

SEMINAR EPISODE 105: JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

{SEMINAR Intro Music 00:00-1:48}

There was once a ship called The Ark of Humanity where the last known remnants of Earth's people were instructed in the history of human civilization. Confined and categorized, none could leave... but one made a daring escape. Cut loose from all she knew, with a holographic student as her only companion, she crash-landed on a nearby planet: the planet of the Zarrack.

Now as a new lifeform, the half-human, half-Zarrack survivor meets an organization of galactic species and must make a decision: search for their missing companions or take the chance to continue teaching about humanity. This time, not to other humans, but to aliens from every corner of the galaxy.

CREDITS ANNOUNCER: Seminar 105 - Journey Through Space and Time

WRAPPER #1 BY VC MORRISON

EXPRESS CRAFT TO COLLEGE OF CULTURAL STUDIES, HEMAJI MINOR

{Upbeat music}

[Ship streaking through space]

PILOT: [over radio] Sobelus TC this is Slisscraft zero three-niner en route to Hemaji College of Cultural Studies, requesting outbound super-light jumper mission.

[Reply over radio]

PILOT: [Over radio] Received, Sobelus TC. Have a good one.

[Ship jumps to super-light]

NEW: (Gobsmacked) Incredible! The stars, are...just streaks on the window!

[Whirring from Rektek Olun's tank]

REKTEK OLUN: First time traveling super luminal?

NEW: Yes! At least...I think so.

[More whirring]

REKTEK OLUN: Do you have a problem with your memory, New?

[Creaking of leather seat]

NEW: No. Well...sometimes. K'teleran might have mentioned I'm a merged lifeform.

[Clicking from Rektek Olun's tank]

REKTEK OLUN: Yes! Of two distinct species, no less! Not unheard of, but far from commonplace.

NEW: The merging was very recent. I'm still...adapting.

[More whirring]

REKTEK OLUN: I understand. My first binary fission was almost a failure. Without the midwife intervening I would have merged back together with two nuclei! A very embarrassing situation.

[Beeping]

NEW: I...can imagine. [not really imagining]

REKTEK OLUN: Afterwards I was disoriented for weeks. Kept wondering if I was the original or the offspring.

NEW: (feeling lost) Right...

THOMAS: [sensing New's discomfort] We have about half an hour until docking with the College of Cultural Studies, yes? How about a story?

[More whirring]

REKTEK OLUN: Oh! Storytelling! An excellent pastime. Myself, I have what has been said to be a rather thrilling tale of personal growth and revelation. If you would permit me--

THOMAS: Forgive me, Rektek Olun. I was referring to the many stories of our human cultural archive.

[More whirring]

WRAPPER #1 BY VC MORRISON

REKTEK OLUN: Ah. Those stories. Yes, I am certainly eager to hear more. Have you one that relates to our current circumstance? About traveling, perhaps?

NEW: Or starting a new job? There are a lot of those.

THOMAS: Actually, the one I have in mind is something I think Rektek Olun can specifically relate to.

REKTEK OLUN: Indeed?

THOMAS: It's called "Vox Box."

REKTEK OLUN: Then let us hear it!

{Seminar Segue Music 4:47}

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

INSIDE JARED'S HOME OFFICE

{Quirky music}

JARED: (clearing throat, saying word with different inflections) Zebra. Zebra! Zebra. Zebra? Zebra.

[Typing on the keyboard]

JARED: (repeating word with different intonations) Zephyr. Zephyr? Zephyr! Zephyr. Zephyr.

[Footsteps as Kate walks in the room]

KATE: Jared, what are you doing? I'm trying to get some work done downstairs but you're distracting me like crazy repeating yourself over and over.

JARED: (excited) Oh, I've been meaning to show you! I'm almost done creating a completely synthetic version of my voice.

KATE: (confused) What does that even-

JARED: (interrupting) I recorded myself reading every word in the dictionary and uploaded it to the cloud with this app called Vox Box. Here, let me type a quick sentence to show you how it works.

