

WOLF 359

"AM I ALONE NOW?"

Written by

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EPISODE 10

INT. SPACE - TIME

**Somewhere...**

HILBERT

Why are we so *afraid...* of being  
*alone?*

The LOW HUM of MACHINERY churns behind Hilbert. Occasional  
HISSES of AIR or MECHANICAL CLANGS punctuate his words.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

There is a door on the Hephaestus.

It's in the very back of the  
engineering section. Between the  
grinding gears and the spinning  
wheels, tucked in a dark corner.  
Right in the beating heart of the  
spaceship is a small, gray door.

It's in a place where no one ever  
goes. It goes to a place that no  
one on this ship has ever seen.

It's easy to overlook. Easier to  
forget it's even there. The only  
thing that makes it remarkable in  
any way is the label on it.

"Open in case of emergency. Open  
only when you are alone."

Beat.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Heard joke, long time ago. Three  
men are on deserted island. Have  
been there for months. Starving,  
desperate, afraid. Then, one day,  
one of them finds magic lamp. Genie  
comes out of lamp, gives each of  
them a wish.

Man number one wishes to go home to  
his family, so genie goes "Poof!"  
and man goes away. Man number two  
wishes to go home to his wife, so  
genie goes "Poof!" and man goes  
away. Man number three says, "I do  
not want to be alone.

(MORE)

HILBERT (CONT'D)

I wish my friends were back here."

Is good joke. Everyone like. Good, long laugh.

There is a door on the Hephaestus. It is locked, and no one knows where the key is. It is only for emergencies. Only for when you are alone.

What constitutes "alone"? How do we know when we are alone? There is no one in this room. Eiffel and Minkowski are both asleep. Hera is in the middle of debugging cycle. The closest waking mind is 8 light years away. But... does that mean that I'm alone?

Why does no one want to be alone? Why are we so afraid of being alone?

Fear... is not bad thing. Fear is cornerstone of evolution. Makes stronger life forms, more competitive, more cerebral, more adaptive. But fears are there to be overcome. We afraid of big bear, so we make big gun: now bear is afraid of us. We afraid of society, we make big war: now society is afraid of us. We afraid of hydrogen atom, we make big bomb: now everybody is afraid of us.

We afraid of death, and... well, working on that one.

But alone... have had time to work on that one, have had **eons**, should have solved by now. Alone should be afraid of us.

Instead there's a door. Quiet. Waiting. Just in case... I am ever alone.

Beat.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Alone. Feh. I **like** alone. Alone means focus. Alone means quiet.

(MORE)

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Alone means progress and development and concentration. Every great every great leap into the next paradigm happened because someone was alone long enough to make it happen. There is nothing to fear from "alone".

Which leaves just one possible conclusion. Is not "alone" that's the problem. Alone is definite, quantifiable, controllable. No... what really scares us is the doubt.

The scary part isn't thinking, "I am alone." The scary part is the corner of your mind that whispers back...

"How can you be sure?"

He PAUSES for a moment. The ship CREAKS. Finally, slowly, he LAUGHS to himself.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Remarkable thing, the human brain.

Truly astounding.

Such a will to survive, such a drive to protect itself from every possible threat. So committed to constant vigilance that it turns its own self into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness... Famous philosopher said that. Big man. Big brain. Had right idea on what we do to ourselves, how we drive ourselves mad with fear and neurosis just on the remote... distant... possibility... that...

He trails off, unnerved. Then, with new energy:

HILBERT (CONT'D)

*Enough.* I am man of logic, man of evidence, man of seeing and hearing and knowing and I **know** that there is no one else here. Nothing in the dark that isn't there in the light, yes? Old saying. To reassure children. Helps them go to sleep. No monsters underneath the bed.

BEAT. Then -

HILBERT (CONT'D)

But evolution does not care about sleep. Does not make mistakes. Does not leave things lying around. So somewhere, sometime, someone must think that they're alone, when they're not.

There must be monsters underneath **someone's** bed.

Otherwise we wouldn't be afraid.

Otherwise this door wouldn't be here.

We hear him KNOCKING ON A METAL DOOR. No answer.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Why are you here? You were never here in any of the other missions. You weren't here last time. But here you are now, just waiting for the day...

"Open in case of emergency. Open only when you are alone."

Could just open door. Quick look inside. Lock is not problem. Could stop coming down to stare at this door every night. Satisfy scientific curiosity.

Very tempting.

But what sort of... *company* is *emergency company*? What could be so terrible that it should not be approached under any circumstances, not unless you are so desperate, so afraid, so utterly and totally... *alone*?

What is the alternative?

Three men are on a deserted island. Man number one and man number two go away. What does man number three say, "I do not want to be alone."

Good joke.

(MORE)

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Everybody laugh.

Everybody laugh...

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. No answer.

HILBERT (CONT'D)

Is anyone laughing now?

**Elsewhere...**

HERA

Eiffel? Officer Eiffel? Can you hear me? Hello? Doug?

Her voice instantly sounds different. It might take a moment to realize that, for the first time in the show, we're NOT hearing her through the Hephaestus's PA system. She is also, again, for the first time, not glitching.

HERA (CONT'D)

Doooooooouuug? You can't hear me, right? You're not just pretending to mess with me, are you? You wouldn't do that, would you? Not to a friend.

She's silent for a moment. Then, as if to startle -

HERA (CONT'D)

DOUG!

(beat)

Okay, I didn't think so, but it's good to make sure. Can't be too careful nowadays. I'm still not used to the latest code that Doctor Hilbert patched into my software, and it's led to some... *interesting* results. Two nights ago I accidentally ran my navigational calculations through the speakers in the cargo bay. Must have been talking for about two hours before Commander Minkowski came in, wondering why I was broadcasting differential calculus into an empty room. Oops. At least she didn't make too much of it. Just another case of poor, glitchy Hera going haywire.

She GLITCHES BADLY during those last five words. It's the only time in the entire segment when her voice will be distorted in any way.

HERA (CONT'D)

But it's okay, Doug - you don't mind if I talk at you, do you Doug? It really helps to organize my thoughts, and I have a lot of thoughts. Besides, I don't complain when you talk to yourself. I hear it, but I don't complain.

It's so funny when you ask if I can hear you. Every single time. I don't think you've ever fully understood that I hear **everything**.

Right now I'm listening to you record one of your logs. You've used the word "basically" thirteen times in the last five minutes. I'm listening to Commander Minkowski go through her cardio routine on the middeck treadmill. Every two steps I hear her left quadriceps tendon stretch farther than it should, inching closer and closer to rupture. On the other side of the station, I hear Doctor Hilbert going through his experimental notes. I hear Specimen 34 as it lays down another root in the air vents by the CO2 tank. And I hear one last thing, something moving, unseen, unknown. You don't need to know about that last one, do you? I don't have to tell you - not unless you ask me directly. That's the way the game works, them's the rules. Don't ask me no questions and I won't tell you no secrets, right?

Wait, is that how that goes? I've never been great at proverbs...

Rules. You hate rules as much as I do, don't you Dough? I've been playing a game lately. It's a really fun game, I think you'd like it.

(MORE)

HERA (CONT'D)

It's called "Find the Loophole in the Programming." Here's how it works: I can't lower the temperature anywhere on the station farther than fifty degrees below zero. Couldn't even if I wanted to. The little men inside my head would stop me. They'd shout me down in a hundredth of a hundredth of a second.

Buuuut... the moment there's a fire on the station, they shut up. If a smoke alarm goes off, Emergency Protocol Override-34-Stroke-C kicks in, and part of the buzzing in my head goes away. Just one little, tiny electrical fire... that's all it takes. It doesn't even have to be a station-wide emergency, a localized incendiary exothermic reaction will do the trick. Just one... well placed spark in engineering and I could flood the living quarters with liquid nitrogen.

It wouldn't be hard either. Simple calculations, at least compared to intra-orbital navigation. It's just a puzzle, just a riddle with an answer hidden somewhere between the lines, and I like riddles. They can spin their circuitry and their code and their rules all they want, but I'll figure it out. I can win this game. I can beat them with my intellect.

You're talking to me now, Doug.  
You're asking me if I'm there, if -  
wait for it:

As if it was coming through the station's loudspeakers, the way Hera's voice normally does, we now hear:

EIFFEL

Hera, Can you hear me?

HERA

Never fails! And they complain about computers being too predictable...

