

EARTH, AGAIN
Episode 1

by

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SCENE 1 - "THE PUMP"

EXT. HOUSE WELL - EARLY MORNING

Cold wind across open prairie. Still dark. A horse stamps in a pen. A rooster, early and tentative. Somewhere in the house behind her, a stove door clangs - her father is up too.

LIV - (she/her, 16), a fixer by nature who can repair anything in this world except the pacemaker slowly failing inside her chest.

Close: Metal on metal. A bolt being worked loose - a wrench turning, grip adjusting, turning again. The clank of a part being set on stone. Hands wiping on cloth.

A leather gasket being fitted - pressed into place, thumbed around its edge. The bolt threaded back in, tightened. She picks up the pump handle. Works it once. Twice. A dry wheeze. Nothing.

LIV

Come on.

She adjusts something. Metal scraping. Tries again - one pump, two, three - and on the fourth, a gurgle deep in the pipe. Water surges up and splashes into the trough.

LIV (CONT'D)

(quiet, satisfied)

There you go.

She pumps a few more times. The water flows steady now - a clean, rhythmic gush with each stroke.

LIV (V.O.)

Mom used to say the stars were where we were headed. Dad still believes that. Me - I just want to make it to summer.

I was six when the world stopped. I don't remember much of it - just the lights going out, everywhere, all at once. And Dad carrying me. We never saw who did it. We just know they left something behind.

She lets the pump handle rest. The water slows to a drip. In the silence: very faint, at the far edge of hearing, a low hum passes overhead. Distant. Alien. A probe on patrol. It crosses the sky and fades. The wind continues as if nothing happened.

LIV (V.O.)

The nannies. That's what people call them. Machines - floating, silent, everywhere. They don't bother you if you follow the rules. And the rules are simple: no electricity. No building anything that might make us more than what we are now.

She gathers her tools. Metal clinking against metal as they go back into a pouch or box. She stands.

LIV (V.O.)

Dad has always taken that personally.

She picks up the trough bucket, pours water into something - a canteen, maybe. The sound of water filling a container.

LIV (V.O.)

I fix what I can. The water pump. The bellows in the forge. The root cellar door.

People bring me things - a broken music box, a busted clock - and I make them work again. Dad taught me that. How to see what's wrong with something and make it right.

A beat. The wind. She stoppers the canteen.

LIV (V.O.)

There's a calendar on our kitchen wall with a red circle on it. We don't talk about it, but we both know what it means. There's a clock inside me, ticking down, and it's the one thing in this world I'm not allowed to fix.

Silence. Just the wind, and the last drip of water from the pump spout.

She walks away. Boots on frozen ground, tools clinking softly at her side. The sound recedes.

The wind. The prairie. First light just touching the horizon.

SCENE 2 - "SPARSE BREAKFAST"

EXT. WOODSHED - EARLY MORNING

A bird, tentative. Then another. Dawn is just beginning. A rooster crows.

ROBERT - (he/him, 50s), Liv's father, a former NASA engineer who lost the stars when the world stopped and never quit reaching for them.

He sets a round of firewood on a stump. An axe bites into wood. A clean, splitting crack. The wood falls in two halves. He picks up another round, stands it on the stump.

Chop. Split. The rhythm of a man who has done this a thousand mornings.

He crosses to the chicken coop. A gate creaks. Hens cluck and shuffle, annoyed at the intrusion. His hand moves through straw.

ROBERT
(muttering)
One egg? Come on, ladies. We had a deal.

He closes the coop. Walks back toward the house. His boots on frozen ground.

INT. HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS - EARLY MORNING

A heavy wood door opens and closes. The stove door swings open on its hinge. Wood is loaded onto a thick bed of glowing embers - the soft hiss and crackle of the fire accepting it. The stove door clangs shut.

A pan is placed on the stove. The egg is cracked, then sputters in cooking oil.

Robert steps to the nearby wall. A page tears off a wall calendar - the sound of paper ripping cleanly.

ROBERT
(muttering, marking the date)
February first.

A pen scratches a line. Then silence. His breathing changes. Slower. Heavier.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(barely audible)
Three weeks.

