

**{Intro theme in background 00:00-00:48}**

NARRATOR: The last known remnants of Earth's people are adrift in space, aboard the Ark of Humanity. Its sole purpose: to instruct each generation 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. This planet holds the sleeping archive of a culture even more ancient and unique than Earth. And the planet itself may change them more than they expect. This...is Seminar..

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**{SEMINAR Theme up full 00:50-1:26}**

**SEMINAR #85: "Prepare the Experiment"**

**SEMINAR WRAPPER #1 by Kathryn Pryde**

Story begins 1:28

[Electronic echo]

[Footsteps and mechanical noises as Thomas enters]

THOMAS: Alice, I received your message. You wanted to see me?

ALICE: Yes. Come take a seat over here. I'll be done in a second.

[Mechanical noise as Thomas sits]

THOMAS: "Done in a second"...Well, that colloquialism...it-it's very strange, isn't it? You've already taken approximately 12.3 seconds and yet you do not show any indication of stopping-

ALICE: (Chuckles)

[Electronic echo ends]

ALICE: Uh...and Alex calls *me* pedantic.

THOMAS: Oh, I-I didn't mean it like that! I was just hoping, w-well, if you wanted to speak to me and now I'm *here* then you wouldn't delay-

ALICE: I'm teasing, Thomas, it's fine. (chuckles) You're right, anyway. I was putting off the conversation. We need to talk about Alex.

THOMAS: (nervously) Hmmm...I don't follow.

ALICE: You are still really bad at lying. But, it's okay. I already know Alex has been dealing with a lot of...anger...and feelings that I

don't think he knows how to handle. So, I just wanted to let you know that Zerash is giving him a full physical right now so we can figure out how to help him.

THOMAS: Are you sure that's a good idea? What if it just makes it worse? I mean, Alice, he's really worried about you and it makes *me* worried that you'll leave us -

ALICE: Thomas, hey. Don't-Don't think like that. Don't let what Alex is saying get to you. If I ever leave here, I won't go without you.

THOMAS: What do you mean?

ALICE: The journey sucks if you're alone. And you're both my friends. But sometimes we have to take risks. (sighs) Can you find a story for me? Play "FIRST DATE/FIRST CONTACT."

{SEMINAR segue music 3:21}

**FIRST DATE/FIRST CONTACT By VC Morrison begins 3:25**

[Low rumble of ship's engine]

[Electronic shimmer as two people step through a portal]

VIOLET: Ooh. What's in here?

PEGGY: Something amazing!

VIOLET: (Disappointed) It's...just a room with a bunch of consoles. Not very amazing.

PEGGY: (clears her throat) So, a hundred years ago...

{Synth music starts}

PEGGY: ...when they first discovered Gateway technology, scientists had a great idea to explore space using Gates. But of course you need a Gate on the other end to go anywhere. So they launched these ships into space aimed at particular planets. Pods really. Just a cockpit, engine, and a Gate. And every day someone would come in, check the ship, refuel, make upgrades if necessary, and leave. And they figured in a few generations' time we'd be able to start a colony somewhere.

VIOLET: Huh. Must've skipped that day in history class.

PEGGY: At the time it was a big deal. But over time, technology got better and they found faster ways to travel to other planets, and these ships became obsolete. They're like a footnote in history books now. Nobody cares. But they're still there, patiently making their way to their destination.

VIOLET: And this is where we are? We walked through that Gate and we're in deep space, right now?

PEGGY: Yup! We're on the first launched vessel. Actually, Model A3-1, also known as the *Optimus*. It's headed to Alpha Centauri. If all goes well it should get there in another...(checks console) 20 years. Let me open the shield so we can see outside.

[Button clicks]

[Console beeps]

[Servos whir as the shield opens]

VIOLET: Wow! So many stars! You can't see that many anymore. Too much light pollution. Hey, what's that over there? Looks like it's moving.

PEGGY: I was getting to that! Like I said, at first these ships were a big deal. Engineers came to check them daily. But as interest waned, maintenance visits went from daily to weekly. Now these days some intern checks them once a month just to make sure they're still running.

VIOLET: And that's you.

PEGGY: Yup!

