A SCENE FROM RELATIVITY EPISODE 56 “In Which Starboard Equals Danger” ...

SOUND: Chris’s voice echoing inside his helmet, along with the sound of the suit “breathing” for him

MARCUS: (ON FILTER THROUGHOUT)

And you should be seeing my surprise by now.

CHRIS: If you mean that jet cycle slowly approaching, yes.

MARCUS: Yeah? You like that?

CHRIS: I don’t know, Marcus -- I know it was incredibly complex and challenging to bring it up here from the far end of the ship and I admire your skill in doing that --

SOPHIA: (ON FILTER THROUGHOUT)

Marcus has been practicing this for weeks -- just in case it was ever needed.

CHRIS: And that is amazing. But I am not a, uh -- I have never been a “motorcycle person.”

MARCUS: No, that’s the beauty of this. All you have to do is get on. I’ll steer it around to the work site.

CHRIS: I’m gonna sit on this contraption -- in deep space -- disconnect myself from the ship --

SOPHIA: Yes.

CHRIS: -- and let somebody a bazillion miles away drive it.

MARCUS: Yes.

CHRIS: Somebody who can’t see what’s happening.

MARCUS: I have all your position data right here.

NADIA: And I can supplement the location data he has.

CHRIS: Nadia? Whose side are you on?

NADIA: Why, yours, of course. I want to help you succeed.

CHRIS: I’m asking a machine if she thinks machines can be trusted.

NADIA: And we can.

MARCUS: Peter used a jet pack -- not much different from this cycle!

CHRIS: And he was insane. That’s not a good endorsement.

SOPHIA: Chris, I wouldn’t have approved this if I didn’t have confidence in it.

CHRIS: You’re that sure?

SOPHIA: I am. I really am. This is in fact what the jet cycles were made for.

CHRIS: Wow. Okay. If Sophia thinks it’s a good idea, then it probably is.

SOPHIA: Thank you very much.

CHRIS: I’ve learned a lot over the years. Okay! Reaching out to the -- to the space chopper.

MARCUS: Will your tether reach that far or should I --

CHRIS: I got it.

MARCUS: Get a solid grip on it and connect a free tether to the central column. Right in front of you.

CHRIS: Oh -- I see, there’s a loop built in for that very purpose.

MARCUS: That’s what it is.

SOPHIA: Are you hooked on to that?

CHRIS: I am.

SOPHIA: Do you feel ready to disconnect from the ship?

CHRIS: Not until I ... okay. I can feel the vibration in the vehicle now. I didn’t want to do anything until I was sure the motor’s running.

MARCUS: It’s just been idling.

CHRIS: Then I am ... disconnecting ... and I am ... disconnected. Wow.

SOPHIA: Where are the robots?

CHRIS: Hovering in formation behind me. I take it you’ve told them to stay within a meter of me, because that’s what they’ve been doing.

SOPHIA: You got it.

CHRIS: Okay, Marcus. I’m as ready as I’m likely to ever be.

MARCUS: Starting off very slowly.

CHRIS: Uhhh ... yeah, still ... disconcerting ...

MARCUS: I’m keeping close to the hull so in the unlikely event anything goes wrong --

CHRIS: I’ll be smeared across the exterior of the ship. Nice!

MARCUS: We’re never going to get up to that kind of speed.

CHRIS: I dunno -- the ship is moving by pretty fast. It’s like being in an underground station when the express train comes through.

SOPHIA: We’re not going to place you in any danger. Any unnecessary danger.

CHRIS: Yeah, I was gonna say.

NADIA: I almost expect to feel wind blowing through our -- through the surfaces of the suit.

CHRIS: That’s your imagination.

NADIA: I suppose it is.

CHRIS: Approaching the prow of the ship.

SOPHIA: Roger that. We see your position.

CHRIS: I have to admit -- this is much, much easier than climbing hand-over-hand the whole length of the forward section.

MARCUS: And we have a lot further to go this time.

SOPHIA: So far that we worried you’d never make it.

CHRIS: I’d be offended if I didn’t agree with you completely.

MARCUS: Should be coming around the prow now and headed down the starboard side.

CHRIS: I love that we still use those old, old nautical terms. As if every possible facet of this ship isn’t the “starboard” side.

SOPHIA: Well, we had to call it something.

MARCUS: And saying it’s the “right” side is boring.

SOPHIA: It kinda is. So why not? Why not connect with our past like that?

CHRIS: Right ... y’know, I’ve never seen this part of the ship before. I’ve been all over the port side -- when we came aboard, and on my other EVA -- but this is terra incognita.

MARCUS: It’s just a mirror image of the other side.

