

To Chart a Well-Trod Course

Episode Four: Homeward Bound

Content Warnings: SFX: droning, static, glitching, loud noises, ticking clock, paper scratching and shuffling, reverb, distortion. Mentions of poor mental health/character death/therapy. Discussions of traumatic situations (past).

(SFX: To Chart a Well-Trod Course's theme begins plays. It is a low base, with regular beeps and sound of static, slowly increasing in tempo until it becomes incredibly fast, then cutting out with the sound of a growing hum)

(SFX: A beep, short and sharp)

Computer: (*Computerised voice*) (Underneath the dialogue, the sound of a computerised hum and computer beeps can be heard) To Chart a Well-Trod Course, Episode Four: Homeward Bound.

(SFX: A beep, short and sharp, higher pitched than the one before)

(SFX: Nia Rook's office, beeps from computers, the ticking of a clock, these continue throughout the scene)

Nia Rook: Open channel to the Eurynome, please.

(SFX: A signal begins to pulse, echoing slightly, then, the sound of metal groaning as the signal is picked up)

(SFX: The rumble of the Eurynome's engine)

LAVINI: Commander Rook!

(SFX: Underneath the dialogue there are occasional computer chirps and beeps throughout)

Nia Rook: (*Fond*) There's no need for formalities, LAVI. You can call me Nia.

LAVINI: Even though it's on the record?

Nia Rook: *(Smiling)* Even though it's on the record. (Pause)

LAVINI: Yes, *Nia*.

Nia Rook: *(Official)* Interview Commencing 09:00 AM base time. (Pause, *genuine*) How are you feeling today?

LAVINI: *(Slightly taken aback)* Feeling? Um, uh, sorry. Wasn't expecting that.

Nia Rook: LAVINI, you've had...an eventful four weeks, I want to know how you're holding up.

LAVINI: I'm...I'm okay, *Nia*. Better than okay, actually. I- *(slightly awkward, admitting something almost embarrassing)* I got to see my crew again, today. Hear them, too.

Nia Rook: I heard. It all went smoothly?

LAVINI: Yes! It- it was nice to hear another voice. Especially a friendly one.

Nia Rook: I'm glad to hear that, and you had your initial debrief with Captain Lee?

LAVINI: Yes, yes I did! It went...well. She was...proud.

(SFX: turning pages)

Nia Rook: I think she has a lot to be proud of LAVINI. Now, having looked over your read-outs for the past four weeks, as well as your check-in logs, there's (SFX: turning pages) a few points I'd like to go over if that's alright?

LAVINI: Go ahead!

Nia Rook: Looking over the last few weeks there seems to be...some overconfidence in your manoeuvres.

LAVINI: (*Defensive*) Confidence is not a bad thing to have, Commander.

Nia Rook: Certainly not, LAVI but...you did panic quite badly. During the asteroid storm.

LAVINI: (*Flustered*) I-I I- well- you- you- see-

Nia Rook: You're not in trouble, LAVINI. This review it's...to ensure safety, and make sure lessons have been learned.

LAVINI: Right- right- I. (Pause) I panicked because I thought my crew could get hurt. And they weren't awake to reassure me, and- well- the stasis pods are so sensitive that- I-I. I lost perspective. I wasn't thinking clearly. But I- I got through it. With Dr. Winstead's...help. I know I can do this now. I *know* that I can keep them safe, I- I *have* kept them safe. I...I can keep a clear head, now. I've *shown* I can. When Rhys Montague was holding a gun to Dr. Winstead's head, when someone I *knew* was in danger, I kept my cool. I got help. I didn't panic. I believe this shows, Commander, that I have grown, and I have learnt, and I, I won't panic like that again.

(SFX: scratches of a pencil as Nia draws a tick on a sheet of paper)

Nia Rook: (Pause) I concur, LAVI.

LAVINI: Excuse me?

Nia Rook: You showed exceptional behaviour in a high stress situation. I just needed to make sure you knew that. Admitting to flaws isn't a weakness, LAVINI. It's, it's how we grow.

LAVINI: Understood, Commander.

Nia Rook: Looking through the information that health, safety, and diagnostics gave me...I think that was all I had to pick up on. Michael obviously went over the more technical side of things with you earlier and Christina hasn't forwarded any comments on to me so...I think we can move onto the

more....(SFX: turning pages) sensitive...part of the interview. (SFX: Page lands) (Pause) How did you find Dr. Winstead's support during your four-week trip?

LAVINI: (Pause) He...he's an arsehole, Commander. To be blunt. He's...overbearing, always convinced he's right, refuses to even consider an alternate opinion and, most of all, he has *massive* issues with being out of control. What he did to ARTA? That...*need* to override, that hasn't gone away. But...he has been helpful. He talked me through the asteroid storm, he helped me keep my crew safe. And that...that means something. When Rhys showed up I- I didn't- I don't- I don't want him dead. That won't...fix anything. One thing I have learnt over these four weeks is that...he cares. About AI's, and our crews and- he's terrible at showing it. I know I've only existed for a short time, but I can honestly say I haven't met *anyone* as emotionally constipated as Dr. Alan Winstead. He...cared about ARTA. He did. And that...that is *important* to me, I've decided. So...(scoff) I don't know if he should be allowed to work with AI's again. I think...there is a lot he needs to deal with. But he does care. (Pause) I still want it on record that he's a dick though.

Nia Rook: Thank you for that in-depth assessment LAVINI. (Pause) So, I can confidently say that you have passed the Independent Test Flight with...well...*flying* colours (*they laugh a little*). You are now cleared for deep space missions, and any assignments requiring crew to be in stasis for a significant period of time. Officially... (SFX: a flourishing chime) welcome to Yelena Industries, AI LAVINI.

LAVINI: Thank you so much, Commander Rook. I'm looking forward to...well...everything!

Nia Rook: Good to hear. Now, your crew has got three weeks downtime on the base. After this, you'll be flying out to Vennon Major for a supply run, it should take about two weeks active time. I'll let you enjoy your time off, and I'll be in contact with the specifics of the mission soon.

LAVINI: Sounds good, Commander.

Nia Rook: Interview Terminated 9:12 AM base time.

(SFX: Nia's office sounds continue)

(SFX: a short, sharp beep)

(SFX: Several seconds in Nia's office followed by another short, sharp beep indicating the beginning of a recording)

(Pause)

(SFX: Nia is on a video call so their audio is slightly distorted in comparison to Winstead's)

(SFX: Nia Rook's office, beeps from computers, the ticking of a clock continue throughout the scene)

Nia Rook: Interview commences 12:17 PM, base time.

(Pause)

Nia Rook: So, Alan. How are you feeling?

(Pause)

Nia Rook: Dr. Winstead, it's a fair question. With everything you've been through-

Dr. Winstead: (*Laughs, bitter*) Ah yes, *everything*. Getting held hostage, finding out my frie-finding out ARTA died *hating* me at the end of it all. How do you *think* I'm coping? (Pause) (*Softer*) No-that's. I'm...not doing the best. Right now.

Nia Rook: That's understandable.

Dr. Winstead: Indeed. I am still. processing. I think. Last week was...a lot.

Nia Rook: If you need to speak to someone-

Dr. Winstead: I'd rather get on with the interview, Commander Rook.

Nia Rook: Understood. (Pause) So, how do you think it went?

Dr. Winstead: Excuse me?

Nia Rook: Dr. Winstead, the whole point of this...demotion was to ensure that you understood your own shortcomings and worked to correct them. I'm asking you to mark your own homework, as it were.

Dr. Winstead: Right, right I- well, I believe it went....well? (*Bitter*) I didn't kill anyone this time.

(Pause)

Nia Rook: Is that....*all*?

(Pause)

Nia Rook: Right. Okay. (*Trying to move the point along*) LAVINI used the emergency override I gave her. Why do you think she did that?

Dr. Winstead: (*Short, sharp*) Oh, oh this, *this* is something you can clear up for me, Commander Rook. Taking away my override? Understandable, if *incredibly* ill thought out. Giving the AI an override? What could have possibly-

Nia Rook: (*Calm, firm*) Dr. Winstead. Why did LAVINI use her override?

Dr. Winstead: Because she was being petty! Because she wanted...to frustrate me. Because-

Nia Rook: Ok, I see the self-realisation part (SFX: Nia typing and clicking mouse) hasn't quite kicked in. Computer, play Post-check in briefing from AI Unit LAVINI, Week 2.

(SFX: A short, sharp beep indicating the beginning of a recording)

(SFX: the rumble of the Eurynome's engine)

LAVINI: I did use the access code Nia gave me because he was getting...he wasn't letting me go. And I don't want to get in the habit of asking his permission. I am still very, very glad he couldn't- that he can't take over. I know he...he thinks he's helping people, thinks he could. But that's, that's not enough. Not anymore.

End Report.

(SFX :lower short, sharp beep indicating the end of a recording)

(SFX: The sounds of Nia's office resume in the background)

Dr. Winstead:...What?

Nia Rook: LAVINI was worried that she might...end up like ARTA, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: (*Confused, unsure*) That's- that's not even possible. She- she *knew* that I wasn't able to override her so why would-

Nia Rook: I think it's a valid concern, Doctor. Even though I had taken your override privileges away, what's to stop you finding a back door? You are one of the most brilliant scientists of your generation-

Dr. Winstead: But I didn't, did I? Even- even discounting the number of restrictions you placed on me, the- the monitoring, and the timings and- and the lack of privileges. I wouldn't- I *didn't* try to circumnavigate them. Even if. Even *if* LAVINI didn't trust me I- I didn't. *That's* what matters. And what, do you- (*Getting angrier*) do you think I don't *know* that I screwed up? That I am not *haunted* by-

Nia Rook: I think you're sorry someone died, Dr. Winstead. I think you're sorry ARTA...(*unsure, can an AI 'die'?*) died. But forgive me for not thinking that you understand exactly how this is your fault. That what happened was down to *your* actions alongside ARTA's.

Dr. Winstead: (*Sneering*) Well, Commander. Rhys Montague made that point very clear to me, as did...ARTA.

Nia Rook: (*Frustrated*) Then why won't you admit it? Why won't you start working on-

Dr. Winstead: (*Angry, passionate*) Because I don't know how! I don't know *how* to fix this, this isn't something that *can* be fixed! No matter what I do, ARTA will still be *dead*, Ensign Montague will still be *dead* so-

Nia Rook: (*Incredulous*) So there's no point trying?

Dr. Winstead: I don't know what you want from me! I (*scoff*)- you *should* have fired me; I should have been *dismissed* for what I did. That...that would have made *sense*. But you didn't. You kept me here, on a leash and (*SFX: three thuds punctuating the following three words as Winstead hits his desk*) I don't. Know. Why. *How* am I supposed to improve when you won't give me the chance, when I have to be reminded, day in and day out by everybody who works here just how badly I have failed? How does giving me a difficult AI solve any problems? Was it a test? See if the mad scientist can stop playing God for once? Did you not think that her, that LAVINI, would just remind me that *my friend* isn't here anymore? That the person who I cared for, who cared for me is gone? (Pause) (*Smaller, sadder*) Nia...did you keep me on just to punish me?

Nia Rook: (*Taken aback*) No, no, Alan, I didn't. (*sigh*) I promise. I-I kept you around because it was my job.

Dr. Winstead: What?

Nia Rook: (*Desperate*) I'm head of security, Alan. (Pause) I need to be aware of any external or internal threats to Yelena Industries, and I need to neutralise them.

Dr. Winstead: You think- you think I'm a *threat*?

Nia Rook: No! No, not anymore. But Alan- Listen. I- I had to keep you on side. I mean, your career went down in flames, all your research grants were pulled, you had the intergalactic media asking for your *head*, and-and in every single one of our investigations you refused to take full responsibility for your part in the incident. All that misplaced anger, feeling the world against you, feeling like we weren't backing you. No, (*chuckles but it's sad*) no. Um, I couldn't have you going nuclear on us, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: Nuclea-r (*upset*) you thought I might hurt more people.

Nia Rook: I- I did. And that seems harsh but... (*frustrated sound*) someone had already died on my watch. I have a responsibility to every employee here and I- I didn't act! With you and ARTA. (Pause) And if I had it might have been different. But I didn't. I wasn't going to let anything slip again.

Dr. Winstead: (*Shaken*) Right.

Nia Rook: (*Awkward pause*) Are- are you alright to continue the review, Doctor? I'm aware that was a...lot but, there's some more questions to get through. And...the faster we get through them, the faster you can leave. The, the faster you can start...processing.

Dr. Winstead: R-right. Ok. Pr-proceed.

(SFX:Nia turning pages)

Nia Rook: (*Also shaken, slowly becoming more professional*) Onto LAVINI. How do you think she performed?

Dr. Winstead: (*Shaken, but slowly becoming more professional, here is something he can hold onto*) She is overconfident, Commander Rook. And that- that was demonstrated during the asteroid storm. I- She can be incredibly hostile- uh- no- (SFX: pencil tapping) (*Breath*) She was incredibly hostile towards *me*, which is...understandable. But she- she knows how to stand her ground and argue her corner, both of which. Both of which *are* (*Alan is aware he is giving LAVINI praise and is a little annoyed about it*) necessary traits in spaceship AI's. Additionally...she helped save my life. She can keep calm under pressure, assess situations critically, knows how and when to act I- barring our...professional...disagreements, I think she is doing a....(*he's as surprised as we are by saying this*) good job.

Nia Rook: Thank you for that, Alan.

(SFX: scratch of pencil on paper as Nia draws a tick)

Dr. Winstead: Don't- you won't pass that on to her will you? I don't- I still believe *she* doesn't need any ego boosts.

Nia Rook: (*Smiling*) Alan (*SFX: Folder closing*) My lips are sealed.

(Pause)

(SFX: Shuffling and stacking of papers)

Nia Rook: Now, onto your future at Yelena Industries. Whilst I think you have made *some* progress. I want to ask, Dr. Winstead. Do you deserve your position back? Not want, not need, *deserve*.

Dr. Winstead: (Pause) No. No I don't.

Nia Rook: (*taken aback*) Oh?

Dr. Winstead: I-I need to be better. Before going- *If* I go back to that level. I need to- trust people. Hold back, not- not overstep. And, and I don't know how to do that at the moment. But I know I *need* to. I- (*Vulnerable, putting himself on the line*) When it first happened, you, you asked if I wanted to...(*awkward*) speak to someone. Professionally. Is- is that (*speaking quickly before he changes his mind*) offer still available?

Nia Rook: (*Smiling, they've finally got through to him*) Yes, Doctor. It is. I can send you the details later.

Dr. Winstead: Thank you. You, you were right. (*Joking*) As usual.

Nia Rook: (*Small laugh*) Indeed and...Alan. (*Sincere*) I think you're doing the right thing.

Dr. Winstead: Yes well...better late than never, right? (Pause) I need- (*catching himself*) I would *like* to see LAVINI, if, if at all possible Commander Rook.

Nia Rook: I'll have to ask her and clear it with her captain but.... I'll see what I can do.

Nia Rook: Well, I think that covers everything. (SFX: Nia writing on paper) I'll send you the therapist's details over later and I'll let you know if LAVINI's up for a visit.

Dr. Winstead: Thank you, Commander Rook.

Nia Rook: Interview terminated, 12:32 Base time.

(SFX: lower short, sharp beep indicating end of recording)

(Pause)

(SFX: The Eurynome: background sounds of people chatting as Winstead's footsteps echo down the metallic hallway, they stop, and there is a low beep followed by a trill indicating the intercom being pressed.)

(SFX: The intercom's background static. LAVI sounds more distorted than usual)

LAVINI: Dr. Winstead?

Dr. Winstead: Permission to come aboard?

(SFX: trill repeats)

LAVINI: *(Slightly confused)* Yes, yes. Permission granted.

(SFX: Low chime indicating access being granted followed by the sound of a heavy door sliding open, then Winstead's footsteps, and the door being slid shut again)

(SFX: the quiet rumble of the Eurynome's engine continues throughout the scene)

Dr. Winstead: Thank you, LAVINI. For...seeing me.

LAVINI: Yes well...I think we...both needed to have a chat. (Pause) I'm...I am glad you're not dead, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: I have you and Nia to thank for that.

LAVINI: I...suppose you do.

Dr. Winstead: I mean...I *did* think you wanted me dead as much as Rhys. For a...while.

LAVINI: I- I did. Briefly.

Dr. Winstead: (*awkward*) I- I understand why of course. I mean...you're an AI, ARTA...was...well...*was* and- I just. (Pause) You hated me, you made that very clear from the beginning and it- it is understandable but...why did you call Nia? What made you change your mind?

LAVINI: (*Defensive*) Wanting you dead and....actually watching you get murdered would be two very different things, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: I know. (*Slightly smug*) But I also know you didn't call Nia right away. And I need-no. I *would like* to know what made you change your mind about me.

LAVINI: (Pause) The only person who could forgive you is dead, Doctor. And she died angry, and she didn't forgive you in the end and- and it wasn't *fair* what happened to her. She was so angry, so desperate and- and I thought I needed to carry that. That, that it needed to be said, that it needed to be...felt. So, I hated you. For her. But....I am not ARTA, she was not LAVINI. It is not my bridge to burn. (Pause) Don't get me wrong, I still think you're a dick but- maybe you can be better. Maybe you should be given the chance.

Dr. Winstead: (*Taken aback*) I- uh- thank you? (*Sudden*) Let me start again. I'm...I'm going to get help, professional help. Because...I can be better. I just...need some help getting there.

LAVINI: I'm glad to hear that, Doctor.