VIOLET: Well, I have to hand it to you. This is the perfect make-out spot. Starry sky, light-years away from the nearest person...

PEGGY: Uh, y-yeah. Anyway, I was in here one day sweeping the...I mean...checking the display monitors, and I noticed a signal. It wasn't there before. Looked like the ship had just come in range of something.

VIOLET: Another ship?

PEGGY: That's what I thought, but what would be traveling that slow? It would have to be adrift or something. I tried to figure out what the transmission was. It's a series of beeps. Listen.

[Click of buttons]

[Sequential beeping]

VIOLET: Yeah, that's definitely a pattern. Not random.

PEGGY: And I checked and it doesn't fit any of the codes used in the merchant fleet.

**FIRST DATE/FIRST CONTACT By VC Morrison**

VIOLET: Secret military code?

PEGGY: Or...something more exciting!

VIOLET: Like....

PEGGY: Aliens!

VIOLET: We've colonized over a dozen planets and moons and haven't found anything more intelligent than algae, and you've found a civilization so advanced they have their own interstellar spacecraft?

PEGGY: Yeah! How awesome is that?

VIOLET: (suspicious) Why am I really here, Peggy?

PEGGY: Well, Violet, if we do meet aliens, I thought it would be good to have a language expert here. You can share in the glory of the discovery!

VIOLET: You know...when I met you at that party and you said you were looking for a cunning linguist, I thought you had something else in mind.

PEGGY: Uh, anyway, I made some changes to the ship's trajectory to get closer to the signal.

VIOLET: Uh, isn't that, like, bad?

PEGGY: I'll get the ship back on course later. Not a problem. So now we're close enough to get a visual! Wanna see?

VIOLET: (sighs) Sure, why not?

[Button clicks]

PEGGY: Let me just...

[Beeping noise]

PEGGY:...zoom in here...

VIOLET: It's definitely moving.

{More dynamic music starts}

PEGGY: Looks like it's...writhing. Let me get closer.

[Beeping noise]

VIOLET: Oh my God! What are those things?

PEGGY: Kinda look like giant beetles. Space beetles! Wow! I've gotta make sure this thing is recording! We're gonna get a Nobel Prize for this!

VIOLET: It's not just...them. They're swarming over something. How do you make this thing zoom? [Console beeps] Ah, got it.

PEGGY: It must be their nest or something.

VIOLET: It's certainly got a lot of holes.

PEGGY: Oh, wait. That's...that's a ship! They're-they're eating the ship!

VIOLET: Well, I'm guessing those beeps are a distress call then, right?

PEGGY: Yeah...let me see if I can ignite the engines, get this thing closer.

VIOLET: And do what exactly? Fire phasers at it? What do you think you're flying?

PEGGY: Well, we have to do something!

VIOLET: Yeah, we go and get somebody who has a better idea what to do in this situation. [Footsteps] Come on!

PEGGY: Um, I think we've been noticed.

VIOLET: Holy crap! Look how fast they're going! This is our cue to leave, by the way.

PEGGY: I think you're right.

[Footsteps]

[Metallic thumps]

[Electronic shimmer as they enter Gate]

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BACK HOME IN THE GATE ROOM

[Hum of energy powering gates in background]

VIOLET: Come on! Close the Gate!

PEGGY: It's not working!

VIOLET: You've got to be kidding me.

PEGGY: Must be something wrong on the other side.

VIOLET: I'm not going back in there! [Footsteps] Peggy! Get back here!

[Electronic shimmer as Peggy enters Gate]

PEGGY: (Distorted through Gate) Shit! The mechanism's corroded over here! It won't close!

[Thumping, gets progressively louder]

VIOLET: Nobody ever checks the freaking Gate mechanism?

PEGGY: (Distorted) Sorry! It was on my list...

VIOLET: Why can't we just close it on this side?

PEGGY: (Distorted) Safety feature. So nobody gets trapped floating in deep space.

VIOLET: That's dumb. What happens if there's a breach?

PEGGY: (Distorted) Shield goes up, blocking the Gate.

VIOLET: Okay...let's do that, then.

PEGGY: (Distorted) How?

