ANNOUNCER: The following Pendant Production contains mature subject matter. Listener discretion is advised.

[Quiet mechanical hum in the background.]

HE-B

Initiating transfer of session notes for session 0012.

[Computer beep in response. A second beep follows. A progran runs, sci-fi tech noises audible.

HE-B hums quietly.

A door opens and footsteps approach.]

TYTHIA

(laughs)

That's, uh... that's from Kalops and Slakka. That's from the first date you ever took me on.

HE-B

Oh! (clears throat) Yes, well. I am...quite fond of Voracian opera, as it turns out. That particular event is one of my favorite memories of you. It seems it's been a recurring pattern of thoughts lately.

[Soft piano music begins playing in the background.]

TYTHIA

Really?

HE-B

Oh, yes. I've spent a great deal of time thinking about what you said. Our relationship was ...much more simple when we first tarted. I had a clear objective and goal. You were not in an exclusive relationship and I wished to experience one with you. I suppose it was naive of me to assume that we could simply go back to that, but... I had hoped a repetition of that pattern would have made this easier. Unfortunately, you had other plans. Which is a shame, since I had to give away the tickets the new revival staging that was on your birthday. Although, the couple that took them seemed to be very much in love, so I'm sure they appreciated them...

TYTHIA

Wait a second. You're telling me THAT was what you had planned for after dinner

that night? You got tickets that were almost impossible to get to... to match our first date? He-B, I had no idea that it meant so much to you. And then I... (sighs) I fucked that right up coming at you and Pallas about the whole... dating you both thing. Fucking hell, I'm an idiot.

HE-B

That is not only statistically unlikely, but patently false. You have multiple degrees and have been able to build some of the most advanced technology this side of the universe. You are not an idiot. You are a complex and unique creature, worthy of anyone's affection, should you desire it.

TYTHIA

Oh, am I? (little laugh) Is that why Pallas has been ignoring my calls and you didn't just give me a little space, you practically gave me the whole sector?

HE-B

I only did so out of respect for your feelings.

TYTHIA

Bullshit. (quiet laugh) You know, now that I know your tells, you're a terrible liar.

HE-B

I will never lie to you, Tythia. Never again. Please do not assume I would be so flippant with your emotional well-being. That is not the kind of individual I wish to be.

TYTHIA

Woah, hey, I didn't mean it like that. You're... you're right. Uh. I know you wouldn't just... lie to me on this, but... you and Pallas have two completely different methods of dealing with conflict and I just... I'm feeling really stretched thin. You're honest to a fault and – and she just shuts down. And I mean, in all fairness, if anyone should be feeling the strain, it is me, ok? Like, this is 100% on me. I completely created this mess and I'm just... not equipped to clean it up.

HE-B

I am sure the solution will present itself to you. Problem-solving is your forte. I did truly pull back to respect your feelings. And... Pallas, although it brings me no comfort to admit that. She is... a truly difficult person.

TYTHIA

That's only because she has very... valid reasons for... being worried about me getting close to you. I mean... (sighs) I really can't blame her. (Another little laugh.) From her perspective, she doesn't know you the way I did when we met. She doesn't know what the Kingery does to people, how it can make you the worst and the best of yourself within, like, an hour timespan.

HE-B Meaning?

TYTHIA

Meaning she doesn't know how I could forgive you. And I – I don't have the right words to make her get that. And who knows? Maybe I can't. Maybe it's not something I can fix. Maybe it's only something she can come to a decision on. Which kind of makes it worse, honestly, because I want to be able to fix this. (A sound of disgust. A breathy, amused sigh and then a groan.) You know. (clears throat) I had a plan when I walked in here. There was a speech and there was like, me being way more put together than I actually feel.

[A chair creaks as she moves.]

TYTHIA (groans) I hate this.

HF-B

Tythia... if I could perhaps say something? [Clack of sound] I've given your... proposition -

TYTHIA

Ooh, please don't call it that, that sounds way more transactional and sexual than this is...

HE-B Proposal?

TYTHIA (disapproving noise)

HE-B Appeal.

