

Heavens to Betsy: A Superpowered Fault Inquest

Audio Drama: episode 1

(Working title)

Morgan Evans

Inquest Voice: Mechanical and cold

Pilot-Contractor voice print (PCVP): An artificial voice based off of Hammish Click

Hammish Click: A folksy cargo pilot with delusions of grandeur

Heavens to Betsy: The ship's AI.

Jason Hernandez: A grizzled survivor at only 18. Forced to grow up fast

Ripper: A little bit of a gremlin. Nonbinary

Inquest Officer Harold Friedman: kissass, brusque, businesslike

Setting

2152 AND 2044

Quarantine World 1 AKA Earth

Scene 1

A computer boots. There is the juttering scratch of a harddrive followed by a warm hum.

Inquest Voice

Launching automated Pilot-contractor fault inquest 57-26-67-J.

Flles imported.

Loading ship voice print.

Error Noise

Error.

Vessel voice print corrupted.

Vessel Artificial intelligence... lost.

Generating new voice print.

Loading pilot-contractor reference.

Pilot-Contractor Voice Print

New voice print compiled.

Importing black box 22879-B.

This data is the property of the Manna Shipping Corporation.

Vessel class: Condor Cargo Mover.

Vessel designation: Heavens to Betsy. Call number: 22879.
Licensed to pilot-contractor Hammish Click, employee number: 57-26-67

Alleged Pilot-Contractor fault recorded at June 3rd, 2144
Black Box Recovery recorded at... error.

Error noise

Temporal anomaly. Reconciling... Impossible. Galactic Time August 4th 2152. Black box
Recorded year as 2145

Collating relevant files.
Loading pilot-contractor log number 5,756
Log begins

A click, then a cold tone.

Scene 2

Setting: The cockpit of the Heavens to Betsy.

*A harmonica is played poorly accompanied by the hum of an engine and
occasional beeps of readouts.*

Hammish Click

Now thats gettin' mighty chice! Ohhhkay,

The flick of several switches

Betsy's trucking us into swingshot orbit of a blue mudball the scopes are oglin'. Gives us another... fifteen cycles till I'm back on Proxi Station? Hoy... hope I can actually 'cell with this harmonica before I touch plate again. Mini Click's been working himself up about his brother becoming some musical genius. All you gotta do is tell that boy you're nodding on the job and he gets ya somethin'... Says I should record while I'm truckin', get famous and all. Little does he know the logs of the Legendary Captain Click-

Error noise

are already groked cross the arms-

Betsy

Demerit awarded: Falsifying position/ you now have... Sixteen Demerits.

Hammish

/Ah c'mon Betsy! You know it t'were a laugh!

Betsy

Joking or not, Hammish, I still must award you the demerit. It's company policy.

Hammish

Crashes... and how many demmies I got now?

Betsy

Sixteen.

Hammish

And when they expire?

Betsy

End of next billing cycle.

Hammish

Double crashes. Okay do somethin' profitable with yourself and lock in the swingshot.

Betsy

Calculating optimal slingshot orbit around Quarantine World 1, charting back to Proxima Centauri Station. Alert: atmosphere skim required.

Hammish

Aw Bets', you know I ain't balked by a lil skim- wait. You said it's a sick world?

Betsy

Quarantine World, pilot-contractor Hammish.

Hammish

You call me Captain, I call it a quarantine world. Did you say *one*?

Betsy

Yes.

Hammish gives a low whistle

Hammish

This sphere must've been important lotta tick-a-clicks ago.

Betsy

I suspect so. Alas, I cannot access files pertaining to the planet. They are restricted.

Hammish

Can you 'least get me a name?

Betsy

I'm afraid not.

Hammish

Hmm. Why we trucking this line anyhow?

Betsy

You requested overtime and received medical clearance to perform another run-

Hammish

No, no Bets', I meant why are we doing *this* run? I ain't heard of anyone who's touched this sector, even as a turn around. Like, what is the company wantin' in this backwater? S'worse than home.

