

The Great Outback

"Blowback" - Show #120

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BLOWBACK

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTER SPACE - DAY

The *CIS Daisy* is in an approach pattern to dock at the Mir Station in Earth orbit.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

The cockpit hatch is open. LEDGE, JONES, and KOKO are at their stations, and AMY/AI's avatar is on the ship's video monitor. Everyone is quiet and serious-minded. Through the windshield, we can see the Mir Station as the *CIS Daisy* approaches to dock.

TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

This is Mir Station Traffic Control. We read your transponder and are assuming flight control. Your estimated time until docking is seventeen minutes.

LEDGE

Roger, Mir Control. *CIS Daisy* over and out. Break comm link please, Amy.

AMY/AI

Affirmative, Ledge. Done.

KOKO

I'm sorry you two can't help me. I've got to do this myself. While I'm there I'll need to file a report, and probably talk to some higher-ups. I hear that they're still mad at me for being on the news. So I don't know what's going to happen. If I can't get back to you, I'll do what I can to send along what we can get out of that data card.

LEDGE

I understand. Ping us if you think of anything we can do.

JONES

Do you think Ariel will be okay by herself?

LEDGE

Definitely more so than if she was with us. What with people spying on us and trying to torture information out of me and everything.

KOKO

So it's okay for Jonesie to be in danger but not for his sister?

LEDGE

Nobody ever said that.

JONES

For that matter, who said I was going to be in danger?

KOKO

What do you mean by that?

LEDGE

I think he means that he's not obligated to stay on with his contract with all this weirdness going on.

JONES

I haven't decided what I'm doing yet. Except planning on making sure my sister is safe.

KOKO

You'd leave the boss in the lurch?

JONES

I didn't say that. I'm still here, aren't I?

LEDGE

You can both leave any time you like. I won't think any less--

KOKO

Shut up, boss. I don't have a whole lot of friends, and I'm not going to let anything happen to the ones I do have. Not if there's anything I can do about it.

Koko shoots an annoyed glance at Jones, who is acting fidgety as he contemplates whether or not he'll leave the crew when they reach Earth.

CUT TO:

INT. CBI HQ (MARSHAL RYAN'S OFFICE) - DAY

Marshal Ryan sits behind a desk that is cluttered with paperwork. In addition to other props, there is a videophone on one corner of the desk.

MARSHAL RYAN

Paperless office my ass--

Suddenly, his videophone beeps. The Marshal reaches over and presses the answer button. The image of his DEPUTY appears on the screen.

MARSHAL RYAN (CONT'D)

Ryan.

DEPUTY

Marshal, Delaney's ship just docked at the Mir Station.

MARSHAL RYAN

Good. Trail all of his crew, regardless of where they go, and please make sure nothing happens to them.

(pause)

Or our detectives.

DEPUTY

Yes, sir.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. CSA HQ - DAY

CLOSE SHOT on CBI CAMERA BOT

The CBI Camera Bot is a sphere with a single camera lens built into it. Identical to those in Episodes 114 and 117, except that it is painted navy-blue and has the initials CBI written on the side in yellow lettering. The robot is hovering in mid-air amongst the trees. We switch to...

POV CBI CAMERA BOT

The CBI Camera Bot is watching Koko through a remote camera that is zoomed in from a great distance. Koko is dressed casually.

CBI AGENT 1 (O.S.)

Well, I'll be damned. Koko is a spook.

CBI AGENT 2 (O.S.)

The Marshal was right. We did have another agency poking their nose into our business.

CBI AGENT 1 (O.S.)

I'll send him the video. Keep the entrance under surveillance.

INT. CSA HQ (SECURITY CHECK) - SAME

Koko is again passing through the CSA HQ security check. A number of extras are entering and leaving the building.

Koko has already passed through the scanners and is showing her ID to SCREENER TWO. It's clear from his expression and mannerisms that Screener Two likes Koko.