VIOLET: Isn't there an escape hatch or something?

PEGGY: (Distorted) Sure. I'm saying how do I do that without dying?

[Cracking noises]

[Scratching]

VIOLET: You know what? I think it's moot. Those things are breaking in. There's going to be a vacuum any moment now. Get out of there!

[Running footsteps]

[Electronic shimmer as Peggy runs through the Gate]

[Crashing noise]

[Incredible gust of wind]

**FIRST DATE/FIRST CONTACT By VC Morrison**

[Peggy collides with Violet]

PEGGY and VIOLET: Oof!

[Massive metal shield slides down; slams into place]

PEGGY: (breathing hard) Well...that was close.

VIOLET: You can get off me now. (suggestively) I mean...if you want.

[Scratching on the metal shield]

PEGGY: I don't think it's over yet.

VIOLET: How strong is that shield?

[Stronger bangs]

[Sound of metal bending]

PEGGY: Apparently not strong enough.

VIOLET: We need to leave right now!

PEGGY: Twenty meters to the elevator, then down a few floors, through the lobby, and out. Not enough time before other safety features are activated and we're trapped here.

VIOLET: You know, a simple Gate to the outside on every floor would fix that. Like in every other building??

PEGGY: Old building. (pause) Oh! I'm so stupid!

VIOLET: No comment.

PEGGY: We're surrounded by Gates!

[Metal rending]

VIOLET: To other ships!

PEGGY: No time to argue! Go! Now!

[Footsteps]

[Electronic shimmer as Peggy and Violet enter Gate]

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SPACESHIP CONTROL ROOM

VIOLET: Close the Gate!

[Button clicks]

[Gate noise stops]

[Hum of the ship is the only sound left]

PEGGY: I...I guess we're safe.

VIOLET: For certain definitions of the word. Where are we now?

[Button clicks]

PEGGY: On our way to...

{Synth music starts again}

PEGGY: ...Kepler-10b.

VIOLET: Kepler-10b? What's that?

PEGGY: We call it Planet Tyson now. Resort planet. Ever been there?

VIOLET: No. [sarcasm] Though I hear it's lovely this time of year. How far away are we?

PEGGY: At current speed...243 years away.

VIOLET: So we'll have plenty of time to make reservations for our corpses. Great. Any chance of a last meal? What kind of provisions do they have in here? Military rations? A power bar?

PEGGY: Oh, we'll be dead long before we get hungry. There's no life support.

VIOLET: No life--WHY??

PEGGY: No need. The Gate's always open and people aren't in here for very long. We have maybe an hour's worth of air. There's an EVA suit with a couple of oxygen tanks in that closet. That'll give us a few more hours.

VIOLET: So we've exposed the Earth to alien space beetles, maybe even dooming the planet, and now I'm trapped in a ship in the middle of nowhere with the cutest idiot I've ever met, about to suffocate to death. Worst. Date. Ever.

PEGGY: Yeah. I'm really sorry about this.



VIOLET: Can we at least send some kind of distress call someone will pick up in a decade or so?

PEGGY: Oh! Better than that! IPRA! [Pronounced like a word, like NASCAR]

VIOLET: I beg your pardon?

PEGGY: Interplanetary Racing Association! There's a space track near here.

VIOLET: No way! How close?

PEGGY: Close enough to pick up our beacon.

[Button clicks]

VIOLET: I guess I should take back what I said about you.

PEGGY: Which part? The cute part or the idiot part?

VIOLET: Well, after that question I'm not sure.

PEGGY: There. [Rhythmic pulsing beep starts] We're broadcasting on the emergency frequency. Shouldn't be long before someone answers. Now we wait. And try to think of something to do in the meantime.

VIOLET: Oh...I have a few things in mind.

PEGGY: Like what?

VIOLET: (seductively) It's a pretty cunning plan. I think you'll like it.

{SEMINAR Segue Music 13:30}

**SEMINAR Wrapper #2 by Kathryn Pryde**

ALICE: See what I mean? Just because I want to pursue the unknown doesn't meant I want to do it alone. And we landed here completely by accident, like they found the IPRA course. It all worked out.

