

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

The last known remnants of Earth's people are adrift in space, aboard the Ark of Humanity. It's 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 might change them more than they expect. This is seminar.

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

Seminar, Episode 99: "A Time to Cast Away Stones..."

[Seminar theme music]

[Beeping sounds followed by an error tone. More beeping sounds, followed by an error tone again. Squeaking of a door being pulled open manually]

NEW

(grunting with effort)

THOMAS

That's it! Almost got it, New! Just a little bit more.

NEW

(heavy grunts of effort) Come on.

[Sound of door thudding open against a wall]

NEW

(panting) Well, I appreciate that Zerash routed the power here. I only wish that had included the door mechanism, not just the locks. (chuckles and then sighs) But, we're here. Now to find our shuttle.

THOMAS

We only have 35 minutes. We lost twenty between the walk and trying to get the door open.

NEW

Zerash said that a manual touch to the shuttle would determine which one's powered. But, (sighs) I'm not entirely sure that's true.

THOMAS

Sorry, New. I don't follow.

NEW

Well, if it has systems power of any kind, we might be able to patch into any latent communications channel. It might take some time, but you could -

THOMAS

Me? Wait, you want me to do it? No, that's not possible. I'm in this holobox, and I don't have the necessary power to push a signal that far.

NEW

Yes, you do. You're able to play the stories, right? We use that. Tap it into the last of the power in the diagnostics console here, and run it on every channel the computer has.

THOMAS

Oh! This is... risky. Too risky. We're going to run out of time.

NEW

Just give it a shot. Pick a story. And if it doesn't work by the time that story is done, we'll think of something different.

THOMAS

Okay. But, I don't think this is going to work. If it fails, who knows what system we'll blow?

[Electronic movement sounds followed by system scanning sounds]

THOMAS

Okay. Playing... "Corporate Space."

[Seminar music]

[The whirr of an air conditioner and sounds of mining activity in the distance. Call ringing sounds. Footsteps approach. Sound of the call being answered]

JESSICA

Harold.

HAROLD

(over the phone)

Jessica, we have a huge fucking problem.

JESSICA

It's great to see you too.

HAROLD

Cut it out. We have an -

JESSICA

You start every call like this lately.

HAROLD

We have a major investor group threatening to pull out of funding your operation there on Meridian.

JESSICA

(gasps) What? Why?

HAROLD

Oh, just that we promised them a 30 percent return last quarter, and we haven't come anywhere near close that.

JESSICA

But we're on track to. So...

HAROLD

They don't give a shit. You know these venture capitalist types. They're all royal assholes. You deliver the ROI, right now, or they'll screw you.

JESSICA

Um, okay. (sighs) What are their demands?

HAROLD

Immediate cost saving, starting with mandatory unpaid overtime. Today, you're going –

JESSICA

Oh, god no.

HAROLD

You're go... You're going to hold a town hall meeting as soon as second shift wraps up in the mine. I've already got corporate comms working on talking points for you.

JESSICA

They'll eat me alive, Harold.

HAROLD

I know it's going to suck, but –

JESSICA

You're throwing me under the bus again.

HAROLD

Excuse me?

JESSICA

You've said for months that you were grooming me for COO. That I was next in line for the job.

HAROLD

(sighs) You saw the press release.

JESSICA

Yeah! You couldn't even tell me that you gave Clayton the job before you announced?

HAROLD

I'm sorry, Jessica. There are internal politics that -

JESSICA

- that prevented you from giving the job to a well-qualified woman?

HAROLD

That had nothing to do with it! He's got family on the board. You know that, dammit. He wasn't my pick. (sighs) Look, I'm really sorry. I might be CEO of Moonstone Energy Group, but I don't call the shots all the time. Sit tight a little longer and there will be another opening. I'll go to the MAT for you next time.

JESSICA

Yeah, sure. Thanks, Harold.

[Beeping sound of an incoming message]

HAROLD

You just got those talking points. Good luck. Let me know how it goes.