TYTHIA (approving noise)

HE-B

I've given your appeal considerable thought since you presented it to Pallas and myself. And while I did give you space out of consideration for your feelings, I did also use that time to consider what you were requesting and whether or not I would be open to the suggestion. What I realized is that it is not the concept of, well, sharing your affection that bothers me. Like any other emotion, I must assume that love is not a finite resource. My feelings for you do not seem to be in limited supply, nor would any of my research on the subject suggest that is the case. Therefore, I have no reason to think that your feelings for me or Pallas would also be a finite resource.

TYTHIA

They're not. I care about you both. Deeply. And equally, it's not... it's not a competition. It's not like I'm letting my head get turned by some fleeting crush or something here. I mean... I still love you and... and I need to tell her but... but, He-B, I love her. I don't want to lose her.

HE-B

And in that, Tythia, I agree. I would not want to cause you pain and ask you to detach yourself from Pallas. If you love her and she makes you happy, I would not ask you to deprive yourself of that love. In fairness, she's never hurt you the way I did.

TYTHIA

But I forgive you for that, I know why you did it -

HE-B

But, as you said, it is not for you to adjust Pallas' feelings on the subject of... well, me. (A pause.) You could adjust mine, though.

TYTHIA

What? (pause) He-B, no! No, I would never -

HE-B

I don't mean as an unintentional quirk of programming. I have no romantic feelings for Pallas, but... I would be willing to have you program them into me. I don't even know if it's truly possible, but if anyone could figure it out, it would be you. And if it would make you happy, if it would help solve this rift that has been created between you two, I would let you. Tythia, I do not want to be the cause of any more pain for you. And I trust you.

TYTHIA

He-B... that... That is ...so thoughtful and ...sweet, but... but I – I would never forgive myself if I did that to you. I – I can't! For so, so many reasons. I mean, I ... I... I wouldn't. I wouldn't do that to you. I - I never want to cross that line. I mean... gah, just thinking that I did it, that I could have done it once, unintentionally, and I... not to mention that if I did do it intentionally, fuck, Pallas would send me packing so fucking fast it's not even funny.

HE-B

But, if it would help -

TYTHIA

He-B, I am ... I am not asking you to fall in love with her. And I am not asking her to fall in love with you. I am asking that the two of you be okay ... with me loving both of you. That's it. Love isn't finite, you're right, but time, money, resources, energy... those are. And if I am spending time with you... that is time I am not ... giving her ... unless we are all okay with spending time together. Could I just, I

don't now, date you both and schedule it out? (A breath of laughter) I – I probably could, yeah, if - if you were both willing. Bu that's ... that's not what I want you two to be... friendly. I genuinely think that you would both get along with each other if you could just (sighs)... just get past me.

HE-B

Tythia, you are not the obstacle. And as you say, time is a finite resource. Which... does bring up a point of... well, concern I do have. Not because of my own feelings, but rather because I think you would pull away from me as a result.

TYTHIA

What are you talkijng about?

HE-B

There are physical needs that you would wish to have satisfied and I... might not be as equipped for them as Pallas could

TYTHIA

Please tell me you're joking. Oh my god, no, no, we are not doing the whole "who's better in bed" thing, ok? Because... I remember what you can do to my tentacles and, uh... let's just say it's not something I am dissatisfied with, okay? (a small laugh) I am not going to compare you two in bed.

HE-B

You say that now, but that could change. You may find that I am simply not as desirable a partner. So, if that is the case, it would only be expected that you spend more time with the partner that can fulfill those needs.

TYTHIA

Stop. Just... (Another quiet laugh) Just stop. Please? That is not what this is about. This is not about sex. This isn't about who knows what kind of dates I like or what wines I drink. I mean ...I'm not looking for carbon copies between the wo of you. You both make me better in different ways, and I want to celebrate those differences. I mean, I think that we could all be... good Together. Really good. But, right now? (sighs) Right now, I'd – I'd settle for just being able to sit in a room with the two of you and not feel like the walls are gonna get blown off from theforce of the shouting match.

HE-B

I am willing to try. But, it's not just up to us. Pallas absolutely has a right to her feelings, just as you do.

TYTHIA

Believe me, I know. I just... (sighs) I just wish I could help her understand that my heart is big enough for the both of you.

[Soft jazz plays in the background.]

PAPA ARKELL

I said I don't want to do this bullshit.