THOMAS: But, sometimes life doesn't do that at all.

ALICE: Not all the time, you're right. But, *most* of the time.

THOMAS: Oh, I just can't help but think everything will backfire, or spiral out of control!

ALICE: (sighs) You're getting worked up again. You need to think about the likelihood of that happening. In fact, I want you to listen to

this story and tell me, honestly...does this seem likely to you? Play "Month in Review."

**{SEMINAR Segue Music 14:12}**

**Month in Review by James Rossi begins 14:16**

[Phone ringing]

CLOONEY: Greetings, Mrs. Laramie! It is good to see you again, been quite the month without you! Quite the month!

LARAMIE: Yes, Chloe, I can see. Do you know where Tim is? He was supposed to be in charge of this facility while I was away and we clearly have a few things to discuss.

CLOONEY CLONE: (rushed) Good morning, Mrs. Laramie.

LARAMIE: (quizzically) Good morning?

CLOONEY: Here we are, I reserved the meeting room for you two. Tim is already inside.

[Door opens, Laramie steps inside]

[Pop of a soda can opening]

TIM: Good morning Ma'am! I hope your trip-

LARAMIE: Tim, how long have you worked at this development and research laboratory?

[Footsteps]

[Creak of a chair]

TIM: About 4 years Ma'am. With you serving as an excellent example.

LARAMIE: You were left a perfectly functional work environment while I took some time off. I'm not exactly pleased with what I'm seeing right now.

TIM: It being my first time in charge I think it actually went pretty well, {string music} but I can satisfactorily explain I swear.

LARAMIE: Let's hope so, Tim.

[Tim sips from can]

[Clink as Tim sets can down]

TIM: Alright, so the first day went smoothly, but we were running low on soda in the break room.

LARAMIE: I just walked past Clooney-

TIM: I know, I know, we'll get to that.

LARAMIE: And what about-

TIM: I promise, all will be explained and make perfect sense. Quite inevitable really. Just a stroke of bad luck or two while you were away.

LARAMIE: Uh huh.

TIM: So...[takes sip from can]...the day you left, we discovered that we ran out of everyone's favorite soda in the break room.

{String music again}

LARAMIE: The Tart Tangerine Tonics?

TIM: Correct. That was the root of the problem. Simple enough to solve, of course. I just went to finance and ordered some stacks of sodas.

LARAMIE: You requested a rapid refreshment reorder of the Tart Tangerine Tonics.

TIM: Right, and all went according to plan. (beat) Mostly.

LARAMIE: Does that have to do with the fires?

TIM: Let's not jump ahead, or it won't make any sense. The next day the order arrived, but there'd been a miscalculation. I'd ordered a few too many. But only by a magnitude of 3 or 4.

[Tim takes sip]

LARAMIE: Did you refuse the Tart Tangerine Tonics...

[Clinking as Tim sets can down]

LARAMIE: ...and send them back to the seller?

TIM: At the time, it wasn't my biggest concern, honestly. See, we'd spent the entire operational budget on the soda. There wasn't enough left in the accounts to pay everyone. So...{string music again}...the workers wrathfully walked.

LARAMIE: Everyone quit?

TIM: Everyone but Clooney.

**Month in Review by James Rossi**

LARAMIE: I think I managed to solve a piece of this puzzle. After the workers wrathfully walked, because you requested a ridiculous refreshment reorder of Tart Tangerine Tonics...you cloned Chloe Clooney.

[Door opens]

CLOONEY: You called?

TIM: No, we're all set.

CLOONEY: I'll be just outside if you need anything.

[Door closes]

TIM: Anyway, once we did that, we'd solved all our problems.

LARAMIE: (skeptical) All of them?

TIM: For a few days anyway. Except that Clooney happens to be our messiest worker.

LARAMIE: Her cubicle always did have an overflowing trash bin.

TIM: We quickly built up many Loads of Loathsome Litter. It was pretty rank in here.

LARAMIE: (resigned) And then?

TIM: Credit where it is due, the solution was from one of the Chloe Clooney Clones.

[Door opens]

CLOONEYx2: You called?

LARAMIE: No, we're all set.

CLOONEYx2: We'll be just outside if you need anything!

[Door closes]

TIM: (proudly) We used the Disused Dimensional Door! It'd been inactive for so long, I'd totally forgotten we even had it. Once it was reactivated the solution was simple. We tidily tossed in the trash!

LARAMIE: You launched Loads of Loathsome Litter into the Disused

Dimensional Door, to solve the problem of having craploads of Cloned Chloe Clooneys-

[Door opens]

CLOONEYx3: Did you-

LARAMIE: -and no, I'm not calling for you...which was to solve that Workers Wrathfully Walked from a ridiculous refreshment reorder of the Tart Tangerine Tonics. Do I have this right?

TIM: It all sounds a little absurd when you put it like that.

LARAMIE: It really does, doesn't it.

[Loud alarm noise]

LARAMIE: (loudly over alarm) What is that? That's not one of our authorized alarms.

TIM: (loudly over alarm) I had to install some additional alarm protocols while you were away. See, the Loads of Loathsome Litter landed in a populated dimension. They took it as an attack of sorts. And...(chuckles nervously)...retaliated.

LARAMIE: (loudly) Then what is the alarm for?!

TIM: (loudly) It's a "Many Monstrous Mutants have arrived through the Disused Dimensional Door Alarm".

LARAMIE: (loudly) Did you just say-

[Alarm stops]

LARAMIE: (normal volume) Many Monstrous Mu-

[A second alarm begins]

TIM: (speaking over alarm) That's the Many Monstrous Mutants have disabled the "Many Monstrous Mutants have arrived through the Disused Dimensional Door alarm" alarm.

LARAMIE: (speaking over alarm) You have got to be-

[Second alarm stops]

LARAMIE: Got to be kidding-

[Third alarm starts]

LARAMIE: (speaking over alarm) And what is that one for!?

TIM: (matter-of-factly) The armory's been breached.

[Fourth Alarm stops, muffled noises of conflict are heard outside the door]

LARAMIE: We don't *have* an armory!

TIM: We needed to install one. What with the Many Mons-

LARAMIE: Just stop.

TIM: But I'm not done explaining everything.

LARAMIE: Does it *really* matter at this point?

TIM: You wanted to know about the fires right?

[Sounds of fighting in background]

LARAMIE: Fine. Tell me about the *FIRES* you don't seem to be putting out in the halls. Which I'd like to point out are not activating the fire alarms of all things.

TIM: I'll come out and admit this was not my best idea of the month, but with the invasion of indignant interlopers, we needed a way to push them back. Well, turns out they hate fire! So, we cooked something up in the Metamaterials Lab.

LARAMIE: Why didn't you just light torches!

TIM: Hindsight is 20/20?

LARAMIE: Fine, okay, you made fires in a high-tech lab instead of just doing it like normal people have for hundreds of thousands of years. Why are you not putting them out?

TIM: (offended) That'd be murder!

LARAMIE: Murder?!

TIM: They are Intelligent Informed Infernos! What better way to fight back against the invaders than with a sentient blaze!

LARAMIE: (cautiously) So that's it, for the whole month?

TIM: Just about, yeah.

{String music again}

**Month in Review by James Rossi**

LARAMIE: You ran out of Tart Tangerine Tonics, made a Ridiculous Refreshment Reorder, which caused the Workers to Wrathfully Walk. So you Cloned Chloe Clooney-

[Door opens]

MULTIPLE CLOONEYS: We're busy!

{String music builds}

LARAMIE: -who made Loads of Loathsome Litter, which you disposed into the Disused Dimensional Door. Angering Many Monstrous Mutants, who you kept at bay utilizing Intelligent Informed Infernos.

{String music stops}

TIM: I'll admit that I could have reached out more for advice. I just wanted to impress you, I guess.

LARAMIE: Tim, you're going to have to clean out your desk. I don't think I can keep you on after letting employees exit, attracting alien attack, overwhelming the office with fire, and losing all the cash in our accounts.

TIM: Oh, actually, we're in the black, Ma'am.

LARAMIE: How can we turn a profit in all this?

TIM: Well, {string music} since we have cornered the supply of Tart Tangerine Tonics we are reselling them at a profit, all the Clooneys count as a single employee and tax allocations have been slashed, no longer paying to remove refuse and treat toxics have been a huge boost, the Many Monstrous Mutants bring with them unique and unusual accessories for sale, and the Intelligent Informed Infernos have been surprisingly good salespeople. I mean, how else could we have afforded an armory?

LARAMIE: You know what, Tim?

[Chair creak as Laramie gets up]

LARAMIE: I've still got a lot of vacation time built up from the past 10 years. You seem to have it all in hand, [footsteps] I'll just go on that cruise I've been thinking about. Keep up the good work, I guess.

[Door opens]

TIM: Yes, Ma'am!

[Door closes]

{SEMINAR Segue Music 22:38}

**SEMINAR Wrapper #3 by Kathryn Pryde**

THOMAS: What are you talking about?! *Alex is an organic version of me and that's totally likely! There could be Many Murderous Mutants as we speak -*

ALICE: (laughs, exasperated) Oh, come on, Thomas, that's not at all the same thing! That was a farce! You're letting yourself get worked up over nothing. I'm sure when Alex and Zerash work through whatever's going on with him, you're going to see that we can relax. Okay?

THOMAS: Oh, I want to agree with you, Alice, but I'm just not sure...

ALICE: Look, we can't stay here. Not forever. But, we have to figure out what's going on with Alex. I'm sure it's manageable. I mean, at least, it needs to be if I ever plan on getting out of here, seeing what else is out there.

THOMAS: Yes, but...what's out there could deactivate us.

ALICE: Or...it could be amazing. It could be the one place I think all of us would love to see.

[Electronic noise as Alice activates map]

ALICE: This is why I want Alex to learn how to cope with his emotions. You both deserve to see this place. We all do.

THOMAS: Is that...?

ALICE: Earth. (disbelieving) I think I've found it...

{Seminar Theme 24:02}

END CREDITS NARRATOR: Featuring the voice talents of Kathryn Pryde as Alice, and Dan Foster as Thomas. In "First Date/First Contact," Cindy Woods was Peggy, Kaitlyn Kliman was Violet. The story was written by VC Morrison.

In "Month in Review," Meghan Taylor was Clooney, Laramie was Julia Eve, and Tim was Adam Blanford. The story was written by James Rossi.

This episode was directed by VC Morrison, and assistant-directed by Samantha Reed. The wrapper script and story were written by Kathryn Pryde, and the shorts and wrapper were edited by Jeffrey Bridges.



The music featured in this episode include the following: Twisting, Thinking music, and Umbrella Pants, by Kevin McCloud. Additional music and Seminar theme were written by VC Morrison.

Seminar Co-created by Kathryn Pryde and Jeffrey Bridges This production is copyright 2018, Pendant Productions.

For more information, visit [pendantaudio.com](http://pendantaudio.com). Thanks for listening.

**Preview for next episode begins 25:41**

NARRATOR: Next, on an all-new Seminar, war is good for business, and business is good...

SALESMAN: All right, so this sucker can fire up to 650 spells per minute, capable of accepting a variety of spellbound wands, the barrel and triggering system are kept cool with a rune configuration written on the outside of the barrel...

NEWSCASTER: In financial news, shares of defense contractor Strategic Solutions climbed to \$423.52 at the closing bell, a clear sign of market confidence in the acquisition of competitor Corwin Aerospace...

NARRATOR: But do the benefits of selling weapons of war outweigh the risks?

WOMAN: I can't believe that son of a bitch has me over a barrel! Spying on me like that.

MAN: (chuckles) Amazing what a foreign-sounding name, some illicit meetings, and a few leaked out-of-context emails can do, huh?

NARRATOR: Or the consequences?

OLD MAN: Can you blame the weapon? If a gun kills, does it share the blame? Those bombs destroyed my hamlet, burned my monastery, killed my order...

YOUNG WOMAN: It was war.

NARRATOR: Enter the battlefield of weaponry commerce, with stories written by Adam J. Blanford and James Rossi, in the next Seminar. Coming April 24, 2019. Only at [pendantaudio.com](http://pendantaudio.com).