WOLF 359

"HAPPY TO BE OF ASSISTANCE"

by

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(WRITER'S NOTE: the following takes place on day 619 of the Hephaestus Mission)

START EPISODE 18:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS - CARGO BAY - 0200 HOURS

We fade in from our credit music to the sound of a LOUD, URGET ALARM. After a few seconds of blaring -

EIFFEL
Hera? Everything copacetic?

HERA
Uhhh... Yes?

EIFFEL
You sure? Because it's alarms-o'clock down here in the hangar bay, and last I checked we don't have an "everything's under control" alarm.

HERA
Oh, that's... Nothing.

EIFFEL
It doesn't sound nothing-y. It kinda sounds, "Oh God, oh God, we're all going to die"... -y.

HERA
Just a... Slight flux in the pressure of the docking bay.

EIFFEL
Can we make it go away, please?

HERA
Yes. One second.

As the ALARM KEEPS BLARING, we hear a HATCH OPEN.

MINKOWSKI
Eiffel. Sit rep?

EIFFEL
Apparently the hangar bay is getting the bends, but Rosie's cleaning up the mess.
HERA
Normalizing air pressure levels now...

There's an AUDIBLE WHOOSH as the air levels in the room adjust. But instead of stopping, the ALARM grows LOUDER.

MINKOWSKI
Hera?

EIFFEL
Whatever's happening seems to be making the alarm louder.

HERA
There is no need to panic, the hangar bay is just a tiny bit over-pressurized. It's a completely routine anomaly. I'll just vent a bit of the excess air out of the room.

EIFFEL
And, umm, how do the red lights that just started flashing factor into that equation?

MINKOWSKI
What flashing - oh no.

HERA
Beginning air vent in -

MINKOWSKI
Wait, wait, abort! You're about to-

HERA
Commander, things will be fine. Trust me.

MINKOWSKI
Eiffel, get down! This room's about to -

We don't hear the rest of that line, as at that moment a KLAXON BLARES a deafening warning TONE, and suddenly everything goes CRAZY.

The LOUD GUST of WIND cuts through the room. Everything that isn't bolted down in the hangar bay is tossed around, going CLANG! and BANG! and BOOM! against the walls and other objects. For about thirty seconds, there's a HURRICANE in that room.
When things settle down, the SILENCE is DEAFENING. At the very least that took care of the alarms.

HERA
There! See? Problem solved.

There's no reply. After a moment -

HERA (CONT'D)
Commander? Officer Eiffel?

Nothing.

HERA (CONT'D)
In retrospect, that... May have been the main airlock that I just opened, not the auxiliary vent. Umm, sorry about that?

If there were crickets in space, we'd be hearing them.

HERA (CONT'D)
And... My senses aren't picking up your heat signatures anywhere inside the station, which would suggest...

She's getting a bit panicky at the echoing silence.

HERA (CONT'D)
Did... Did I just kill everyone? I think I just killed everyone. I didn't know it would be that easy. Why was it that easy to kill everyone? I never thought that's how I would end up killing -

BZZT! There's a BURST of STATIC, and then through an intercom, we hear Minkowski COUGHING.

MINKOWSKI
(via intercom)
Hera, what the hell was that!?

HERA
Oh my God, Commander. Are you -

MINKOWSKI
We're fine! We're alive!

HERA
Where are you? You're not showing up in any of my systems.
As Minkowski answers, we transition into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - SECRET LAB - CONTINUOUS

MINKOWSKI
We had just enough time to dive into the closest room. We're in that hidden laboratory we found a few months ago, the one that's off the grid. That's why you can't see or hear us.

EIFFEL
(deep breaths)
Okay, I'll admit it... Installing that hatch over the hole in the wall wasn't a total waste of a Saturday afternoon.

MINKOWSKI
Fortunately, Eiffel had one of his portable comms transmitters on him. But we're both here, we're both fine. We haven't died.

(then)
Yet.

HERA
Commander, I am so sorry, I have no idea how -

MINKOWSKI
Just - just get the hangar bay repressurized. On the double.

HERA
Yes, sir. It should only take about... an hour.

MINKOWSKI
Get it done. We'll be in touch.

HERA
Happy to be of assistance, sir.

We hear a BURST of STATIC as Minkowski switches off the transmitter.

EIFFEL
Oh great, an hour in the station's creepiest corner...
MINKOWSKI
C'mon. Hilbert hooked up the old computer terminal to the power grid when we were clearing out this room. Let's see if we can connect to our central systems and give Hera a hand.

EIFFEL
Aye aye.

We hear them BOOTING UP the computer. After a moment -

MINKOWSKI
You think she's okay?

EIFFEL
What, Hera?

MINKOWSKI
It hasn't exactly been smooth sailing lately. She's been struggling with a lot of things around the station.

EIFFEL
Well, you know how it is when your mechanical brain gets broken and you have to get it replaced with a new one made mostly out of electrical tape and paperclips. Oh, wait, no you don't. Neither of us know what that's like at all.

MINKOWSKI
I'm... I'm not unsympathetic, Eiffel. But I'm also not unalarmed. I don't know if you noticed, but we just had a near catastrophe there.

EIFFEL
We all make mistakes. Give her some time.

The computer finishes BOOTING UP with a DING. Its HARD DRIVE SPINS.

MINKOWSKI
How much time? Because avoiding mistakes like that is pretty much the reason we have -

Minkowski STOPS SHORT as the screen flickers on. For a moment she just stares at the computer.
MINKOWSKI
Eiffel... You remember the first
time we were in here? With the -

EIFFEL
With the spider, yes. It'll be a
few lifetimes of the Earth before I
forget that.

MINKOWSKI
And the log we found in this
computer? About the experiments?

EIFFEL
Uh, vaguely? From Doctor Whoozis?

MINKOWSKI
No, not Doctor Whoozis - Doctor
Selberg. Listen:
   (reading off log)
"Contact with live specimens
extremely dangerous, as shown with
recent exposure trial. Captain
Lovelace has ordered termination of
all samples."

EIFFEL
Wait, Lovelace? As in our friend
from the hidden S.O.S. message?

MINKOWSKI
That one. I told you I'd heard that
name before... I think we may have
just found a non-Hilbert source of
information.

And off that -

FADE TO:

LATER -

EIFFEL
Okay, so there's bad news and
there's good news.

The bad news is that this hard
drive is shot to hell, and most of
the files on it are corrupted.

(MORE)
There's a few experimental logs I can access, but Dr. Selberg seems to have been a man with a one-track mind — and his track was eight-legged things that go bump in my nightmares. I'll mark those for you, and you can go through them once I'm far... far... away.

And the good news?

The good news, is there's six audio files floating around in backup directories. They probably bled over from another computer through an old server.

And what's on those?

Why don't we find out?

We hear him turning on a SET OF SPEAKERS.

Blast from the past, volume one. Here we go.

We hear Eiffel TAPPING A FEW BUTTONS, followed by a CRACKLE OF STATIC. Over a somewhat distorted noise, we hear the recording. There's a P.A. chime, followed by:

She speaks with a somber, grave tone.

Hello, hello!

Turn up the volume.

We hear a KNOB TURNING.

It is with an... Extremely heavy heart that I report that our evasive maneuvers have failed. (MORE)
In spite of our best efforts to avoid it, the alien mothership has spotted us, and is closing in on an intercept vector. If we are really lucky we'll avoid their death ray, but all hands should brace for immediate impact. In the extremely likely event of a boarding party, remember what we learned from our battle with their advance scout. They're vulnerable in the back of the false head and underneath their tentacles, but be careful: whatever you do, don't look into their third eye. Continue to work on the barricade, but don't forget to swing by the armory for some liquid courage and really big guns, all right?

Oh. And could somebody be a doll and get rid of that half-autopsied alien body in the medical bay? That would just be -

IN RECORDING: Lovelace is interrupted by the familiar BUZZER of the Comms System.

IN RECORDING: There's some unintelligible, ANGRY MUTTERING coming through the Comms System. Then -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
It's okay, Officer Lambert, just a little joke to pass the time. There's nothing to -

IN RECORDING: More, angrier muttering. Then -

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Okay, okay, message received, thank you. Now go away. Go far away.

IN RECORDING: Lovelace hits a button, and hangs up.

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Anyway... This is the log of Captain Isabel Lovelace, Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. Hephaestus. It is day 97 of our orbit around Wolf 359. We are not, I am happy to say, under attack by little green men.

(MORE)
On an unrelated note, my personal mission to get Communications Officer Lambert to crack a smile is an ongoing project.

IN RECORDING: We hear her flipping through a few pages.