[A door slides open.]

ALYSON

Uh, hello?

MADISON

Okay, well, you can either do your crossword or you can eat your lunch. Which is it gonna be, Mr. Arkell?

PAPA ARKELL

I ain't hungry. I already ate before you got here.

MADISON

Four Haley's Honey Buns is not lunch, and if I have to make you eat these Koowee wings I brought all the way from Sarah's place, we're gonna do three crosswords tomorrow.

PAPA ARKELL

(grumbling to himself)

MADISON

Was that guff? Sounded like guff. I don't take guff from old men who don't eat protein.

PAPA ARKELL

Oh, hell. Fine. Goddamn, you are one stubborn ass.

MADISON

Yes, I am. It's on the top of my resume. Also right up there with "Takes no shit" and "eats obstinate old men for breakfast."

PAPA ARKELL

So why the hell are you doing this?

MADISON

Because I like my job. You wouldn't talk to me when I started, and now look at us! Practically best friends!

PAPA ArKELL

(Sighs loudly, then gives in and eats, chrewing audible)

ALYSON

Well, shit. If I had known just giving him a hard time would have worked, I would have done that a whole hell of a lot sooner.

MADISON

(sighs)

Oh, don't think about it like that, Ms. Arkell. People don't like to listen to FAMILY about their own well-being. Sometimes you need a stranger to tell you what to do.

[Papa Arkell grumbles in the background.]

ALYSON

I AM a stranger.

MADISON

That's not what he thinks.

ALYSON

(scoffs)

Is that right?

PAPA ARKELL

Madison? Did-did you bring me the uh... uh...

MADISON

They're... in the bag on your right, next to your soda.

PAPA ARKELL

(a grunt of thanks as he goes back to eating)

[Grrumbles and eating sounds continue in the background, over the music.]

ALYSON

He's... he's different. Like he's in there. Mentally. Not somewhere in Sector 49A.

MADISON

The sessions have helped. But mostly, it's about routine. He's no different than some of my other patients. Dementia, Alzheimer's', Briggs-Nelson, Jonam-Keln disease, they all thrive on a lack of stimulation. It doesn't necessarily stop the disease, but in many cases, having a routine helps prevent further regression. For a time. And in your father's case, since there's no clinical disease causing further degeneration, this is probably all he needs to get back up and running.

ALYSON

So he's... what, he's gonna be normal?

MADISON

(little chuckle)

Oh, Ms. Arkell. No one's normal. That's just an illusion we're all working towards for some unknown reason, a desire to... fit into some universal groupthink.

ALYSON

"For the many to serve the One"... right.

MADISON

Anyway, I was just about to sit down and turn on some tableball for him. Did you want to stay, Ms. Arkell?

ALYSON

Yeah. Actually, have you eaten anything? You can go take a breather. If he's up to it, I want to... to talk to him for a bit.

MADISON

Of course. And... if he gets salty, don't take it out on yourself.

ALYSON

(a sound of acknowledgement)

[Footsteps walk away. A chair is pulled out.]

ALYSON

(sighs)

Hey, uh... how're you doing, old man?

PAPA ARKELL

I'd be better if my kids visited more often and if that damn battle-axe didn't try to force feed me every five minutes. Do I look undernourished to you? Madison seems to think so.

ALYSON

Madison is paid to keep you healthy. Very well, I might add. More than I pay to keep you in here, so at the moment, they're more expensive than you. Remember that.

PAPA ARKELL

Uh-huh. (deep breath and a sigh) It's... starting to come together. Today, Madison tells me, is a good day. Not that I'd know the good from the bad. The wings are good, though... reminds me of a... of a place. Used to take you and your sister to. They – They had really good fries.

ALYSON

My sister... so, wait, you know that I'm -

PAPA ARKELL

No one would sound so much like Sylvia without being one of mine. And you and Cass both do it differently, but... Madison told me you were my daughter. That you run things around here.

ALYSON

So they tell me. (quiet sigh) So... So you know that I'm... I was -

PAPA ARKELL

You're Alyson. That's what you said your name was, right?

ALYSON

Well, um. Not exactly. Uh. Look, I'm not married to the name. That's still on a trial basis.

