

Chasing a Ghost
Episode 9 - When I'm Gone, Don't No One Mourn Me

written by

James Big

Address

Phone

E-mail

INT. STUDIO/SYSTEM EXCHANGE STATION SE081

Space station ambiance; a promenade cafe in a semi-busy transit hub. Recording is a bit tinny and distant, as though recorded guerilla journalist style on a portable recorder.

LENNON MERLO

(nervous)

Uh... excuse me, but...

(remembering their
manners)

Hi.

THE BANJO GHOST

Howdy. There something I can do
for you?

LENNON MERLO

I hope so. Are you, uh... I see
you're wearing a SPACE operator
uniform?

THE BANJO GHOST

I am.

LENNON MERLO

Are you the current operator for
the ship in dock 6? The 4T2FF John
Brown?

THE BANJO GHOST

(not sure what this is)

Yeah, that's me. We don't start
boarding for a couple of hours
yet, but if you have questions
about the trip I can help you find
the ticket office. It should be
just around-

LENNON MERLO

Sorry, no, I'm...

(jumping to it before he
can chicken out)

Is this you?

The cigar box cover of Blues for the Black used in the first episode begins playing, very low and tinny, like Lennon's opened it on their hand-held terminal. Lennon and the Ghost are both silent for a moment as the music plays.

THE BANJO GHOST
(very confused)
I... yeah, I think it might be...
(beat)
Why do *you* have it?

LENNON MERLO (v.O.)
(with more gravitas than
usual)
I'm Lennon Merlo... and this is
Chasing a Ghost.

Intro sting plays.

LENNON MERLO (v.O.)
After our trip to the
Peregrination enclave on Arcturus
Station, Jax and I were left with
a list of a dozen places and times
where, within a certain margin of
error, we knew the Banjo Ghost had
been. At first, it was unclear if
there was any pattern at all.

Hotel room ambiance; the visual would be sheets of paper
spread out on a bed so Lennon and Jax can look at them all
at once.

LENNON MERLO
OK, let's talk it out. What *can*
we say about them?

JAX ABRAHAMS
Well... we've always assumed the
Ghost is just one person, and this
certainly doesn't contradict that;
there's no transmission far enough
from any other that you couldn't
get there in time to send the next
one.

LENNON MERLO
It doesn't confirm it, either, but
yeah, probably safe to keep
assuming that.

JAX ABRAHAMS

They don't stick to one kind of station or settlement; unlikely they're something like a VACquero or an ice hauler.

LENNON MERLO

If they were, they wouldn't travel this widely either. But they don't seem like a long-haul freighter or a Terminal cyclor, either, because some of these places are way off any low-energy transfer route.

(frustrated grunt)

Urgh! This is impossible! Who the hell goes from Pallas to Mercury to Vesta to a Waystation Market in the middle of nowhere in a month and a half, but doesn't stop at Titan, or Luna, or Gany? Dammit!

A long pause.

JAX ABRAHAMS

(wide-eyed)

Lennon.

LENNON MERLO

What?

JAX ABRAHAMS

(excited)

Lennon. Lennon!

LennonLennonLennon!

Looklooklooklooklook!

LENNON MERLO

What, Jax!?

The crinkle of a pamphlet being waved emphatically.

JAX ABRAHAMS

Look! Look at this!

LENNON MERLO

(deadpan and frustrated)

Jax, that's not- that's our SPACE timetable, not part of the evidence.

JAX ABRAHAMS
I know, but look. What did you
just say? Pallas to Mercury to
Vesta to the middle of nowhere?
Look, right here!

A finger rapidly tapping paper.

LENNON MERLO
Pallas...Caloris Basin,
Mercury...Vesta...SE738...

JAX ABRAHAMS
With listed amenities
including...?

LENNON MERLO
A Waystation Market...! Jax!

JAX ABRAHAMS
Lennon!

LENNON MERLO
JAX!

JAX ABRAHAMS
LENNNON!

The sound of two people excitedly jumping up and down,
followed by a hard mic bump.

LENNON MERLO
Oh shi-

An ever harder mic bump, and the recording cuts off.

LENNON MERLO (V.O.)
There **was** a pattern, a common
factor between all the locations
on our list: they were all stops
on one of two SPACE passenger
transport routes that shared a
common starting point. And, when
we commed our contact at the
Atbrook Endowment and asked if
they could help us, they narrowed
down our list of possibilities not
just to those routes, but to a
single ship. From there, we

narrowed down where the ship would
be and when, and...

A private room, off the same promenade as the first scene.

THE BANJO GHOST

Uh... howdy, y'all. I'm... well, I
guess y'all call me the Banjo
Ghost.

LENNON MERLO (v.O.)

The Ghost agreed to speak to me on
the condition that I allowed them
to remain anonymous, a condition I
gladly agreed to.

THE BANJO GHOST

No use in concealing my voice, I
guess. But yeah, if you wouldn't
mind not using my name, I'd
appreciate it.

LENNON MERLO

Absolutely. Oh, and I've been
using they and them to refer to
you in the show so far; would you
prefer I use something else?

THE BANJO GHOST

They/them is fine. Not my usual,
but I've never been especially
attached to any particular set.