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Morale amongst all the non-buzzkill members of the crew is fairly high. Dr. Selberg reports that his biomass samples are developing ahead of schedule, and Dr.'s Hui and Fourier are happy with the results of their first radiation trial. Petty Officer Fisher is still trying to figure out how to get rid of that interference in the navigation system, but he seems optimistic.

And Communications Officer Lambert is... Communications Officer Lambert. So an enormous stick in the mud.

IN RECORDING: There's a series of BEEPS from a CONSOLE.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
I heard that, Rhea. You are expressly forbidden from telling him I said that.

IN RECORDING: Two more BEEPS.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
More on these stories, as they develop. Captain Lovelace out.

There's a CLICK from her RECORDER as the first RECORDING ENDS. After a BEAT -

EIFFEL
Well...

EIFFEL MINKOWSKI
She sounds awesome. She sounds terrible.

They exchange looks.

EIFFEL (CONT’D)
Uh, well, agreeing to disagree for a moment...

(MORE)
Is it me or does her crew seem a lot more... Robust than ours?

MINKOWSKI
Biologist, some sort of engineer from the sounds of it...

EIFFEL
What were the other two doctors? Astronomers?

MINKOWSKI
Or physicists, if they were doing radiation tests. And that device at the end sounded like a gen zero A.I. Unit.

EIFFEL
Sooo... How come Command sent Captain Picard up here with only half the crew they gave Kirk?

MINKOWSKI
Let's see if we can find out.

EIFFEL
Roger.
(tapping keys)
Volume two, coming right up...

We hear the sound of a RECORDER ENGAGE as the second recording begins.

LOVELACE
This is the log of Captain Isabel Lovelace, on day 383 of our mission around Wolf 359.

This time around she sounds exhausted.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Just had another argument with Officer Lambert. He wants me talk to Fourier and Hui, thinks they should hear it from the captain. Like we don't have enough on our hands with that meteor shower that's supposed to hit us tomorrow. (she sighs)
Honestly, as long as they get their jobs done, I could care less about what they do during their down time. If they want to -
IN RECORDING: She's cut off as an ALARM GOES OFF.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Rhea, talk to me. What's going on?

At a drop of a hat, she's all steely business.

IN RECORDING: There's a series of BEEPS as Rhea pulls up information.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Goddammit, that's way ahead of projections. Get me an ETA on first impact. And patch me through to Fisher's helmet comms.

IN RECORDING: There's a CHIRP as the Comms Channel opens.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Officer Fisher, drop whatever you are doing and head for the nearest airlock, now.

IN RECORDING: There's a tiny bit of INDISTINCT CHATTER, which she cuts off -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
No, listen: I don't care about the panel. Hui's projections were way off, the meteors are inbound right the hell now.

IN RECORDING: There's a distant RUMBLING. Another second of CHATTER.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Mace, just shut up and do as you are told. You're about to be in the middle of an high velocity mine field. Get inside right n--

IN RECORDING: She's cut off as the METEORS IMPACT against the Hephaestus. SPARKS FLY, METAL RUMBLES AND BREAKS, and as the first EXPLOSION BREAKS OUT -

The recording CUTS OFF.

MINKOWSKI
Next one. Play the -

EIFFEL
(typing)
Already on it, just a sec...
The RECORDER ENGAGES as Volume Three starts playing. There's a loud BURST OF STATIC and DISTORTION at the start of this recording. As it dies down -

LOVELACE
-tain Lovelace, this is day 435 of the Hephaestus Mission.

Doctor Selberg took off the cast today. Looks like my arm's healing well, but he wants to keep taking regular X-Rays to be sure.

He... He helped me clean out Fisher's quarters this afternoon. He was right, of course. The longer I put it off, the worse it would've been. As it is, I don't know that I could have done it without him.

(clears her throat)
Fourier and Hui are moving ahead with their experiments. I wish they'd wait for some kind of response to the distress signal we sent out after the meteor shower, but... We only have another ten months up here, and we need to move faster to get results.

Lambert's the only one who's still treating this like a review. He's reacting to the whole mess in stride. Maybe that's smart. But I'd like to be able to dodge the next curveball, if it comes. When it comes. I just hope those two kids know what they're doing.

A BLIP as her recorder shuts up.

EIFFEL
Ten months?

MINKOWSKI
They were probably on a 730-day rotation - same as us.

EIFFEL
But in the other message, the one she left for us, didn't she say that it was, like -
MINKOWSKI
(glum)
Day 944. She'd been here for 944 days.

EIFFEL
So they just left them here? What's going to happen to us? Is Cutter just going to -

He's interrupted by the sound of the computer console POWERING DOWN.

EIFFEL (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no!

He smacks the side of the computer.

EIFFEL (CONT'D)
We're losing power. Terminal's shutting down.

MINKOWSKI
Damn it all...
   (switches on transmitter)
Hera, what's going on with the power grid?

HERA
Just some... Teeny, tiny fluctuations in the flow of energy, nothing to be alarmed by.

MINKOWSKI
Well, we need full power back, ASAP. We might actually be on the verge of making sense of something for once.

HERA
Look, I'm trying, okay? And I'm also trying to get the pressure system back to normal, a task I am attempting to tackle with a minimum of trial and error for the sake of your health, so give me a bit of space, okay Officer Eiffel?

BEAT.

MINKOWSKI
Excuse me?
There's an *awkward moment* as Hera realizes what just happened.

    **HERA**
    I mean -

    **MINKOWSKI**
    Hera, you *are* aware of who you're talking to, right?

    **HERA**
    Of course I am, Commander. I'm sorry, it's just... I'm not used to hearing your voice through the transmitter. That's all.

There's a *hum* of electrical activity as a *power surge* hits the room. The computer *terminal* boots back up.

    **HERA (CONT'D)**
    There. Is that better?

    **MINKOWSKI**
    ... Much. Thank you, Hera.

    **HERA**
    You're welcome. I'm... I'm going to keep working on the airflow problem.

    **MINKOWSKI**
    Keep us posted.

Minkowski switches off the transmitter.

    **EIFFEL**
    I'm sure that was -

    **MINKOWSKI**
    Let's just finish up these logs before something else goes wrong with the computer. We can do an in-depth analysis of how boned we are after we've heard all of them.

    **EIFFEL**
    Okay, sure.
    (typing)
    Umm, the Lovelace chronicles, chapter four.

The fourth recording begins:
This is the log of Captain Isabel Lovelace, on day -

She stops short, as if something had caught her attention. After a second -

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Did you hear that? Did - There it is again. Did you hear it?

Honestly, we're not sure. Between the crackle of the recording and the ambient noise of the station, it's hard to say either way.

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
I've been hearing things for the past few weeks. Always late at night, when the others are asleep. Always when I'm alone. It's like there's something scurrying inside the walls. Like there's rats in the walls.

Dr. Selberg says he's worried about me. I'm not getting enough sleep. Well, nobody is. We're all pulling double shifts practically every day. We can sleep once we get off this station.

There's a BEAT. Then she continues — lower, angrier.

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Does anybody even listen to these? We all keep making these logs, and sending them but... I've been asking for help for months now. Somebody should have contacted us, somebody should have been here by now. You people haven't told me something. Something important. Something about this -

She stops again. Then, urgently.

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
There, in the walls. Listen.

She holds up the recorder to the walls.

Eiffel and Minkowski lean in, listening intently. After a moment -
EIFFFEL
(whisper)
Are you hearing -

MINKOWSKI
Shh...

And finally, soft but definitely there, is the sound of FAINT SCRATCHING.

Then -

LOVELACE
Talk to me, Canaveral. Before bad things happen.

STATIC. End of the fourth recording.

That gives them PAUSE. After a moment -

EIFFFEL
Was... Was there something there? In the walls?

MINKOWSKI
I'm not sure, Eiffel.
(beat)
Play the next one.

A bit of typing, and then a BURST OF STATIC. Start of the fifth recording.

IN RECORDING: Captain Lovelace lets out a LONG SIGH.

LOVELACE
Captain's log. Day 872.

Doctor Hui died today. Dr. Selberg was with him all night. He passed sometime in the early hours. Apparently... he did stop coughing at the end. Seems it was... relatively painless. As far these things go.

He gave us some letters. For his mother, his sisters. Dr. Fourier and I promised we'd deliver them if we get back to Earth.

Fourier thinks there must be something wrong with the Comms system. Some... Mechanical fault or interference we haven't noticed. (MORE)
LOVELACE (CONT'D)
She says it's the only explanation for why nobody's come to help us. I wish I could believe that too. But I don't think so. I think you just don't care anymore.
(beat)
I miss Lambert.
(she laughs a tiny, bitter laugh)
I never thought I'd say that. Out of everyone we've lost but... Yeah. I wish you were still here, Sam. I wish you were here to tell me not to call you that.