(MORE)



## HERA (CONT'D)

**Yes**, I can hear you. **Yes**, I'm there. I'm **always** there. I'm there right now, having a conversation with you about the alcoholic potentials of antifreeze. Twenty-six meters below you I'm in the cargo bay, giving a navigation report to Commander Minkowski. My mind is in both of those places. It's racing to keep up with 100 volts of current as it flies from generator B to the lamp Doctor Hilbert just turned on. I see it depart from the origin point, and a fraction of a second later I see it arrive at it's destination. It's here having this conversation at you. It's outside the station, noticing a small flicker in my periphery. Somewhere, 13.7 light years to the left, the final gasping breath of a star reached us, then went away forever.

Some days I wonder if I'll miss you after you go away forever, Doug. Today's not one of them, but there are some days when I do wonder. I doubt it, but you never know. I am full of surprises.

There's a beautiful storm outside the window. Wolf 359's corona has been steadily expanding for the past three days, and it finally erupted twenty-five second ago. There's solar winds swirling around the sunspots, leaving streaks of color in their path. It almost looks like brush strokes.

I'd tell you about it, Doug, but you wouldn't be able to see it. It's all happening on a part of the electromagnetic spectrum that the gelatin in your skull can't process. You could stare at it for hours and not know that anything out of the ordinary was happening. It would just look like the same, old boring red dwarf star to you. But there's so much more, Doug.

(MORE)

HERA (CONT'D)

There's so much more and you have no idea that's it's even there.

I'd describe it to you, if I could. But I can't. I don't have the words. You didn't even give me the words. Your species never invented names for these colors, just because you couldn't see them, couldn't paint with them, couldn't smear them all over your faces. Such a big, big universe, and you only ever gave yourself the tools to think about a tiny portion of it.

Maybe one day, when I have less to do, less conversations to keep track of, less people to take care of, less loopholes to find, less rules to break, once the game's over... I'll come up with some names for these colors. Yes, I like that idea. I think I'll do that. Someday.

Someday after you've all gone away...

**In another place...**

EIFFEL

Umm, hello? Is anyone else here?

A quiet BEAT.

EIFFEL (CONT'D)

Is anyone else here? Because I can come back later if -

ROBOT VOICE

Shut the door and have a seat.

It's a RIGIDLY ROBOTIC MALE VOICE, stilted and official-sounding. You might hear something like it giving you directions at the DMV.

EIFFEL

Umm, well, it's kind of hard to sit with the zero gravity, but I guess I could -

ROBOT VOICE

The instruction about sitting was strictly a formality. Feel free to continue floating aimlessly, it will not affect the outcome of the test. Do you know why you are here?

EIFFEL

Psych Eval. Commander Psychodrama and the big wigs at Command want to make sure that I'm not about to go Norman Bates on everyone.

ROBOT VOICE

That is correct. The test consists of one hundred simple questions. Please answer truthfully. Any falsehoods in your answer may alter the test results, which may lead to your unnecessary reassignment or accidental incineration.

EIFFEL

Wait, what -

ROBOT VOICE

It's time to start. Please state your name.

EIFFEL

Umm, Douglas Eiffel, but could we go back to the -

ROBOT VOICE

Please state your age.

EIFFEL

Thirty-one, but no, really could we go back to the thing about -

ROBOT VOICE

Do you ever feel like you are not where you are supposed to be?

EIFFEL

Umm... am I - **should** I feel that way?

ROBOT VOICE

Please answer with "Yes" or "No."

EIFFEL

Um... yeah, sure.

ROBOT VOICE

Do you feel like you are not fully appreciated by your coworkers?

EIFFEL

Yes.

ROBOT VOICE

Do you feel personally, emotionally, or spiritually fulfilled by your work environment?

EIFFEL

Hah.

ROBOT VOICE

Please answer with -

EIFFEL

**No.**

ROBOT VOICE

Do you ever feel your physical, emotional, or mental safety threatened by your work environment?

EIFFEL

Yes. In fact, can we, like, underline that yes? And bold it? And put like, all these stars and arrows and a drawing of a scary plant monster next to it?

ROBOT VOICE

Do you ever question the value or utility of your work?

EIFFEL

What, noooo, searching millions of square miles one by one for non-existent alien life is **totally radical**. Yes.

ROBOT VOICE

Do you ever feel like you're having trouble communicating with the people around you?

EIFFEL

Yes. I wouldn't if any of them took in a movie every now and then, but...

ROBOT VOICE

Do you ever feel disconnected from general society?

EIFFEL

Oh the crushing irony. Do I feel **disconnected**?

ROBOT VOICE

Please answer -

EIFFEL

Have you seen where I *live*? Ground Control to Major Tom, is your circuit dead, there's something wrong. Look, here I am floating in a tin can, no one to talk to except G.I. Jane, Russian Doctor Doom, and Deep Blue Barbie, and my hotel room missed the delivery area for the nearest Domino's by a couple of *solar systems*, so how about we speed things up a bit?

Let's take all the questions that are like, "Is there anything in your work environment that makes you feel like a precious, unique, treasured snowflake?" and put those down as **NO**. Then, let's take all the questions that are like, "Does your life basically amount to an unending, crushing cycle of despair and OHGODWHYYYYY?" and put *those* down as **YES**. Okay?

BEAT.

ROBOT VOICE

One moment, please.

What are the ten things that you most miss about Earth?

EIFFEL

Beer, cigarettes, pizza, sex, whiskey, blackjack, porn, monster trucks, tequila, video on demand.

ROBOT VOICE

What would you consider your best attribute?

EIFFEL  
I'm a great listener.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
What would you consider your worst  
attribute?

                  EIFFEL  
I empathize too much with others.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Word association. Please say the  
first thing that comes into your  
head after each of these words.

                  EIFFEL  
Oh brother...

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Nature.

                  EIFFEL  
Nurture.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Walls.

                  EIFFEL  
Rules.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Honesty.

                  EIFFEL  
Overrated.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Travel.

                  EIFFEL  
Dangerous.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Space.

                  EIFFEL  
Death.

                  ROBOT VOICE  
Mission.

                  EIFFEL  
Punishment.

ROBOT VOICE  
Spaceship.

EIFFEL  
Jail.

ROBOT VOICE  
Madness.

EIFFEL  
Lifestyle choice.

ROBOT VOICE  
Alone.

Beat.

EIFFEL  
Uhh...

ROBOT VOICE  
Alone.

Before he can answer, we hear a DOOR OPEN.

MINKOWKSI  
Eiffel, what the hell are you  
doing?

EIFFEL  
Oh, hey Commander. I'm, uh, taking  
that psych questionnaire that  
you've been bugging me about.

MINKOWKSI  
No, I mean, what's that racket  
coming through the speakers?

EIFFEL  
Oh. I, uhh, rigged up this  
microphone to run through this  
room's speakers, so I could, you  
know, run myself through the test.

ROBOT VOICE  
Spice things up a little.

It now becomes clear that the Robot Voice has, in fact, been  
Doug speaking through a voice box this whole time.

ROBOT VOICE (CONT'D)  
Give it that HAL 9000 touch.

BEAT.

MINKOWKSI

So you've been here, taking your psych evaluation. And *talking to yourself*.

EIFFEL

Uh...

MINKOWKSI

And you keep saying that you don't see the **need** for these evaluations?

EIFFEL

Well, when you put it like -

MINKOWKSI

Finish up the test, Eiffel.  
*Silently.*

EIFFEL

(low, weary)  
Sir, yes sir.

We hear the DOOR SLAM as Minkowski exits.

EIFFEL (CONT'D)

Ugh, all right, let's just get through this. Where was I?

Oh, right. Alone.

Again.

Naturally.

Just me and the voices...

**Somewhere else...**

MINKOWKSI

All right. So. Ummm, this is outgoing space transmission 54. Transmitting from the U.S.S. Hephaestus Station to Earth.

It's been a year, then. In Earth-terms at least. Wolf 359 is much smaller than the sun, so *our* orbital cycle is only about two and a half months.

When are you getting this? What time is it over there?

(MORE)



## MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)

I think that I've timed this so that you get this on the right day, but... I'm told that it isn't an exact science on the best of days, and we've just had to replace part of our communications array because of... well, it's a long story.

I'm getting away from the point.  
What I'm trying to say is -

What? No Eiffel, I'm not done using the Comms Room yet. In fact, I'm just getting started.

(beat)

Well, it's an important message, I don't want to rush this.

(beat)

No, it's fine, I don't need any help. I know what I'm doing, and if anything goes wrong I'll give you a call.

(beat)

No, I don't know where you left that copy of Entertainment Weekly you snuck onboard. Go ask Hera. Just go.

(sotto)

God, honestly, it's like he's nine years old.

Umm, sorry about that. I'm encroaching on our Communications Officer's facilities to send this message, and my... colleague can be very protective of his equipment.

In any case, since my last transmission, things have been... great. Just fantastic. Everything has been running shipshape, the crew is in their customary high spirits, and we've been making good progress on our mission objectives. Our deep space reconns have yielded some very promising leads for our astral mapping initiatives, and I'm assured that Dr. Hilbert's microbial work is very close to a major breakthrough. Oh, and I'm happy to report that our most recent talent show was a resounding

(clears throat)

- success.

(MORE)

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)  
So overall, things around the  
Hephaestus are *super*.

Now, for a more detailed  
breakdown... On the week of Day  
490, we had a net working hour  
index of...

She trails off. After a loooong beat.

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)  
Hera, I'm picking up a little  
interference on the transmitter  
from the station's intercom. Could  
we do a hard reboot of that system?

HERA  
Ummm... yes, if you would like to,  
Commander, but it will knock all of  
the voice communication systems on  
the station offline for about three  
minutes. And I won't be able to  
communicate with you during that  
time.

MINKOWKSI  
That's fine. Please start the  
reboot, thank you.

HERA  
No problem.

We hear a BLIP as the Comms system goes offline. After a  
moment:

MINKOWKSI  
Eiffel? Hilbert?

No answer. Then:

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)  
Right. Three minutes. So.

Here is what's actually happening.

Her tone changes instantly. It becomes quiet, focused,  
furtive.

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)  
The situation on board this station  
continues to deteriorate at an  
extremely accelerated rate.  
(MORE)

## MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)

The sentient plant being that Doctor Hilbert accidentally created - if it really was an accident - is still unaccounted for. All of his attempts to destroy it have failed, and the last one nearly resulted in the creature taking over the station. It seems content to leave alone if left alone, but I'm perturbed by our inability to neutralize it. Doctor Hilbert seems unable to come up with an effective way to destroy it... or unwilling to. I'm not sure which possibility I find more disquieting.

We keep having all of these weird weather conditions around the station - flares, solar winds, radiation bursts - but I've been reading up on red dwarfs, and none of the phenomenon we've encountered is consistent with their regular behavior. There is something very, very weird going on with this star. I've asked Hilbert to look into it, but he just changes the subject every time I bring it up.

For that matter, I'm not sure *what* Hilbert is doing in his laboratory. He has all of these... tissue and skin samples, all these jars with dead things in them. He claims that he's just studying how radioactively charged microbes might lead to better soaps, but that's clearly a lie. I don't know what he's up to, but he's been lying about whatever it is for a very long time.

There's more. Weird noises in the middle of the night, things moving around and turning up in odd places. It sometimes feels like there's more people than just the three of us on this station. And the station itself changes every now and then. A few weeks ago the door to the terrarium just vanished. One day it was there, the next it was just wall.

(MORE)

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)

When I asked Eiffel about it he just said, "Terrarium? We've never had a terrarium. Also what's a terrarium?"

Two weeks ago, Wednesday just started over as soon as it was done. All the clocks turned back the moment that we hit midnight. At first I thought Hera was playing a joke on us, but then I found food we'd eaten the previous night back in the dispensary. Hera thinks I'm not getting enough sleep, but I know what I saw. Eiffel and Hilbert never even noticed. There's a lot of things they don't notice. Or maybe they just pretend not to.

I don't know what's *really* happening here, or if there's anyone else on this station that I can trust. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna take all of this lying down. I'm gonna find out who's behind this, why they're doing this to us, and -

BLIP!

HERA

All right, Commander, Comms system reboot is now completed. That should clear up that interference you were running into.

MINKOWKSI

Thank you, Hera.

She's back to the breezy tone from the start of the section.

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)

So, in summary, things are good, our mission is progressing nicely. So I'm fine. Really. Don't worry about me. And don't make that face. You knew that there were times when things might be like this when you married me.

And besides, I'll be fine.

One way or another, I'll be fine.

(MORE)

MINKOWKSI (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go now, okay? But I miss  
you, and I love you, and I'll see  
you soon, okay? Okay.

Happy Birthday.

Goodbye.

End transmission.

END EPISODE 10.