

The Great Outback

"Public Beta" - Show #107

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PUBLIC BETA

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MIR TRANSIT STATION - ESTABLISHING

The *CIS Daisy* is docked tail-first to the Mir Transit Station which is in geosynchronous orbit above Earth's Iberian Peninsula.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

LEDGE and JONES are standing in the *CIS Daisy's* cockpit. They are discussing possible job opportunities with AMY/AI.

LEDGE

Amy, has anything turned up on the freelancer boards?

AMY/AI

Negative, Ledge. It's been a quiet day.

JONES

You know...

(pause)

If you're interested, I've got a line on something that might help us out in the long run.

LEDGE

Go on.

JONES

Interested in being part of the public beta test for SureTrack nine-point-oh?

LEDGE

That's our navigation software, isn't it?

JONES

Yes. We're on version eight-point-two.

LEDGE

What does it pay?

JONES

The pay is only ten-thousand smoos, but when it's released, Daisy gets a free copy, which is probably going to list for a hundred-thousand smoos per installation. So, the total value is a hundred and ten thousand smoos.

LEDGE

Why would we want to upgrade?

JONES

There are three very good reasons.

(pause)

First, it should increase our jump range from 30 light years to 50. This should save time and wear on the jump drive.

(pause)

Second, it should increase our interstellar jump accuracy by ten percent and our micro-jump accuracy by fifty percent. Another time saver.

(pause)

Third, since I wrote part of the base code, every copy sold gives me a royalty.

(pause)

Okay, two very good reasons and one very selfish reason. But the two good reasons should be reason enough.

LEDGE

How long will it take? I'm not in a rush to get our operation relocated out to the frontier, but I'd like to line up some courier runs while we're heading that way. I need to both have and be able to give some advance notice.

JONES

It will probably take five days from start to finish.

LEDGE

What will we be doing?

JONES

Field testing the upgraded navigation software. We'll do one round-trip interstellar jump and four in-system micro-jumps. We'll have a Zumpco software developer on board in case anything goes wrong.

LEDGE

Is there anything that could possibly go wrong?

EXT. WHITE SPACE - MUCH LATER

CIS Daisy jumps into frame from hyperspace. The background is off-white, yet dark enough to contrast with the *CIS Daisy's* white hull.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Jones is sitting in his navigator station. Ledge, KOKO, and ALVIN are standing around, looking impatiently at Jones.

JONES

We're lost.

LEDGE

What do you mean, lost?

JONES

I don't know where we are.

ALVIN

Don't look at me. I'm really just supposed to be here for peace-of-mind.

Jones points through the windshield. The exterior is not luminous, so no light is coming in, but everything around the *CIS Daisy* is visibly off-white. Jones is very worried.

JONES

Look out there. We either jumped into the middle of an abstract painting or we're not in normal space.

EXT. WHITE SPACE - SAME

The *CIS Daisy* is hovering in the white void.

JONES (O.S.)
This is as lost as you can get.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - DAY

The cockpit hatch is open.

Alvin is seated at the folding table in Jones' bunk bay (bay #2).

Ledge is seated FRAME LEFT. Jones is seated FRAME RIGHT. Koko is seated behind Ledge. Music is playing over the ship's stereo system. Alvin is yelling over the music.

ALVIN

Turn that racket off, PLEASE! I can't think!

(beat)

Will you please--

(throws arms up in disgust)

LEDGE

Turn the music off, please, Amy.

AMY/AI

Yes, Ledge.

SFX the MUSIC stops playing.

LEDGE

Colin, did we forget to give him a beer?

JONES

He's on the wagon.

LEDGE

We'll see.

Ledge reaches below seat and pulls out a beer. Carefully stands up, making three-point contact with ship as he's a bit tipsy. Ledge walks toward the crew section. Jones makes one last attempt to stop him, but Ledge continues.

JONES

He's going to refuse it.

Alvin is sitting in the folding chair within his and Jones' bunk bay. The folding table is down. He has his tablet computer plugged into his DUI interface via a cable.

He is concentrating intently and focused on the computer screen when Ledge walks up to him carrying a beer. Alvin is angry and frustrated because the ship's crew have not been taking him seriously enough.

LEDGE
Would you like a beer?

ALVIN
No.

LEDGE
(offers beer)
It's burpless.

ALVIN
I don't care if--
(pause)
Did you say, burpless?