SCREENER TWO

Here on your own? No recall?

KOKO

Correct. It is in relation to my current assignment.

(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

I need access to some of our resources that I can't reach remotely. And that's all I can tell you.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

We are driving along a secondary road in a futuristic ground car. The exterior scenes are sparsely populated countryside. Ledge is driving and Jones is sitting in the passenger seat. Jones is thumbing through a COPY OF TENNYSON'S POEMS.

The hardcover book has no dust jacket. The title as printed is Alfred Lord Tennyson: Collected Works.

JONES

So, where are we going?

LEDGE

To visit an old friend.

JONES

Anybody I know.

LEDGE

Yes and no.

BEAT

JONES

What did Miranda say when you told her what was going on?

LEDGE

She wasn't really happy about it. She looked at me really oddly when I told her about the--um...

JONES

Call girl?

LEDGE

Yeah, that. I don't think she believed me when I told her it was all Koko's idea.

JONES

Technically, I had a role in it as a financial advisor. But, yeah, it was Koko's plan.

LEDGE
I'm obviously paying you too much.

JONES
Is she going to change our
arrangement?

LEDGE
We have an open-ended contract, but
it wouldn't be good to remain where
we're not wanted.

JONES
Would you miss Miranda?

LEDGE
Why would I?

JONES
It just seems like when you and she
are in the same room, there's some
kind of sexual tension between you.

LEDGE
You're kidding, right?

JONES
Maybe it's just my imagination.

LEDGE
That woman is so far out of my
league that we're not even in the
same sport.

JONES
I think she likes you.

LEDGE
She's just very professional in how
she deals with people. She's
friendly with everyone.

JONES
If you say so.

Ledge clearly begins to contemplate what Jones just said to
him. We pause for a beat as Jones looks at a page as if
confused.

JONES (CONT'D)
What's an idyll?

LEDGE

An idyll? I think it's some kind of
Indian rice cake.

CUT TO:

INT. CSA HQ (COMPUTER LAB) - DAY

The computer lab is very small. There are two chairs. Koko and RAVI (32) are seated. Before them is a smooth control panel that is backlit with colorful controls and indicators. A number of slim video monitors hang from the ceiling. The monitors look like clear panes of glass. When they have content to display, they become opaque.

KOKO

Thanks for doing this, Ravi.

RAVI

Anything for you, hun.

KOKO

What did you find?

RAVI

This is really interesting. I'll
just let the video speak for
itself.

ON VIDEO MONITOR

One of the video monitors displays an image of DAISY sitting in front of her video camera, which is a futuristic, high-res version of a web-cam. She is inside the Habitat Module from Episode 103 where our crew found her murdered.

DAISY

Dear Ernest. I saw the datacard you
sent along with the artifacts. It
explains where they came from,
although I suspect you knew that
all along and didn't tell me. I am
re-encrypting and protecting it
with our usual password. It's the
only copy.

The monitor displays a black screen with the text: End of
File superimposed.

BACK TO SCENE

KOKO

Did you ever meet Daisy?

RAVI

I've seen her before. I think she might have been a high-level covert agent. But that's just a guess. She had beta-level clearance, so she was senior, just below section chief.

KOKO

What's the next video?

RAVI

Our second featurette is the Oscar-winner. Watch this.

ON VIDEO MONITOR

The video monitor switches to...

POV HANDHELD CAMERA

...which is following around Doctor PINSKI. Pinski is a middle-aged man. He is wearing a work jumpsuit that is emblazoned with a United Salvage logo and has his name stitched upon the front.

We are standing inside of a cavern which has been excavated around a crashed ALIEN SPACESHIP.

A portion of the hull of the spaceship is exposed to the open air of the cave, but most of it is buried in the dirt and rock. The spaceship is about the same size as the *CIS Daisy*, but it is ovoid in shape. It's hull is a spotless white.

PINSKI

Hello, Ernest. This is your cousin, Tom. Thanks for agreeing to look at the artifacts. The whole team is anxious to do business with you.

(pause)

This will be a quick summary of what we have found out about the crashed spaceship.

(MORE)

PINSKI (CONT'D)

We're still working on figuring everything out, but we didn't want to wait for management to come along and steal it from us before we could work out a deal.

Pinski walks over to the side of the hull. The cameraman follows him.

PINSKI (CONT'D)

We don't know what the hull is made of. It neither reflects nor absorbs the emissions from scanners. They just pass through it as if it wasn't really there.

(pause)

Macintosh thinks that it's neither matter nor energy. Maybe a third state of matter-energy relationship.

(chuckles)

The wildest theory we have so far is that it's a manipulation of space itself, but everyone was pretty drunk when we came up with that one.

(pause)

Now, watch this.

Pinski reaches over to the side of the hull and places his hand against it. Next to his hand, a two-meter-round section of the hull fades away, leaving an opening into the interior.

PINSKI (CONT'D)

What you just saw is correct. The door just faded out of existence. It will reappear on its own in about thirty seconds.

(pause)

This should help confirm for you that what we are selling you isn't just some old Zimrakkan ship, but is rather something totally alien and so advanced that for all we know, it could just be magic.

Pinski enters the spaceship and the cameraman follows. The first room they encounter has bulkheads on both sides.

PINSKI (CONT'D)

There does not seem to be any sense of fore or aft or port and starboard on this ship.

(MORE)

PINSKI (CONT'D)

There are only two sections, which seem to be a control center and a cargo area. We can find no indication of where it is drawing power or what kind of power it is drawing.

Pinski places his hand on the bulkhead to his left and another round door opens in the wall. He steps through and the cameraman follows him into the...

INT. UFO (CONTROL ROOM) - SAME

The control room appears to be completely empty. The walls are bare.

PINSKI

It was in this room that we found the android. It was not active, and we couldn't find a way to turn it on. We're planning on dissecting it and seeing what we can come up with. It had a number of tools attached to it's belt, and we can't figure out what any of them do. I'll make a separate recording about that.

KOKO

Pause.

The video stops playing.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Is this what I think it is?

RAVI

Yep. This is a gen-u-ine U-F-O. Same shape and size as has been logged in the CSA files for years. This gang from United Salvage found one and was able to open it up. Then they tried to sell it behind the backs of their bosses.

KOKO

Fifty-thousand smoos a year as employees or a few million by making an end run. I can understand that, I guess.

(pause)

Can you ID that scientist?

RAVI
His name is Doctor Pinski. PhD in geology. He was the leader of that team.

KOKO
Was?

RAVI
He disappeared after making this video.

KOKO
How?

RAVI
His survey ship was hijacked by pirates.

KOKO
How do you know they were hit by pirates?

RAVI
There was a record of it in the Navy logs. A navy cutter intervened, but the survey crew and cargo had already been taken.

KOKO
Out of curiosity, did this happen at New Brazil?

RAVI
I'm not sure about the excavation. They don't specifically refer to it. I think they wanted to keep the location secret until they'd concluded the sale. But the piracy did happen there, so I'd say the odds are really good.

KOKO
Do you remember the name of the cutter by any chance?

RAVI
It was a standard patrol frigate. Not sure of the name. Gap, Crap, or something like that.

KOKO
It wasn't Giap was it?

RAVI

It might have been. Can't remember.
I can look it up again if I need
to. Why do you ask?

KOKO

I'm pretty sure I know someone who
was on board the cutter when it
happened. Can you mail me that
information when you have a chance
to look it up?

RAVI

Sure.

KOKO

Thanks.

Koko refocuses her attention on the video monitor.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Play.

The video continues.

PINSKI

Now, you may be wondering why we
think this is a control room,
considering that it looks
completely barren. Schultz, hand me
that IR Lamp.

From out of frame, a hand reaches in to hand Pinski an
INFRARED LIGHT EMITTER which looks like a fancy flashlight.

PINSKI (CONT'D)

Watch this.

Pinski turns on his infrared light and starts playing it
across the Control Room wall. As the beam makes contact, we
see a multitude of controls and alien characters. Pinski
switches off his infrared light.

PINSKI (CONT'D)

And that's why we think this is a
control room. Now we're going to
take a look at the cargo--

Pinski is abruptly cut off as the video monitor turns black.
The text: Record Classified displays on-screen. The screen
then suddenly deactivates. Both Koko and Ravi look surprised.

KOKO

What happened?

RAVI
Computer, what just happened with
the video we were watching.

A disembodied computer AI voice asks...

COMPUTER AI
What video was that, Ravi?

RAVI
The one I was just watching.

COMPUTER AI
I have no record of you watching a
video just now, Ravi.

Koko bursts out laughing.

RAVI
We'll I'll be damned.

KOKO
This is unreal. It's like we're
inside an alien conspiracy theory.
Did they happen to have a video of
the autopsy they performed on that
android they mentioned?

RAVI
Yes, they did.

KOKO
Search the files and see if you can
still find it. Or any of the
records.

RAVI
Computer. Please display a list of
all video records with the filename
United Salvage Alien in the title
please.

COMPUTER AI
No match found.

RAVI
Crap.

KOKO
You saw the videos before you
showed them to me, right?

RAVI
Yes.

KOKO
Tell me about them.

RAVI
I'm kind of afraid to. You've heard
all the rumors. The MAIDs might
come after us. To clean us up.

KOKO
The who?

RAVI
The Military Alien Intelligence
Division.

KOKO
Oh, come on, they don't exist.
That's just a conspiracy theory--
(suddenly very worried)
Black CSA-style covert ops ships.
Self-deleting data files.
Disappearing evidence. Mysterious
deaths. Cybernetic assassins. And I
saw a recording where Ernest Silvio
said something about maids
tampering with his computer system.
I wonder if that's what he meant.

RAVI
You were saying?

KOKO
We'll you've seen the files now. If
they are going to disappear you,
they'll do it whether you tell me
or not.

RAVI
I guess you're right.
(pause)
The cargo room in the spaceship was
basically some kind of menagerie.
There were dozens of alien
creatures all locked in some kind
of stasis cells. Some of the cells
were empty. Pinski said they
thought the ship might have been
collecting specimens.

KOKO
Were any of them familiar?

RAVI

Oh, yes. One was clearly human. He was wearing some kind of old, bronze-age armor that looked like it was out of Homer. And he had a very surprised expression on his face.

KOKO

So that ship is probably over three-thousand years old.

Ravi shrugs.

KOKO (CONT'D)

What about the other videos?

RAVI

One was where they disassembled the android. It looked humanoid, but not human. They said that the parts were mostly organic.

Koko reaches into her pocket and pulls out a hundred-smoo bill. She offers it to Ravi.

RAVI (CONT'D)

What's this?

KOKO

This is in case I don't live to follow up on the promise to buy you dinner for doing this.

RAVI

I'll spend it quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Ledge and Jones are standing in a large military cemetery. They are looking down at a grave marker. Ledge is carrying the copy of Tennyson's poems we showed in a previous scene. There is a conspicuous bookmark in the center of the volume.

CLOSE ON GRAVE MARKER

The simple, bronze grave marker reads:

Ens. Amelia K. Johnson (2781-2810) Killed in Action

A large bouquet of brightly colored flowers has been placed on the ground at its base.

BACK TO SCENE

JONES

I can wait in the car if you prefer.

LEDGE

Stay here for just a minute. I don't think I can handle this alone. Sorry to sound wimpy. I need to talk about it with someone.

(beat)

Have you ever been in love?

Jones did not expect that question and his expression shows that he was caught off-guard with no clear answer.

JONES

I--I don't really know. I thought I was in love several times. But it never worked out. When I look back, I don't think that things would have worked out anyway and that I was just misleading myself. Why do you ask?

Ledge continues, it is as if he is just talking to himself. He pauses to let Jones answer, but he doesn't really even hear him.

LEDGE

As much as I believe that I was in love with Amy, sometimes I wonder if I was seeing her through a filter.

JONES

How do you mean?

LEDGE

Sometimes, we would have these awkward silences where we would run out of things to talk about. If things had happened differently, and we had settled down on my mom's farm, I wonder how many more of those moments we would have had.

JONES

I don't see how any couple could
keep a conversation going
indefinitely.

LEDGE

When I was in VR with our Amy, the
computer, we talked a lot about the
real Amy. In retrospect, I don't
know if she and I had as much in
common as I used to think we did.

JONES

I think that no two people can be
everything to one another all the
time. People are just too
complicated.

LEDGE

I can still see her smiling and
laughing though. I so loved just
being around her. Even if I was
depressed, or in a foul mood, all
she had to do was enter the room
and I'd forget all about it.

JONES

I think I know what you mean.

LEDGE

I think you can go back to the car
now, Jonesie. Even if you don't
stay with me and Daisy, you did a
great job. You and your sister
both.

(beat)

I'll be along when I can.

Jones nods and walks away. Ledge kneels down beside Amy's
grave. He opens the copy of Tennyson to the bookmark. He
clears his throat and begins to read.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

The Lady of Shalott. Part One.

(pause)

On either side of the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the
sky;
And through the field the road runs
by
To many-towered Camelot;

LONG SHOT as Jones reaches the car. He turns and looks at Ledge, who is in the distance. Ledge is on his knees. Although he is too far away for us to hear him, he is clearly crying as he tries to read the poem to his deceased fiancée.

CUT TO:

INT. CSA HQ (DIRECTOR SMITH'S OFFICE) - DAY

We are standing within Director Smith's office. Koko is standing in front of Smith's desk, and SMITH is standing behind it. Koko looks very irritated.

SMITH

There wasn't much in your report.

KOKO

I can't report anything when I haven't found anything.

SMITH

You've been on this assignment for the better part of almost a year now and you don't seem to have turned up anything except the heat on the Agency because of that stunt you pulled. Voluntarily appearing in public media against regulations.

KOKO

It was part of maintaining my cover.

SMITH

Good job with that. The tabloid bloggers made hay over not being able to find out anything about you, and some even speculated that you might be some kind of covert operative.

KOKO

It can only be rumors. I didn't give anyone any proof of that.

SMITH

Under the circumstances, I'm going to have to take you off this assignment.

KOKO

Mister Smith, I really don't think--

SMITH

If I wanted to know what you thought, I'd ask. Right now, I've got a compromised agent who seems to be developing an attachment to those she is supposed to be infiltrating. Low-level or not, your actions have risked exposing our involvement, which in turn risks the entire case.

KOKO

What IS the damned case? I'm told to infiltrate an independent courier ship's crew without any details. The next thing I know, a black ops ship is flying over my head and a cyborg is torturing my friend. You tell ME what's so damned important.

SMITH

That will be all, Agent Koko. I am removing you from this case forthwith. One more word from you and I will be removing you from your job. Am I clear?

Koko, furious, turns and walk towards the door. She exits and slams it behind her. We hold for a beat as Smith fumes. Then the side door to his office opens. Marshal Ryan enters the room, closing the door behind him.

MARSHAL RYAN

Thank you for letting me listen in on that.

SMITH

It's the least I could do for one of our distinguished colleagues from the CBI.

MARSHAL RYAN

It's an active murder investigation, so it's none of the CSA's business anyway. The fact that one of my agents was murdered under very suspicious circumstances has me wondering if the CSA was involved in the murder.

SMITH

I don't know who was responsible for that incident. But I have a good idea who it might have been. It wasn't my Agency.

MARSHAL RYAN

So you're denying that the CSA was involved?

SMITH

If we are, I don't know about it. I'm only the director. I'll wager that there are hundreds of covert ops that I don't know about yet. I've only been here about Nine months and might be gone in another three, depending on the political winds.

MARSHAL RYAN

What are the politics behind this one? Or would you tell me if you knew?

SMITH

You're seeing the politics. We're stepping away from it. It's all CBIs show now.

MARSHAL RYAN

Why did the CSA get involved in the first place?

SMITH

We had Ernest Silvio under investigation because we suspected that his company was cooking the books on several military contracts. But he was murdered before we could find out one way or another.

(pause)

When we got word that the CBI had reopened their investigation, some within the government wanted to know why. So they asked us to look into it.

(chuckles)

Although I suspect that the real reason for the directive was because it made a lot of other politically connected CEOs nervous.

The Marshal does not appear to share in Smith's humor. His expression remains serious.

MARSHAL RYAN

I trust that if the CSA comes across any relevant information, or has any more covert agents planted, you'll have someone tell us?

SMITH

Within the restrictions of classification and Confederation security.

Marshal Ryan turns and walks toward the exit door.

MARSHAL RYAN

If you mean, "No," just say so.

The Marshal grabs the door handle. He stops and turns back to Smith.

MARSHAL RYAN (CONT'D)

One more thing. My agents have preemptive defense orders. So if any of your agents are involved, and they wind up in a bodybag, you'll know who did it.

INT. CSA HQ (DOCTOR'S OFFICE) - LATER

Koko is poking her head inside the doctor's office. The DOCTOR is examining a newspad and comparing it to a medical scan that is being displayed on a monitor on his office wall.

KOKO

Excuse me, but is the doctor in?

DOCTOR

Well, good evening, Koko. What brings you around? You don't need any patching, I hope?

KOKO

Nah, I'm actually fine. I just wanted to say hi while I was here. And to thank you for all the times you fixed me up.

DOCTOR

You can come in--

KOKO

Actually, I'm in a hurry. I just want to check in with the family while I can.

DOCTOR

Well, don't let it be another six months before I see you again, gunshot wounds or not.

KOKO

Bye, Doc.

INT. CSA HQ (SECTION CHIEF'S OFFICE) - LATER

We are inside the office of the CSA Section Chief who is Koko's boss. The door to the outside is open. The SECTION CHIEF is seated behind a desk. He is complaining out loud as Koko enters the open door. She is in a foul mood.

SECTION CHIEF

Paperless office my ass--

(pause)

Hello, Koko. What can I do for you?
I saw that Smith pulled you off
your current assignment.

Koko hands her Section Chief a printed and signed document. He looks over the paper.

SECTION CHIEF (CONT'D)

What's this?

KOKO

I'm putting in for my vacation. All of it. Effective now.

SECTION CHIEF

It's okay since you're off of assignment now. But technically, you do need to get pre-approval.

KOKO

Screw pre-approval. This is my life, not a goddamn medical insurance policy. I'm taking my time off. If anyone named Smith's got a problem with it, tell him he can kiss my ass.

FADE OUT:

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. MIR STATION (HOTEL ROOM) - NIGHT

Jones and Koko are standing in a Mir Station hotel room. Ledge is sitting on one of the twin beds. The room looks as if it was lived in for a couple of days. The curtains are open and we can see outside the window into space as ships arrive and depart, their navigation lights blinking. Earth and the Moon are visible through the window. Koko is holding her overnight bag. Jones' overnight bag is packed and sitting on the bed.

KOKO

That's the story.

JONES

A UFO? As in a flying saucer?
Little green men beeping at one another and saying, "Take me to your leader?"

KOKO

A little gray android, but otherwise, you're pretty much on the button.

LEDGE

So, if the timeline is correct, somewhere on New Brazil, there's a crashed UFO waiting to be salvaged?

KOKO

Correct.

LEDGE

Are you sure it wasn't just an old Zimrakkan ship or something?

KOKO

As far ahead of us as the Zimrakkans are, they aren't this advanced, and based on what I heard about the cargo, the ship is probably over three thousand years old.

JONES

How do you know that?

KOKO
Educated guess. If we can find it,
you'll see how I know.

LEDGE
But it's on New Brazil?

KOKO
Correct.

JONES
Isn't that the planet you refused
to visit a while back?

LEDGE
Yes, it is.

JONES
Why don't you want to go there?

LEDGE
It's where Amy was killed.

BEAT

KOKO
Boss, imagine what the salvage
rights to that would be worth.

JONES
It would be priceless. We've known
that these things really exist
since that big incident at Tokyo
several hundred years ago. Just
that nobody knows anything about
them.

KOKO
So what do you say? Do we go for
it?

LEDGE
I'm going to need some time to
think about it. I'm still worried
about why all these weird things
have been happening to us. Do you
think that's the reason why?
Because Daisy's former owner was
involved.

KOKO
Duh! Isn't that reason enough? I'll
bet the MAIDS are all behind this.

JONES

MAIDS?

KOKO

It's a super-secret spy ring that doesn't really exist except in tabloid journals and crazy conspiracy theories. Except that I think they really do exist and they are trying to find the same shipwreck before anyone else does. And they think we know something about it.

LEDGE

(remembers)

Hang on a minute.

REEVES (V.O., MEMORY)

My former owner requested that if given the opportunity, I should give any future owner this warning. Beware of maids.

LEDGE

Reeves, that AI that hijacked us to Shangri-la way back when, said something about "maids." I'd forgotten about it since it didn't make any sense. I wonder if that was what he was talking about?

JONES

Won't that make it kind of dangerous?

KOKO

Once we find it and sell the location to someone, there's no reason for them to continue chasing us. If that's what's really going on. Funny thing about conspiracy theories. They're all theories. But I'll bet you that girl's left arm that they're real, even if they're not the same as in all the wacky stories.

Ledge stands up.

LEDGE

Okay. For now, let's just head back to Xia. We can decide what to do later.

(MORE)

LEDGE (CONT'D)

If Koko's right, we're probably being followed, bugged, and scanned by half the government right now. In fact, we've probably said too much. Koko, that was a good idea breaking into this room instead of using the one we registered for.

KOKO

I'm a pro. Low-level pro, but a pro.

LEDGE

I'm going to check out. I'll meet you two back on board Daisy. That is if you're coming. I'll wait two hours. If you're not on board by then, I'll assume you've decided to remain behind. No questions asked. No explanation needed. I know it's dangerous.

Ledge opens the door and exits the room. When the door has closed, Koko turns to Jones and says...

KOKO

Colin, it's time for you to choose. I'm staying with the boss. Are you staying with me?

Jones glances at his wristwatch.

KOKO (CONT'D)

You have to look at your watch?

JONES

It actually took me less than a second to decide. But it's taking me a lot longer to think of what to say.

KOKO

If you don't say what you really want to, you may never get another chance.

JONES

I'm afraid to say it.

KOKO

Why?

JONES

Because you were right. Some time ago, you told me what I was afraid of. And you were right.

KOKO

You're afraid of me?

JONES

Yes.

KOKO

In five seconds, I'm turning and walking out of the room. I'll never look back. Five. Four. Three. Two--

JONES

I LOVE YOU! There. I said it. I. Love. You.

(sincerely)

And I'll follow you even if the path leads into the very bowels of the abyss.

Koko turns and opens the door. She laughs as she says...

KOKO

I only wanted to know whether or not you were coming. But don't be surprised if the abyss is where we wind up. Let's go!

FADE OUT:

THE END