LENNON MERLO

Ok.

(beat)

Sorry, it's just... I've been
planning this interview for
months, and now I'm sitting across
from you and my brain is just
going blank.

THE BANJO GHOST

That's all right, I'm... not
exactly sure what to say here,
either. You've really been looking
for me? For months? Because you
heard me on the redline?

LENNON MERLO

I have.

LENNON MERLo (v.O.)

As I explained how I'd come to hear the Ghost's recordings, how there was a small community of diehard Banjo Ghost fans trading songs and theories and being inspired to make their own music, the Ghost got more and more wide-eyed. I think at one point they were certain this was some sort of elaborate prank at their expense, but eventually came around to the idea that no, there were really people around the solar system curious about them and the music they played.

LENNON MERLO

So, can I ask you: how did you decide to start broadcasting yourself?

THE BANJO GHOST

Sure. I guess... I've always kind of been a bit of a musical dabbler, I guess you might say. Picked up and put down half a dozen instruments over the years, some more than once. Never quite had the dedication to get really good with any of them, but I've always got some song or another running through my head, and I've been singing since I was a kid, mostly to myself. Even got embarrassed by it a time or two, getting lost in a song somewhere in public and only noticing I was doing it when I caught someone laughing at me. But that's neither here nor there.

(beat)

I've also been working for SPACE as a pilot and operator for going on about ten years. It's a good

job, for the most part, but the foundation changed some things a couple years back that have made it a bit less pleasant.

LENNON MERLO

What happened?

THE BANJO GHOST

Oh, there was this big high-profile robbery on a ship a while back. Not even one of ours, this was one of those Southerby locomotive ships, some muckety-muck got some fancy flower swiped out from under his nose, but SPACE decided to try to get ahead of the curve by changing up their security practices, and one of the things they changed was sealing the operator in away from the passengers while the ship is in transit. So, I went from being able to chat with folks on long and lonely stretches to being shut up by myself for days at a time.

LENNON MERLO

Sounds lonely.

THE BANJO GHOST

More than anything, it was *boring*. There's only so much Tidal Heat you can watch before your fingers start itching to *do* something, you know? So I picked up this little handmade junk guitar from a fella on Ceres, and started playing again. And, just for the hell of it...

(clears throat)

So, SPACE transports have an onboard entertainment system, to make sure folks have something to watch or listen to even when we're outside the range of most redline stations. There's a few hard-wired entertainment terminals, but

mostly people would rather use their own, so the ship has its own little redline transmitter, just big enough to give a good signal to everyone on the ship. That transmitter is up in the cockpit area, right next to the comms console, and it's got a lot more possible channels than we've got entertainment feeds, so I pick a channel way outside the standard bands, hook the cabin microphone up to the transmitter, and play a little tune.

LENNON MERLO

Did you think someone might be listening?

THE BANJO GHOST

Nobody in particular, no; I thought a passenger might tune in by accident sometimes, or some passing ship might get a hint of it on their receiver, and if it brightened their day, well, then maybe I was doing it for more than just my own amusement, and the thought of that maybe was enough to do it again next leg. But the thought it might get picked up by a relay and re-transmitted when we were close to port? The thought never crossed my mind.

LENNON MERLO

Well, I can say that more than a few of my days have been brightened, and there are at least a few hundred people out there who'd agree.

THE BANJO GHOST

Heh. That so? Well, I guess that means I've got a reason to keep doing it.

(beat)

Provided my employer will let me,
anyway.

LENNON MERLO

Let's just say that we have a
contact at the Endowment who's
also a big fan of your work. I
can't speak for them, but I
definitely don't get the
impression they'd want to make you
stop. And I certainly hope you
don't.

THE BANJO GHOST

Well, that's... very kind of you
to say.

(clears throat)

Oh, look at that, we're running up
on an hour to the next launch, I
need to get back to the Brown and
start my pre-flight checklist.

LENNON MERLO

Of course. Oh, but before you go,
I wanted to give you something.
Something we... made for you.

THE BANJO GHOST

You... made me something?

LENNON MERLO

I mean, the instrumental is yours,
actually, and I had some help with
the vocals, but yeah, Jax and I
put it together. I wasn't even
sure who you were when we started
making it, but I knew I'd want
something I could give the Ghost
to say 'thank you'.

THE BANJO GHOST

(touched, but trying to
play it cool)

Well... I've got a couple minutes
yet. I guess it'd be rude not to
give it a listen.

The guitar instrumental for Blues for the Black plays, but the vocals this time are broken up between all the musical guests we've heard over the course of Chasing a Ghost (and probably anyone else in the BSFF cast who wants to contribute for the second vocal section). Ideally, Lennon's final voice over happens in the instrumental between the two vocal sections.

LENNON MERLO (v.O.)

And so, our journey comes to an
end. I don't think it'll be the
end of my travels across the
system, though, not if I can help
it. There's so much music out
there, no one person could ever
hope to capture it, but after all
I've seen and heard so far, well,
I'm willing to give it a shot.

(beat)

Until then, friends.

LENNON & BANJO GHOST (v.O.)

Y'all have a good one.

The song finishes, followed by actual BSFF credits for the whole series.