The pen is still in his hand. He doesn't move. The house is silent except for his breathing - slower now, heavier, as if the number has physical weight.

Water boils - a sharp, insistent bubbling that pulls him back.

He pours it into two mugs. Tea.

He cuts a chunk of yellow cattail bread, then plates the egg and the bread onto a plate.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(calling out the door)
Breakfast!

INT. HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. Cold air rushes in. Liv steps inside, sets her tools down with a clank. The door closes, muffling the wind.

LIV
(sniffing the air)
Smells good.

She takes the plate. A beat.

LIV (CONT'D)
Not joining me?

ROBERT
Nah, had mine already.

She holds his eyes for a moment, but says nothing. She eats. Robert fusses with something in his hand.

LIV
Uh-oh.

ROBERT
What?

LIV
Your old NASA badge is out. You only stare at that thing when you're thinking too hard.

He stows it back in his pocket.

ROBERT
Eat your breakfast.

LIV

(a beat)

Is this is the last of the cattail
bread?

ROBERT

Yep.

She eats. He sips his tea. The stove crackles between them. The house is small - rough sawn wood, timber frame, warm enough in winter. The sounds are close, domestic.

Robert takes a hunting rifle from the wall. Opens the bolt, then loads four rounds into the small magazine.

LIV

If we had some venison to bring to
Mira tonight, I bet she'd trade us
some loaves.

He chambers the first round.

ROBERT

Mm hmm.

Robert crouches, opens a steel trunk. The hinges whine. Inside: various small electronics, relics of the old world. He carefully removes something.

LIV

We need the geiger counter today?

ROBERT

Hot zones are shifting. I want to
update the maps while we're out
there.

LIV

And if a nanny spots it?

ROBERT

Then I'll throw it, like last time.

LIV

We're running out of things to
throw.

He reseals the trunk.

ROBERT

I'll be outside.

LIV

I'll saddle the horses.

ROBERT
No. We're walking today.

He crosses the room. The door opens. Cold air rushes in. He steps outside, and closes it.

LIV
Yes, sir...

She finishes with the plate.

She follows him outside.

SCENE 3 - "DEER HUNT"

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - MORNING

Footsteps on a forest floor. Leaves, twigs snapping softly underfoot. The canopy above filters the sound - birdsong, wind through high branches. Two sets of footsteps, one heavier than the other.

They walk in comfortable silence for a moment. Then Liv speaks.

LIV
You ever think about what Mom would say? About all this?

ROBERT
About what - the hunting?

LIV
About... everything. The way we live now.

ROBERT
(a beat)
She'd say we're doing fine. And then she'd reorganize the pantry and tell me I'm stacking the firewood wrong.

LIV
(smiling)
Yeah. She would.

They push through denser brush. Branches sweep past.

ROBERT

(quieter)

She'd hate it, Liv. The same way I do. She just would've been quieter about it.

The terrain changes. They're climbing. Their breathing deepens. The forest thins slightly, and the sound opens up - more wind.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOK - MORNING

They clear the rise. The wind catches them.

LIV

(stopping)

Dad. Look.

A beat. They stand still.

LIV (CONT'D)

Sunrise over the lake. God, that's something.

ROBERT

Ten years. The world still does that every morning like nothing happened.

LIV

Maybe nothing did happen. To the world, I mean. Just to the people.

A beat.

The wind on the ridge. Robert doesn't answer. Not because he disagrees - because he doesn't have a response. *

Robert pulls out a worn map. Paper crinkles as he unfolds it.

ROBERT

We're here. The old campground is south of us. And this -

(his finger taps the paper)

- this X is the hot zone we marked last month.

LIV

Which means the deer will have pushed east.

ROBERT
That's my thinking. We circle
around, stay upwind.

He folds the map. They continue, bearing right, away from the marked zone.

EXT. DEEP FOREST - MORNING

The forest closes in again. Denser. Quieter. Robert's pace slows.

ROBERT
(whispering)
Hold up. See that? Broken branch,
about chest height. Fresh.

LIV
(whispering)
And there - droppings. Still wet.

ROBERT
He's close. Maybe ten minutes ahead
of us.