PAPA ARKELL

For now, you're Alyson, and that's good enough for me. I didn't know you growing up. It's hard to remember when you were so young, but... this is who you are now. I don't pretend to understand how we got here, but... I'm trying to figure it out.

ALYSON

Well, you're doing a pretty good job so far... (clears her throat) I, uh... I wasn't exactly sure when I was going to say anything.

PAPA ARKELL

Why? You, uh... you thought I wouldn't approve?

ALYSON

I don't... I don't think it's that. (exhales) Maybe? I'm not exactly good at the whole... bearing my fucking soul thing.

PAPA ARKELL

Neither am I... but... it's... not my job to approve of your life. I gave up that privilege years ago. I... I wish I'd never left you kids. Because I would have been there for you to... to talk to. I was angry, I was scared and I... I took the coward's way out. I was not a good parent.

ALYSON

You cared. That's something.

PAPA ARKELL

Not the way I should have. I mea, look at you. You treat your people real well. You're not what Sylvia made you. I should have known you could be your own person, that you could be better than that. I...I wish I'd been there.

ALYSON

Yeah... me, too. (A pause.) Hey. You wanna break out?

PAPA ARKELL

(hunt of a rumbled laugh) Well. You gonna break me out of jail?

ALYSON

Well... it's not a jail if I'm the jailkeep. Come on.

SFX: The sound of a broadcast or radio chatter in the background. A sliding door opens. Footsteps enter.

ZEFF

All right, chucklefucks, here's the deal. I am in an exceptionally good mood. I'm in such a good mood that Gorlock could take a cosmic shit and rain clusters of it down onto the Kingery and I'd still walk out of here with a smile on my face. Which is a good thing, because at this point, I think I'd take a Gorlockian shitstorm over dealing with the five of you chucklefucks. So, I am going to try to play mediator one more time and so help me, if we don't come to a solution, I will go find Gorlock to give him an enema myself because all of you are fucking torture.

CAL, CHRIS
(at the same time)
Gross.
(They gasp in unison.)

CHRIS

I don't like it when you do that. That makes me deeply uncomfortable.

CAL

I don't like it when YOU do that, it makes ME deeply uncomfortable. And I said a single word because, uh... yeah, that was gross.

ZEFF

(clears throat)

You good? Good. Fantastic. So. Let's try this again. Commandant Browning put the marines here as a resource given the current fuckery going on. The only reason I'm here is to help the Commandant accomplish that goal. I don't want to be everyone's babysitter here, okay? The pay's shit, for one thing. So, as I stated before, it really seems like we only have two options. Either you go into deep fucking cryostasis like Alyson was because I have had it up to here with all of you -

CAL, CHRIS
No, thank you!
(Another simultaneous gasp.)

ZEFF

(Not a moment's pause)

Or we can work on some basic conflict resolution here and everybody gets to go home at a decent hour so we can come back tomorrow to figure out what's going on with the robotic whackadoos out there.

CAL, CHRIS (same time again) Cybernetic.

CAL

Stop it.!

CHRIS

No, YOU stop it!

CAL

You broke my elbow, you don't get to tell me what to do -

CHRIS

Then stop saying what I'm going to say.

CAL

How am I supposed to do that? I don't know what you're going to say, you haven't said it yet.

ZEFF

Do I need to go find a piece of notebook paper so I can write a note that says, "Do you like each other, check yes or no?" (sharp sigh) You both were paying attention to the case details, it's why you're good at what you do. You should be on the same wavelength here.

REYES

Knowing that the whole thing with Masque involves cybernetics versus robotics isn't exactly some sort of mind meld.

ZEFF

No, but the point is that you CAN work together because you all know the details of the case! And you might see different sides of the case that could lead to finding Masque. You just gotta talk it out. You're... awfully quiet about this, Madeleine.

MADDIE

Well... you've already made up your mind. No point in arguing.

ERIN

You just wanna get out of here.

MADDIE

Fuck, yes, I do, we have a perp to catch! I don't want to be having this pissing match every five minutes. Oh, and also, you don't get to call anyone a chucklefuck in my precinct, Zeffram. Only I do.

ZEFF

Ok, well, stop acting like one and I'll take it back.

MADDIE

You are telling me to do the work that the academy is supposed to do, as opposed to my, y'know, actual job.

ZEFF

Browning gave you 3 of the best marines! Marines follow orders! The more explicit, the better! Maddie, you don't want them to get in your way, then delegate. Give them clear tasks with goals. Oh, and if you don't want them to rough people up, maybe just give them a quick two second primer on due process. Here, I'll show you. (right into authority tone) Marines! As of this moment, you do not place your hands on a civilian. If they refuse to answer questions, you do not press them with physical force. If you feel that you have probable cause to interrogate them further, then you escalate to Captain Grey. Understood?

CHRIS, ERIN, REYES Undersfood, sir.

7FFF

Good! And what are you not gonna ask me, Reyes?

REYES

I'm not gonna ask you why, sir!

7FFF

Damn straight! See? There you go. I don't want them in trouble any more than you do. I want them to be useful to you. And there is a chance that they have heard or seen things you haven't because people know who you are, they don't know these three. Use that to your advantage.

MADDIEge

(one very long, very exasperated sigh) Fine!

ZEFF

(forcedly, falsely cheerful) Great! Yay! Now, back to the desks! Let's work this thing together.

[Footsteps. They walk as they talk. The sounds of business being conducted and strains of music are heard in the backgrounjd.]

PAPA AKRELL

(low whistle)

To think... you built all this.

ALYSON

I mean, gross oversimplification of events. And my people, they helped. A lot. I mean, SOL wouldn't have been nearly what it was if Tythia hadn't gotten involved. She's smart. Too smart. Took me way too long to figure that out. Her dad knew, though. Prok always fucking knew. (sighs) For what it's worth, I'm more like Sylvia than I want to be. I was stupid. I let Prok take the fall for a mistake his kid made. And that mistake wasn't worth losing Prok over. THAT was Sylvia's way to handle the situation. If I'd known then what I know now... I dunno.

[They walk in silence for a moment.]

PAPA AKRELL

From the way Cass talks about you, I didn't think you... took a lot of time to second-guess yourself.

ALYSON

Before? No. Now? (sighs) All the fucking time, it feels like.

PAPA AKRELL

You did what you thought was right.

ALYSON

(laughs)

Are you kidding me? A few years ago, I thought I knew everything. Now? (a wry laugh) Now, I don't even know if I'm a heels or a loafers girl. I don't know if I want to be a power suit or A-line dress girl. Fuck me, I don't even know if that's the right word for that kind of dress!

SLEAXY KIOSK SALESMAN

Did I hear someone say A-line dresses? We have a fine selection of couture fashion at budget prices.

AIYSON

I'm not interested, so fuck off.

SLEAZY KIOSK SALESMAN

Well, you don't have to be such a bitch about it.

ALYSON

The fuck did you just call me?

SLEAZY KIOSK SALESMAN

I, uh... I said nothing, I was just going to point you to a few more stores that might be in your price range. If you're not interested –

ALYSON

No, you know what you fucking called me. You heard him, right?

PAPA AKRELL

Pretty sure he called my daughter a bitch.

ALYSON

That's what I thought, too.

[She decks the Salesman. Boxes crash to the ground beneath him.]

PAPA AKRELL

(chuckles)

That's my girl.

[Shorted out electronics buzz in the background.]

ALYSON

Nah, that was all Sylvia... thought you didn't like violence.

PAPA AKRELL

I like your backbone, though. Feel any better?

ALYSON

Not really, no. Thought hitting him would make me feel better, but I'm still pissed. That didn't fix it, either. He's still gonna harass another woman at some point. I thought I cleaned up all the trash that the AI hired. Looks like I missed one. Not like I approve the permits here anyway, so... guess that's something else I need to review again.

PAPA AKRELL

What're you gonna do about it, then? If you don't want to do it Sylvia's way, what then?

[She walks over and drives her heel into the salesman.]

SLEAZY KIOSK SALESMAN

(whimpers in pain)

ALYSON

Hope you liked doing business while you could, buddy. I'm not a bitch. I'm the boss. And your permit to do business is fucking revoked.

[Sci-tech running, high-pitched sound of programs running. Radio chatter is heard in the background as well.]

REYES

(mid-thought here) This is every single person we think could be involved with this whole... Army of the Evolved.

CAL

That is a significantly larger list of suspects than what we had.

REYES

Well, we also were working off less evidence, more supposition. Oh, and I read your case files so I figured we'd do better to look outside of the people you'd already tagged.

CAL

You what?

REYES

Anyway, putting that to one side, our list does need to be narrowed down, huh?. For starters, we have to throw out the professor working on the weird synesthesia drug thing. That was a non-starter.

MADDIE

Yeah, but you were on the right track. The attacks were moving in that direction, and you were working the beat like I told you to. But, with all of this Army of the Evolved crap, they haven't really had a focus on chemical enhancement.

ERIN

Right, not like anyone's coming out of a meeting with Masque sporting an amped up metabolism because of some new drug.

MADDIE

Bingo.

REYES

Plus, we did almost catch Masque before that! Didn't your guy grab the mask that attached to their face?

CAL, CHRIS

(in unison again)

It was their face.

ZEFF

That's gonna get old real quick.

ERIN

I think it's kind of cute in a way. It's like they're syncing up. The Holmes to his Watson.

CAL

All those inputs mean that this Masque character has to be on some neural blockers, though, because that would be so much input that - I'm sorry, am I Watson in this scenario?

ERIN

Well, yeah. You're Watson for Captain Grey, too.

MADDIE

(chuckling)

Okay, you can stay.

CAL

I am insulted, no - no, I'm hurt -

MADDIE

(laughs harder)

Jesus, Cal, pull the stick out. I'm fucking with you.

CAL

You should be worried. She only does this when she's at the end of her rope. We're two seconds away from her going nuclear. Or checking out. I'm not sure which is worse.

MADDIE

(sighs)

Cal, the only thing I'm thinking is that we are still no closer to finding Masque than we were when we started. And while all of this has been a fun little chat down memory lane about all the ways our special counselors have been taking special pains to get in our way -

ZEFF

(under his breath)

Oh, it was going so well -

MADDIE

We have nothing new to show for it. Nothing. So, at the moment, yeah, I'm gonna just have to laugh about all of this because right now we literally need a lead to walk in here screaming "Please, someone, help me! I'm being chased by a rogue AI!" to figure it out.

[Sliding doors open, hurried footsteps come rushing in]

HOOKS

Please, someone else, help me! Socks is coming for me!

MADDIE

(surprised laugh)
I'll take it!

CAL, CHRIS (together)

You're fucking kidding me.

MADDIE

Hooks! Where the hell have you been? Are you okay?

HOOKS

Oooh, Captain Gray, thank god it's you. Look, I don't have a lot of time. I finally got away from her. I mean, I did a pretty good job of covering up how I got out, but she's... she's everywhere. You need to be ready. She's going to be here in maybe a few days.

MADDIE

Woah, woah, slow down, Hooks.

CAL

WHO is on the way?

HOOKS

The AI that controls Socks. And I'm pretty sure she's working with someone here. Dr. Bowerman! And... and Masque. They're all working with her.

REYES

I KNEW IT!

[Kingery theme plays]

The Kingery, season eleven, episode ten. "The Physics of Finite Resources"

Featuring the voice talents of:

Max Fleischhacker as He-B

Kathryn Pryde as Tythia

Justin Fife as Papa Arkell

Melissa Autumn Hearne as Alyson

Bridget Guziewicz as Madison

Russell Gold as Zeff

Christopher Gilstrap as Cal

Kaitlyn Kliman as Chris

Carissa M. as Reyes

Alicia Laine Pickens as Madeleine Gray

Kristine Chester as Erin

Dan Beddow as Sleazy Kiosk Salesman

And Perry Whittle as Hooks

Sensitivity Reader, Kristine Chester

Written by Kathryn Pryde

Story by Tilly Bridges, with Susan Bridges, Rene Christine Jones, Pete Milan, Kathryn Pryde and Perry Whittle

Kingery Theme by Tom Stitzer

"The Parting of the Ways-Part 1", "Study and Relax", "Rumination", "Calmant", "Covert Affair", "Junkyard Tribe", and "Prelude and Action" By Kevin MacLeod at incompetech.com

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Directed by Dave Morgan

Assistant Director Adam Blanford

Produced by Pendant Productions

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[Kingery theme fades out]