After a moment, she SWITCHES OFF the recorder.

MINKOWSKI
Okay... Last one.

EIFFEL
I kinda...is this getting kinda morbid? Maybe we shouldn't listen to this.

MINKOWSKI
You mean listen to how she died?

EIFFEL
Yeah...that thing.

MINKOWSKI
If there's something on the log that can help us, then I want to know what it is. And if that's the case, I don't think she'd mind.

HERA
I agree.

EIFFEL
Hera? How are you listening in?

MINKOWSKI
And what's the status of the air supply?

HERA
We're close, Commander. And playing the audio files is integrating them with my servers. Please, Officer Eiffel. We should finish this.
EIFFEL
Okay. Take it away, Isabel...

We hear Eiffel TYPING. The final recording BEGINS:

LOVELACE
Captain's Log. U.S.S. Hephaestus
Station. Final entry.

Her voice is 100% proof venom as she says -

LOVELACE (CONT’D)
Run and hide.

That's all I have to say to you.

Run. And. Hide.

Because I'm coming for all you bastards. You probably thought you'd never see me again. You thought if you just left us up here you could forget all about us. Out of sight, out of mind, huh?

Jokes on you. You bastards killed most of my crew, but I'm still alive, and Dr. Selberg is still alive, and we have a way to get off this tin can. It's taken months, but we found a way. It's not gonna be pretty. It's not gonna be fast. But we'll make it back to Earth, and the first thing we're going to do as soon as we get home is find everyone involved in this sadistic little field-trip and make you pay.

So if you're listening to this:

Run. And. Hide.

Because by the time that I'm done you will feel more helpless and more alone than all the innocent people you've ever hurt.

See you soon.

The message has barely collapsed into STATIC before we hear-

EIFFEL

WHOOOO!
MINKOWSKI
Calm down, Eiffel.

EIFFEL
No! No calming down! I encourage you to join me in the fist-pumping section of the audience! For those about to kick Goddard Futuristics butt, we salute you!

MINKOWSKI
If they got away, do you think we'd be -

EIFFEL
D-d-d-d-d-d. Stop it.
(beat)
Is it within the realm of the remotely possible that they might have found a way off the station?

MINKOWSKI
Possibly? I mean, in terms of fluke things that could conceivably hap-

EIFFEL
And! And - Do you have any hard evidence that Captain Lovelace is actually dead?

MINKOWSKI
Well, no, not exa-

EIFFEL
Then you are going to shut up and let me have this. Just once. Let me have my badass space commando chick victory cocktail, okay?

On the other side of the hatch separating the rooms, we hear the sound of a MASSIVE AIR GUST as the room is repressurized.

EIFFEL (CONT'D)
And there, see! That sounds like our air supply getting its groove back. So all in all, I think we can put this down as a good day.

Almost as soon as he says that, there's a BURST OF STATIC THROUGH THE SPEAKERS.

MINKOWSKI
Eiffel?
EIFFEL
Oh, uh... I guess there's a bit more tacked onto that last recording. One moment, please.

He TYPES for a second and the STATIC DIES DOWN. THE SIXTH RECORDING RESUMES:

ON RECORDING: We hear Captain Lovelace flipping through some pages and muttering to herself. Then, she CLEARS HER THROAT:

LOVELACE
This is a message for any and -

IN RECORDING: There's a KNOCK on a door.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
It's open.

IN RECORDING: The DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

SELBERG
(on recording)
Captain Lovelace. Is bad time?

Eiffel and Minkowski both freeze in HORROR.

EIFFEL
Wait a minute...

LOVELACE
Doctor Selberg. No, come in, I was just doing some recordings.

MINKOWSKI
That voice...

EIFFEL
Oh my God.

LOVELACE
How can I help you?

SELBERG
Everything is prepared downstairs. We can get started as soon as you are ready.

MINKOWSKI
No, it can't be.

LOVELACE
Thank you, Doctor Selberg. I wanted to make sure I said that.

(MORE)
LOVELACE (CONT'D)
I would have never made it this far if you hadn't been here.

EIFFEL
Commander listen to him –

SELBERG
Just doing my job, Captain.

EIFFEL
– that's Hilbert.

And so it is.

SELBERG/HILBERT
Always happy to be of assistance.

STOP RECORDING.

END OF EPISODE 18.