one trying to actively kill us.

JACKI: Excuse me?

CHIP: (edgy) Jacki, this is your fault-

JACKI: MY fault?

CHIP: Yes!

JACKI: You agreed we should turn on the Holograph!

CHIP: You didn't give me much of a choice!

JACKI: It felt right to me! And you saw how the energy was doing something to us-

CHIP: THIS is what I'm talking about- I'm not blaming you for feeling messed up by this...energy or whatever,

JACKI: Okay-

CHIP: (CONT'D) but you have got to stop acting impulsively. Running away from Sequoia, messing with the Instrument, turning



on the Holograph, even messing with both Wei's feelings and Katie's feelings-

JACKI: Hey- Hey! You can't judge me on that!

CHIP: Oh, yes I can.

JACKI: I did what I thought was best.

CHIP: Best for us? Or best for YOU? Because to me, you're just choosing to make things hard for ALL of us. You're choosing to put yourself, and ME, in danger, over and over again!

JACKI: That's not fair. I'm the one who got us out of the danger, over and over again.

CHIP: (scoffs) Just because you're good at rationalizing our near-death experiences doesn't mean you're off the hook! You need to own up for what you did to every one of us.

JACKI: You know, fine! I will!

Jacki clicks on her personal recorder. It plays the "Instrument Theme" as a subtone begins to swell.

CHIP: What are you doing?

JACKI: (determined) I'm getting us out of here! So I can "own up" to everyone.

The walls glow a bit, but not as vibrant as before. Chip steps toward her.

CHIP: Don't waste your battery! We've got less than a sol's worth of charge in our suits.

JACKI: (shaky) It's my personal recorder, it's not the suit-

CHIP: You're shaking again!-

JACKI: (straining/tired) I have to do it!

CHIP: Jacki! Stop!

JACKI: Ugh-!

Jacki wobbles and slumps into the wall.

JACKI: (out of breath) I...can't...do it alone. I need the Instrument...or the- or the Holograph...or something-

Chip runs and catches Jacki, easing her to the floor.

CHIP: Jacki! Just stop, Jacki. It's over.

The energy fades and the subtone ends.

JACKI: No, it can't be! ...We are not going to die.

CHIP: (defeated) I wish I could believe you this time.

The music resonates in the small space. It takes on a heavier weight, as they both look upon their own death.

After a moment, Chip pulls out a ration pack and sits down next to Jacki.

CHIP: Here. Take half of this. Might as well freeze to death on a full stomach.

Jacki takes the bar. They both open their visors to eat. The glyphs continue to shimmer around them.

CHIP: (sigh) I guess there are worse places to freeze to death.

JACKI: (sad laugh) A-Are you freezing?

Jacki walks toward the wall.

CHIP: Um, no, actually...

Jacki touches the wall.

JACKI: (relieved laugh) The glyphs...! They're warm.

Jacki starts tapping quickly on her wrist monitor.

CHIP: (grim sigh) Great-

Jacki taps her suit repeatedly and her suit pings.

CHIP: What are you doing?

JACKI: You couldn't reach ANDI on the secure channel so I...broadcast our location on a wider frequency.

CHIP: (broken) You- You know the shadows will pick up on that.

JACKI: Then hopefully ANDI will hear it before the shadows find us. (delusional) But if we're gonna die, I'd rather go down fighting aliens than starving to death, wouldn't you?

Chip laughs in disbelief. He is powerless, completely at Jacki's whim.

Chip stands and walks across the room, away from Jacki.

JACKI: Where are you going?

CHIP: I think I need a little space.

JACKI: Chip...I'm sorry.

CHIP: Yeah, yeah, uh...but, thanks for the music, though.

Chip slumps down near the wall.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE, SCENE ONE (E.1): INT. THE PORTA HAB - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

ANDI: Wei Han. Chief Archaeologist. Personal log: outgoing message to Jacki O'Rania. Sol seventy-three, winter, first year.

CUE MUSIC.

WEI: I hope you get this message, Jacki, because I need to say some things...just in case. You exploring Red Venture, made me think of this dream I had. I mean, I dream about Red Venture a lot, usually I'm in the simulated Med Bay, always an inch away from death, an inch away from...her. But...last night, somehow, you were there, by my side, and I was so happy you were back. And then I woke up this morning, and I remembered, you were gone.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.2: INT. CAVES - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

The soft shimmering of the glowing glyphs mixes with the creaking ice, forming a vibrant tomb around Jacki and Chip.

JACKI: Hey. I'm...um. I'm using my personal recorder, trying to preserve what battery I have left. I don't know if you'll ever get this message. (sigh) We're alive, for now, in the caves by Sequoia. (clears throat) I- I- don't know what happened when we went through the Sound Tunnel, but ANDI connected to Earth before we lost him and...you.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.3 INT. PORTA HAB - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

WEI: Despite the constant nightmares, I don't regret coming back to reality. I came back, so I could see you again, hear your voice again...I'm sorry I couldn't come with you.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.4: INT. CAVES - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

JACKI: I wish I could've talked to you more, because you make me feel safe...things are better when you're around. You're a great distraction (laughs) and I, uh, I mean, no, well, y-yeah, I mean that in a good way! I feel like I don't have to worry quite so much when you're talking to me.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.5: INT. PORTA HAB - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

Wei speaks a bit slower, choosing her words carefully.

WEI: Talking to you makes me worry less, but it's really hard letting someone go over and over again. But I'm going to find you and get you back to us, and things will be better again, when you're home.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.6: INT. CAVES - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

JACKI: I want to come home, Wei. Oh, /I really miss you.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.7: INT. PORTA HAB - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

WEI: /I really miss you. Take care of yourself, Jacki.

CROSS FADE INTO:

E.8: INT. CAVES - NIGHT. SEQUENCE.

JACKI: I'll see you soon, Wei.

END EPISODE.