[Sound of the call disconnecting]

[Sounds of heavy machinery, warning tones and footsteps. A phone starts ringing]

ANGEL

(sighs) I'll be in the trailer.

[Footsteps move away and the heavy machinery sounds fade as the ringing of the phone get louder. The sound of the phone being answered]

JESSICA
(over the phone)
Hey, Angel.

ANGEL
Yes, ma'am?

JESSICA
Bad news from corporate.

ANGEL
Layoffs?

JESSICA
No. Overtime. All shifts are extended two hours starting tomorrow.

ANGEL
We're already working our asses off. This is –

JESSICA
– and you'll have to work them a little harder. Look, we have huge investors threatening to walk away, which would put all of you out of a job. I'll hold a meeting tonight to explain.

[Footsteps]

ANGEL
Ma'am, I know you're just trying to do your job, but you're gonna lose some good people if this kinda thing keeps up.

JESSICA
(laughs) Oh, sure. Yeah, you'll all just catch an Uber back to Earth, learn to code, and reinvent yourselves, right? There are no jobs you're qualified for there. There isn't an ounce of coal left. That's why you came out here to Meridian, to help us strip this planet of all its natural resources, too.

ANGEL
Are you finished?

JESSICA
Yes. Show me a better attitude next time or you'll be finished, too.

[Call end beep followed by the dial tone]

ANGEL
God, these assholes.

[City noises in the background. A phone starts to ring. A toilet flushes. Footsteps approach and the call is answered]

HAROLD
Harold Lightner.

SABRINA
(over the phone)
(cheerful) Harold! It's your old friend, Sabrina.

HAROLD
Sabrina James. How's your company doing?

SABRINA
Oh please, like you didn't see me on the cover of Forbes last month. "CEO of the decade" sounds pretty nice, doesn't it? I hear you've got problems, though.

HAROLD
Yes. My wife left me and I'm the same miserable bastard you've always known. Was it worth calling me just to hear that?

SABRINA
(exasperated sigh) Stop being a dumbass, Harold. Moonstone has problems.

HAROLD
We're just fine, but thanks so much for your concern.

SABRINA
That's not what my sources are telling me. Investors pulling out, are they?

HAROLD
What do you want?

SABRINA
Just to do you a favor. Let Rock Coal and Power buy you out.

[City sounds in the background and footsteps pacing]

HAROLD
Ha! These are minor difficulties at worst. We've put billions into our operations on Meridian. but when all is said and done we'll be paying back our investors hand over fist. We'll top 100 percent returns.

SABRINA
You can either make this easy for yourself, or we can do a hostile takeover.

HAROLD
You're not gonna persuade anyone on our board to go that route.

SABRINA
(laughing) I know you've done your research on us. Do you think we've been building our own private army for the past year just to sit around?

HAROLD
We've got plenty of automated defense systems –

SABRINA
– that we have just disabled. Meridian is ours for the taking.

HAROLD
(beat) No, you're bluffing. You don't shy away from a fight, Sabrina – I'll give you that – but no way in hell would you ever resort to corporate warfare.

SABRINA

You haven't even asked me yet who I'm working with on the inside. (beat) Someone you just...

SABRINA (CONT'D)

(no longer over the phone)
threw under the bus?

HAROLD

Arrrghhhhhh!

[Glass breaking sound]

SABRINA

I told Jessica she'll make a great COO for us.

HAROLD

We'll be able to hold our own. You're not gonna take Meridian. (breathing heavily)

SABRINA

Maybe the space force will rescue you.

HAROLD

(breathing heavily) Double our current share price and we're yours. You win, dammit.

SABRINA

Oh, Harold. There was never going to be an honest offer on the table here, I assure you. Our ships will be breaching your defenseless perimeter within minutes. But I promise: we'll treat your people... mostly all right.

[A phone rings over blaring alarms and sounds of destruction in the background]

JESSICA

Pick up, dammit, pick up!