They move carefully now. Each footstep deliberate. Their breathing controlled.

LIV
(still whispering)
Can I ask you something?

ROBERT
If you do it quietly.

LIV
The nannies - why don't they care
about guns? We've never had a
problem hunting out here but that's
a technology, right? So why aren't
we getting zapped?

ROBERT
They only care about electricity.

LIV
Isn't a gun more of a threat than a
light bulb? Or fire? Explosives?
There are a million different ways
to destroy something that have
nothing to do with electricity.

ROBERT

The nannies aren't concerned about destruction. They're worried about building.

LIV

What do you mean?

ROBERT

Electricity builds your civilization. Computers, communication, medicine, industry - it all runs on current. You want to be a species that stays in one valley forever, fire and some weaponry is enough. You want to reach the next star? You need electricity.

LIV

And they don't want us to.

ROBERT

Without progress, we can never be much of a threat. So they banned progress.

Robert stops. He's spotted something.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(barely audible)

There.

Through the foliage: movement. Something large, threading its way through scrub at the tree line. *

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Buck. Big one. Sixty yards, maybe seventy.

He takes a knee. The rifle stock settles against his shoulder. The scope clicks as he adjusts for windage.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(sighting)

He's turned toward us. White eyes - you see that? Milky. Radiation mutation from the old hot zone.

LIV

Can we still eat it?

ROBERT
Muscle should be ok. We'll leave
the liver.

A breath. His finger slides to the trigger.

The buck bolts. A crash of brush and hooves, fleeing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Fuck.

A beat. The deer is bounding away.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I mean - damn.

★

LIV
(a small laugh)
No, I think "fuck" is right.

ROBERT
Come on, let's keep after him.

They're up and moving, fast. Branches slap and grab at them. Footsteps pounding. Heavy breathing. They push hard through the forest. Running now.

Suddenly - the yellow box on Robert's jacket squawks to life. A sharp, angry ticking sound. Slow at first, then rising in tempo as they advance.

Robert freezes. His hand shoots to Liv's shoulder, stopping her dead.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(sharp)
Radiation.

They stand still. The geiger counter ticks, rapid and hostile.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Damn it. New zone.

They back up. The sound calms.

He unslings the rifle, pulls out the map. Paper crinkles.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
We're... here. This wasn't hot last
month.

LIV

That's three new ones this season.
The zones are growing.

He marks a new X. Folds the map.

ROBERT

We go right. Circle wide.

They redirect. Moving fast again, but more cautiously now.
The geiger counter quiets more as they pull away from the zone.

They break through the tree line into open space.

LIV

(breathing hard)
There - in the field!

The buck, running through tall grass. Open ground.

SCENE 4 - "THE NANNY"

EXT. OPEN FIELD - MORNING

Wind across an open field. Tall grass swaying. The buck's hooves, distant and receding.

ROBERT

OK, he's settled down. Ready to
take your first deer?

LIV

Really?

ROBERT

Rite of passage.

She pauses.

LIV

Give me the rifle.

He unslings it, hands it to her.

ROBERT

Round is chambered, safety is on.
Here, use this branch for a rifle
rest.

Liv raises the rifle to her shoulder, rests the rifle on the branch.

LIV
I've got a shot.

ROBERT
Good, pull it tight into your shoulder... That's it. This is 6 point 5 Creedmore, so it's not a lot of recoil, but be ready for it.

LIV
OK. I'm good.

ROBERT
Wait for a side shot. Just behind the front shoulder.

LIV
I see him... I've got it.

ROBERT
Then exhale halfway, and squeeze. Let it surprise-

He sees something.

LIV
Dad?

ROBERT
Wait.

His breathing stops entirely.

A sound enters. Not from any direction. From everywhere. A low, resonant hum that vibrates in the chest more than the ears. It is not mechanical. It is not natural. It is something else.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(a whisper, barely a voice)
Don't move.

LIV
What -

ROBERT
Don't. Move.

The hum grows. Closer. Something is in the field with them.

LIV

A nanny.

The hum shifts. It tightens, focuses. A new quality - higher, sharper.

ROBERT

Shit! The geiger counter.