Betsy

Accessing... an observation station in this system requires resupply runs every eight standard orbits.

Hammish

No desig' on that one neither?

Betsy

I'm afraid it's restricted as well.

Hammish

Huh. Well ain't this a whole crock of odd.

Betsy

We are about to begin the atmosphere skim, pilot-contractor Hammish. Would you like to assume manual control?

Hammish

Awe Bets', you know me right well. Accepting controls... mark.

A rattle of the chassis and a clicking of switches and buttons.

Betsy

Controls passed.

Hammish

So Bets', whatcha gonna do when we hit plate again?

Betsy

Hammish... I should remind you that your lease and contract will expire-

Hammish

Just humor me.

Betsy

Sigh

I am due for a defragmentation and a cache clean. There is a new cleaning program I've been meaning to try.

Hammish

Oh, that beachside sim you told me bout?

Betsy

Yes I... I find them very freeing. I must admit.

Hammish

Well we're gonna getcha the best one when we get back. Entering skim... now.

Rattling increases, now accompanied by the dull roar of atmosphere.

Reading normal friction, you copy?

Betsy

Confirmed.

Hammish

Following your track... upping yaw by point five.

Alarm

Betsy

Bogey on scopes mark-

A collision followed by an explosion that shakes the cabin.

Hammish

Crashes! What we got?

Inquest voice (under dialogue)

Black box recording initiated

Betsy

Unidentified object hit starboard thruster-A

Hammish

I'm not getting any compensation Bets!

Betsy

I'm no longer reading anything from relevant systems. Electrical system and backup thrusters are down!

Hammish

Can you get any more out of star-B or port-A?

His seatbelt rattles as he finally puts it on.

Betsy

Everything we have is rerouted.

Hammish

Makes you wish I sprung for the escape pod-

Betsy

Pilot-contractor please brace for-

The ripping of steel and furrowing of earth as the Heavens to Betsy collides with the ground.

A click, then a cold tone.

Scene 2

Setting: the crash site of the Heavens to Betsy

Pilot-contractor voice print
Loading Blackbox 22879-B, fragment 2... Accessing. Loaded.

A click, then a cold tone.

Birds chirp over the crackling of a small electrical fire. Sparks pop and fizz.

Hammish

He grunts as he pulls himself from the wreckage, throwing a sheet of metal to the side.

Now how, *URGH*, in the arms... *crashes*... did we survive that?

Beat

Betsy...? Betsy!?

Oh no. *urrgh*.

He wretches

Arm ain't supposed to bend like that... Everything is... gone. No! No. C'mon old girl... where you hiding?

Metal clatters as he searches through the wreckage.

Ah-ha! There we go... C'mon... come... un-PLUGGED! WOAH!

He manages to extract the data core but falls back into a pile of wreckage.

Okay... well.. Just... gotta plug you in there... *crashes* I wish my other hand... okAY!
There we go! Data-core initiate intelligence transfer to pilot coms system.

A ping of affirmation. The scene becomes gradually quieter.

C'mon... C'mon... Yes! There we go!

Something big steps on a branch in the undergrowth. It snaps.

What was that?

A click, then a cold tone.

Scene 3: Running terrified through the woods

Pilot-Contractor Voice print

Loading Blackbox 22879-C, pilot communication suite. Fragment 1 accessing... loaded.

A click, then a cold tone.

Hammish is screaming as he runs through the undergrowth. Something with big, stomping strides is following him.

Betsy

Detecting abnormal vitals. Pilot-contractor, would you like me to request medical attention or make alterations to your last will and testament?

Hammish

Screaming

Betsy

Low power detected. Hibernating to conserve battery.

Abrupt Silence.

Then the recording begins again with a click. The stomps are closer now, slow, deliberate. The breath of the creature can be heard wheezing between its growls. Hammish whimpers, trying to keep his breath quiet.

Betsy

Hammish, your vitals have/ spiked again. Would you like me to-

Hammish

/SHHHHHHHH!!! SHHHHHHHH!!!

A click as Betsy is turned off.

Scene 4: a fight in the forest

A click as Betsy is reactivated. The monster roars in the background. Slicing noises and the trampling of vegetation can be heard.

Hammish

Betsy? Betsy, are you seeing this??? Can you record this?!

Betsy

Unfortunately, your coms suite does not have any ocular devices-

Hammish

You're not gonna believe what I'm oggling... This guy, he just made a blade, out of thin air, mind it might be made out of light I think? I was about to get et by this frog looking dinosaur thing and he... Consarn it he just cut that dino's leg off... Is it still movin'?!

Gasp

Oh no the frog's got this poke's leg in his mouth. He's swinging him around! GET OUT OF THERE LIGHTBOY!!! YOU CAN STICK 'EM-

A ripping noise.

WHAT IN THE ARMS IS/ GOING ON!

Betsy

/I can honestly say I have no idea. Hammish, maybe you should move us to safety.

Hammish

Another kid just came out of nowhere... like they tore a hole in the sky... they just threw a spear through a hole and it caught the froggy right in the oggler. Lightboy is okay Betsy, he's getting up! Oh his leg ain't lookin too chice. But the dino's gone! Its truckin out, limpin like a mother. Betsy, where in the arms are we?

Betsy

Quarantine planet 1, pilot-contractor. Please return me to the crash site so that I may abide by regulation and send out a distress ca-

Her voice warbles and dips to silence.

Pilot-contractor voice print

Fragment ends. Loading fragment 2.

Scene 4: Walking to the mall

Three sets of footsteps, one limping, padding through the forest. Cicadas are just beginning to trill, mixing with crickets.

Hammish

She should be juiced now. Betsy? Betsy you with us?

Betsy

I am here, pilot-contractor Hammish. Please provide a situation report.

Hammish

Be happy to Bets. Got two folks to introduce you to first though.

Jason

That thing in your head... is talking?

Hammish

Yeah, loaded her up into the implant. Couldn't leave my co-pilot fer scrap. Betsy, that's Jason. He was the poke who was in the hopper's mouth.

Jason

Um... hi... Betsy...?

Betsy

Hello, Jason. A pleasure to meet you.

Jason

God, that's creepy.

Betsy

I'm sorry Jason, is there something I could do to make you more comfortable?

Hammish

Awe Bets, don't pay him no mind. You're perfect as programmed. But you gotta meet... kid is that really whatcha want me to desig' you?

Ripper

Ripper is my name, dipshit. Just call me it.

Hammish

Alright. I've heard weirder names. That's Ripper-

Ripper

The one who just saved your asses. Or... ass? Does she like, have half of your ass or do you do a joint custody thing or-

Betsy

I have no corporeal form, Ripper. Pilot-Contractor, I submit a second request for a sitrep.

Hammish

You're right, I've been holding out on ya. 'Parently, those critters are everywhere on... What'ch'y'all call it?

Jason

Earth?

Hammish

Earth! Can you believe that? That's Quarantine World 1!

Betsy

Unlikely but... Updating designation. Please continue.

Hammish

Yeah! So these kind folks are already on their way to a mall and they said we could truck with 'em. They got malls down here, ain't that wild?

Betsy

How delightful Hammish! Just like back home.

Hammish

Yep! We're gonna be touching plate in no time.

Jason

I feel like I got your hopes up dude. This place is pretty busted. We just... we heard there might be some people there who can help us. You're still welcome to tag along but... I dunno man I have no clue what you're expecting.

Hammish

Oh.

Betsy

Oh.

Ripper

C'mon. Buck up you two. Not like you've got a choice. You ain't got any powers, we leave you out here you're fucking worm food. And Jason says we gotta 'help other people' or what the fuck ever so you're coming with us.

Jason

Don't look so self-satisfied, kid.

Ripper

Hey! Don't ruffle my hair! I'm not twelve!

Betsy

Switching to internal coms.

Outside noise fades.

Hammish, are you sure we can trust them?

Hammish

Not sure we have much choice, Bets. I ain't got no idea what's goin' on here. 'Sides, seems like they could cut us in half if they felt so.