SABRINA (over phone)

Yes, Jessica?

JESSICA

You told me I had a week to get off this damn rock before you attacked!

SABRINA

I said "more or less," didn't I? You should've moved faster. Now you'll be joining your friends down in the mine.

JESSICA

What? (grunts) Our contract says Chief Operating Officer. You signed it!

SABRINA

Oh, I know. You can call yourself whatever you like. But it also said "additional duties to be assigned."

JESSICA

Sabrina!

SABRINA

I hope you're good with a jackhammer.

[Call end beep followed by the dial tone]

JESSICA

(breathes heavily) What the fuck have I done?

[Dial tone continues and gradually fades out]

[Mining activity sounds. Intercom notification tone]

SABRINA

(over the loudspeaker)

"Valued workers" of Rock Coal and Power, this is your new CEO, Sabrina James. I'm pleased to inform you that we're announcing a 10 percent pay increase across our entire workforce. (chuckling) Enjoy that extra 10 cents an hour. You've earned it.

[Intercom notification tone]

ANGEL

Let's pick up the pace, everyone! I don't want to have to report anyone to the new boss.

JESSICA

(sighs) God, these assholes.

[Footsteps approach]

ANGEL

Hey, it's our "Chief Operating Officer!" Why don't you get back to work?

JESSICA

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.

ANGEL

Looks like I won't be needing to learn to code anytime soon, huh Jessica? Huh, yeah, hmm! Yeah, huh, I might recommend you give it a try, though. If you ever find your way off this rock.

JESSICA

Yes, sir. Right, sir.

ANGEL

Good luck making your way up the corporate ladder now.

[Footsteps walk away and the sound of Angel's voice gets softer. Pickaxe sounds along with other mining sounds]

JESSICA

(sighs) Princeton undergrad (grunts with effort), Harvard Business School (grunts with effort), two hundred thousand dollars in student loans... (grunts with effort) Now I'm holding a fucking pickaxe right next to a bunch of community college dropouts.

[Sound of rocks breaking]

JESSICA

(sighs) Well, there's only up from here.

[Music]

[Seminar music]

[The ending of "Corporate Space" echoes in the distance. Electronic sounds]

NEW

(laughs) Looks like there is an active channel. One of these shuttles must be using it.

[The ending of "Corporate Space" continues to play]

THOMAS

(exclamation of surprise) I was sure that would fry my servos.

NEW

Well, it's like Jessica said: Only way to go is up from here. I was watching the power distribution. I knew that if it didn't pick anything up with the power you had available, there was no point in trying it.

THOMAS

Another one of your super-guesses!

NEW

(laughs) Is that what we're calling them? I guess so. (chuckles) Let's go find that shuttle.

[Electronic sounds accompanied by footsteps]

THOMAS

What if the shuttle doesn't open up for us?

NEW

We'll figure it out.

THOMAS

What if it's the furthest shuttle from us?

NEW

We'll figure it out.

THOMAS

What if it takes us too long to find the shuttle and Zerash can't open the doors before the Zarrak get here?

NEW

Thomas. We will figure it out.

THOMAS

But how?

[Footsteps]

NEW

(sighs) I don't know yet, Thomas, but I do know that I would rather think of what can go right, instead of what goes wrong. In fact, there's a story you can play while we find the shuttle. Find "Come On and Slam".

THOMAS

Accessing... "Come On and Slam."

[Seminar music]

[Murmurs of a large crowd followed by introductory music and fireworks]

GOD

Hey, everybody! God here. Bet you're wondering why I called all of you, uh, you know, creative types, the greatest authors and poets in the history of my creation. You're welcome!

[Isolated voice from the audience calls out]

GOD (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

MAYA ANGELOU

Yeah, what gives? Ernest Hemingway and I were locked in a battle with an enormous marlin. Now I'll never know if we woulda caught it.

GOD

It's heaven, Madam Angelou. You would have caught it.

MAYA ANGELOU

Spoilers! God damn.

GOD

(unintelligible sounds)

GOD (CONT'D)

As you may know, the universe will be ending soon.

UNKNOWN VOICE FROM AUDIENCE

Awww.

GOD

Yes! It's fine. I'm making a second one, a new one, a better one. But I need, like, (stutters) a core idea to... to really base this new universe on. So what I need you creative folks to do is find some art that inspires you – a painting, a book, a film – (stutters) that would... (unintelligible sounds) that I can... (unintelligible sounds) that I can use as the basis for this new universe.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

And should this work of art encompass all?

GOD

Still doing the iambic pentameter thing, Will?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Been doing it this long.

GOD

But yes, exactly. I need you to choose the one piece of art that perfectly encapsulates everything good and right about humanity. Everything mankind, that I made, learned, that I helped teach them,

as a species because everything happened for my reasons. I'll give you – a thousand years. Good luck!

[Watch winding sounds followed by sounds of fast forwarding]

GOD (CONT'D)
Aaaaand...

[Alarm sound]

GOD (CONT'D)
So, what have we got? Who wants to start? Nobody? Ah, yes – Maya – Maya Angelou.

MAYA ANGELOU
You're not gonna like it.

GOD
What? No, it's fine.

MAYA ANGELOU
No, you're really not gonna like it.

GOD
Just tell me.

MAYA ANGELOU
Will you just promise not to be mad?

GOD
Just tell me.

MAYA ANGELOU
Space Jam.

[Things falling]

MAYA ANGELOU
(laughs)

GOD
Fuck you. Go... all of you? Go, fuck yourselves.

MAYA ANGELOU
Didn't say we were happy about it.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
We felt the work would last forever more. Its plot and characters so smart, so pure.

[Rumbling sounds]

GOD
Will, try talking like that again. See what happens. I will unmake you. I will unmake you.

[God's voice warps along with rumbling sounds]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Alright. My B.

GOD

(unintelligible sounds) I don't – you're saying that... that when the Other's armies, that they... when they raze the first draft of my universe, the one I worked for 6 days, and I had to rest for a full day afterwards, the thing that I should've saved is not a play, not music that inspires the ages but a basketball movie?

MAYA ANGELOU

No! You should save a basketball movie starring the Looney Tunes.

GOD

No, no, no, no, no. No, we are not doing that. We're not doing that. Let's do Hamlet, okay? People... people... people... people like Hamlet.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sure, but like, Hamlet was just about one thing, the revenge thing, Space Jam is like, it's about two things.

MAYA ANGELOU

It's got Michael Jordan and the Looney Tunes. People love those.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Plus, Hamlet, while vastly superior to the works published by my contemporaries such as, say, Christopher Marlowe –

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

(shouting from the background) Get fucked, Bill.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

– as a work of art, it wasn't terribly... what's the word?

MAYA ANGELOU

Monetizable.

GOD

Fuck it. Maya, let's just do one of your poems. "Still I Rise," let's do that one.

MAYA ANGELOU

Nobody ever made t-shirts of my poem. There were no Maya Angelou plastic dolls with still-rising action.

GOD

Why does that matter?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

If there's one thing we learned about your universe, it's that people were super psyched about money. And Space Jam, with all the merchandizing, the tie-ins, the fact that the whole movie was based off of a shoe commercial –

GOD

I... I don't... I gave you a thousand years to discuss this, and you're all agreed this is the best course of action?

SYLVIA PLATH

No.

GOD

Oh? You there, the pretty young one.

SYLVIA PLATH

Wait, are you saying I'm pretty and young, or are you using 'pretty' as an adverb to modify 'youth'?

GOD

I... (sighs) I don't know. Both? Who cares? (sighs in exasperation)

[Rustling sounds from the audience]

GOD (CONT'D)

Yeah, okay, half of you. Everyone put your hands down. Yes, you. Uh... Sylvia Plath.

SYLVIA PLATH

(sighs) I don't like it, but Space Jam is preferable to the alternative.

GOD

Come again?

SYLVIA PLATH

It's a soulless movie, sure, but those who created and consumed it never felt the slow stings of agony that many in this chamber know all too well.

GOD

Kind of a grim way to look at it. I made all of you brilliant, especially you, Sylvia.

SYLVIA PLATH

You also gave me depression so crippling that not even the love of my children could prevent me from sticking my head in an oven.

GOD

Yeah, but, omelettes and... and eggs. (stutters) How many of you feel this way? That the creative stuff didn't balance out the umm... you know the... the being sad all the time stuff?

[Rustling from the audience]

GOD (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. So, most of you.

SYLVIA PLATH

I mean, remember Edgar?

GOD

Edgar Poe? (hesitates) The goth kid, yes, who was reincarnated as a bird or whatever?

SYLVIA PLATH

He wrote amazing horror stories specifically because he was so miserable having lost the love of his life.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

His cousin, incidentally.

MAYA ANGELOU

Which... nasty.

GOD

Oh! That's... that's weird.

SYLVIA PLATH

Look, it's Space Jam, or it's something depressing. Those are basically your options. Those are the only options any of your creations had.

GOD

Whether to watch Space Jam or not?

SYLVIA PLATH

Whether to face the myriad horrors you inflicted upon the world, to think about the pain and cruelty you allow to exist for no other reason than sheer whimsy or dare I say laziness, to understand one's place in the universe and one's terrible meaninglessness in the face of its indifference... or to turn those parts of one's brain off and draw some comfort from simpler things. That is what it is to be human. You don't like it? You have nobody to blame but yourself.

GOD

(sigh). Let me think about it.

[Loud sound followed by music]

QUAD CITY DJ

Come on and slam, and welcome to the jam. Come on and slam. Come... Come on and slam, and welcome to the jam –

GOD

And in the beginning, I said... Let there be ball.

[Cosmic sounds followed by music]

[Seminar music]

[Footsteps]

THOMAS

Well, that was interesting. I really wish I could see "Space Jam" one day.

NEW

(chuckles) Well, maybe when we find Earth. And we will find Earth, as soon as we find the shuttle.

THOMAS

That's why you wanted me to hear that story, isn't it? So that I'd be optimistic and... and full of fluff?

NEW

No, I wanted you to listen to it because you needed to hear what Sylvia Plath had to say. The world is a sad, scary place, yes. We all know how that feels. But, we can either let it fuel us or we can pretend it doesn't exist. We can't control what happens to us, Thomas, but we can control how we react to it. And I am choosing to react with optimism.

THOMAS

I see...

[Footsteps followed by the sound of the ending of "Come On and Slam" somewhere in the distance]

THOMAS

Is that... is that the story from earlier?

[The sound of the Come On and Slam continues to play]

NEW

It's the shuttle! It's playing it back! We found it!

[Loud sound followed by warning sounds in the distance]

NEW

And just in time. We need to move. The Zarrak are back.

[Alarm sounds continue. Loud sounds of damage. Music]

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

Featuring the voice talents of:

Dan Foster as Thomas, and
Briar Zachary as New

In CORPORATE SPACE:

Brandon Levine as Angel
David Nagel as Harold
Rukshin Shaher as Sabrina, and
Jennifer Waescher as Jessica

Written by Jeff Robison

In COME ON AND SLAM:

Marty Boswell as William Shakespeare
Nettie Chickering as Maya Angelou
Garan Fitzgerald as Christopher Marlowe
Miranda Lenert as Sylvia Plath, and
Punyaha Mukherjee as the Quad-City DJ

Written by Anthony Burch

Directed by Garan Fitzgerald
Shorts edited by Tilly Bridges
Wrapper written by Kathryn Pryde

Seminar theme by V C Morrison
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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[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

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