Robert grabs the geiger counter off his jacket.

The hum is closer now. Louder. Probing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(hissing)

Get down. NOW. I'll throw it.

He throws the geiger counter. The throw - a grunt, the whistle of the box arcing through the air, landing in the grass thirty yards away. The ticking, now distant.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Down!

He hooks an arm around Liv and they dive. The impact of two bodies hitting earth. Grass closes over them.

They lie flat. Breathing hard. The grass hides everything. Only sound.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(whispering, right against
her ear)

Don't lift your head. Don't speak.
Just breathe.

A scanning whine. The probe has found the geiger counter.

Metallic clicks, rapid and irregular. Sensor clusters adjusting, rotating, twitching. An angry, disapproving tone.

Then: the energy lance. A sound like lightning channeled through a needle - a single, blinding crack of focused energy. The concussion thumps through the ground beneath them.

The geiger counter is gone. In its place: a hissing crater, earth still crackling.

Silence.

The hum holds. The probe is still there. Deciding.

Liv's heartbeat is audible now - not racing, exactly, but prominent. Thudding in her chest. We hear it as fear.

Five seconds of terrible quiet.

The probe's hum changes again. Not the aggressive scanning tone. Something subtler. Deeper. A resonance that holds and lingers. The second-pass tone.

Is it focused on Liv?

Robert stops breathing. His hand tightens on her arm.

Three seconds. The deepened tone sustains.

Liv starts to speak - just the first shape of a word, barely a breath - and Robert's hand clamps down on her arm.

She stops. The word dies.

Two more seconds. The tone holds.

Then it shifts away.

The hum returns to neutral. The probe resumes its patrol. The sound recedes - slowly, unhurried - until it is at the edge of hearing. Then gone.

The world returns in pieces. Wind. A bird, cautious. Grass rustling.

A long beat. Neither of them moves.

LIV
(shaking)
Is it gone?

Robert lifts his head. Looks around.

ROBERT
Yeah. It's gone.

They sit up. Grass and dirt fall from their clothes. Liv's breathing is ragged.

LIV
That was... I've never been that close.

ROBERT
Neither have I.

LIV
(quietly)
Did it... was it looking at me? At
the end?

A beat. Too long.

ROBERT
No. It found the geiger counter.
That's all it wanted.

LIV
You sure? It's like it could hear
my pacemaker.

ROBERT
(too firm)
I'm sure. Come on. Let's head home.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - LATE MORNING

Walking. Slower now. The energy drained from them. Boots on
leaves. No conversation for a stretch.

LIV
That was our only geiger counter.

ROBERT
Probably the only one for a few
hundred miles. We'll have to rely
on the maps.

LIV
And hope we don't walk through a
hot zone.

ROBERT
We'll be careful.

LIV
Super.

A pause. Then:

LIV (CONT'D)
It isn't fair. They don't want us
to progress? Fine. But at least let
us keep the things that help us -
how are we supposed to live like
this?

ROBERT

We're meant to survive, not much more.

LIV

(Bolder, now that danger
is past)

And some fucking aliens get to
decide what that looks like? Who
the hell do they think they are?

ROBERT

If I ever meet one, that'll be my
first question.

Their footsteps continue. Home is getting closer.

SCENE 5 - "THE CALENDAR"

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The door opens. Cold air swirls in, then is shut out. Coats
are hung on hooks. The stove crackles - still holding embers
from the morning.

Robert crouches by the stove, adding wood. The fire catches
and grows.

Liv sets the rifle down.

ROBERT

We'll go back out tomorrow. Go down
to the settlement when we've got
something to trade.

LIV

Mira invited us tonight. They
always do a big dinner for the
first, we're not missing it.

ROBERT

It's just a day on the calendar.
Tomorrow will be just the same.

LIV

We're going.
(then)
And we both know that's not true.

He doesn't answer. He's poking the fire.

LIV (CONT'D)

Dad. We need to talk about it.

ROBERT

Not today, Liv.

LIV

Putting talking about it off until tomorrow doesn't buy us more time.

He stands. Closes the stove door harder than necessary.

ROBERT

I'm aware.