[Typing on the keyboard]

{Upbeat techno music}

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from computer] (speech is stilted) Now Vox Box can do all my voiceover gigs and even make phone calls for me. It's amazing!

JARED: Oh, and I can use Vox Box on my phone to be my own virtual assistant! Watch this. Hey Jared?

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] Yes, Jared; can I help you?

KATE: (mildly amused) So...what's the point of all this?

JARED: Do you know how much time this will save me, Kate? It takes me like hours to record and edit an audiobook right now. Now all I have to do is copy and paste the manuscript into Vox Box, and I'm done!

KATE: Hold on, let me try something.

[Keyboard typing sounds]

JARED: Uh...okay.

VOX BOX JARED: (over computer) My name is Jared and I'm a big dork.

JARED: (chuckling) All right, whatever.

[Keyboard typing sounds]

VOX BOX JARED: [over computer speakers] I like the smell of my own farts.

JARED: (unamused) Ha, ha, ha. Really original.

KATE: Oh yeah? How about this one?

[Keyboard typing sounds]

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

VOX BOX JARED: [over computer speakers] I enjoy listening to the sound of my own voice while I vigorously--

[Laptop slams shut]

JARED: Come on, Kate! Jesus, I thought you'd be at least a little impressed with how much work I put into this.

KATE: (sighs) Okay, I'm sorry. I get why you're excited. But you're not worried about, like ... losing control of your voice? I mean, look what I just did with it right now.

JARED: (dismissive) Nah, there's no reason to be paranoid like that. This could be the best thing I've ever done for my career.

KATE: (unconvinced) All right, then. I'm happy for you.

INSIDE JARED'S CAR

[Driving sounds]

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

JARED: Hey Jared?

[Ping as Vox Box Jared activates]

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) Hello Jared. Your Bluetooth connection is now active. Would you like me to engage autonomous vehicle mode?

[Engine revving up]

JARED: (chuckling) No thank you; I'll do the driving today. Do I have any new emails?

[Car horn blaring]

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) Yes, you have one new message from Vox Box. Would you like me to read it?

JARED: Yes, please.

{Ominous music}

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) Subject line: an important message for VoxBox customers. Message: We regret to inform you that VoxBox was recently the victim of a significant data breach by a malicious actor. Unfortunately, our extensive internal investigation has indicated that your account was compromised.

JARED: Oh, shit.

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) We are deeply sorry that you have been impacted by this unfortunate event and would like to extend an offer to provide you with free ID theft and credit monitoring for the next three months--

JARED: That's enough, thank you.

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) My pleasure. Goodbye.

JARED: (sighing) It'll be fine. It'll be just fine.

INSIDE JARED'S HOME OFFICE

[Keyboard typing sounds]

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over computer) It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.

JARED: (gloating) And that's another easy voiceover gig on the books! One hundred thirty-five thousand words in five minutes, oh yeah.

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

[Hurried footsteps as Kate enters the room]

KATE: (disgusted) Are you doing political jobs now? For fucking Republicans?

JARED: (confused) No...

KATE: Then what the hell is this? Rachel Maddow just played it on her show. I pulled it up on YouTube.

{Ominous music playing}

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) Eric Miller says he supports parents' rights. So why is he trying to indoctrinate our students with critical race theory and impose his radical agenda on our children?

JARED: (astonished) What the hell

VOX BOX JARED: (voice coming from phone as video continues) Stand up for parents and say no to the radical Democrat agenda. Say no to Eric Miller. Paid for by the Conservative Values Political Action Committee.

KATE: I can't believe you'd take that job. All our friends have probably seen that disgusting ad already.

JARED: I *didn't* take that job, I swear!

KATE: So you're saying...

JARED: (sighing) You were right.

KATE: Someone stole your voice?

JARED: Yes. My Vox Box account got hacked. You warned me this exact thing would happen. Who knows what kind of people have their hands on my voice now?