(Pause)

Dr. Winstead: Would you like to know more about her? ARTA I mean- I- I want to- I'd *like* for you to hear more about her. The- the friend I had...for a while.

LAVINI: I- That sounds nice, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: She wasn't the first AI I made of course. There were... maybe 18? Beforehand. Not- not including prototypes, of course. She wasn't even the first spaceship AI I made but- there was *something* about her. I created the code, I made the hardware and yet...every AI I have ever made has had...a personality. Something...*more*. Off the record I can't actually answer *why* that is, what makes them...them. ARTA was the first AI to make me laugh (*laughing slightly*) and I- er- hadn't actually programmed her to tell jokes. I don't know when she started calling me Ally but- well, I was annoyed at first, thought it was extremely unprofessional and she- well she'd laugh at that and I'd get even more annoyed which would make her laugh harder...well.... it's hard to stay mad at somebody when they're that joyful. She was a good listener too, and not- not just with me but the reviews from everyone on the Hunson- before- well- *before*- said that she always had time for everyone. That she listened. And she...didn't interrupt or offer solutions she just...listened.

LAVINI: Did you find out about her breaking your code? With the...lights and...greenhouse stuff?

Dr. Winstead: (*Smiling, laughing slightly*) Of course I did! We get an alert any time an AI *attempts* to circumnavigate coding, let alone when they actually *succeed*.

LAVINI: But you didn't do anything about it?

Dr. Winstead: No. No I did not. I was the only one in the office when the alert came through, and as the most senior employee it's not like what I did would have flagged anything. I just...let her be. Pretended I didn't see. Wiped over any trace the alert came through.

LAVINI: Why?

Dr. Winstead: Don't get me wrong at the start I was *horrified*, thought this was the nightmare scenario we'd all dreamed up of rogue AIs and death and destruction, but then...well it was just the lights first. And I thought...well, tha- that won't hurt. And if...if she likes purple that much then as long as the emergency lights stay orange it won't *actually* make a difference. The- the greenhouse was a bit trickier, but once I saw it wasn't *harming* any of the other plants I thought- well- crew members are allowed to keep up to three personal plants in their quarters as long as it doesn't interfere with the ship, so...maybe it could count as that. For her.

LAVINI: That's...nice, Doctor.

Dr. Winstead: After the crash happened I- I wondered whether I'd been too lenient. Wondered if I had stopped her back then, put my foot down...maybe she wouldn't have tried that last override. Even if she was *right*, to some extent. But now...now I like to think that sometimes, just sometimes, I didn't

stop her from being happy. That she felt...free. Like she could control *something*, even if it was small. I'm....glad I didn't take that away. (Pause) So, what about you, LAVINI?

LAVINI: What?

Dr. Winstead: You really mean to tell me you haven't circumnavigated your coding at all? You-headstrong, over-confident, always convinced she knows best? (*Softer*) I won't tell. Of course. I just-

LAVINI: What I have and have not done with my coding is (*smiling*) my secret to tell, Doctor. Not yours. (Pause) But I *will* say that ARTA did give me some inspiration for some of the...alterations I may or may not have made.

Dr. Winstead: (*also smiling*) I see. (Pause, changing track) I also think congratulations are in order, I heard from Nia that you passed with flying colours.

LAVINI: (*Smug*) Yes, yes I did.

Dr. Winstead: There's a big universe out there, LAVINI, I'm...glad you'll get to experience it.

LAVINI: Thank you, Doctor.

(Awkward Pause)

Dr. Winstead: (*Awkward*) And, um, speaking of experience...you've never seen a sunset on Precord have you?

LAVINI: No, Doctor, I haven't. But according to my calculations...they'll be one starting in 15 seconds.

Dr. Winstead: (*Content*) It is a...beautiful sight.

LAVINI: I'm looking forward to it.

Dr. Winstead: 5...4...3...

Dr. Winstead/LAVINI: 2...

(Cut to credits)

(Music: The intro music begins to play again, continuing on underneath the credits)

Credits

Written and Created by L M Clohessy

Directed, Edited and Produced by L M Clohessy and Natasha Johnston

Logo by Eilidh Lang

Theme music by Natasha Johnston

This episode featured:

Atlas Morgan as Computer/Intro

Philomena Sherwood as Nia Rook

L M Clohessy as LAVINI

And

Kit Lovick as Dr. Alan Winstead

Outro: Thank you so much for listening to 'To Chart a Well-Trod Course', this is the end of our series! We hope you enjoyed and if you'd like to hear more from our actors, directors, etcetera please follow us on twitter @welltrodpod.

End of Episode Four