LEDGE
All zero-gravity beer is burpless.

ALVIN
Do you want to get home?

LEDGE
Sure. We'll run out of beer in a few days.

ALVIN
Then let me patch the navigation program in peace, or else we won't get home anytime soon, or maybe not at all.

Ledge turns and walks back into cockpit. He closes the hatch behind him and takes his pilot's seat.

JONES
Told you.

KOKO
I'm bored.
(beat)
I'm still bored.

LEDGE
I'm open for suggestions.

KOKO
I got one. Let's ask each other a personal question.

JONES
Might this culminate in you hitting
me in the face again?

KOKO
I promise not to hit you in the
face.

JONES
Or anywhere else?

KOKO
Okay--

JONES
And not throw things at me?

KOKO
(sighs)
No violence at all.

JONES
Fine by me, then.

KOKO
(to Ledge)
Are you game, Boss?

Ledge subconsciously fiddles with his engagement ring.

LEDGE
Alright. But if I don't want to
answer, we have to agree to let it
go at that.

KOKO
That's okay. If you answer, you get
to ask anyone else you choose the
next question. I'll start with--
Ledge.

(pause)
I've been meaning to ask you this
for a long time, boss.

(pause)
Where did you get your nickname?

LEDGE
That's an old story. It goes back
to when we were in high school. I
and a couple friends used to play
music together.

KOKO
You were in a band?

LEDGE

Well. We were sort of a garage band.

JONES

Played small gigs and stuff?

LEDGE

No. We just played in the garage.

KOKO

Have we ever heard of you?

LEDGE

Nah. We never made any official recordings.

JONES

What did you write songs about?

LEDGE

Well, we mostly did covers.

KOKO

Anything original?

LEDGE

Okay, we only did covers.

JONES

Who did you cover?

LEDGE

We used to do a lot of metal-fusion songs. Hard jazz and metalachi. Iron Taco was our favorite band. Our best cover was one of their ballads, "Low Ride to Heaven." We did it in three-quarter time though, so we could make it last over ten-minutes. We were going to use it as our encore, if we ever got an encore. Or a gig.

KOKO

What were you called?

LEDGE

We called ourselves "We3" because-- there were three of us. Me, Nobbo, and Bingo. Nobbo was the singer and guitarist. I played all the synthesizers. That's where I got my nickname. I was, "The Ledge."

JONES
Why did they call you The Ledge?

CLOSE ON LEDGE

We hold on Ledge for a BEAT.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFF WALL - FLASHBACK

TEEN LEDGE is standing on a small ledge on the side of a cliff. His back is pressed against the wall and his arms are stretched out to either side as his hands hold on to any protrusion he can find. He is petrified with fear. The voices of his friends in the band echo up from below.

TEEN NOBBO (O.S.)
Steve! Come down! We're sorry!

TEEN BINGO (O.S.)
Yeah, buddy! It was just a dare!
Nobody said you had to climb up
there!

Hold for a BEAT, then BLACKOUT. Immediately cut to the same...

EXT. CLIFF WALL - NIGHT

Crickets are chirping as Ledge is still standing on the ledge well into the night.

TEEN LEDGE
Guys? I think I'm ready to try and
come down now.
(beat)
Guys?

END FLASHBACK:

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

Ledge has a blank expression.

LEDGE

I don't remember why they called me that.

(pause)

But it stuck. I've just used it ever since. It's easier to say than Steven A. Delaney the Fourth.

JONES

That's sad.

LEDGE

We weren't that bad.

JONES

No. Steven. A. Delaney. S.A.D. Sad.

KOKO

(ignores Jones)

Okay, Boss. Your turn.

LEDGE

Oh, I don't know.

(pause)

I really don't want to know all the shady details of your sordid pasts.

KOKO

Come on, Boss.

LEDGE

Okay. Jones. What's the stupidest thing you've ever done?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL (CHEMISTRY LAB) - FLASHBACK

YOUNG JONES, 12, is standing behind a table in a high school chemistry lab. Several students are working at other tables. He is clearly years younger than the other students.

Young Jones is preparing to pour liquid from a Flask labeled WATER into a Beaker labeled ACID.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL (CORRIDOR) - SAME

A corridor outside of a closed high school classroom door.

SFX a loud BOOM causes the entire scene to shudder.

The door to the lab flies open and several students, 16 years or so of age, run out, panicked, as a cloud of green gas rolls out of the entrance.

When the students have run off, a TEACHER walks out of the room dragging Young Jones by his ear. Both have been turned bright green all over, including their clothes. Once both are outside the room, the Teacher releases his ear, then smacks Young Jones on the head.

SFX a Fire Alarm goes off.

The school's sprinklers cut on, showering Young Jones and the Teacher. The Teacher smacks him on the head again.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

JONES

I have never done anything stupid.

Koko guffaws.

JONES (CONT'D)

Prove otherwise.

KOKO

Do tattoos count?

JONES

No fair! I was unconscious.

(pause)

Okay, once. ONCE in my life, I was stupid enough to let a Zimrakkan get me drunk and take advantage of me while I was unconscious.

KOKO

I'll accept that.

JONES

Okay, okay. My turn now. And I choose--

Koko points between Ledge and Koko as if doing an eeny-meeny count.

JONES (CONT'D)

Koko.

(pause)

Is Koko a virgin?

LEDGE
Hey, that's mighty personal.

JONES
The name of the game is personal
questions.

KOKO
(rolls eyes)
Are you projecting? Am I a virgin?

BLACK - FLASHBACK

Voices echo off of unseen walls as Koko and EMIL fumble
around in the dark.

KOKO
Where is it, Emil? I can't find it.

EMIL
It was somewhere in between my legs
when it fell out.

KOKO
How big is it?

EMIL
It's about a quarter of a meter
long. Grab it and let's get
humping!

KOKO
There, I found it!

EMIL
Turn it on!

INT. ACCESS CORRIDOR - SAME

A flashlight's beam suddenly pierces the darkness. REVEAL
Koko and Emil standing in an underground access corridor.
Both are dressed in black, tactical gear and are armed with
submachine guns. They are wearing big backpacks. Emil looks
at Koko.

EMIL
What? Let's hump it!

Emil takes off running down the access corridor. Koko looks at Emil as if she has some feelings for him, and sighs as she turns to follow.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

KOKO

Of course I'm a virgin. What a dumb question to ask a girl.

(pause)

Okay, my turn again.

JONES

That's dodging the question.

KOKO

No it isn't. I answered.

JONES

How do we know you're not lying.

KOKO

You'll have to take my word for it.

(grins)

Because otherwise you'll never know.

(pause)

Who shall I pick on next--

(pause)

Amy! Would you like to play?

AMY/AI

I do not understand.

KOKO

I'll ask you a personal question. If you choose to answer it, you get to ask one of us a personal question.

AMY/AI

Why would I want to do that?

KOKO

Because it's fun. Would you like to try?

AMY/AI

Fun?

(pause)

(MORE)

AMY/AI (CONT'D)
Alright. Ask me your personal
question.

KOKO
(thinks hard)
Have you ever been in love?

AMY/AI
I do not understand.

Koko leans forward on her control console, folds her arms and rests her chin on her arms. She stares at the video monitor.

KOKO
I think you do understand.

AMY/AI
(confused)
No. I do not.

LEDGE
Koko--

JONES
She's just a ship computer, Koko.

Amy/AI looks over at Jones, annoyed at his saying that she was "only" a ship computer.

AMY/AI
I resent that.

KOKO
A-ha! Got you!

AMY/AI
(to Koko)
No you didn't.

KOKO
I've been watching you. You react to things we tell you like a real person would.

AMY/AI
No I don't. It would be impossible for an AI unit to do that.

LEDGE
Okay, that's enough. No more questions for Amy.

KOKO
 (sighs)
 Okay. Then I direct my next
 question to Captain Ledge.

LEDGE
 Are you sure--

KOKO
 (direct)
 Is Amy your real-life friend?

The next three lines of dialog are given in rapid-fire
 succession.

LEDGE
 No.

AMY/AI
 Yes.

LEDGE
 Yes.

Koko uncrosses her arms and leans back in her chair,
 satisfied.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
 (uneasy)
 Yes.

INT. CIS DAISY (CREW SECTION) - LATER

Alvin is working diligently at his tablet computer. He pauses
 and looks up. He removes his dewey plug from his computer.

From his computer carrying case, Alvin pulls out a smaller
 zippered case. He unzips the case. He takes out a very small,
 flat BUGGING DEVICE.

Alvin stands up from the table and dashes over to Ledge's
 bunk bay. He lifts the bunk mattress pad and unzips the
 cover. He slides the device into the mattress pad on its
 underside where it would not normally be noticed. He then
 returns to his chair and re-plugs his dewey.

The hatch to the Cockpit slides open. Jones steps out. Alvin
 is nervous.

JONES
 How's it going?

ALVIN

Slowly.

JONES

Is everything okay?

ALVIN

Oh, everything's just peachy!
Except that we are lost in some
kind of white void that seems to be
outside the normal parameters of
the universe.

JONES

It might help if you think of it as
if the universe has a delicious,
cream-filled center.

Alvin glares at Jones.

JONES (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything while I'm
up?

ALVIN

No.

Jones walks to the galley bay, removes two bottled beers and
a fruit juice from the refrigerator. As he walks by Alvin, he
glances at his computer screen.

JONES

You have an open loop there. Line
thirty-five thousand, seven-hundred
and four.

ALVIN

(annoyed)

Am I telling you how to fetch beer?

JONES

Cheers.

Jones returns to the cockpit, closing the hatch behind him.

Alvin does a double-take while looking at his computer
display.

ALVIN

Damn, I did miss that.

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - LATER

Ledge, Koko, and Jones are all seated, nursing their beverages, except for Jones, who is very quickly guzzling his beer and finishing it off.

LEDGE

Anyone come up with any ideas about where we are? As much fun as we're having here, I'd like to think that this is a two-way trip.

KOKO

I'm actually proud of how you two are holding up. Most people would be freaked-out by now.

LEDGE

The Elephant isn't nearly as scary the second time around.

Jones holds his empty beer bottle out in front of him, staring at it. He holds his bottle with his left hand. He inserts and removes his index finger into the mouth of the bottle a couple times.

KOKO

Getting lonely, Jonesie?

JONES

No, my dear Koko. I think I might have figured out where we are.

EXT. WHITE SPACE - TRANSITIONAL

The CIS Daisy continues to hover in the white void.

INT. CIS DAISY (CREW SECTION) - SAME

The hatchway between the cockpit and the crew section opens. Jones quickly walks down the corridor, closing the hatch behind him. He passes Alvin, who glances at Jones furtively. Jones stops at his science module and starts activating the equipment.

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

Ledge and Koko remain in their seats inside the cockpit.
Amy/AI is on the video monitor. There is an awkward silence.

KOKO
Would you like to talk about it,
Boss?

LEDGE
It's not something I like to
discuss. It's not something I even
like to think about.

KOKO
Well, if you ever want to get it
off your chest, I'm all ears.

Koko glances around the cockpit randomly. Ledge is looking at
Amy/AI's image on the video monitor. We change angles and see
AMY/DREAM is sitting in the navigator's chair.

AMY/DREAM
Why not tell her about it?

LEDGE
It hurts me to talk about it.

AMY/DREAM
It hurts you not to talk about it.

KOKO
I understand, Boss. Just consider
it as an option if you think it
will make you feel better. I know
how to keep secrets really well.

LEDGE
What would I say?

KOKO
Anything you feel like saying.

AMY/DREAM
She'd only think you're insane.

LEDGE
You'd only think I'm insane.

KOKO
Boss, I, of all people, would never
refer to anyone else as insane.
Trust me on that one.

CLOSE ON KOKO

KOKO (CONT'D)

Would it make it easier for you to trust me if I told you something really personal about myself?

BACK TO SCENE

Amy/Dream is gone.

LEDGE

Koko, you don't have to share personal things with me. I hired you and Jones for who you are, not for who you were.

KOKO

I'll tell you anyway.

(pause)

My parents were killed in an accident when I was five years old. I was raised as an orphan. The only person I've ever had strong feelings for is also dead.

LEDGE

I'm very sorry.

KOKO

Don't be. I've seen a lot of that kind of stuff, and the old adage about things not killing you toughening you up is true.

LEDGE

Maybe. But sometimes, things that don't kill you just leave you crippled. Not stronger.

KOKO

If things didn't happen to us in exactly the way they do, we'd be completely different people. I think you're a decent man, and if anything in your life had been different, you might be completely different too.

LEDGE

I don't think our experiences alone make us who we are.

(MORE)

LEDGE (CONT'D)

I think our principles are what
guide us through the bad times.

KOKO

Different people will react to the
same thing differently. Don't
forget that, Boss. Do what works
for you. If talking helps deal with
it--

The hatch to the crew section slides open. Jones leans into
the cockpit.

JONES

I know where we are!

EXT. WHITE SPACE - TRANSITIONAL

The CIS Daisy continues to hover in the white void.

INT. CIS DAISY (CREW SECTION) - SAME

Ledge, Koko, and Alvin are sitting around in the crew
section. Ledge is sitting next to Koko on one of the bunks.
Jones is standing, explaining to them what he thinks has
happened to their ship.

ALVIN

So, it wasn't the errors I found in
the navigation program?

JONES

Correct. The code just failed and
caused the errors when we wound up
here because there is no way it
could have coped with the change.
It still needs to be patched, but
it wasn't responsible.

LEDGE

What did cause it? And where the
hell are we?

JONES

I believe we are in a hyperspace
bottle.

KOKO

What's that?

JONES

Way back, before we met the Zimrakkans, we used anti-matter engines to power our sub-light colony transports.

LEDGE

Is this going to be techno-babble?

JONES

Well--

KOKO

It is.

JONES

There's no simple way to explain it. You're just going to have to listen.

(pause)

Antimatter is dangerous--

KOKO

All hail Captain Obvious.

JONES

--and if you don't keep an eye on it, it likes to spontaneously flip back to being normal matter. But when it is in hyperspace, it remains stable.

KOKO

Why?

JONES

I--I don't know. Why do you ask me questions like that?

KOKO

To remind you that you don't know everything.

LEDGE

The sooner we let Jonesie finish, the sooner we get home.

JONES

Thanks, Ledge.

(pause)

Even though we didn't know how to travel through hyperspace in those days, we could create little bottles of hyperspace.

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

Ships used to carry their antimatter fuel inside these bottles so it wouldn't rot or come in contact with normal matter and blow up.

KOKO

Why do you think we are inside one of these bottles?

JONES

Because when I activated the scanners in my science bay, the only matter and energy I detected was our ship and whatever energy we were giving off. All the energy was being reflected off the walls. The actual dimensions of our bottle are less than a hundred-meters in diameter.

LEDGE

How did we get inside it?

JONES

What probably happened was that when we opened the wormhole, something went wrong at the other end and the exit didn't open. So we went into hyperspace, but didn't pop out.

LEDGE

(toward the cockpit)

Amy, have you ever heard of anything like this?

AMY/AI

There are no recorded incidents like this in my archives, Ledge.

KOKO

I wonder if this is what happens to some of the ships that disappear when they jump?

LEDGE

(concerned)

Does that mean we're stuck?

JONES

The jump drive is designed to punch holes in normal space from the other side.

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

I don't know if it will work in reverse. Since there are no records of this ever happening.

ALVIN

(raises hand)

No known records.

Everyone looks at Alvin.

JONES

Do you have something to share with the rest of the class that you've not told us yet?

ALVIN

Just rumors.

LEDGE

What kind of rumors?

ALVIN

Rumors that the Navy was working on finding ways to park anti-ship mines in hyperspace so that when a ship passes by, the ship's own hyperspace interdiction field would break the bottle and toss the mine out right next to the target.

LEDGE

Really?

ALVIN

It's just a rumor.

LEDGE

How does that help us?

JONES

It means that they must have planned to have a way to retrieve them without setting them off. Putting a jump drive on a mine would be ridiculously expensive.

KOKO

Did that ever stop the Navy from wasting money on anything? No offense, boss.

LEDGE

None taken. How are we going to get out of this bottle?

JONES

If I knew that we'd already be out.

The others grumble and sigh.

JONES (CONT'D)

Don't I get anything for figuring out what happened?

KOKO

Where's my boomerang?

EXT. WHITE SPACE - TRANSITIONAL

The CIS Daisy continues to hover in the white void.

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

Ledge and Koko are sitting quietly in their crew stations. The cockpit hatch is closed.

KOKO

I'm bored again.

INT. CIS DAISY (CREW SECTION) - SAME

Alvin is working on patching the navigation program. Jones is laying down on the opposite bunk. Jones is whistling softly.

ALVIN

If you won't help, can you stop making noise?

JONES

(stops whistling)

I didn't say I wouldn't help.

ALVIN

Come on! This is a matter of life and death. OUR lives and deaths.

JONES

I'm sorry. I'm just the beta-tester. If you want me to help with the coding, you'll have to sign a contract.

Alvin stops what he is doing and looks over at Jones.

ALVIN
Are you insane?

JONES
The company should have considered this eventuality when they fired me. I work for Captain Ledge now. I would first have to get permission from him to moonlight. Then we'd have to negotiate the rate.

ALVIN
Ah, but they didn't really fire you, did they?

JONES
What do you mean?

ALVIN
Don't be coy with me. I know about it.

JONES
There's nothing to know about.

ALVIN
I know you're still on the ZUMPCO payroll. Does Captain Ledge know you're double-dipping?

JONES
Alright! Listen up. I'm here as part of my job. If you rat me out, I'll make sure you get fired. Or worse.

ALVIN
You help me patch this code and I'll keep your secret. After all, if we don't get out of this mess, it won't really matter, will it?

INT. CIS DAISY (COCKPIT) - SAME

Ledge and Koko have just finished talking. Koko looks sad.

LEDGE
That's the story.
(pause)
I still see her just like she was on our last day together. It's strange.
(MORE)

LEDGE (CONT'D)

She looks real enough to reach out and touch sometimes. I don't know if I'm seeing things or what.

KOKO

I don't know why I'm not bawling right now, boss. I think that's one of the saddest stories I've ever heard.

The cockpit hatch slides open. Jones and Alvin walk in.

JONES

The code is patched.

Jones climbs into his navigation station. Alvin hands Jones his tablet computer. Jones reaches behind his head and grabs the dewey cord on the back of his headrest. He extends the cord and plugs it into the tablet computer.

JONES (CONT'D)

We're going to upload the patch to the navigation computer now. Then we'll link it to the sensors and find out if our code can detect our entry point. If we can detect it, I've got an idea on how to break the bottle.

LEDGE

What's your idea?

JONES

You know what happens when you shake a bottle of lager really hard and then open it?

LEDGE

A big mess? What are you proposing?

JONES

We're going to shake up the hyperspace bottle by overloading it with energy. We're going to turn Daisy's radar on full power and let it run. The energy can't escape the bubble, so it will continue to build up.

KOKO

Whoa, whoa, WHOA!

LEDGE

What's wrong, Koko?

KOKO

All that radiation is going to bounce back on Daisy?

LEDGE

Daisy will reflect almost all of it. She doesn't have a stealth hull. The opposite in fact. She's designed to reflect radar to make her easier to spot.

KOKO

How much will be reflected?

JONES

Should be about ninety-nine percent. I know what you're thinking. Don't worry. If this doesn't work before it gets intense enough to damage her electronics, it's not going to work at all.

(pause)

We will have to close the windshield though.

LEDGE

Amy, can you close the windshield cover please?

AMY/AI

Affirmative, Ledge.

A hard cover raises over the outside of the windshield, blocking off the external view.

JONES

Amy, I'm setting a threshold at which I want you to turn off the radar.

AMY/AI

I will do my best. I must caution you that if my sensors become damaged, I may not be able to tell when the threshold has been reached.

LEDGE

Are you absolutely sure this will work?

JONES

No.

LEDGE
Are you reasonably sure this will
work?

JONES
No.

LEDGE
Just HOW sure are you?

JONES
I figure about thirty-three
percent.

LEDGE
Is that all?

JONES
Anyone have any better ideas?

KOKO
Why not just use the jump drive?

JONES
Because I have to poke a hole in
normal space somewhere, and I have
no way of ensuring where we might
wind up. When I think about the
mathematics of opening a wormhole
from inside hyperspace, it boggles
even my mind.

KOKO puts her finger under her nose and pushes her nose
upwards as she makes a face at Jones, suggesting that he is
being snooty.

JONES (CONT'D)
But if I can find our original
entry point, I think we will be
ejected where we started.

LEDGE
Ejected?

JONES
Yeah. Just like if we opened the
bottle of beer after shaking it.

LEDGE
I'm not sure I like the sound of
that.

KOKO
Should we strap in or something?

LEDGE

Sounds like a good idea. Everyone get ready for turbulence. And trash all the beer bottles and secure anything that's lying around loose.

JONES

I think I found it! There is a point where the energy isn't being reflected evenly. That's got to be it.

LEDGE

How long do you think this will take?

JONES

Rough guess, about ten minutes. Plus or minus ten minutes.

(pause)

Just say when to start shaking the bottle.

EXT. WHITE SPACE - LATER

CIS Daisy is still hovering in the white void.