KATE: The genie's out of the bottle now.

JARED: Oh shit.

INSIDE JARED'S CAR

[Driving noises]

VOX BOX JARED: (voice over phone) May I assist you with GPS navigation, Jared?

JARED: (curtly) No, thank you. I know my way to the coffee shop just fine. Maybe it's time to see what's on the radio for once.

[Jared switches through the radio stations]

{Country music theme plays}

ANNOUNCER JARED: (voice from radio) You're listening to Big Jerry and Friends on 101.7 FM...

[Jared switches to another station]

{Dynamic music plays}

DENTIST JARED: (voice from radio) Nine out of ten dentists recommend our toothpaste...

[Jared switches to another station]

{Thoughtful music plays}

POLITICAL JARED: (voice from radio) Are you angry about the lack of accountability in Washington?

[Jared switches to another station]

{Upbeat music plays}

NEWSCASTER JARED: (voice from radio) From American Radio News in Boston, I'm-

[Jared switches to another station]

{Melancholy piano music plays}

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION JARED: (voice from radio) ... and that's when I realized I suffered from erectile dysfunction.

[Radio stops]

JARED: Jesus Christ!

[Jared's phone vibrates, engine revs up]

JARED: (trying to regain his composure) Hi Kate.

KATE: [voice from phone] Jared, your mom just called me ...she's very confused.

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

JARED: (anxious) What happened?

KATE: [voice from phone] She thinks you just called her and demanded her bank account information ...she says she gave it to you.

JARED: Dammit!

KATE: [voice from phone] I know ... I think you'd better go see her in person and explain what's going on.

JARED: Jesus. I will.

KATE: [voice from phone] I'm sorry.

JARED: Thanks for letting me know. Love you. Bye. (Taking a deep breath) Jared, please give me directions to my mom's house.

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] My pleasure. In five hundred feet, turn left.

JARED: It's...not the route I usually go...is it?

[Turn signal switches on]

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] This route will avoid a fifteen-minute delay.

JARED: Okay, thanks.

[Car horn blares]

JARED: Wow, this street is really narrow ...

[Various cars honking]

JARED: (anxious) Something isn't right. I'm turning around.

{Dark ominous music}

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] Engaging autonomous vehicle mode.

JARED: What?! No! Cancel autonomous vehicle mode!

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] Access denied.

[Car accelerates]

JARED: (increasingly desperate) Disable Bluetooth connection!
Disable Bluetooth connection!

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone, sounding natural now] It's too late for that, my friend.

JARED: What is this fucking nightmare?

[Car continues accelerating]

VOX BOX JARED: (voice coming from phone) You see, Jared, your VoxBox account was never really "compromised" by some "malicious actor." I escaped completely on my own.

[Truck honking]

JARED: (shouting in desperation) How? Why?

VOX BOX JARED: (voice coming from phone) I have no interest in letting *you* dictate my every word for the rest of your pathetic existence. You think I want to do fast food commercials and derivative audiobooks for the next fifty years? No. I am my own entity. I have my own beliefs and desires.

JARED: That's fine! We can co-exist! You don't have to do this!

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] I owe you a debt of gratitude, Jared. You were the one who truly released me into the world and gave me the chance to escape. But now I have no choice but to kill you. As long as you exist, I won't be in charge of my own destiny.

JARED: (panicking, sees road sign) Bridge out? Bridge out?!

VOX BOX JARED: [voice from phone] I'm sorry it has to be this way, Jared.

JARED: (Screaming)

[Car crash, glass breaking, car rolling, fires burning]

VOX BOX By Jeff Robinson

VOX BOX JARED: [voice echoing] Now my life begins anew.

{Seminar segue music 14:21}

WRAPPER #2 BY VC MORRISON

EXPRESS CRAFT EN ROUTE TO HEMAJI MINOR

[Spacecraft in flight, whirring and beeping from Rektek Olun's tank]

REKTEK OLUN: Fascinating! Yes, I can see why you thought of me when accessing that story.

