

THE STRANGE CASE OF STARSHIP IRIS

EPISODE 7: ROOT SYSTEMS

Written by

Jessica Best

The Strange Case of Starship Iris

[Report One: Violet Liu](#)

[Report Two: Checkpoint Osiris](#)

[Report Three: In The Deep](#)

[Report Four: Phone Home](#)

[Report Five: The Carmen Gambit](#)

[Report Six: Parallel](#)

CHARACTER LIST

1. Agent
2. Junior Agent
3. Violet
4. Brian
5. Sana
6. Krejjh
7. Arkady
8. Ricky
9. General
10. Gratuitously Pleasant Female Voice

- 5.1 ARKADY Well Krejjh, blame the English language.
- 5.2 BRIAN To be fair, they took that one from the French?
- 5.3 ARKADY Blame a series of interchangeable dead white people.
- 5.4 VIOLET Also sums up--about a thousand years of Earth history. (coughs)
- 5.5 SOUND DOOR CLOSES
- 5.6 ARKADY Liu, why the hell aren't you resting?
- 5.7 VIOLET I'm not sick.
- 5.8 ARKADY Really? You look wiped.
- 5.9 VIOLET Only because I was up all night coughing.
(Realizes how that sounds) I have *one* symptom.
That's barely a cold.
- 5.10 ARKADY (Skeptical) Sure. (Not sarcastic, and thus more awkward) But just, y'know, in case: any last-minute requests when we reach Hafizah? Soup, or more tea, or--

- 6.1 VIOLET COUGHS, WORSE THAN BEFORE
- 6.2 ARKADY --shit, a coffin? Have you been tested for Floating Pneumonia?
- 6.3 VIOLET The Regime ran us through a full physical before we left for the mission. I've been screened for everything from asthma to zinc deficiency.
- 6.4 ARKADY Are these the same people who sent *the wrong woman into space*? Yeah, not gettin' the sense you saw their best and brightest.
- 6.5 VIOLET It's not-- (Breaks off to cough again, her voice is a little shot.) Uh, wouldn't mind if you pick up some cough suppressant, I don't know what brands they have out here--the powdered kind you add to water?
- 6.6 ARKADY Already on the list. And not to go all Tripathi on you, but don't be afraid to take a break.
- 6.7 SANA Well-put. I'll be right back, Krejjh, don't start the party without me.

10.1 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe here. Skipping ahead one hour and five minutes, roughly ten minutes after landing on Hafizah. Estimated local time is-- (the recording cuts off; McCabe hasn't been interrupted in-person. The audio has been overridden.)

10.2 SOUND THREE HARSH TONES

10.3 JUNIOR AGENT (nervous) Uh, on request of Major General J. Fredrick, we have retroactively inserted the landing sequence back into the report. While there is some mention of peaks and valleys, none are identified by name. However, uh, the landing sequence follows.

10.4 SOUND COMM COMES TO LIFE, KREJJH ACTIVATES SWITCHES AND CONTROLS

10.5 KREJJH Krejjh to all crew. We are officially approaching touchdown, please ready yourself for a rugged mountain landing that is heroic yet gentle, swift yet precise, the perfect blend of stealth, speed, and dare I say *pizzazz*. We are looking at moderate winds planetside, visibility good, E.T.A very nice indeed.

KREJJH CONT'D OVER

11.1 KREJJH CONT'D

Now's the time to start securing any valuables, *and* maybe start workshopping those compliments. As we say where I'm from, "They who arrive prepared, brush the hem of the magenta cape of greatness."

11.2 AGENT

Agent Park. Independently verified by myself and General Jahansooz that the Dwarnian pilot Krejjh did not recite the landing coordinates while approaching Hafizah. It is unclear if Krejjh had received written instructions to omit that detail, or if they simply decided on this occasion that incorporating a long string of numbers did not adhere to their sense of (God, does he hate his job) *personal style*.

11.3 SOUND

THREE NOTES INDICATING SUCCESSFUL TOUCHDOWN

11.4 JUNIOR AGENT

Resuming just after landing on Hafizah. Estimated local time fifteen-hundred hours.

11.5 SOUND

Wind in the background, which gradually fades out as the scene begins. Rocks and gravel crunching under two sets of slightly cautious footsteps; Arkady and Sana are walking outside on a mountain path.

13.1 SOUND ARKADY HACKS THE COMPUTERIZED LOCK

13.2 ARKADY CONT'D Early Cartwrights, might as well use the *honor system*.

13.3 SOUND LOCK CLICKS OPEN; BOX OPENS

13.4 SANA (A little surprised) Looks like everything's in place.

13.5 ARKADY Yeah, your friend's a real sweetheart. Mind if I scan the shit out of it anyway?

13.6 SOUND HUM OF A SCANNER SEARCHING FOR LISTENING DEVICES

13.7 SANA Be my guest.

13.8 SOUND HUM STOPS; A POSITIVE CHIME "GOOD NEWS: NO ISSUES"

13.9 ARKADY Bug free.

13.10 SANA Are you sure?

13.11 ARKADY Hey, *I* was just being paranoid. You got reason to doubt?

14.1 SOUND BRIAN SLOWLY APPROACHES, HUMMING; THE DOLLY WHEELS

14.2 SANA I was only asking if you're sure. (Brian's humming is audible now.) Hey Brian!

14.3 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe here. Assuming the handcart was pushed in a straight line, the number and rate of footsteps gives us a reasonably good estimation of the distance between the Rumor and the pickup site, see attached file. However, as the pickup site was an unmarked crevice in an unnamed mountain range, at least one additional landmark is needed to narrow the search.

14.4 SOUND THREE HARSH TONES

14.5 AGENT Agent Park to all agents. My colleague's claims have been substantiated. It is believed the Rumor is still on Hafizah at this time. Each additional clearance request only serves to slow the proceedings. (starting to lose his cool just a little) Please be advised that my people can be trusted to do their jobs.

- 15.1 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe to all agents. Calculations estimating the complete window of space in which the Rumor might be are attached. Resuming Transmission 11A.
- 15.2 ARKADY (back inside the ship) Arkady Patel to Violet Liu. We got your throat powder, please pick it up from the cargo hold before you hack a lung out--
- 15.3 VIOLET (coughing) (disappointed) I was gonna sneak up on you.
- 15.4 ARKADY (Sarcastic but not mean) I'm so proud of you. Here.
- 15.5 SOUND VIOLET CATCHES THROAT POWDER
- 15.6 ARKADY CONT'D One box of bargain brand throat powder. (Awkwardly) Uh, I think we wound up with mangosteen flavor; the label's in, I wanna say Malay? Figure it beats the American stuff, like pumpkin or cool ranch, or-- are you *mixing that into coffee?*
- 15.7 VIOLET Mostly coffee. (Drily) Trust me, I'm a doctor.
- 15.8 ARKADY You're a *biologist*.

17.1 SOUND A HIGH FIVE

17.2 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe. Little else of interest here until the tail end of the return fuel trip, transmission 11C, confirmed local time 15:45. Location still unknown.

17.3 SOUND STATIC AND DISTORTION OF CLASSICAL MUSIC OVER A VAN RADIO

17.4 SOUND ARKADY SUDDENLY TURNS OFF THE RADIO

17.5 SANA Hey, I was listening to that.

17.6 ARKADY No, you weren't. Look, something's off lately.

17.7 SANA (A little defensive) What do you mean?

17.8 ARKADY Yeah, like that. Your work gets done, but you never seem focused. You haven't ribbed me at all for spending more time with Violet.

17.9 SANA Why, have you been?

17.10 ARKADY Not an invitation to start.

- 18.1 SANA I...think we're all a little worn-down right now, but it's nothing to worry about.
- 18.2 ARKADY Y'know, all that ridiculous touchy-feely crap you trot out if one of us freaking *blinks* wrong--(Really really struggling here) Uh, you know that goes both ways, right?
- 18.3 SANA (There's an element of lightness and humor here, or at least an attempt at it) Arkady, do you have a fever? Is Violet contagious?
- 18.4 ARKADY This is hard for me, okay?
- 18.5 SANA (More serious. There is some obvious care here, but she's also sort of trying to end the conversation) Hey, I appreciate it. I really do.
- 18.6 ARKADY I'm not doing this to *grow as a person*. Something is *wrong*. This can't all be about Campbell. (Pause. Arkady realizes she has no idea if it is about Campbell or not.) Uh. Is it about Campbell?
- 18.7 SANA We're out here making enemies, getting noticed, and we still don't know what the Regime was

trying to do with the Iris, with Brian's friend--any of it.

19.1 SANA CONT'D

I make one bad call, and we're all dead. Maybe I've already done it, and we just don't know it yet.

19.2 ARKADY

Have you ever been led by somebody who had absolutely no doubt?

19.3 SANA

I get what you're saying but--

19.4 ARKADY

Because I *have*, Sana. I wake up every day, and I know I am *still* best-case scenario of Sky Corps Seven-Seven. (Arkady has spent all her sincerity, so we are back to self-deprecating snark!) So, like. Let *that* chill your blood for a sec.

19.5 SANA

Is it any better if your leader's just going with her best guess?

19.6 ARKADY

That's all any of us ever do. Hey. You sure you don't want company, meeting your friend for the handoff? (A little more pointed) You know, your mysterious friend you won't talk about?

19.7 SANA

Plenty of reasons to stay anonymous, these days.

20.1 ARKADY (The beginning of a speech) That's just it. Captain, I'm--a lot of things, but I'm not a hypocrite. How much shit have I given you, over the years, for assuming everybody's gonna be as honorable as you?

20.2 SANA Where are you going with this?

20.3 ARKADY (Carefully; this is hard to say) I just wanted to say: if there's anything you wanna tell me right now, you can. (This part is so much harder) And if there's anything you *don't* wanna tell me...I get it. If we were wrong about Campbell, the ship's still compromised. It's--not your job to put all your trust in one person. *Any* of us.

20.4 SANA You're my best friend. If I had something to share, you'd be the one.

20.5 ARKADY (That was not good enough.) Yeah.

20.6 SOUND VAN STOPS MOVING SUDDENLY; THEY'RE BACK AT THE SHIP; ARKADY UNLOCKS HER SEATBELT

20.6 ARKADY CONT'D Sit tight, I'll get us unloaded.

21.10 SOUND KITCHEN CUPBOARD CLOSES

22.1 KREJJH Science Officer Liu, did we get any of
the--the--*breesht*--

22.2 VIOLET Sorry, what's *breesht*?

22.3 KREJJH (half-laughs) Not a word to repeat in polite
company. Sorry, I'm trying to remember-- Crewman
Jeeter, how do you say *vresh'rraffo'ssepp* in
Earth English?

22.4 BRIAN ...awnings?

22.5 KREJJH No, *vresh'rraffo'ss*, they're--on sticks?

22.6 BRIAN Umbrellas?

22.7 KREJJH *Vresh-rraffo-ssepp*.

22.8 BRIAN Little, uh-- (Brian suddenly understands) drink
umbrellas!

22.9 KREJJH Yes!

22.10 VIOLET Didn't see any.

- 26.1 KREJJH The one you wouldn't stop replaying in our room?
Uh, yes, Crewman Jeeter, I remem-- [remembers]
'Hello hello? Is this Thasia? Is this *Craddock*?'
- 26.2 VIOLET Emily *Craddock*.
- 26.3 BRIAN Where'd she work? Biotech? Security?
- 26.4 VIOLET ...PR. I don't know, it could be a coincidence,
but I feel like we should keep digging. There's
some files I want to look at, but I'm having
trouble accessing them.
- 26.5 KREJJH We're not picking up any orbital sources with a
decent signal. We'd have to connect to the local
network.
- 26.7 BRIAN Man, I miss those local connections. So much
faster. I've got, like, a month's worth of heavy
downloads queued up.
- 26.8 VIOLET Then why aren't we connecting?
- 26.9 KREJJH Because there's risk involved, we're on the run,
and our security officer is--First Mate Patel.
(sigh) Being an outlaw is so *boring*.

27.1 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe here. Nothing else relevant on Transmissions, 0, B, or D for some time. Returning to Transmission C, estimated local time 17:00.

27.2 SOUND CAR DOOR SLAMS; GRAVEL UNDER FOOTSTEPS

27.3 RICKY Captain Sana Tripathi, right on time!

27.4 SANA No bodyguards, really?

27.5 RICKY I *said* one-on-one. C'mon, I'm not gonna search you for weapons; you're not a killer. I *am* gonna do a quick scan for bugs, though. *And* I need your comm link.

27.6 SANA You can see it's deactivated; the crew can't reach me.

27.8 RICKY Yeah, but let's play it safe. (pause) Smart girl. Alright, hold still.

27.9 SOUND RICKY SCANS FOR BUGS; ALL CLEAR SOUND

- 28.1 RICKY (Vocal affect changes to sound more like a not-evil Regular Joe.) Thank Christ. All that villain shit, not as fun as it looks. It's good to see you again.
- 28.2 SANA (More confused but not really less angry)What is this? What do you want?
- 28.3 RICKY Damn, I was hoping you were playing along a *little*. You're still holding a grudge? It was over a decade ago. We were kids.
- 28.4 SANA I'm here because you threatened my crew.
- 28.5 RICKY Look, the IGR was waiting for you on Rosalind. When you changed course, we left them scrambling to catch up. And of course I'm sorry about *how* I did that, but I knew your audio wasn't secured, so I didn't have a ton of options.
- 28.6 SANA What about the blackmail, is that real?
- 28.7 RICKY I'm not *blackmailing* you. I have a contact who came into some information about your ship being bugged. I'm offering to tell you who did it, if you do one job for me. An easy one. More like a favor.

29.1 SANA

What.

29.2 RICKY

I need you to kill Ricky Q. (Pause) Don't worry, I'm not speaking in third-person. I know what you think of me, but I'm not a *monster*.

29.3 SANA

You wanna stage the death of your Cresswin Landing alias. You've been using it to work with various criminal organizations, and now the Regime is closing in, and you need to tidy up.

29.4 RICKY

Not exactly *closing in*. They're offering me a contract; I just need those zealots to think I'm one of them long enough to pass a background check. All you have to do is go back to your ship, let slip who you met with, say that you lost your temper, and *alas poor Ricky Q, I knew him, Horatio*. There's no risk for you. You've already got blood on your hands; they're not gonna put out an extra bounty if you shoot a fellow criminal. Your mole can leak it to my middlemen, and they'll bring it to my government contact on New Jupiter. You've got to admit, "He's literally dead" is a pretty good alibi.

29.5 SANA

Still feels more complicated than it needs to be.

31.1 ARKADY (Through her teeth) *Attempt harder.*

31.2 GRATUITOUSLY PLEASANT VOICE Connection not available. Would you like to try again?

31.3 ARKADY (Deep breath) Arkady Patel to Brian Jeeter.

31.4 SOUND COMM CONNECTS

31.5 ARKADY Brian, have you heard from the Captain?

31.6 BRIAN *Not...since she left?*

31.7 ARKADY She hasn't checked in?

31.8 BRIAN *Doesn't she normally do that with you?*

31.9 KREJJH (Has dreamed of this moment) *Are we having connection problems? Because there's always, y'know, local networks.*

31.10 ARKADY (this is the sound of Arkady getting a headache in real-time) Krejjh, if this is about you wanting to download another Dwarnian soap opera--

- 32.1 KREJJH *No! It is only like fifteen percent about that.
We're trying to find the connection with Alvy and
the other-Violet.*
- 32.2 ARKADY *Actually, you know what, yeah, let me dial us in.*
- 32.3 KREJJH *Whoa, really?*
- 32.4 ARKADY *We need some way to stay informed in the middle
of goddamn nowhere. Arkady Patel out.*
- 32.5 SOUND ARKADY PROGRAMMING SOMETHING
- 32.6 JUNIOR AGENT *Junior Agent McCabe, several more unsuccessful
attempts to reach Sana Tripathi have been filed
in the archives. Frankly, you get the picture.*
- 32.7 GRATUITOUSLY PLEASANT VOICE *--like to try again?*
- 32.8 ARKADY *(long, devastated exhale, which cuts off abruptly
as--)*
- 32.9 SOUND DOORS OPEN
- 32.10 VIOLET *Hey. Here, this was getting cold.*

- 33.1 ARKADY (this is the worst day of Arkady's life in a long while) Um...thanks.
- 33.2 VIOLET (can tell Arkady is almost crying, trying to be a little tactful) I came down to see if you wanted to come trade theories with us, but now I'm gonna go ahead and say you don't wanna do that.
- 33.3 ARKADY (Trying to play down how emotionally distraught she is, with mixed results) Uh, accurate.
- 33.4 VIOLET What's going on?
- 33.5 ARKADY Engine trouble. Turns out, we picked up a tank for an RXJ-fifty-one. Same fuel, same setup, but the output valve's different. There's probably a way to rig it up, but damned if I know.
- 33.6 VIOLET Could the Captain talk you through it?
- 33.7 ARKADY If she was answering her comm.
- 33.8 VIOLET Maybe the terrain's blocking the signal?
- 33.9 ARKADY Not on the local network.

37.1 ARKADY

You could tell when a district was really going crooked, because there were patterns to who they'd send us. (Arkady considers this, considers the structural inequalities that decided who got sent to regular jail and who got sent to Cresswin.) Well, there were always *patterns*, but. Somebody new would come to power, and we'd just get a wave of dissenters.

37.2 VIOLET

When you said you learned opera in prison...

37.3 ARKADY

We didn't have a high school, but we had a theatre troupe. Not just opera, they did anything one of them knew by heart. Shakespeare, *Abedayo*, *Miranda*, *Omar*... By '78, there must've been eighty people in the company. We were getting folks from *Telemachus* by then. A lot of them; *Telemachus* is a big place. That's how I met Sana.

37.4 VIOLET

I should've guessed you two went that far back.

37.5 ARKADY

(A little flat; she's feeling weird about the implication that she and Sana are so close.) I knew who she was; she didn't know me. I was a kid. Anyway. With *Telemachus*, we had the people and the contacts to smuggle in what we needed. That's what pushed things over the top.

- 39.1 SANA Do you have one to spare? (Ricky doesn't say no.)
Goddammit, Ricky-
- 39.2 RICKY You're gonna lecture me about morals, really? Do
you expect me to buy that the guard on Elion was
your one and only casualty?
- 39.3 SANA Only when it's a matter of survival.
- 39.4 RICKY My guy was about survival, too. Regardless of
whether or not you want to believe me. Please,
one favor. One chance to actually pull something
over on the Regime.
- 39.5 SANA And you'll tell me who the mole is.
- 39.6 RICKY Of course.
- 39.7 SANA Because you still think I haven't figured it out
yet.
- 39.8 RICKY I *know* you haven't. Never play poker, Sana. It's
just embarrassing. You wanna hear the really
crazy thing about all of this? You were wrong
about me on Cresswin. I never would've betrayed
you.

RICKY CONT'D OVER

- 40.1 RICKY CONT'D I really was ready to die for the uprising. If you hadn't pushed me away, if you hadn't turned against me--I was risking so much, and at the end of the day, still you were so convinced I had to be up to something--
- 40.2 SANA I didn't think you were plotting against us.
- 40.3 RICKY Then why were you constantly working against my plans?
- 40.4 SANA *Because they were bad plans.*
- 40.5 RICKY What.
- 40.6 SANA You wanted to plant hidden cameras in the head office, you wanted to stage your own kidnapping, you wanted to give a big, rousing speech that would convince all the guards to switch sides--
- 40.7 RICKY They would've listened to me. We had to send a *message.*
- 40.8 SANA We'd *tried* sending messages, Ricky. We'd been trying for years, and then you show up--

- 42.1 RICKY (genuinely angry now) Sorry I wasn't willing to be the *pawn* you all wanted me to be!
- 42.2 SANA Thought you'd do anything for the cause.
- 42.3 RICKY You know, your real problem is you're still blaming me for things that happened after I left.
- 42.4 SANA *How did you think it was gonna go?*
- 42.5 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe to all agents. The Rumor is still on Hafizah, and we can eliminate Districts A1 through A7, B1 through B9, and C1 through C13.
- 42.6 AGENT Also D1 through D5. Returning now to Transmission 11A.
- 42.7 ARKADY They were getting everything in place, all the supplies, all the greenhouses and seeds and water purifiers we'd need once we couldn't depend on shipments anymore. But three months before the big day, one of the guys at the top abandoned us. We knew he had to be a double agent. So we had to strike then. Only chance for a surprise attack.
- 42.8 VIOLET Before you had enough food in place...

44.1 JUNIOR AGENT

Junior Agent McCabe. Transmission 11C becomes unusable for some time, as Ricky Q's slanderous ranting continues for nearly ten minutes. Skipping ahead to--

44.2 AGENT

Hold on, Junior Agent. In fact, this portion must still be included, in accordance with Edict 1837. It is, of course, crucial to abide by all regulations at all times, no matter how time-sensitive, urgent, or vital the circumstances.

44.3 RICKY

Y'know, it's common knowledge that you only turn a profit in the black market selling luxury goods to the kind of people who can afford them. Tell me, for every revolutionary pamphlet you hand out, how many bottles of scotch are you moving? Where's this stuff really ending up? I bet they love you in middle management. I bet you guys make their lives way easier.

44.4 SANA

We do what we have to, so we can do what we want to. If you think I don't weigh that balance every single *damn* day--

46.1 RICKY

Thank you.

46.2 SANA

We went over everybody, with scanners that can pick up any human-made recording device on the market.

46.3 RICKY

Well-said, now if we can--

46.4 SANA

So what would *that* leave, alien tech? Even the Dwarnians don't have that kind of precision, and all the other civilizations we know about have been dead or missing for centuries. Who would be looking for them at this point? Even the Regime knows that ghosts aren't real.

46.5 RICKY

I agree. I'm in kind of a hurry, so--

46.6 SANA

(To herself) "No line safe." And now she keeps *coughing*, like something's in the air...Nobody even considered if it was contagious... (Sana now understands the nature of the leak)

46.7 RICKY

What?

46.8 SANA

You don't know.

46.9 RICKY

Know what?

48.1 RICKY

You are so goddamn smug, you always have been. You have no idea who you're talking to. How do you think somebody like me stays so far off the radar? I've got people at every level, on every planet. It's not just some agent on New Jupiter I went to school with, it is so much bigger than that. How do you think your corrupt desk jockeys can afford that extra bottle of whiskey? It's my bribe money that keeps you in business. Hell, how do you think I got that contract? I am the opposite of small-time. I've spent years making a name for myself, and I did it without any help from anyone, because after my time with the Landers, (GETTING SAD NOW) you have to realize nobody in my family will ever trust me again, and if you don't think I weigh *that* every day of my life...

48.2 SANA

(sadly) Roderick Quincy Cresswin the Third.

48.3 RICKY

The Second. Granddad was a Richard, lucky him.

48.4 SANA

I'm sorry.

48.5 RICKY

It's my burden to bear.

48.6 SANA

Not for that. Karma's gonna get you.

- 50.1 SANA (Not fully engaged in what Ricky's saying; her mind is a million miles ahead) Guess not. Toss me my comm link?
- 50.2 RICKY Here. Y'know, I'm not gonna play the karma card, but *something's* gonna catch up with you, and by then, there really is gonna be nothing I can do.
- 50.3 SANA Yeah, maybe.
- 50.4 SOUND SANA WALKS AWAY
- 50.5 SANA (Calling over her shoulder) Need a hand unloading the cargo?
- 50.6 RICKY Keep it. What am I gonna do with twenty cases of noise canceling headphones?
- 50.7 SANA You already paid.
- 50.8 RICKY Believe me, your fee is the definition of small-time.
- 50.9 SANA Right.
- 50.10 RICKY See you around, Sana.

51.1 SANA (Flat.) Yeah.

51.2 SOUND CAR DOOR OPENS

51.3 SANA Probably not.

51.4 SOUND SANA SITS DOWN, CLOSES THE CAR DOOR, STARTS
ENGINE. RADIO STARTS WITH CAR

51.5 RADIO SINGER *"--Red light shines on and on and on and on and
on / but it's not the sea, that's coming for me,
and it's not the storm--"*

51.6 SOUND RADIO TURNS OFF

51.7 SANA (To herself) Be brave, kiddo.

51.8 SOUND SANA DRIVING THE CAR

51.9 SANA Outside call. Sana Tripathi to Arkady Patel.

51.10 **ARKADY** **Captain.**

51.11 SANA I need everything secured and ready to go, right
now. And I need you to tell the rest of the crew,

this goes for everyone: not a single word about where we are, or where we're going.

52.1 ARKADY Code blue?

52.2 SANA Code teal.

52.3 ARKADY Captain, I--

52.4 SANA That's the situation. And if I'm not back in forty-five minutes--wartime protocols.

52.5 ARKADY Not an option. We need you.

52.6 SANA Yeah, well, you don't wanna see the speedometer right now. I'm gonna make it, and I'm gonna tell you everything, I promise.

52.7 ARKADY (urgent) Sana, the engine. It's a fifty-one, not a fifty.

52.8 SANA We just need enough power to get out of here. You'll figure it out, okay? I trust you. Sana Tripathi out.

53.1 SANA CONT'D

(In a more outward tone, although on some level she is also talking to keep herself calm during some dangerous driving) A quick note, to the agent or agents listening in on this, because I know you are, and you know I know, and frankly, I am too tired to pretend right now.

53.2 SANA

Maybe you're wondering why I just handed you Roderick Quincy Cresswin Junior. I want to be clear here: this is not me cooperating. This is not about me giving you what you want. Not gonna lie, it feels weird trying to psych out someone I've never met. You know the songs I sing in the shower, and I don't know your name. Y'know what, I'm gonna call you Leonard. And uh, if you've got complaints--yeah, I guess you know my number.

53.3 SANA CONT'D

So, hi, Leonard. And hello to any counter-agents listening in on this, because I think you know by now, Leonard, just how unstable your operation really is. What Roderick said, about knowing people in high places--I don't think he made that up. I mean, you know how corrupt the average guard is.

54.1 SANA CONT'D

Man, Lenny, I've had so many imaginary conversations with you guys over the years, with the IGR true believers. And now that I know I actually have a captive audience, it's like--I realize how much time I've wasted. We've been trying to make ourselves heard for a long time. At some point, either you hear us, or you don't.

54.2 SANA CONT'D

And lately, lately somehow my goals are even smaller than that. You know what I want? At this point, you know what I lie awake dreaming about? I wanna live in a world where my friends don't have to be terrified every single day. And I haven't had that in a long, long time. And I'll be honest with you, most days, I don't really think I'll have it again. Even standing still is a privilege I don't get. There's no place where every single piece of me belongs anymore. The closest I've got is a ship I built myself, out of scraps, and if we have to keep moving, we might as well run.

54.3 SANA CONT'D

So, say whatever you want to say. Write whatever you want to write. But just--understand that when I say that I would do *anything* for my crew, I mean it. But that's not an offer, Lenny, and it never has been. It's a threat.

- 55.1 SANA CONT'D (A beat. Sana is driving very fast now.)
(Dawning, embarrassing realization) ...you have
definitely heard me singing in the shower. Wow,
I really hope you guys edit those reports.
- 55.2 AGENT Agent Park to all agents. At present, Source C
has 44 minutes until the Rumor exits Hafizah.
- 55.3 JUNIOR AGENT Cutting in with a parallel section of
Transmission 11B.
- 55.4 BRIAN Alright, that's enough files to keep us busy for
a while. How're you doing?
- 55.5 KREJJH Got a nice stack of downloads here, Crewman
Jeeter. Three new episodes of *Sh'th Hremreh*
waiting for our eyeballs and earholes.
- 55.6 BRIAN Hey, what's that?
- 55.7 KREJJH You said to start grabbing everything that wasn't
garbage, viruses, or student loan bills.
- 55.8 BRIAN That video file, right there.

- 57.1 BRIAN Arkady, is Violet with you? There's something you should see.
- 57.2 ARKADY Later, Jeeter.
- 57.3 BRIAN Arkady, dude, I am not kidding around, this is big.
- 57.4 ARKADY Jeeter! We're on a code teal.
- 57.5 KREJJH First Mate Patel, this is worth a look...
- 57.6 ARKADY Code teal, Krejjh.
- 57.7 BRIAN Uh, teal means a code green plus a code blue.
- 57.8 KREJJH Oh. *Breesht*.
- 57.9 ARKADY Liu and Jeeter, you guys make sure everything's secure. Krejjh, I need you in the engine room. Now.
- 57.10 AGENT Agent Park to all agents. 37 minutes now until the Rumor takes off.

- 58.1 JUNIOR AGENT The song playing on the radio during the previous section of Transmission 11C has been identified as "Fear for the Storm" by Birdie & the Swansong.
- 58.2 AGENT After applying--moderate pressure to local authorities, our agents have been able to obtain a map of broadcast ranges on Hafizah.
- 58.3 JUNIOR AGENT Only one tower was transmitting the song at the relevant time, with a range of roughly 90 square kilometers. This narrows our search to an area of roughly 8,900 kilometers, see attached file for Agent Sheepek's calculations.
- 58.4 AGENT All agents on Hafizah urgently requested to search Districts A14, A15, A16, and A19.
- 58.5 JUNIOR AGENT Junior Agent McCabe to all agents. Update: 33 minutes until the Rumor takes off. Transmission 11D.
- 58.6 KREJJH Okay, an RXJ51. I saw something like this in a history book once, I think you need to--connect this, and that--
- 58.7 ARKADY But what about--

District A19, I repeat, please divert all
resources to District A19.

61.2 VIOLET Uh, want me to change the subject again?

61.3 ARKADY ...yeah.

61.4 VIOLET (a small cough) Why opera?

61.5 ARKADY Because it's big and loud and stupid, and you
know ahead of time if it's gonna be a comedy or a
tragedy.

61.6 SOUND AIRLOCK UNLOCKS; SANA IS BACK

61.7 BRIAN Do you hear something?

61.8 KREJJH The airlock!

61.9 JUNIOR AGENT (defeated) Junior Agent McCabe, Transmission 11C.

61.10 SOUND AIRLOCK CLOSES; A COMM COMES TO LIFE

62.1 SANA Sana Tripathi to all crew, Everybody report to
their stations immediately. How are we looking?

62.2 ARKADY (Beyond relieved.) Looking great, Captain.

62.3 AGENT Agent Park to all agents. We have confirmation that Source C is on the Rumor. Much of the following audio is useless across all sources, however--

62.4 SOUND ENGINES GOING

62.5 KREJJH (Piloting) Ha-HA! All you Regime galoots are cordially invited to dine on your own failure! Sorry we forgot to RSVP, but we've got a date with the velvety embrace of OUTER SPACE! Wooooo--(cough) Woo!

62.6 AGENT We have confirmation that the Rumor has left Hafizah. While our people on the ground were unable to maintain visual contact with the Rumor as it left the atmosphere, the ship now has few options for refueling without passing through at least one government checkpoint. Due to the crew's growing awareness of Project Sentinel, this case is now classified as a Priority Two. For a review of new procedures, see attached file.

For more on Source D, formerly "Krejhh," see file marked Brittony LeFever.

For more on Source Zero, formerly "Violet Liu," see file marked Cindy Chu.

For more on Source B, formerly "Brian Jeeter," see file marked Jamie Price.

For more on Source A, formerly "Arkady Patel," see file marked Ishani Kanetkar.

64.4 GENERAL

You know, Source C did say something interesting. There's been a common element to your failure as a department for a long time. And it does make a person wonder where your loyalties lie.

64.5 AGENT

Sir, Junior Agent McCabe is on their first assignment. Any departure from regulation reflects on me, not them.

64.6 GENERAL

I know. I also know that you attended the same third grade class as Cresswin Jr. Park, come with me. Bring your coat; this is going to be a while.

64.7 JUNIOR AGENT

(Understands just how bad this is.) Sir, I swear, Park is loyal to the republic.

64.8 GENERAL

How old are you, McCabe? Twenty-two, twenty-three? You've got decades ahead of you here, but only if you can learn very quickly. Watch who you ally yourself with. Bad choices can make or break your career. And more than that. Come on, Park.

65.1 AGENT

(Can't hold it back, still trying to be composed.) McCabe. Uh, if Shelly calls, tell her not to expect me.

65.2 GENERAL Agent McCabe?

65.3 JUNIOR AGENT Uh, *Junior* Agent, Major General.

65.4 GENERAL Not anymore. Do your goddamn job.

65.5 JUNIOR AGENT Oh--

65.6 SOUND RECORDING IS SWITCHED OFF; BEAT; RECORDING IS
SWITCHED ON

65.7 JUNIOR AGENT (now pretty calm, almost authoritative) While Cresswin Jr. will likely contribute little actionable intelligence to this case, Edict 1837 compels us to prosecute any possible source indicated by a Priority 3 class criminal, or higher.

The song heard earlier on the radio has been identified as "Ruwal Iree Giya Naukawe" performed by long-dead Sri Lankan singer Nanda Malini. No subversive ties suspected.

This report has been transcribed by Ensign Best, with direction from Agents Clark and Seiders. If you need to review a written version, please access procyonpodcasts.com. That's p-r-o-c-y-o-n podcasts dot com. Additional thanks to Agent Bauman and Agent Cross, and to the specialists at Procyon. This is Jun--this is Agent McCabe, codename Andrews, filling in

for Agent Park, codename Apollo, who is on indefinite leave. Long live
the republic.