CHRIS: Well, yeah.

SOPHIA: Approaching the Hub.

CHRIS: Yeah, the crew section looks very, very big from right here, and the Habitat --ha! It’s like a planet. A big drum-shaped planet.

NADIA: It is like a planet. On the inside.

CHRIS: Yeah, that’s a good observation, Nadia.

NADIA: Thank you.

MARCUS: Slowing to approach the Crew Section.

CHRIS: Have you noticed how much better this EVA is going than the last one?

SOPHIA: Even with more personalities involved.

MARCUS: That may even help.

SOPHIA: Yeah, maybe.

NADIA: I hope you are counting me among those personalities.

SOPHIA: I am. I absolutely am.

MARCUS: Nadia, it does seem like you keep looking for new things to try. It’s like you want to experience everything you possibly can.

NADIA: That’s exactly right! I do!

SOPHIA: Is that why you wanted to take over the instrumentation in Doctor Mason’s suit?

NADIA: Absolutely. It seems very much like having a physical body of my own.

CHRIS: Well, right now it’s more like you’re my second skin. I’m not sure how much you can learn from that.

NADIA: Oh, it is an extremely enlightening experience! Naturally I enjoy this new opportunity to assist you. But primarily I find the intimacy to be deeply rewarding. I am close to you, all around your body, and for once I can feel you inside me. It is, I suppose, as close as you and I could come to having sexual intercourse.

CHRIS: W-w-w-w ... y-yeah ....

MARCUS: CHANGING THE SUBJECT

Uh, you should be right at the rotation gap now.

CHRIS: Thank you, Marcus, and, uh -- you are going to stop this thing, right?

MARCUS: Slowing you to a stop now.

NADIA: Did I say something wrong?

CHRIS: Not right now, Nadia, okay?

SOPHIA: From here you should be able to look directly into the fluid gap, the space between the rotating and stationary parts of the forward section.

CHRIS: Yep.

NADIA: Chris, I’m increasing the brightness of our headlights.

CHRIS: Thank you. Our headlights are perfect now.

SOPHIA: Can you see anything that looks out of place? Anything that is a different color or texture?

CHRIS: Not really, no. Y’know, I didn’t even ask -- why am I on the starboard side of the ship if we don’t know exactly where the damage is?

MARCUS: The rotational imbalance indicates the resistance is on this aspect of the axis.

CHRIS: That makes sense and, uh -- hey, Mission Control --

SOPHIA: Mission Control aye.

CHRIS: In all this pale gray metal, I just spotted something silver -- something ragged and silver, right at the gap -- and the Hub is definitely dragging against it. I see sparks!

SOPHIA: Bingo! Can you describe the location?

CHRIS: There’s a big number etched into the metal ... and it is ... *Pyatnadtsat*! Fifteen!

SOPHIA: You’ve learned some Russian after all!

CHRIS: I have a lot of time on my hands.

MARCUS: Your visual matches our telemetry. You are at Fluid Gap Transit Arc Fifteen.

NADIA: I really do apologize if I said anything that caused offense or embarrassment.

CHRIS: It’s okay, Nadia -- Control, it’s an enormous open area here -- I could actually go down there myself.

SOPHIA: Let’s save that as a last resort.

MARCUS: Robots should be moving now.

CHRIS: Yeah, there they go. So I just ...

SOPHIA: Don’t do anything.

CHRIS: Robots are zooming over to the site -- yes -- that’s it. That’s the thing I saw.

MARCUS: Converging.

SOPHIA: Sensor contact.

CHRIS: Already?

SOPHIA: Sensors detect a metal foreign to that section.

MARCUS: Definitely debris.

NADIA: I see that data, too. And the object’s composition matches materials from Junction Omega.

CHRIS: A-hah!

SOPHIA: Something that was ejected from Junction Omega when Peter Miblin’s simple bomb exploded.

SOPHIA: But then somehow didn’t get stuck in this gap until much later?

NADIA: It seems to be the only logical explanation.

MARCUS: Robot arm connecting ... now! Grip closing.

SOPHIA: Pull force set?

MARCUS: Set.

SOPHIA: Execute pull-back.

MARCUS: Pulling. Lotta resistance.

SOPHIA: Pull to max.

MARCUS: At max. Debris is not moving.

SOPHIA: All right, get that guy outta there. Bring up the big guy.

MARCUS: Robot two coming in.

CHRIS: Robot Two looks like he’s the one with all the muscle.

SOPHIA: Correct. Heavy-duty arm.

MARCUS: Robot Two contact with debris.

SOPHIA: Close that grip.