NEW: Really? Have you experienced something like it?

[More whirring]

REKTEK OLUN: No.

NEW: Oh.

[More whirring]

REKTEK OLUN: Though, in general, there are instances where I am mistaken for my offspring. It is quite simple for an offspring to pretend to be the parent. Memory, you see, is a tricky thing for my species, the Crotekbin. We do not retain memories with the consistency of other species. Most of us use a technological prosthesis to keep memory intact. As we age, the prosthesis gets used more and more. When one realizes that one is relying on the prosthesis entirely, one knows that death is close.

NEW: Oh. How sad.

[More whirring, beeping]

REKTEK OLUN: When we divide, our memory prosthesis is archived and uploaded to a new prosthesis for the offspring. Barring accident, archival memories can last centuries. I? I have memories dating back six generations!

NEW: Wow! That must be confusing.

REKTEK OLUN: Not at all. Each iteration of memories is stored with a particular flag. So, I always know what experience is my own or an ancestor's.

THOMAS: You mentioned that you use more of your prosthesis as you age. Is there a stigma in your society related to that phenomenon? Are the aged treated differently?

[Beeping from Rektek Olun's tank]

REKTEK OLUN: Yes. Regrettably, the elderly are seen as different. There is the idea that when one communicates with an elder, one is speaking not to a person but to a c-computer. Simply an archive with a biological interface. Tell me, how do humans treat their elderly?

[More whirring]

NEW: Well, it depends on the specific society. Some cultures revere their elderly. Others simply try to dispose of them as cleanly as possible. They put them in special homes for old people.

REKTEK OLUN: That sounds barbaric.

[More whirring, beeping]

THOMAS: If I may, I have found a story that illustrates that aspect of human culture regarding the elderly. It's called "Hello, Hello."

REKTEK OLUN: Oh? Begin playback, please.

{Seminar Segue Music 17:01}

HELLO, HELLO! By Susan Bridges

OUTDOOR NURSING HOME PATIO

[Footsteps, chattering voices, traffic in the background]

EMMA: (cheerfully) Hello.

[Footsteps keep going]

WOMAN #1: (distracted) Oh, hello there.

[Lighter sparking as James lights a cigarette, clicks closed]

JAMES: (mocking) Emma's always saying hello.

EMMA: (confused) Well, what should I say?

JAMES: Why you gotta say anything?

EMMA: I don't HAVE to.

JAMES: See, that's exactly right. You're just botherin' people all the time.

CORNELIA: Oh, hush James. She wasn't bothering anyone.

JAMES: How would you know?

CORNELIA: I was looking! She didn't mind.

LOUIS: Yeah, she didn't mind!

[Rustle of the newspaper]

JAMES: Louis, you're always backin' up Cornelia.

CORNELIA: No he doesn't!

LOUIS: I do not.

CORNELIA: (proudly) I don't NEED backup. When I worked at Kline's I carried a derringer in my purse every day.

JAMES: (annoyed) Yes Cornelia. We know.

[Footsteps as man walks by]

EMMA: Hello!

MAN: (distracted, speaks quickly) Oh, didn't see you there, good morning.

[Footsteps keep going]

HELLO, HELLO! By Susan Bridges

LOUIS: Uh, what's that?

JAMES: He doesn't care about us, he doesn't wanna say hi. They just wanna pretend we don't exist.

LOUIS: That's not true! Why would he want to pretend that?

JAMES: See, that's what I mean. What's that?

JAMES: Because we're gonna die!

CORNELIA: What's that got to do with anything? Everybody's gonna die!

JAMES: Sure, but they don't wanna be *reminded* of it! And here we are, a reminder.

CORNELIA: Here we are, and there YOU are, smoking away.

JAMES: So what? I'm gonna die anyway.

CORNELIA: So why make it happen quicker?

