

WHAT WILL BE HERE
EPISODE 1
Go For Deploy

PART ONE: JULES

***MUSIC:** Mid-tempo synth music plays.*

INTRODUCTION

What Will be Here, episode one: Go For Deploy. Content warnings for this episode include swearing, the brief presence of fire, several animal noises, audio of a jet, and the recording of a gunshot. See the show notes for more details and a link to the transcript.

***MUSIC:** Begins to fade to a soft piano, then suddenly cuts out completely as the episode begins.*

***SFX:** Mic noise, like JULES is tapping it*

JULES

Hello. Hello. Hi. Hi! Jules here! I'm working on a little time capsule project to send a message to the future, and these recordings are part of it! This recorder? Our payload. And there's a whole group of us working on it!

***SFX:** Footsteps under as JULES moves around the space.*

JULES

We have a team of 5, including myself. Everyone has a different specialty! I love seeing what they do. Being a part of this project is so exciting.

***SFX:** JULES'S voice begins to echo as she enters a new space.*

JULES

Oh hey, there's one of them right now. Armani! Armani come here!

SFX: *Footsteps as JULES approaches ARMANI.*

JULES

Lovely Listener, this is Armani. Say hi Ari, I'm recording.

ARMANI

Jules! That is not how you hold a mic! There is a handle, hold it by the handle!

JULES

I am! This is the handle!

ARMANI

No! That is NOT it. Give it here!

JULES

I got it-

SFX: *Muffled shuffling noises as ARMANI takes the mic from JULES and shows them how to handle it properly.*

ARMANI

There. That's better. Hello.....and goodbye. Sorry Jules, I've got things to do.

JULES

Rude. Anyway, Armani is our engineer. We went to the same college, and it's really nice to see a familiar face... we're here for different reasons, though.. They're here because they love to tell stories, I'm here because it's a chance for a future for, like... Someone. Anyone..

Ari loves history - they say it's just all the stories of humanity, piled up. I guess we're making history now, though... right? For future people? Hopefully.

SFX: *Continued walking. JULES adjusts her grip to the one previously used. There's the sound of wind under as JULES continues.*

JULES

Armani talks about their family a lot - there's a lot of love there, and I think it's hard for them to be apart. It's weird for me, because my family isn't... close. They don't even know I'm doing this.

SFX: *The distant scrape and squeal of something metal being moved.*

JULES

(With false cheer)

But I'm sure they'll understand. My folks work for Savannah, kind of like an eco organization-

SFX: *The scraping metal sound grows in volume and pitch suddenly. Crashing as KEI falls from the ceiling.*

KEI

(Looking up from the ground)

Oh, hi there.

DANE

What the fuck Kei!

JULES

Dane, Language!

DANE

Why were you in the vents?! Are you *trying* to get killed when they collapse under your weight?!

KEI [OVERLAPPING]

I was doing repair work!

DANE

Repair work? Repair work on what!?

KEI

...the hole I made in the vents earlier.

DANE

For fuck's sake, Kei-

JULES

DANE!

DANE

You're not my mothers.

JULES

It's good to be polite. Come on, say hi like you mean it.

SFX: *DANE steps closer to the mic and leans into it.*

DANE

Hello, motherfuckers.

JULES

Why do I even try?

KEI

Wait. Wait, you're recording? Don't mention I fell out of the ceiling.

JULES

Will we even have a ceiling left when you're done?

KEI

(Mocking)

"Will we even have a ceiling" of course we'll have a ceiling!

DANE

(Laughing)

Alright Kei. Sheesh. Let's make sure you didn't break anything.

JULES

Do you need my help?

DANE

I've got em.

KEI

I'm *fine*! I'm fine to continue - whatever this is. Why are you carrying the mic around anyway?

JULES

I'm doing introductions!

DANE

Weren't we going to record our own bits? Or...no?

KEI

Armani is going to lose their mind if they see you carrying the mic like that.

JULES

It's fine! I already ran into them.

KEI

And?

JULES

They still have their mind, I promise.

SFX: *Footsteps as JULES walks away.*

JULES

Okay. Well that's one way to make an entrance. Um, so that was Dane who is our physicist and Kei, our mechanic. Don't let their straightlaced fashion sense fool you, Kei is a troublemaker. *chuckles* I can't believe ey were in the *vents* in an Oxford shirt with a perfectly pressed collar.

That kinda sums em up, actually.

And Dane. Dane is uh, Dane is nice. He's smarter than most people give him credit for but he hides it by cursing like a sailor. As you probably noticed. It's a terrible habit. On the plus side though he's actually... pretty handsome...

Half a beat. JULES clears her throat.

JULES

(Stammering a bit)

I mean handy. He's handy to have around because he's a valuable member of the team. He's our physicist, so a lot of the schematics and such depend on him and so, um, yeah.

SFX: *Rock music playing over a speaker grows louder as JULES approaches SURI'S workstation.*

JULES

Last stop, so to speak. The final member of the Team is Suri. She's our supply guy. Any and all equipment comes from her by some frankly mysterious means that I'm just never going to ask about.

SFX: *JULES knocks on the side of the open door. Music cuts off.*

SURI

What?

JULES

I'm doing a meet the team bit so everyone knows who we are.

SURI

Ironic coming from you.

JULES

I... don't know what you mean.

SURI

I guess it's not a shock that you want to record everything we say and do, just like Savannah.

JULES

Come on, Savannah isn't *that* bad!

SURI

Do you believe *everything* your parents tell you? Look. I'm really busy setting everything else up so-

JULES

My parents have nothing to do with-

SURI

(Interrupting)

Look. I'm really busy setting everything else up so-

Jules

(Interrupting)

You know what? Fine. Yeah. Okay. Uh...I'll get out of your hair.

SFX: *Footsteps as JULES starts to walk off.*

SURI

Hey Jules. Leave the mic and I'll introduce myself.

JULES

Alright. Here you go.

SFX: *JULES walks over, sets the mic down on SURI'S desk, and leaves the room.*

PART TWO: SURI

SFX: *SURI takes the recorder from JULES and begins to speak into it.*

SURI

Okay. You'll have to forgive me for the... shift in tone. I can't stand her bubblegum and rainbows! Especially not when I'm the one member of this squad busting my ass outside of this... vaguely protective bubble.

Seriously, everyone else gets to spend the afternoon breathing filtered air and I have to trust a retrofitted respirator to keep my lungs alive just so I can barter for scrap metal. Being *cheerful*? That's too fucking much.

SFX: *Suri sits down with a sigh.*

SURI

Don't get me wrong, people of the future. It's what I'm good at, and I'm proud of that. I mean, there'd be no rocket to send into space without the scrap metal, so it's not like you have to be a rocket scientist to... build a rocket... Um. Nevermind.

Dane practically begged me to help with this as soon as he joined the team, and that's like, the whole point of being siblings, isn't it? We've always been pretty close! But...

SURI takes a breath.

SURI

(Irritated)

But I just cannot believe that in addition to sourcing materials, Jules has decided that I will also tell my life story to people who may or may not ever exist and who, if they do, might not be human. You want aliens to learn about what humanity used to be from *my* stories? Really? Well, at least they're a lot more realistic than anything Savannah publishes. I don't fit into the Savannah mold, in... more than one way. I'd rather stay under their radar. So I, to put it lightly, am not a *fan* of someone with Savannah connections asking me to compromise myself. I'm giving her the benefit of the doubt and assuming she just doesn't know any better, but geez.

A pause as SURI takes a breath and tries (and fails) to calm herself down and reevaluate.

SURI

I know that in theory we're all taking the same risk. We're not exactly supposed to be building a rocket in a secret underground lair.. But damn it, if anyone's gonna get caught here, it's definitely gonna be me! Probably carrying mysteriously unbranded Savannah-like wire. Or setting up an exchange for aluminium and suddenly I'm in the back of an unmarked vehicle that was actually an undercover Savannah cruiser *because my contact didn't bother to check if he was being tailed!*

I'm more than glad to help Dane and his friends, but I HATE that someone who thinks that "Savannah isn't *that* bad" expects me to share a lot of details. But since I've got this recorder... I might as well share something. I've actually started thinking about it all from a different angle. I mean, everyone besides Dane and me sees all of this on a sort of metaphysical level or something. I'm trying to get there with them, you know? So I'm treating this entire scheme as a really complex art project, and at the moment...

SFX: *SURI pulls out a sheet of paper and starts scribbling on it.*

SURI

-I'm gathering up the art supplies, and even though I'm not the one with the grand vision, I'm trying to trust that it'll be something great in the end. Creative types have to believe that, or else we wouldn't finish anything, you know? That's how creating something always works. Like, the end product is still a long ways away, but you just *have* to convince yourself that it *is* going to be beautiful...and worth it. It's gotta be worth it...

But for the time being, I'm still not so sure about putting my signature on this particular piece. So? Sorry aliens, or whoever this reaches. My name is Suri, and I'm the parts guy.

And that's pretty much all I'm willing to tell this machine about me for now.

PART THREE: ARMANI

SFX: *The recorder clicks on and we hear ARMANI adjusting the mic, shifting around at their desk. They take a quick pause, they begin.*

ARMANI

Okay, now that someone with proper mic handling technique is here, let me tell you what you're about to listen to. It's a welcome message, of sorts. A 'hello' that we'll send out across

the universe. It'll include sounds, pictures and recordings from us, from all of us, detailing life here, in hopes that...

ARMANI takes a pause and a breath.

ARMANI

I don't know. In hopes that someone out there will find this and know what was here, after we're all gone. With this, they'll know the actual account of what's happening here on earth, in contrast to the messages that have undoubtedly been sent out already.

SFX: *As ARMANI speaks this next bit, we hear the sounds they describe behind their words.*

ARMANI

I've included a few of my favorite sounds plus a few I think are important, for posterity's sake. There's the sound of wind and rain, crickets and frogs, the sounds of traffic and tools. Of Amma making halva while Dad brews tea. Thunder and gunfire. My brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews laughing and playing in the sun. The sound of drones flying overhead. My own heartbeat. Music, as much as I could get my hands on. I've also included the sounds of dogs, cats, rats, as many animals as I could find. Dad found me an old recording of a goat. It sounds a lot cuter than I expected, gotta say. Some sounds were harder than others to get a hold of. Whales and horses. Volcanos. The sound of an F-22 taking off. A Saturn V launch. Birds.

SFX: *A pause as we hear some birds chirp softly. The sound slowly fades out.*

ARMANI

If we've got the room, I'm going to be including some holograms, old pictures of what was here. Pictures of the underground and the city stacked atop it. A half dozen types of flowers and trees. The sun, in all its glory. I debated adding a few pictures of Savannah and Ocelot buildings but... I don't know. I don't think they deserve to be remembered after all of this.

I'd like to, if I can get everyone to stand still long enough,

include a picture of us, this little ragtag group of delinquents.

Might be nice... to be remembered.

A few more seconds of silence as ARMANI thinks.

ARMANI

Every culture's got their own way of remembering. Oral histories. Written accounts. Art. Architecture. Music. Dance. We've got this rocket. And this message. I'll be translating it into as many languages as I know. I have a few other friends who can help me fill in the gaps.

It took me a while to figure out what exactly I wanted to say for this. Some two hundred-ish years ago, NASA, God rest their souls, did something similar. They attached a phonograph, a physical record, to a spacecraft and launched it into the universe. Apparently, the people who were tasked with recording these greetings the first time around weren't really given any more information than just that it had to be a greeting to possible extraterrestrial life and it had to be brief.

The way that each community took it upon themselves to greet these life forms is fascinating. The Arabic greeting was "Greetings to our friends in the stars. We wish that we will meet you someday", whereas the people from Fujian, a Chinese province, asked, "Friends of space, how are you all? Have you eaten yet? Come visit us if you have time." The Japanese just wrote "Hello? How are you?" while the Hittites, who were from present day Turkey, simply said "Hail." Nepal said "Wishing you a peaceful future from the earthlings." Sweden, I think, is one of my favorite responses. They wrote "Greetings from a computer programmer and the little University town of Ithaca on the planet Earth."

Each message says so much within so little and I want *this* message to be perfect. A perfect representation of who we are as a people and the history that has shaped us into what we are today. So, what do we say? What should this little ragtag group of delinquents, hobbling together a rocket ship in a

not-so-secret underground bunker say to the world outside our own? What can we say to them to not only communicate that we are likely no longer, but that we want to be remembered for the good in our world once we're gone? After a few weeks of obsessing about this, I think I've finally landed on a message that works.

Pause.

ARMANI

Please remember us, not for what was here, but for what will be.
Peace. Love. Family. Now and forever.

PART FOUR: KEI

SFX: Clicks of the recorder being turned on. KEI'S voice echoes over the dull whirring of machinery.

KEI

What the hell is this? This isn't a
mag-drill, is it? OH!

SFX: Rapidly, the recorder turns off and then back on with two clicks.

KEI

I have to say something. Hm. Jules is going to throw a fit if I just leave the recorder in here for six hours after she explicitly said "Hey Kei, could you record something for the rocket?". It's not like I'm going to get kicked off the team for not recording something on Day 1.

I can do it when I get to a break, it's fine.

SFX: Again, the recorder turns off and then back on with two clicks. The sound of riveting and banging echoes.

KEI

Alright, alright, Jules, I will record the message for you as soon as I finish these rivets!

JULES

(Muffled, from a distance.)
Kei? Did you say something?

KEI

SHHHHH! I'm not supposed to be in the ducts, don't tell Jules
I'm
disobeying a direct order from our de facto commander! And
Jules, when you eventually listen to this because I know you're
going to do a last minute check right before we launch, you are
going to
thank me for being in the ducts all the time! Start countdown
for apology at t-minus 2 hours!

JULES

Kei?

KEI

We're all good, Jules!

SFX: *KEI hammers in the ducts.*

KEI

Now where was I? Right, the last great hurrah before we get cut
off from communicating with you ever again! Well, my name is
Kei, and I am going to tell you about our funny little species
while I eat lunch. Speaking of which!

SFX: *Hissing sound of the hot vent.*

KEI

It is my pleasure to introduce to you to the greatest culinary
cooktop humankind has ever created...The Hot Steel Vent!

SFX: *Clatter of the canister as ey toss it away.*

KEI

Well, no need for that canister anymore. No use having a torch
attachment on your wrist gear if the fuel canister is empty.

SFX: *Sizzling as the sandwich cooks. We hear it flipped with a spatula halfway through the next line.*

KEI

So how the hell did we get here? Better question is where the hell
are we going to go in the next century, because THAT is going to be one wild ride. They're claiming that in the next ten years they'll be able to give us handheld 3D printers with industrial capabilities. Just imagine printing an I-beam out of a spool of wire, when just a few hundred years ago you had to cut down an entire tree and wedge it in there. Who came up with such a ridiculous idea?

SFX: *KEI uses the spatula to pick up the sandwich.*

KEI

Oh! Ooh-hoo-hoo-hoo HOT HOT HOT SPICY SANDWICH! Whew! Let the sandwich cool off, Kei, you can't just eat it right off the cooktop! Whew!

SFX: *KEI sets the sandwich down.*

KEI

So where was I? Ah! HUMANITY! Heroic and miserable inhabitants of the planet Earth and inventors of the miraculous device known as the MOTOR! Also known for some stupid stuff like the invention of fascism, gelatin-packed meats, psychoanalysis and the now-nonexistent Ohio!

SFX: *Sound of metallic clattering as KEI switches equipment.*

KEI

So how did we survive into our modern futuristic world? Listen, I'm genuinely not sure.

SFX: *KEI bites into the sandwich.*

KEI

(Through a mouthful of sandwich)

Rumor has it that guilt has something to do with it, but if I'm being perfectly honest I think it's spite that has been a much bigger motivator for us. Speaking of which!

SFX: *Metallic clattering as KEI switches out equipment. The sound of whirring and buzzing accompanies eir speech.*

KEI

(Still eating)

Did you know that certain persons in this little group are profoundly annoyed by me using an angle grinder in a suit? I really don't care, I specifically got a fire resistant fabric blend so my work clothes weren't so obviously work clothes, but apparently it's "Dangerous" and "Going to profoundly screw something up".

Seriously, you would think that the person who has been working with mechanical stuff since ey were 4 would be better qualified to be the judge of tool usage than a physicist or a chemist!

Could I make that repair with a smaller tool? Yes, but that wouldn't be as much fun as using an angle grinder. And besides, it matches my tie.

So, That's really all you need to know about humans: If you tell us we aren't allowed to do something, that's the very first thing we're going to do!

SFX: *Recorder clicks off.*

PART FIVE: DANE

SFX: *Recorder clicks on.*

DANE

Well, Jules started this so I assume you've already heard all about who we are and what we're doing, yes, great, wonderful, but I'm pretty sure she left out a lot of the background. The earth is *fucked*. It's broken and it's awful and it's tearing itself apart and there is nothing any of us can do to stop it.

DANE sighs.

DANE

Where do I even start? Where did *it* even start? I guess Savannah's the answer to that. Companies combined and merged until there were only a few of them: Pomegranate, Ondatra, Crim/Ex, Ocelot, and Savannah. And then Savannah devoured the others until they owned, well, *everything*. These days, you can drive your Savannah-brand car to your Savannah-owned apartment and make that dinner you bought at the Savannah-run grocery store in your Savannah-made specialty oven.

DANE laughs bitterly and sighs.

DANE

Our lives are run by a fucking corporate monolith owned by the world's most powerful piece of shit. You can bicker over brand names all you want but you only get the *illusion* of choice. Boulderpop vs. Funzo comes down to a difference of can color - the soda is made in the same factory. "Savannah Soda," or whatever their marketing think-tanks decided to call it. So-dannah? Fuck if I know. Savannah makes the shitty off brand goods, the luxury name brand goods, and all the shit in between.

I came out of college with a shiny degree and a lot of determination, but even the best little startup couldn't compete. We either got crushed or... well, absorbed. So I either had to work under *Gaut Nocoœur* or not work at all, and the choice was pretty damn clear.

DANE sighs.

DANE

I did the nonprofit thing - worked as an organizer, tried to get the powerful people to care about the consequences of their actions. It's not physics, but I was fucking good at it. But that didn't matter. The game was rigged against us, and by "us" I mean humanity. Fuck, I think we weren't even players, in this metaphor. The real players - like Gaut, actually mostly Gaut, I hate that son of a bitch - get away with things so much worse than murder. He can pollute entire rivers with his factories and burn cities to the ground with his weapon tests *and* cause

goddamn earthquakes with his strip mining! He may not have personally caused last season's hurricanes but he sure made a profit off of it. I have the financial records to prove it, but Savannah owns the news.

The thing is, though, I think they know about the consequences. Savannah knows the numbers as well as I do. They've done the fucking math. They just don't care. The world is dying because people just don't care.

Beat. DANE sighs.

DANE

I shouldn't say that. *People* do care, but people with the power to change anything don't. And so we're here in this fucked up, crumbling world just doing our best until we die. So many of us are dying. What's gonna be left when we're all dead and gone? What will fucking be here? I think it'll be ashes.

DANE lets out a breath.

DANE

(Quietly)

Jules, that better be good enough for you.

SFX: *DANE walks over and shuts off the recorder.*

MUSIC: *What Will Be Here theme plays, hopeful piano music.*

CREDITS

This episode was written by Brad Colbroock, Chandler Harrison, Cole Burkhardt, Dee Reese, and Tal Minear, with script editing by Evan Tess Murray. It was directed and sound designed by Tal Minear and features Jonah Lune as Jules, Kathy Yousef as Armani, Vico Ortiz as Kei, John Y. Kamara as Dane, and Sahar Iman as Suri. The theme music is by Benny James and the transcript is by Caroline Mincks. What Will Be Here is primarily produced in Long Beach, on the stolen land of the Kizh nation.

A moment, then the music begins to fade out.

MISSION CONTROL

Discovery, roger, go for deploy.

Music fades out.