MARCUS: Arm grasping the debris. Grip force seventy per cent.

SOPHIA: Pull strength?

MARCUS: Eighty per cent. It’s not budging.

SOPHIA: Increase both to max.

MARCUS: Ninety per cent. Ninety-five. One hundred.

CHRIS: Nope. Hasn’t budged.

MARCUS: Debris is still in place.

SOPHIA: Dammit!

MARCUS: Whatever that thing is -- it is jammed in there to stay.

CHRIS: Is this where I get in there and try it?

NADIA: The robot heavy-duty arm has a grip force of fifteen hundred kilos.

CHRIS: I’m not trying to beat it at arm-wrestling -- we’re trying to get a jagged piece of metal out of a gap between two -- it’s one of those things that a human -- that somebody or something with two arms and two legs and a few million years of evolution is uniquely equipped to do.

SOPHIA: You may be right.

CHRIS: And I have all kinds of tools that I could take over there with me ... prybars and ... well, I don’t know what most of this is ...

SOPHIA: Marcus? Recommended procedure?

MARCUS: Electromagnetic grip. Lower him with the power winch.

CHRIS: Electromagnets?

SOPHIA: You should have them on board. They attach to the soles of your boots.

CHRIS: I see them. Yeah. Putting those on!

MARCUS: How about the attachment for the power winch cable?

CHRIS: Uh -- let me get the other magnet on my boot ... okay ... yeah, winch cable attachment. Got it in my hand. In my glove.

NADIA: I feel it.

MARCUS: Attach that to your sternum hook. May be a little difficult to see.

CHRIS: Fortunately, I know where my sternum is. Latching the cable on now --

NADIA: And it’s connected.

CHRIS: Yes, it is.

SOPHIA: Now, once you’re free of the vehicle, you’ll have to free-jump to *Konyechny* while we manage your velocity and braking with the winch motor.

CHRIS: FAKE CRYING

MARCUS: You’ll need the tool bag as well.

CHRIS: I am on one of the winch hooks and I have the tool bag on the other.

SOPHIA: No, you should tether that tool bag to your suit. On your back if you can.

CHRIS: Okay ... moving that over ... making sure not to interfere with my ... hoses and things ... okay, I am on the line and the tools are connected to me on one end and the magnet on the other.

SOPHIA: All right then. Unclip yourself from the support column.

CHRIS: Unclipped. Our only connection to the vehicle is the winch cable.

MARCUS: And the winch motor clutch is open, so right now you have all the outward potential you need.

CHRIS: You want me to just ... fall backwards?

SOPHIA: Whenever you’re ready.

CHRIS: Ugh ... if I wait too long I’ll chicken out completely, so I’d better just – ah -- fall back into space ...

NADIA: Tension on the sternum loop.

CHRIS: It’s very reassuring.

MARCUS: Engaging the winch now.

CHRIS: I don’t feel it.

MARCUS: We’re at resistance zero now but we’ll slow your forward motion when you get closer.

CHRIS: Twisting so I can see where I’m going ... It’s amazing. This is so much easier ... than it is to step out and away from the ship ... I feel like I’m heading toward solid ground.

MARCUS: Even though you and the ship and all four of the bots are both traveling at eighty-two per-cent of the speed of light.

CHRIS: That’s just numbers...!

NADIA: And yet your breath rate and pulse are both accelerating.

CHRIS: Well, yeah - Marcus -- the ship is approaching very fast --

MARCUS: Understood. Slowing you more.

CHRIS: That’s better. Ha. I’m passing the robots now. Hi, guys. Looking good.

MARCUS: The trick here -- is to get you on to the stationary section and not ...

CHRIS: Yeah, I do not want to hit the rotation ...! But it looks like that is what might happen -- what do I do? Sophia?

SOPHIA: Pull him back if you have to!

MARCUS: I’m moving the vehicle two-ex along the ship axis.

SOPHIA: If that doesn’t work get one of the bots to --

CHRIS: It’s working -- I’m moving away --

NADIA: I feel it, too. Definitely moving away from the danger zone.

CHRIS: Yeah. That’s much better, folks. Thank you.

MARCUS: You should be about a meter from the hull now.

CHRIS: Yeah. Uh -- not much to grab onto, is there?

SOPHIA: That’s why you have the magnetic boots.

CHRIS: Right. So, uh --

MARCUS: When you feel like you have a solid place to stand, just reach out with your legs --

CHRIS: Doing it now ... ow ... too old for this ...

SOPHIA: Nonsense. You’re doing fine.

SOUND: SINGLE REVERBERATION IN THE SUIT

CHRIS: And! Touchdown!

NADIA: We are on the hull of the ship.

CHRIS: Yeah, the turkey has landed.

MARCUS: Very good. But did we get you anywhere near the site of the damage?

CHRIS: Perfect. Absolutely perfect.

SOPHIA: Marcus and I are a good team.

CHRIS: I can tell!

NADIA: I would say all four of us make a good team.

CHRIS: I agree!

SOPHIA: You’re sure you can reach the debris.

NADIA: I can feel the energy waves emitted by the Hub engine. We are very close to the rotation gap.

SOPHIA: I can only imagine what that looks like from where you are.

NADIA: It has the appearance of --

CHRIS: Hey, let the one who has eyeballs answer that question, okay? It looks like I am an ant that is for some reason on the axle of a wagon, watching the wheel go ‘round and ‘round and wondering if it is suddenly going to crush me.

MARCUS: Well, that is not going to happen, but you are at the rotation gap, and that is very, very dangerous.

CHRIS: That’s what I’m saying. The width here is -- oh --

SOPHIA: Should be seven point five centimeters.

CHRIS: About seven point five centimeters, which to me looks like it wants me to get my hand or foot stuck in there.

NADIA: If you did, the hand or foot would most likely be twisted and pulled beyond the limits of your body or your suit ---

SOPHIA: Okay --

NADIA: -- and would be instantly severed, which would not only cause massive bleeding but would void the environment inside your suit --

MARCUS: Nadia --

CHRIS: We get the picture, Nadia. I have human fear instincts, all right? You don’t have to explain to me why this is an insanely dangerous place to be.

NADIA: I understand.

MARCUS: Does the debris look like something you could get a pry bar under?

CHRIS: Yeah ... unfortunately, the best place to do that would be on the rotation side --

SOPHIA: NO. Absolutely not.

CHRIS: I wasn’t going to volunteer.

MARCUS: Do you think it’s worth a try from where you are?

CHRIS: It is definitely worth a try. If I can’t budge it, maybe I can bend it until it works free?

SOPHIA: Are the robots close to you?

CHRIS: Hovering overhead. Like angels. Or vultures.

SOPHIA: Let’s go with angels. Marcus, send one over to handle the tools.

MARCUS: Roger that.

CHRIS: Oh, good idea ... yeah ... he’s holding out an arm and I am letting the tool bag loose ...

SOPHIA: Let us know when the robot grip has the bag.

CHRIS: The robot grip has the bag.

SOPHIA: Okay, we’re relying on your judgment here. Fish out whatever crowbar you think will do the job.

CHRIS: Is it okay if it isn’t really a crowbar but just a long piece of metal that I can’t identify?

SOPHIA: At this point, yes.

CHRIS: Good, because this is just a long, flat piece of steel or ... something harder than steel ... anyway, I think ... yeah. This will do nicely.

MARCUS: Let us know what you’re doing. Remember, all we can see is your location and the location of the bots.

CHRIS: I am sliding one end of this bar under a corner of the debris ... and realizing that I guess I thought I was going to create a lever like this and ...

SOPHIA: Put all your weight on the other end?

CHRIS: Yeah. And I don’t have any, do I? Don’t know what I was thinking.

MARCUS: A lever still works in zero gravity -- you just can’t use weight as the force applied.

CHRIS: No. I’ll just have to ... push with all my might ... and nothing happens.

SOPHIA: The robot arm did pull as hard as it could.

CHRIS: But all it could do was pull away. I’m using the oldest and simplest ... machine ... and by God they built the Pyramids of Egypt like this so I know I can ... urrrghh!

MARCUS: The robots can also push, if they have something to push against.

CHRIS: Yeah, but out here they don’t. And anyway, I just felt the thing move ... !

NADIA: I felt it too! A definite vibration.

CHRIS: Yes! One more good push ought to -- YES! -- AHH!

SOUND: That was a cry of PAIN AND SURPRISE – and it’s followed by an ominous HISS ...

MARCUS: Robots sensors show object moving away from the ship!

SOPHIA: You did it! Chris, that was --

NADIA: Warning. Severe damage to EVA suit. Environment compromised --

SOPHIA: Chris! Talk to me!

CHRIS: Yeah -- I kinda cut myself on the bar when I --

SOPHIA: You mean, cut the suit?

MARCUS: His air level’s plummeting --

NADIA: Emergency. Emergency. Emergency.

MUSIC: END THEME

ANNOUNCE: Relativity. Episode Fifty-Six.

In Which Starboard Equals Danger

Written, directed, and produced by Lee Shackleford.

Featured in the cast were

Alana Jordan

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The role of Central Computer Nadia was played by herself.

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