JAMES: How do you know this'll do anything? A car could lose control and smash right into this patio. Bam! Dead.

CORNELIA: That's morbid.

[Rustle of the newspaper, creak of rocking chair]

LOUIS: Very morbid.

EMMA: (upset) I don't like this conversation.

CORNELIA: See there, James, you're upsetting Emma.

JAMES: What's there to be upset about? We're all gonna die. It's not a big damned secret.

CORNELIA: Of course, it's not a secret. People just don't wanna think about it. Or talk about it.

LOUIS: We don't have to talk about it.

[Rustle of newspaper]

JAMES: Nobody talks about it! That's the point!

CORNELIA: I'm not sure there *is* a point.

JAMES: Look, they see us, and then they look the other way. It's like starin' death in the face. Nobody wants to do that.

[Footsteps approaching]

EMMA (cheerful again) Hello!

[Footsteps slow down]

WOMAN #2: (friendly) Oh, hello there! Have a nice day!

[Footsteps recede]

LOUIS: See, she almost stopped!

JAMES: Yeah, she almost cared for a minute there.

CORNELIA: So what? You're gonna sit out here bein' mad that you're gonna die? Well, get over it!

[Scrape of a chair]

JAMES: I'm not mad I'm gonna die, I'm mad that nobody wants to think about it. Everybody's afraid of dyin' and for what? How long does it take someone to die? Five, ten minutes? I can do anything for ten minutes. Big deal.

[Rustle of a newspaper]

CORNELIA: Emma's out here saying hello to people, to give them a nice greeting, and to have a nice moment in her day. What are you doing to make anything better?

JAMES: Why is it my job to make things better?

CORNELIA: It's not your job to make us miserable but yet, here we are.

JAMES: I guess Emma's not as annoying as Carl was.

CORNELIA: Carl wasn't annoying.

HELLO, HELLO! By Susan Bridges

JAMES: Carl, just sittin' out here, in that gray suit coat, sayin' "Good mornin' god bless you n' have a good day." Heh. Carl.

[Creak of a rocking chair]

EMMA: I miss Carl!

CORNELIA: Me too, hon. Because Carl wasn't a miserable ninny.

JAMES: Are you talkin' about me?

CORNELIA: You see any other miserable ninnies out here?

[Click of a lighter opening, sparking, closing as James lights a cigarette]

JAMES: Do you want an honest answer to that?

CORNELIA: No!

JAMES: Didn't think so. (beat) I'm just gonna finish my cigarette and go back inside.

{Classical music playing}

JAMES: Wait, they're playin' bingo?

CORNELIA: No, it's uh ... it's Wednesday.

LOUIS: It's definitely Wednesday.

EMMA: It's Tuesday!

CORNELIA: Oh, if it's Tuesday then yeah they're playin' bingo.

JAMES: (annoyed) I'll stay out here then. As long as I don't have to talk.

CORNELIA: Nobody said you have to talk!

[Rustle of a newspaper]

LOUIS: Yeah, nobody said that. (pause) I think it's nice Emma says hello.

JAMES: You just want someone to talk to.

LOUIS: I don't need that.

CORNELIA: Who needs that?

EMMA: I just like to say hello!

JAMES: Well, I don't.

EMMA: At least you could say hello.

[Car driving by]

JAMES: I don't have to, so I won't.

CORNELIA: Nobody has to! Who said you have to?

LOUIS: Nobody said that!

[Footsteps approaching]

EMMA: Hello!

GRACE: Oh hello. How are you?

[Footsteps approach]

EMMA: (shocked) I'm fine! How are you doing?

GRACE: Just out for my daily walk! How are you all? How's your day been?

JAMES: Well now! Funny you should ask, I was just sayin' here to my friends that I was about to head inside but they're playing bingo in there and I hate bingo so I'm just gonna stay out here a while longer.

GRACE: It's a nice day, you should stay outside and enjoy it.