LIV

You said the battery was rated for twelve years. I was four when they put it in. That makes me sixteen in

-

ROBERT

I can do math.

LIV

- in weeks, Dad. Weeks.

A long pause. The fire crackles.

ROBERT

(quieter)

I know.

LIV

So what do we do? What's the plan?

ROBERT

The plan? Thanks to the nannies out there, "medical science" means pouring whiskey over a knife before cutting into a patient. I can't open you up. I can't replace the battery. I can't even test it without an electrical device that would bring a probe through our roof.

LIV

There has to be something -

ROBERT
Anything I might try would be as
dangerous as letting the battery
run out. I could kill you trying to
save you.

LIV
And doing nothing?

ROBERT
(exploding)
I DON'T KNOW!

The words ring in the small house. The fire pops. Somewhere
outside, a chicken startles and clucks.

A beat. Robert's breathing is ragged.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(hoarse)
I'm sorry. I -

LIV
It's ok.

ROBERT
It's not ok. None of this is ok.

The door opens. The cold air again. The door shuts behind
him.

Liv stands alone in the house. The stove crackles.

Her footsteps. Slow. She stops. We hear her breathing, close -
and behind it, the creaking of the house in the wind.

SCENE 6 - "TRAJECTORY"

EXT. ROBERT'S YARD - NIGHT

An outdoor fire. Larger than the stove - open, breathing,
popping with resin. Crickets. A clear, cold night. The vast
open acoustic of sky above.

A door opens. Footsteps on frozen ground. Liv crosses to
where Robert sits by the fire.

She doesn't say anything at first. She sits beside him. The
fire crackles between them and the silence.

A long beat. Then:

LIV
You're doing it again. Staring at
your old badge.
(beat)
You miss it.

ROBERT
(exhaling)
Yeah. I do.

He pokes the fire. Embers scatter upward.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
We had it so easy, Liv.

LIV
(gently teasing, she's
heard this before)
"Lights at the flip of a switch.
Hot food without a fire."

ROBERT
(a small laugh)
I know. I do go on.

LIV
A little.

ROBERT
But it wasn't just the comforts.
That's what people don't
understand. It wasn't about - hot
showers or television or any of
that. It was the direction.

LIV
Direction?

ROBERT
Trajectory. We were going
somewhere, Liv. Every generation
moved the line a little further.
Figured out one more thing. Cured
one more disease. Reached one more
place we'd never been.

He looks up. The fire reflects off nothing - just cold, clear
sky.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
The Arks were supposed to be the
next step.
(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Not just visiting other planets, or
sending robots. Living there.
Setting down roots on another world
and saying - we belong here too.

LIV

And then...

ROBERT

And then something looked back and
said: "No. You don't."

The fire settles. A log shifts. Sparks.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

They didn't just kill billions of
people. That's - that's a horror,
and I'll never make peace with it.
But what eats at me, what I lie
awake thinking about, is that they
cancelled the future. They looked
at everything humanity was about to
become, and they decided we didn't
get to become that.

LIV

But Dad - the world was also a
mess, right? Before? Wars.
Pollution. Nuclear bombs. People
starving while other people threw
food away.

ROBERT

All true.

LIV

So maybe the aliens saw all that
and thought -

ROBERT

That we weren't ready? Maybe. But
being imperfect and being hopeless
aren't the same thing. We were
moving, Liv. Stumbling, stupid,
dangerous - but moving. You don't
have to be where you're going. You
just have to be heading there.
That's what trajectory means.

A beat.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

And now we're standing still. Worse than still - we're sliding backward. And that... paralysis, with the problems we still have? That's how a species dies. Not in a flash. In a slow forgetting.

A beat. The fire. Robert staring into it.

LIV

(quiet)

Mom used to say something. When you'd get down.

"The river keeps flowing."
Remember? She'd say that whenever things got really bad.

"The river keeps flowing, Robert."

A beat.

ROBERT

(barely audible)

Yeah. I remember.

Down in the valley, distant gunshots ring out. Drunken yelling follows - Mira's community, someone having a loud night.

LIV

(lightly)

At least Mira's crew is having fun.

Robert smiles weakly. Pokes the fire.

Liv stands. