

Down the Wire
a sci-fi noir podcast pilot
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1 SCENE ONE:
INT. OFFICE, DAY.

The rain outside beats gently against the windows.
A computer trills and a voice begins to speak, close to the mic.

INACHUS:

When it rains on Ganymede, the sky
lights up like the Borealis on Earth
against a backdrop of Jupiter. It is
frankly, one of the wonders of the
solar system but has the unfortunate
effect of draining the colour from the
settlements below. Not only that but
it'll strip the flesh right off you if
you're not suitably attired; and it
stinks like cat- His lighter clicks
and hisses. He walks across the room
away from the mic. - inhale, ah,
Proxima Beta Coralwood (beat) better.
Computer [computer trills again]
timestamp recording, please.

1

COMPUTER:

Case File Thirteen, Status, unsolved,
Earth day six hundred and ninety-one.
Interview four thousand and three
commences at eighteen hundred.

2

The computer beeps and trills, confirming its activity. Janie slams her papers on the desk in a huff.

JANIE:

Jim, I'm not a case file!

3

INACHUS:

Then why am I not in a low-G bar where
I can still cut some moves, Janie?

4

JANIE:

Because someone is stopping me from
sending messages off world!

5

INACHUS:

You sure they ain't just stopped
replyin'? `Cause this ain't the
tallest story I've heard from those
lips.

6

JANIE:
Jim, please! 7

INACHUS:
Okay Janie, as luck would have it, I 8
got nothin' better to do and on the
off-chance you're right, most of my
work comes down the wire so I can't
take the chance. Computer, put this
recording in a new case file, title
'Down the Wire'.

COMPUTER:
Case seventy-three, please state fee 9
and payment method.

JANIE:
Uh- 10

INACHUS:
Pro bono. 11

The computer acknowledges the input again and the noise of the office fades. Jim closes the recording, again close to the mic.

INACHUS:
It always rains on Ganymede... which 12
is why all our off-world comms rely on
an orbital station connected by an
imposing rope of data cables known as
The Wire. Getting across the city to
the ground base is trickier than
getting in to ask awkward questions.
Galillei is a bit of a ghost town
these days. A waystation for crews
with much longer voyages ahead and
practically forgotten by the
commonwealth is not exactly littered
with security forces... but I hate
getting into out-door wear.

Radio switches off with a click. The acoustic is brittle now, Jim stands in an airlock squeezing into a tight-fitting, kind of rubber space suit that protects him from the rain. As he locks in his helmet the computer powers down.

2 SCENE TWO: INT. LARGE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR, DAY.

Jim is walking through alone and his steps echo. The computer trills and announces the scene.

COMPUTER:
Case seventy-three investigation notes, begin recording... 13

INACHUS:
(muffled)
At its height, downtown was a bustling nest of malcontents, debt-runners and desperate people who ran out of cash at the edge of the solar system. Jim fiddles with a switch, there is a hiss and the acoustic changes. He can now be heard inside his helmet as he walks down a long tunnel. The fall of the great dome did little to improve its appeal. The comms station encircling the base of the Wire is supposed to be off-limits to civilians but the guards are usually too busy playing poker to notice anyone snooping around. 14

The hum of machinery grows and a door opens. The sound of a large computer powering up. Corporate music plays.

OMNI:
Hi there, I'm Omni! How can I direct your communication query? 15

INACHUS:
Great, a hologram... Do you keep all incoming and outgoing messages through this station? 16

OMNI:
Messages are encrypted but all participants are logged for security. 17

INACHUS:
Pull up the log for Janie Clearsky. 18

OMNI:
I'd love to help but your security clearance is...very expired. 19

INACHUS:
Would you rather I stuck a screwdriver into your cognition processor? 20

OMNI:
Communication records for Janie Clearsky. Please state date range. 21

	INACHUS:	
	Let's start with last week.	22
	OMNI:	
	I'm sorry, most recent records are point four Earth cycles ago.	23
	INACHUS:	
	That's impossible. Check for record deletion.	24
	OMNI:	
	Standby... System checks indicate-	25
	Omni powers down.	
	GUARD:	
	Hey! Who's in there?	26
	INACHUS:	
	Oh, sh.....end log! Rubber, fabric and shoes shuffling as Jim retreats.	27
	Computer powers down.	
3	SCENE THREE:	
	INT. JIM'S HELMET, DAY.	
	The computer trills. Not much can be heard in the background and Jim is back in his helmet, breathing heavily and close to the mic.	28
	COMPUTER:	
	Case seventy-three supplementary note.	29
	INACHUS:	
	Some cases take on a sour note real fast. Only a handful of people on this rock could cause the meltdown I just saw and I can't think of one with motivation. Just when you thought a hologram was bad company, you have to go chat with an avatar...	30
	Jim huffs and keeps walking. A heavy door slides open with a hiss and creaking. The sound of the rain takes over the mix as the computer powers down.	

4 SCENE FOUR:
INT. UNDERGROUND MARKET, DAY.

The computer trills. The sounds of rotor blades and things being hit. The sound of someone being accosted. All the commotion nearly drowns out the introduction made by the computer. Music plays in the distance of what sounds like a warehouse or hanger.

COMPUTER:
Case seventy-three, interview two. 31
Recording begins at twenty hours and
twenty minutes.

DERELICT_09:
Jupiter! I'll talk already! There's no 32
need for...
(as if offended by a bad smell)
physical contact.

INACHUS:
Perhaps if I'd got a warmer welcome? 33

Electrical fizzing and whirring that had continued throughout the scene becomes more prominent in the mix as it sparks and dies abruptly.

DERELICT_09:
My drone! 34

INACHUS:
Stop wasting my time, Terrence! 35

DERELICT_09:
Can we at least be civil? 36

INACHUS:
Fine. Derelict Nine, I need 37
information...and pronouns.

DERELICT_09:
(Deadpan)
It. As in what can it tell you to make 38
you leave?

INACHUS:
Who's been messing with the Wire? How 39
bad?

DERELICT_09:

(Amused)

If I told you that you'd be
upset...and well, it would end poorly
for me. I'll give you half to walk out
that door: it's bad. And it's above
your pay grade! 40

Jim and Derelict_09 begin to regain their composure and Jim releases his grip on bunched up clothing.

INACHUS:

Says every two-bit Moog I ever took
down. 41

DERELICT_09:

Look, I wouldn't touch it. And a lot
of people have died over stuff I did
touch. You ken? 42

INACHUS:

You're a useless, spineless,
backstabbing... 43

DERELICT_09:

Invertebrates have feelings too, but
I'm a survivor, Jim, just like you. 44

Heavy metallic footsteps approach. Pneumatics hiss.

DERELICT_09:

Well, maybe I tread a bit more
lightly... Is this your lift? 45

Sharp whir and a thud. Pronounced silence replaced by concussive ringing as the music comes back in and quickly fades again.

5 SCENE FIVE:

INT. SMALL SPACESHIP IN FLIGHT.

Quiet piped music through some tinny speakers. The quiet hum of a shuttle engine and muted sounds of machinery.

COMPUTER:

Case seven...teeeee 46

Wires being pulled as the computer stutters and becomes garbled. Recording continues, slightly muffled or distorted.

TABITHA: 47
 Is the blasted thing off? Julian
 Inachus Moog? I need your full
 attention, please.

INACHUS: 48
 Jim, please, and that would be easier
 if your `roid hadn't clocked me in the
 head.

TABITHA: 49
 You've been kidnapped and your first
 concern is the service? Look, I didn't
 come halfway to that sad little rock
 just to trade quips, so unless you
 want to end up drifting in a pod
 waiting to be picked apart by vultures
 I would recommend that you listen
 carefully to what I say next.

INACHUS: 50
 I'm at least...70% ears, we'll make it
 work.

TABITHA: 51
 Your little expedition is in danger of
 shedding light on things that are...
 not quite ready to be known.

INACHUS: 52
 I'm sure I don't know what you're
 talking about, I just wanna close a
 case and pay some bills.

TABITHA: 53
 Bills! Oh, I do like bills. It's far
 easier on the stomach to make those
 disappear; wouldn't you agree? Jim
 starts to speak but she cuts him off.
 So if I say you don't have any bills,
 you can tell me you don't have any
 cases, yes? Say anything else, and
 hope the radiation gets to you before
 the vultures.

Growing static noise swells and no more recording is heard.

6 SCENE SIX:
 INT. OFFICE, NIGHT.

Sparks crackle and hiss. Tools clatter.

INACHUS:
Ah come on, work damnit! 54

Repair work seems to be going poorly.

7 SCENE SEVEN:
INT. OFFICE, NIGHT.

Computer trills as in other scenes but the sound falters.

COMPUTER:
Case seventy-three. Status: redacted. 55
Closing statement, recording...

INACHUS:
There was a moment. After the glass 56
slammed across my face, but before the
wall knocked me in the back of the
head, where I floated wondering which
answer I had even given. My head was
filled with questions I would never
get to ask and then, thanks to rapid
deceleration, I was unconscious. This
case is hereby closed without
investigation, all names and dates
expunged. Remind me why I can't just
delete this case file altogether?

COMPUTER:
Tax return. 57

JANIE:
(Distant)
Of course you took the money. 58

Jeanie unlocks her weapon and we hear it powering up.

INACHUS:
It meant living a little longer. 59

JANIE:
Not as much as you'd think. Soon this 60
whole place will be dead, but I don't
suppose it will trouble your gormless
expression.

She fires the weapon and Jim thuds to the floor. As her
footsteps recede, the faint whir of the door is replaced by a
growing fire.

The computer powers down.

SPARE IDEAS/CUT SCENES

[pink static, mechanical click, the sound of diodes warming]
Inachus: Case seventy something, investigation notes. I've got a killer hangover and I don't even know if it's for a good reason. I remember someone warned me off the case but it felt like the hand of a corporation. I don't know what they thought I was onto but I doubt I'm likely to get in their way. SOBs are the only people that still get their privacy though, so now I need to find a gadget genius. Computer: Please reenter password after [android voice] getting me smashed to pieces Inachus: [muttering] MoogerFooger597 theta pi Computer: Compiling. Additional data found. Inachus: I had to improvise. Computer: Fidelity poor, attempting to repair. Inachus: You're starting to sound like...nevermind. Any obvious connections I'm missing? Computer: Undoubtedly. Your file to date suggests a strong assumption of criminal hacking. Inachus: Let's just say the alternatives are...distasteful. Computer: Probability is [android] twenty one per cent[/android] that your current line of investigation will resolve. Inachus: (reluctantly) What do you calculate for the alternatives? Computer: [android] thirty seven per cent Inachus: Without getting myself killed? Computer: Twenty f- Inachus: Can we make that an automatic assumption please? Computer: Error. [/android] Behaviour inconsistent with case history. [power down] O'Rien: