**OBLIVITY**

A scripted comedy series for radio

Script by Rob Stringer/Production by Joe Carr

**SEASON 2 EPISODE 6**

**UMBRA: PART ONE**

**COMMANDER MILDRED FALCONER** CATE NUNN

Battle-hardened and bewildered.

**FIRST LIEUTENANT JOY CHRISTY** HANNAH WILMSHURST

A peppy thrill-seeker and over-achiever.

**OFFICER ALOYSIUS BURNEY** MAX WINDICH

Prodigious and introverted.

**OFFICER HOWELL LOWELL** ASHLEY HUNT

An impulsive wrecking-ball.

**ORPHEUS**: GUY GRIMSLEY

A bug-riddled computer.

**MAJOR GENERAL SILAS FALCONER**: MATT BLURTON

Mildred’s dad

**DR. HESTER FALCONER:** CAROLYN TAYLOR

Mildred’s mum

**SPECIAL OPERATIVE AMOS DEXTER:** ED BLAGROVE

An easy-going special operative

**COMMANDER GERTRUDE MINK:** CLARE DENTON

Mildred’s smug nemesis

**SECOND SECRETARY AMBROSE BURNEY:** MAX WINDICH

Burney’s twin brother

**TIMMY:** TBC – PROBABLY ROB TO BE HONEST

A character in a film

**SCENE ONE (COLD OPEN): INT. RECREATION ROOM**

**MUSIC: SMUSHY FILM SCORE**

TIMMY: [FROM TV SCREEN] *And it was at that moment, everything made sense. All my doubts disappeared like whispers in the wind. Life, in it’s crazy, unpredictable way, had led me here: The right place, at the right time. And that’s how I learned to enjoy a rich and rewarding career at a decontamination bay!*

**MUSIC: SWELLS TO END**

CHRISTY: [BIT TEARY] That was *ace*.

LOWELL: It was awesome!

BURNEY: [CYNICAL] Most illuminating.

CHRISTY: Wasn’t it ace, Commander?

LOWELL: [SOTTO] *She’s asleep.*

**BEAT**

So I’ll wake her. Commando! Commando! Commando! Comman-!

FALCONER: [WAKING] Hmm? Buh… Wha…

CHRISTY: You missed it! The premiere of *‘How I Learned to Enjoy a Rich and Rewarding Career at a Decontamination Bay’*!

LOWELL: [IN ONE BREATH IF POSSIBLE] I liked the bit where Timmy’s mum didn’t listen to the governmental warnings about leaving Mars to see what Earth was like and she died in completely unsuspicious circumstances and Timmy learned never to question authority which now I think about it was basically the whole film.

CHRISTY: For a moment, I was worried he might become a Defector; but I think we were *all* surprised when he learned to enjoy a rich and rewarding career at a Decontamination Bay!

LOWELL: How’d you sleep through it?!

FALCONER: Because thanks to the quirk of interplanetary time zones, here on Pluto, it’s six a.m.

**FX: CLINKING OF BOTTLES AS FALCONER STIRS**

FALCONER: How’ve you gotten through so much elderflower pressé? Really, it’s pure sugar...

BURNEY: I did not touch it.

CHRISTY: Me neither.

LOWELL: LET’S PLAY A GAME IT’S CALLED ‘WHO CAN MAKE THEIR HEAD VIBRATE THE FASTEST?’!

CHRISTY: I love camping in the recreation room!

BURNEY: It reminds me of childhood.

CHRISTY: Because you used to go camping?

BURNEY: No; because we cannot use the lavatory without permission.

FALCONER: When I’m certain the sleeping gas has filtered out the base, we’ll get back to normal. And you don’t need ‘*permission’*..!

You need ‘authorisation’; it’s completely different.

CHRISTY: Besides, the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of Martian colonisation are on! Next up: Hydrogen tank parades and thermo-nuclear jet fly-bys! Do you all have your flags ready to wave?

BURNEY: Gosh darn it, I’ve lost my flags. Now how will anyone know about my myopic fanaticism?

CHRISTY: Don’t worry, you can have some of mine!

LOWELL: And *then* it’s Nik and the Sputz: live from the edge of the Sys’! OH WHAT THE DEUCE OH WHAT THE DEUCE OH WHAT THE DEUCE OH WHAT THE DEUCE is my favourite song.

FALCONER: See? Lots to enjoy. Orpheus, prepare the CrewPod for launch.

ORPHEUS: Preparing the CrewPod, Commander.

CHRISTY: CrewPod? Where are you goi-

FALCONER: Hang on *shh–*

CHRISTY: *What*?

FALCONER: Just waiting to find out what the ‘glitch of the week’ is…

BEAT

Huh… Perhaps he’s working properly for onc-

ORPHEUS: Preparing for you to meander!

FALCONER: There we are.

**MUSIC/SFX: SOME COMIC FIDDLE/BANJO JINGLE**

ORPHEUS: To say I had not

would be absolute rot

and provoke allegations of slander!

FALCONER: I’m going outside, Christy. Routine admin. Risk assessment.

CHRISTY: Risk assessment?

FALCONER: Yes.

BURNEY: For the intensely hostile ice-scape of Pluto?

FALCONER: So you’re thinking... slip hazards?

OK, you got me. But you have to promise not to call me crazy, OK?

**PAUSE AS NOBODY PROMISES**

Fair point. Look, I know lately I haven’t been too… compos mentis.

LOWELL Minty compost.

FALCONER: And I *know* there’s no ‘phantom astronaut’.

LOWELL: Minty… [SPORADICALLY MUMBLES ‘MINTY’ AND ‘COMPOST’ BEHIND DIALOGUE]

FALCONER: But I want to check one last thing.

BURNEY: The SS Umbra.

CHRISTY: But it’s a crash site! It’ll be buried in ice by now!

FALCONER: I just want closure. Where’s my eye patch… Aha!

CHRISTY: You’re supposed to be resting…

FALCONER: One minor ‘*wobble’* doesn’t mean I can’t look after myself.

BURNEY: You have put your eyepatch on incorrectly

FALCONER: Nice try, but I think I’d know if I’d ‘put it over the wrong eye’ or whatever.

BURNEY: No, I mean you just tied a g-string around your head.

FALCONER: Oh hell…

CHRISTY: Why don’t you stay - and Burney and I will go?

BURNEY: Oh will I indeed?

FALCONER: But the anniversary – the flags -

BURNEY: To which the answer is ‘indeed I will’!

FALCONER: If you *insist*…

CHRISTY: I do. And Lowell…

LOWELL: Minty compost?

CHRISTY: …can stay here. [LEAVING] Be back before you know it!

**FX: DOOR SWISHES OPEN**

FALCONER: Thanks for keeping me company.

LOWELL: Mmm hmmm yep. Gotta finish story. Bionic Belch. Needs an ending needs an ending needs-

FALCONER: Probably nothing there anyway, but some old astronaut’s skeleton-

LOWELL: Changed my mind bye!

**FX: DOOR SWISHES CLOSED BEHIND HIM**

FALCONER: But- *Lowell?!*

**PAUSE**

Right.

I give them a couple of hours.

Time enough to visit our-

**JUMP CUT TO**

**INT. ALMOST SILENT ROOM. SLIGHT ECHO.**

**CONTEXT: THE JUMP CUT MAY COME ACROSS TO A LISTENER AS STYLISTIC, BUT MORE ACCURATELY IT REPRESENTS FALCONER SLIPPING INTO A HALLUCINATION. (THE BASE DOES NOT HAVE AN OFFICIAL ‘INTERROGATION ROOM’).**

**FX: PHANTOM BREATHING**

-Interrogation room.

How are we today, my Kevlar-coated space cadet?

Ready to show me who’s under that visor?

**MUSIC: OPENING THEME**

**SCENE TWO: INT. CREWPOD**

**FX: CREWPOD WHIRS ALONG**

CHRISTY: Maybe *I* could work at a Decontamination Bay! Or the Horticultural Resource Facility. I could advise on whelk husbandry!

BURNEY: Your zeal is perplexing. It was only yesterday you suffered mental paralysis, having learnt you would never be a pilot.

CHRISTY: I know.

BURNEY: Your hopes crushed.

CHRISTY: I know.

BURNEY: Your dreams mashed into pulp.

CHRISTY: I *know*.

BURNEY: Your sole reason for being, shattered into piercing shards of despair.

CHRISTY: It’s like I’m *unstuck*. Like letting go of that one fixation has opened up infinite possibilities…

I could do *anything*!

**PAUSE**

BURNEY: Except be a pilot.

CHRISTY: I wouldn’t expect you to understand.

LOWELL: *Uuughhh* keep it down guys. Got a *killer* hangover.

CHRISTY: I’ve never gone this far from the base before. The *landscape* - those massive icy stalagmites back there. It’s so dark and *spooky.*

BURNEY: The SS Umbra is appropriately within Pluto’s umbra. In the Vucub-Came Macula. Named for a god of death. Littered with fault systems. A subterranean ocean. Deeply, *deeply* unstable terrain.

[SINCERE] In short - utterly enchanting. Why have we not visited before?

CHRISTY: According to the nav, the crash site should be-

LOWELL: Whoa…

BURNEY: A V-13 shuttle, as reported.

CHRISTY: *Wowwww!*

Once, when I was little, my parents got me this massive present. I unwrapped it, saw the big cardboard box, got inside and pretended it was a V-13.

LOWELL: What was in the box?

CHRISTY: Me.

LOWELL: No, what was the present?

CHRISTY: A box!

Dad had drawn V-13 controls on it with a glitter pen! It was ace! Though it always bothered me that he didn’t include the modular auxiliary data system instrumentation.

BURNEY: The ship is curiously well preserved.

LOWELL: Not covered in ice, either.

CHRISTY: Which suggests an interior thermal control system.

BURNEY: Which in *itself* suggests…

**FX: TRANSCEIVER ON**

CHRISTY: [INTO TRANSCEIVER] This is the crew of Research Base Persephone. Is anybody receiving? Repeat. Is anybody receiving?

**PAUSE**

LOWELL: Now ask if any *skellingtons* are receiving.

**BEAT**

I only came for the skellingtons.

CHRISTY: D’you think it’s stable enough to dock?

BURNEY: Absolutely not.

LOWELL: No way.

CHRISTY: Agreed. We’ll have to abort without confirmation for the Commander.

BURNEY: Without investigating.

LOWELL: Without skellingtons.

**EXTENDED PAUSE**

BURNEY: Shall I…

CHRISTY: Yeppo.

LOWELL: Awesome.

**SCENE THREE: INT. SS UMBRA**

**FX: HATCH HISSES OPEN**

CHRISTY: [D. AN IN-SUIT TRANSCEIVER] Thank flip for helmet flashlights.

BURNEY: [D. AN IN-SUIT TRANSCEIVER] Are you not deploying your ocular lasers, Lowell?

LOWELL: [NO TRANSCEIVER] The dark is my friend. Nice, quiet, non-brain-stabbing dark.

**FX: GENTLE CREEEAK OF SHIP**

CHRISTY: Maybe one of us should hang back and be ready to undock, just in case.

BURNEY: I nominate Lowell, given that he is clearly – and I eagerly await his amusing misinterpretation of the word - *crapulous*.

LOWELL: Look, *Bumface*. My sugar-induced physical indisposition is no concern of yours and categorically does not preclude me from this assignment.

**BEAT**

BURNEY: What?

LOWELL: I said your *face* is crapulous.

I think…

Man this hangover.

BURNEY: Hmm…

CHRISTY: You’d murder each other without me. We’ll all go.

**FX: SHIP CREEEEAKS SLIGHTLY**

BURNEY: We should enable microgravity on our grav packs, to limit disturbance.

**FX: THREE NOISES TO INDICATE THE THREE GRAV PACKS BEING ALTERED?**

BURNEY: Your floating is much improved Christy.

CHRISTY: Was that a compliment?

BURNEY: An observation; but one intended to trigger dopamine production. I am practicing… [WITH SLIGHT EMBARRASSMENT] *nice*.

CHRISTY: That’s ace, Burney! As it happens, I had spacewalk practice recently, so I think-

BURNEY: I did not request a tedious explanation.

CHRISTY: Well, it’s a step I suppose.

BURNEY: As we’ve already acknowledged, we are not *stepping* but *floating*. Really, you have *no* talent for apposite remarks.

**BEAT**

But your floating is much improved.

CHRISTY: The cockpit! It’s *stunning*.

LOWELL: Skellingtons?

CHRISTY: Empty.

Here’s the photonic fuel gauge - hardly any left. Shame…

LOWELL: Thought you weren’t bothered about flying?

CHRISTY: Yeah. I mean no. I mean-

BURNEY: Aside from the thermal systems, Life Support services are not operational.

LOWELL If it crashed, the pilot might’ve been in the stasis thingy right?

CHRISTY: And if Life Support isn’t running, then… *Ick*.

I *suppose* we should get visual confirmation…

Lowell.

LOWELL: Why me?

CHRISTY: You wanted to see a skeleton.

LOWELL: From far away, yeah. Not within snogging distance.

CHRISTY: Why would you want to snog a skeleton?

LOWELL: I don’t!

BURNEY: Just check the chamber.

LOWELL: *O-kay…*

CHRISTY: It wouldn’t have a tongue. Where would the *passion* be?

LOWELL: [NERVOUS] Right… Stasis thingy…

It’s too dark. Have to fire up my lasers.

**FX: LASERS SWITCH ON [LIKE IN ‘DARK MATTER’ SEASON ONE EPISODE FIVE]**

**BEAT**

OK, now I can- *AAAGH!*

CHRISTY: What?

LOWELL: If ya think lights shining *into* your eyes hurt with a hangover, imagine them shining *out* of your eyes.

CHRISTY: But what do you *see*.

LOWELL: I see… Nothing.

CHRISTY: Nothing?

LOWELL: No body, no skellington, *nothing*…

**SCENE FOUR: INT. INTERROGATION ROOM**

**FX: DOOR SWISHES OPEN AND CLOSED. THE ASTRONAUT BREATHES CONTINUOUSLY, VADER-LIKE.**

FALCONER: And to think I thought you were some kind of ghost. But here you are, solid as the chair you’re tied to.

Don’t know about you, but I’m *loving* the suspense. I’m almost reluctant to unmask you.

[IDEA!] Ohh! Shall we play a guessing game?

Breathe heavily for ‘yes’.

**BEAT AS ASTRONAUT CONTINUES TO BREATHE HEAVILY**

Oh *goody.*

Do I *know* you?

The lengths you’ve gone to hide your face, I think I do.

Should I be *scared* of you?

If you wanted to hurt me, you’d have done it by now. Besides. I’m Falconer the Fearless. I’m sure you did your homework.

So: Who *are* you?

I have some thoughts.

One - the sci-fi option: you’re an alien. My friend Amos said this base was built to look for intelligent life out there. Looking at you, I can safely say we’re still searching. Waddya think of that, chump?

**BEAT AS ASTRONAUT DOESN’T REACT**

Hm.

Two – the uncanny option: It’s my face under there. And this is all leading up to some moment of psychological self-discovery.

No? Yes, perhaps a little too trite.

Three. You really *are* from the SS Umbra.

It has a *scrap* of plausibility…

But what intrigues me more than who you are, is that you could have revealed yourself at any time. You’ve enough wriggle room in that rope to press your wrist-pad controls.

But you want me do it *for* you.

Why is that?

**BEAT**

Actually, I don’t care. Bored of games now.

Swung by weapon storage on my way here.

[EMPHASISE LINE – ENJOY IT] Picked up this splendid laser blaster: So snug in my palm, and reassuringly familiar.

If you want to show yourself, by all means do. Either way, I’m more than happy to remove this complication from my already over-complicated life.

And you know I’m not bluffing, because you know *me*, which means you know what I’m capable of.

Because the real question is not ‘who *are* you’?

It’s *‘who the hell do you think you are’?*

Coming to *my* demi-planet, trespassing in *my* research station, and trying to intimidate *me*!

Nothing to say?

Ah well. It was nice not knowing you-

**FX: HISSING OF VISOR SLIDING UP**

There. Knew you’d cave in eventuall-

It-

*Can’t be…*

**BEAT**

SILAS: And yet here I am, *Scout*.

**SCENE FIVE: INT. SS UMBRA**

CHRISTY: Do you think there *is* an astronaut?

BURNEY: Let’s not jump to conclusions.

CHRISTY: That wasn’t a definite ‘no’. Which means you think there might be! Which means there *is*!

BURNEY: You don’t ‘jump’ so much as launch yourself headlong with a triple somersault, do you.

LOWELL: You could just check the ship’s records.

BURNEY: A… sensible idea, Lowell. Let me just-

**FX: BLEEP BLOOP OF COMPUTER COMING ON**

LOWELL: ‘Programme by Van der Kamp Solutions’. Van Der Kamp… Where’ve I heard that?

CHRISTY: You’re kidding… The Van der Kamp family? Most powerful family in the Sys’! They’re all CEOs and government leaders and influencers!

They’re so lucky that everyone in their hugely wealthy family turned out to be so successful. Must be in their genes, I guess.

LOWELL: Yeah well I’ve not heard of ‘em. Lost my rememberies, remember? But I’ve definitely heard it *recently*.

Ahh my *brain*. I think I’ve got to the age where I can’t drink elderflower pressé anymore.

**FX: CREEEEAK**

CHRISTY: Really don’t like that sound. Found anything.

BURNEY: No indication of sabotage, by Defectors or otherwise. In fact quite the contrary.

LOWELL: What’s it say?

BURNEY: Life Support systems did not fail. They were never operational in the first place.

The Umbra was entirely auto-piloted. It was programmed to land here.

**SCENE SIX: INT. INTERROGATION ROOM**

FALCONER: Dad?

SILAS: Major General to you, *scout*.

FALCONER: They told me you’d died.

SILAS: Believe anyone in a uniform, won’t you, scout.

FALCONER: But how are you – why are -

SILAS: Heard you were making a dog’s dinner of things.

FALCONER: I’m not – I’m *not* making a-

SILAS: One task. Supervise an inconsequential workforce in an insignificant research base. Even *you* could achieve that, we thought.

But given a job that could be done by a glass of weak lemon squash with a badge on it, and you’ll still find a way to screw up.

FALCONER: I-

SILAS: And you know why?

FALCONER: No, I-

SILAS: *Ego*.

FALCONER: I -

SILAS: *‘I, I, I’*! Exactly my point. This wretched *neediness* to make it all about *you*.

FALOCNER: That’s… but-

SILAS*: Locate your backbone, soldier!*

So you had a ‘struggle’ at Mariner Valley. Spare me the blubbering. Think you’re the first comrade to question their allegiance?

The difference is that most know when to put their whining and selfishness aside and just do the job.

You’re a disgrace. And that reflects on me; do you understand, scout?

FALCONER: [TRIES TO BE ASSERTIVE] It’s *Commander*-

SILAS: *You Do Not Deserve That Title!*

PAUSE

You’ve disappointed your mother and humiliated me.

So listen. No more childish games. First you’re going to untie me from this damn chair; then you’re going to stop playing dress-up, and you’re going to come back home, where you belong. Do you hear?

FALCONER: I can’t go back-

SILAS: You’ve done enough damage. Time to give up.

FALCONER: It’s not too late! I can do it; I can-

SILAS: Time you saw yourself for the deadbeat you are. The deadbeat you’ve always been.

FALCONER: Deadb-

SILAS: Scout? Is that you?

FALCONER: What?

SILAS: What are you doing in my study?

FALCONER: In your… But that was… I wanted to look at the coral. The sea coral. I… I wanted to play with it… I-

SILAS: You are *not* to touch my things.

FALCONER: I was only-

SILAS: You’ve broken it!

FALCONER: I’m sorry, I was a child! I didn’t know! I didn’t-

**BEAT**

This isn’t real. It can’t be.

You’re not really here.

**PAUSE**

HESTER: Well that’s a matter of opinion, isn’t it Milly.

**SCENE SEVEN: INT. SS UMBRA**

LOWELL: Why would they send an empty ship?

BURNEY: [HAVING JUST DISCOVERED IT] Perhaps the answer is in this password-protected file.

CHRISTY: A password? Hmmm… [LIKE A DETECTIVE] It’s almost like they didn’t want anyone to open it…

LOWELL: You guys let me know when you’re done. I’m going to have a little lie down.

CHIRSTY: You’re suspended in mid-air.

LOWELL: A little lie up then. If you need me I’ll be right here.

BURNEY: We will not need you.

CHRISTY: OK. We can do this. How many characters?

BURNEY: Eight.

CHIRSTY: And three attempts? I hope so, cos then there’ll be a really good chance of us guessing it on the third.

BURNEY: Actually, we have *infinite* attempts.

CHRISTY: Even better! I’ll take the first shift.

**FX: KEYS TAPPING – PHYSICAL OR TOUCHSCREEN**

AAAAAAAA. No. AAAAAAAB. No. AAAAAAAC. No. AAAAAAAD -

**FX: CREEEAAAAAK**

BURNEY: Methodically exhausting the alphabet is not a realistic approach.

CHIRSTY: Duh; obviously. I’ll add numbers and special characters later. AAAAAAAE. No. AAA-

LOWELL: Do you have to do that out loud?

CHRISTY: Shh; concentrating. Where was I? Have to start again. AAAAAAAA. No.

BURNEY: This will not work.

CHRISTY: Got any better ideas?

BURNEY: Yes. We go back to the base, and return when I’ve devised a solution.

CHRISTY: But the Commander-

LOWELL: Keep it down*!*

CHRISTY: We’re talking!

BURNEY: All she wanted to know was if anybody was here.

CHRSITY: But there’s a mystery here!

BURNEY: Which is why we must take the time to-

LOWELL: *Shut uuuup!*

CHIRSTY: I said we’re talking!

LOWELL: And *I* said…:

[AS IF POSSESSED] Seven-One-Lower-Case-Y-Hashtag-Upper-Case-B-One-Asterisk-Twelve.

**PAUSE**

CHRISTY: What?

LOWELL: Seven-One-Lower-Case-Y-Hashtag-Upper-Case-B-One-Asterisk-Twelve.

**BEAT**

CHIRSTY: I mean, you *are* skipping ahead a bit.

**BEAT**

BURNEY: Let me try…

CHRISTY: [GASPS] You don’t think-

**FX: STARTS TYPING THEN STOPS**

BURNEY: Ah - one character too long.

CHRISTY: Oh. I got all excited.

LOWELL: Ah, yeah, soz. Dunno why I even said it. I’m not great with numbers.

Like how sometimes I get twelve and three confused.

**BEAT**

CHIRSTY: Perhaps-

BURNEY: On it.

**FX: TYPING OF KEYS**

**FX: CHEERFUL BLEEP**

CHRISTY: How’d you do that?

LOWELL: I dunno. My brain was all focused on how much it was hurting, and while I was distracted, the password just… rocked on up.

BURNEY: Well we have not gained access *yet*.

CHRISTY: A ‘hand’ icon.

BURNEY: The iconographic command to yield.

LOWELL: Nah. It’s just telling you to high five the screen.

BURNEY: This is an incredibly sophisticated system. There is unequivocally *no* possibility that a ‘high five’ would-

LOWELL: High five!

**FX: CHEERFUL BLEEP**

CHR/BUR: [GASPING] Biometric two-step verification!

CHRISTY: But that must mean that-

LOWELL: Guys-

BURNEY: [SCEPTICAL] Perhaps he saw the code written down somewhere.

LOWELL: Guys-

BURNEY: And the biometric authentication may be down to a fluke relating to his cybernetic make-up. Or-

LOWELL: Guys! Look.

CHRISTY: “Prove you’re not a robot. Click every square with a supernova in it.”

LOWELL: Does *part* robot count?

CHRISTY: Why don’t you find out?

LOWELL: [MAKES A NOISE AS HE TAPS EACH ONE] …and…

**FX: CHEERFUL BLEEP**

CHRISTY: [GASPS]

LOWELL: [DRAMATICALLY] “Welcome… *Benedict Van Der Kamp.”*

**BEAT**

[OBLIVIOUS] Who’s that then?

**BEAT**

*Ohhh-*

BURNEY: The evidence is compelling. And yet I have not heard of a ‘Benedict’ Van Der Kamp.

CHRISTY: Me neither. And I’ve got the complete souvenir memorabilia Van Der Kamp tea-set. Spent loads on it.

**FX: BURNEY TAPS SOME KEYS**

LOWELL: M… Maybe it was some kind of mistake…

CHRISTY: I don’t think so. The adverts assured me the sentimental value would be *priceless*.

LOWELL: But… I only wanted to see skellingtons…

CHRISTY: [VERY SYMPATHETICALLY] It’s a lot to take in. You should take some time to digest it.

BURNEY: Indeed.

**BEAT**

But not before I’ve exhaustively probed you for further latent knowledge.

CHRISTY: Burney!

BURNEY: For his benefit!

Besides, that matter can be put figuratively ‘on ice’, as the file contains startling information about this ship, which is *quite literally* on ice. Or at least frozen hydrogen.

Not my finest segue.

What I’m saying, is that I’ve discovered what the SS Umbra is for.

**FX: SHIP CREAKS VIOLENTLY – SHORT, SHARP, LOUD**

CHRISTY: Let’s put that conversation ‘on ice’ shall we?

BURNEY: You know, an apposite remark does not count if it’s derived from someone else’s-

**FX: BANG, BANG, BANG AS SHIP IS JOLTED**

LOWELL: Shut up Bumface and run! I mean float!

**SCENE EIGHT: INT. INTERROGATION ROOM**

FALCONER: Mum?

HESTER: I mean, what’s *real* when you think about it?

FALCONER: I’m… dreaming. No. Hallucinating! Or the simulation room is… leaking? Can it do that?

HESTER: If you say so.

FALCONER: Which one?

HESTER: Ah. You need me to explain.

FALCONER: Yes... please.

HESTER: Shrimp.

FALCONER: Shrimp?

HESTER: Used to have them back on Earth.

FALCONER: Dad had books…

HESTER: He did! He loved that nature stuff.

FALCONER: Did he?

HESTER: Yes! He wasn’t all brooding and heartless – not to begin with.

Where was I?

FALCONER: Shrimp.

HESTER: Shrimp!

The mantis shrimp, specifically. Actually a crustacean, to split hairs.

See, that eye of yours does what anyone’s does: turns light into neural signals. The other would too if you’d agree to a cybernetic implant, but I know… you’re proud…

Now; humans boast three types of cone colour receptors, for red, green and blue.

The mantis shrimp had up to-

FALCONER: Sixteen.

HESTER: Dead right. Bees saw ultraviolet. Bats had radars. Sharks relished the electrical fields of their trembling prey.

We all live in that space behind our senses; but oh how differently we perceive our shared universe!

Which begs the question: What’s it really like? How does it look when not viewed through eyes? How does it feel when not felt through nerves? What innumerable wonders does it hold, that life *cannot detect?*

Our own universe only exists inasmuch as we subjectively *experience* it.

FALCONER: You’re saying what I’m seeing is real?

HESTER: I’m saying it is to you, so who’s to argue any different?

Why don’t you come and untie me. Then we can have a proper natter. Hmm?

FALCONER: You’re not her. You can’t be.

Who are you?

And why is my hand so… *itchy*?

HESTER: I’m someone who knows you better than you know yourself.

There’s a darkness in you.

FALCONER: She said I have to decide what’s worth saving.

HESTER: I think we’re way beyond that now.

FALCONER: What do you mean?

HESTER: Sooner or later it’s crunch time.

FLACONER: But I never worked out-

HESTER: You never tried.

See something you don’t understand, and what do you do? Reach for the laser blaster.

FALCONER: I like to be prepared. Anything could be a threat, and until I know for sure-

HESTER: And that’s good leadership is it? Constant mistrust?

FALCONER: I’m not perfect. But I do know my team trust *me*.

HESTER: Oh please…

DEXTER: You barely trust yourself.

**SCENE NINE: INT. CREWPOD**

BURNEY: I should have known it wouldn’t take the additional mass of the CrewPod.

CHRISTY: Too late to worry – let’s just undock and go!

LOWELL: Yeah, get us out of here before-

**FX: ECHOING CREEEAAK AND CRUNCH!**

ALL: *Agh!/Whoa!*

CHRISTY: It’s probably OK. The CrewPod boosters should be powerful enough to lift us out of a shallow-

**FX: ECHOING CREEEAAK AND CRUNCH**

CHRISTY: It’s probably OK. The CrewPod boosters should be powerful enough to lift us out of a *moderately* shallow-

**FX: EXTENDED ECHOING CRUNCH…IT COULD GO ON A COMICALLY LONG TIME**

**BEAT**

LOWELL: It’s probably OK..?

BURNEY: The controls are non-responsive.

CHRISTY: Buried alive! Just when I had my whole life ahead of me!

BURNEY: It’s still ahead of you. It’s just now somewhat shorter.

CHRISTY: Not helpful!

BURNEY: I find pedantry comforting in dire situations.

CHRISTY: Well me and Lowell don’t!

BURNEY: Lowell and I.

LOWELL: Stop arguing and start idea-ing! I only wanted to see skellingtons, not be stuck with both of yours for the rest of my cyber-life.

Wish I had some elderflower pressé. Just a sip, to take the edge off.

BURNEY: Wait… You said the Umbra had leftover fuel?

CHRISTY: Fumes. You think-?

BURNEY: It’s worth a try. However-

CHRISTY: One of us needs to go back in...

BURNEY: Indeed.

CHRISTY: Ideally someone who knows their way round a V-13.

BURNEY: Indeed.

**PAUSE**

LOWELL: OK. I’ll *do* it.

CHRISTY: No, Lowell, *me*.

LOWELL: Yeah that makes more sense.

**SCENE TEN: INT. INTERROGATION ROOM**

FALCONER: Now I’m *really* confused.

DEXTER: Spot on, Mildred. But then you have been for some time now, haven’t you.

FALCONER: No! Well - maybe *wobbly* at times…

DEXTER: Wobbly?

FALCONER: Things haven’t been - since Mariner Valley -

DEXTER: Oh I’ve certainly noticed that.

FALCONER: You’ve been spying on me?

DEXTER: I’m not *him*, remember? Though – granted - for the purposes of this dialogue, it may be easier to progress as if I am.

FALCONER: Dialogue…?

DEXTER: I note that despite years of friendship – not to mention serving together - you still don’t trust me.

FALCONER: I do.

DEXTER: You just accused me of spying on you! Come, Mildred. You’ve entertained the idea:

Amos Dexter the secret Defector.

FALCONER: Well- OK. But you double-crossed me. Fine, if before you left you hadn’t implied a *triple*-crossing. Quadruple-crossing? I lost count. I have every *right* to be wary.

DEXTER: That’d be ever such a convincing argument, Mildred, if it weren’t for the fact that you’re hard-wired for paranoia.

FALCONER: Now that’s not-

DEXTER: You even have suspicions about your own team.

One of them at least.

**SCENE ELEVEN: INT. SS UMBRA**

BURNEY: [D. OVER TRANSCEIVER] Ready?

CHRISTY: [D. RESPONDING IN SPACESUIT] One minute!

Come on Joy. You *know* this. Ground command interface; landing gears; trim switches; servoamplifiers…

BURNEY: Time is not on our side!

CHRISTY: It all looks a bit different when it’s not glitter-penned onto a cardboard box!

Let alone there now being a modular auxiliary data system to contend with.

OK. Let’s do this.

BURNEY: Synchronise boosters on three, two, one-

CHRISTY: Ignition!

**FX: BOOSTERS FLARE FROM BOTH CRAFTS**

LOWELL: [D. OVER TRANSCEIVER] It’s working! We’re goin’ up!

CHRISTY: And… out! We’re doing it!

BURNEY: Suggest you cease celebrations and return to CrewPod immediately!

CHRISTY: Coming now - fast as I can float, I’m –

Flip!

**BEAT**

LOWELL: Christy?

CHRSITY: My grav pack – the strap’s snagged on the seat…

LOWELL: You have to come now! When the Umbra’s fuel’s gone it’ll-

CHIRSTY: I know! Don’t you think I know! I’m trying to-

LOWELL: Unclip the grav pack – you don’t need to float! In this gravity, you can bounce!

CHRISTY: Yep, I’m - agh! -caught round my ankle!

LOWELL: Get it off!

CHRISTY: *Do you know how hard it is to orientate yourself when gravity is nought-point-six metres squared and your stress levels are exospheric?!*

BURNEY: We’re descending... We need to undock.

CHRISTY: I’m untying it!

LOWELL: Just give her a minute!

BURNEY: *We do not have a minute.*

LOWELL: Christy!

BURNEY: We cannot wait!

LOWELL: You have to come out n-

**FX: HATCHES HISS CLOSED**

LOWELL: Burney - you closed the hatch…

**MUSIC: DRAMATIC VARIATION OF THEME**

ROB: End of part one