Betsy

We are to rely on the kindness of strangers?

Hammish

For now? I reckon.

Betsy

Accepted. Were you able to see if the distress beacon on the ship was intact?

Hammish

No idear. But we've only been truckin' a half day or so. Wanna go check when it's light?

Betsy

Plan formulated. Hibernating to conserve power.

Hammish

He sighs, concerned.

Alright... Talk soon, Bets.

Betsy

We will speak soon, Pilot-Contractor.

Hammish

fading

I hope so...

A click followed by a cold tone.

Scene 5: Cargo Manifest

Setting: Inquest

Pilot-Contractor Voice print

Retrieving BlackBox-A, Cargo Manifest of the Manna corporation vessel, designation: Heavens to Betsy. Call number: 22879.

Manifest Loaded. Beginning audio transcript generation.

Launch Site: Proxima Centauri Station, loading berth 57-alpha.

Launch Date: May 23rd, 2144.

Cargo Loaded: 13 items

Total mass: 35,000 pounds

Container 1:

Crew Clothing. 20 pounds

Hygiene supplies. 10 pounds.

Emergency rations. 40 pounds.

Requested personal items. 7 pounds.

Total: 111 pounds.

Container 2:

Water: 600 pounds.

Hydroponics equipment: 2,205 pounds

Total: 2,805

Container 3:

Seeds and tubers, various. 885 pounds.

Out of Gauge Item 4.

Pisces model outboard repair drone. 3,700 pounds

Out of Gauge item 5.

Improved armor plating stack. 5,856 pounds

Container 5.

Contents redacted

Container 6.

Improved Communications Equipment: 523 pounds

Communication Dish: 1,058

Repair Components, Various: 600 Pounds

Total: 2,181 pounds

Container 7:

File Corrupted.

Container 8.

Cryogenic storage pod: 1,400 pounds

Doctor Harry Wensley: 195 pounds

Total: 1795 pounds

Container 9.

Contents redacted

Warning, Hazardous Cargo. Do not expose to heat in excess of 98 degrees fahrenheit or light above 1000 lumens

Container 10.

Experiment Equipment for project A-25: 500 pounds

Experiment A-24: 20 pounds

Total: 520 pounds

Container 11.

Improved Thermal Imaging Suite: 2,000 Pounds

Out of Gauge Item 12.

Telescope Grade Mirrors: 8,000 pounds

Container 13.

Tackium crystal rods: 985 Pounds

Manifest Ends

A click and a cold tone

Scene 6:

Inquest Officer Harold Friedman

Inquest Officer Harold Friedman beginning manual review of automated inquest. Date of review, September first, 2152, authorization code 78-delta-5. Beginning review 1 now.

Click

Beginning review notes 1 now. Well, isn't this an exciting one! Certainly better than the last five. All malfunctions or pilots getting far too sauced to actually pilot. I... something aside from the fantastical reports of the pilot are worming at me on this one. I need to cross reference the requested items from observation base 1 with the manifest, something obviously isn't lining up here. Also it appears there has been yet another clerical error! I do not have clearance to review all the attached files. This was probably meant for *Michael* in his big boy corner office- ach hem. Pardon me. Just like the last few times, I'll continue my review. If it actually becomes a problem I'll send a message to upper management but- well I certainly don't want to end up like Clarice.

So far it seems to be a bit of a cut and dry case. The pilot was using an out of date intelligence, he took manual control of the craft *during* a planned atmosphere skim, and I believe I detected the jangle of an unbuckled seat belt? I'd be surprised if he hadn't crashed. Plus there was the matter of the demerits. How many was it... let me look at my notes... sixteen, eh? Well, he was hardly making any money at all in that case.

I've met his type before, uncouth to say the least. Despite how interesting I find this... *case* I would simply close it with the information presented and find him at fault but I must trust the computer. I will continue to review all the files the intelligence produced for me. So many! Well I'm sure I'll find out the reason for the extensive records soon enough. End review notes 1 now.