SFX white noise starts emanating from the CIS Daisy (as an indicator to the viewers that the ship's radar has been activated).

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

All of the crew members are strapped into their seats. Jones is still holding onto Alvin's tablet computer, but he has unplugged the dewey wire and retracted it into the tablet.

JONES

We'd best close the hatches too in case anything happens to the hull.

LEDGE

Right. Amy, close and lock all the hatches.

AMY/AI

Affirmative, Ledge.

The cockpit hatch slides closed.

JONES

Ledge, I don't think you should trust Alvin.

LEDGE

I thought you knew him?

JONES

So did I. We both worked on the earlier version of SureTrack. But there was something that makes me doubt his veracity.

KOKO

Is it that hyperspace mine rumor?

JONES

Partly. When I was helping him patch the code, what struck me as odd was that there was any code to fail when we landed in the bottle.

LEDGE

Explain.

JONES

They had written some code to handle errors should something like this happen. Even if that code wasn't working correctly, why write it in the first place if you never knew that something like this could happen.

(pause)

Would you write thousands of lines of computer code based on a rumor?

KOKO

You think this might not have been an accident? That it was part of the test and we were unwitting guinea pigs?

JONES

Koko gets a cookie. After all, if you were going to test something you knew might be dangerous, wouldn't you minimize your risk?

LEDGE

And our courier ship is the smallest ship in service that can make a hyperspace jump.

JONES

The cookie jar is getting empty fast.

LEDGE

Suggestions?

JONES

Just don't trust him. That's all I can say. Who knows what he'd say if we confronted him about it. I wouldn't be surprised if he tried to say I was involved.

The ship suddenly lurches violently, tossing the crew about. Alvin's tablet computer goes flying. It lands on the deck and smashes. The turbulence only lasts for a few seconds.

JONES (CONT'D)

Oops. I'm such a butterfingers.

KOKO

You should have secured that. It could have hit us.

JONES

Yeah. But now we control the only copy of the patched code. Like I always say. Don't screw around with nerds.

LEDGE

Amy, please open the windshield cover.

The windshield cover retracts. A normal background of stars is visible beyond it.

JONES

Yes! Who's your daddy?

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. CIS DAISY - DAY

Ledge and Jones enter the ship through the airlock. They converse as they walk toward the cockpit.

LEDGE

So how much extra cash were we able to extort from the corporation?

JONES

Another twenty thousand. Plus we still get a copy of the program when it's released, and it will be on a hard copy, so I'll be monitoring the installation and reviewing it for, ahem, anomalies.

LEDGE

How is Alvin?

JONES

His nose regenerated flawlessly.

Jones reaches into his pocket and takes out the listening device Alvin had planted. He hands it to Ledge.

JONES (CONT'D)

Did you know that you snore?

LEDGE

How did you ever find this thing?

JONES

When I was reviewing the sensor data I took while we were inside the bottle, I noticed that it showed up on my scanners. I was looking for radiation, and it was giving off a handshake signal on a strange frequency. It was too small for me to notice while I was working on getting us home.

(pause)

I'm guessing that he was planning on having someone pick it up again when we had the final version of the navigation software installed.

Jones and Ledge enter the cockpit. Koko is seated in the engineer's station.

LEDGE

Why did a computer programmer from ZUMPCO want to plant a recording device inside our ship? That doesn't make any sense to me.

KOKO

Didn't you used to work for ZUMPCO, Jonesie?

JONES

Yeah. Why?

KOKO

Just curious. I don't know about you two, but I'm going to take a nap. Knock if anything important happens.

FOLLOW Koko as she stands and walks into the crew section. She ducks into her bunk bay and pulls the privacy door down behind her.

INT. CIS DAISY (KOKO'S BUNK BAY) - SAME

Koko sits on her bunk. She uses her ID Card to unlock one of the storage drawers underneath the bunk. She opens the drawer and pulls out a hand computer and the data card she retrieved from CSA HQ in *Blue Gene Baby*. She inserts the data card into the hand computer.

Koko fluffs up the pillows on her bunk. She then pulls her feet up in bed and sits with her back up against the bulkhead. She activates the hand computer. She then sets it down at her side, next to her right arm (the arm we showed in *Blue Gene Baby* as having a wireless interface imbedded within). She closes her eyes.

KOKO (V.O.)

Search records using keywords Colin Jones and ZUMPCO.

FADE OUT:

THE END