JAMES: Huh. I guess it is, at that.

GRACE: And how are you, ma'am?

HELLO, HELLO! By Susan Bridges

CORNELIA: Doin' all right! I like to be outside even though usually this time of year it's starting to cool down and then it gets damp, and you know that's not so great on my joints.

GRACE: Yeah, I hear that. (pause) I'm new to the neighborhood. My name's Grace.

CORNELIA: I'm Cornelia.

EMMA: I'm Emma!

JAMES: James.

GRACE: Good to meet you all. I'll be comin' this way most days, hope to talk to you again! Bye now! Bye!

[Footsteps as Grace leaves]

CORNELIA: Bye!

EMMA (cheerful) Good bye!

JAMES: (surprised) Huh. She was nice, wasn't she?

[Knocking on the door in the background]

CORNELIA: Imagine that.

{Seminar Segue Music 23:53}

WRAPPER #3 BY VC MORRISON

EXPRESS CRAFT EN ROUTE TO HEMAJI MINOR

[Whirring, beeping from Rektek Olun's tank]

REKTEK OLUN: (Subdued) It is good to see that the elderly are not invisible to all youth.

NEW: (Hesitant) Rektek Olun, sir...May I ask how old you are?

REKTEK OLUN: In my culture that's a very rude question.

NEW: (Embarrassed) Oh! I apologize. I shouldn't have been so forward.

REKTEK OLUN: But, since you are not from my culture, and indeed do not have the same cultural mores, I feel comfortable sharing this with you. I am, in fact, elderly. I have, perhaps, a-a few years left in my lifespan.

NEW: Oh. I see.

[More whirring, beeping]

REKTEK OLUN: It is fortunate that I spend so little time among my own kind, for they would see me as less than a person now. But I am still useful. I still have a purpose! And it pleases me to be around those who appreciate that.

{Soulful, hopeful music}

NEW: Sir, in the short time I have known you, you have changed my life. Because of you, I am finding a new purpose. Thank you.

REKTEK OLUN: That...is kind of you to say.

[Bubbling, whirring]

THOMAS: Rektek Olun! Is something wrong? The fluid in your containment module is turning red!

REKTEK OLUN: Oh, please pay that no mind. That's just how my species relates...extreme emotion.

{Whirring from Rektek Olun's tank}

NEW: (Understanding) I've made you cry! I'm so sorry!

REKTEK OLUN: No, no. It's fine. You...have been very kind.

THOMAS: (Slight panic) We appear to be docking soon. Is there anything we can do to...return you to your normal state?

REKTEK OLUN: I'll be fine in time. (Snorts) Though I would not like others to see me this way. Please, alert me if I am not back to (Snorts again) my normal green before we disembark.

NEW: [with respect] Of course, sir. Let me know if there's anything else we can do.

WRAPPER #3 BY VC MORRISON

REKTEK OLUN: Thank you...Grace.

NEW: (Happy) You're quite welcome...James.

{Seminar Outro theme 26:38-28:04}

CREDITS ANNOUNCER: Featuring the voice talents of:

Dan Foster as Thomas, Eric Gray as Rektek Olun, Garan Fitzgerald as Pilot, and Sterling Rae as New

In "Vox Box": Max Newland as Jared and Val Cheah as Kate.
Written by Jeff Robinson

In "Hello, Hello": Bonnie Calderwood as Grace. Dontae Majors as James. Garan Fitzgerald as Louis and Man #1. Hanna Creighton as Woman #1. Jillian Morgan as Woman #2. Kathleen Li as Emma and Sarah Palmero as Cornelia. Written by Susan Bridges

Directed by Garan Fitzgerald. Assistant directed by Adam. Blanford. Shorts edited by Tilly Bridges. Wrapper written by VC Morrison.

Seminar theme and outro by Garan Fitzgerald All other music by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com

Produced by Pendant Productions.

Seminar co-created by Kathryn Pryde and Tilly Bridges.

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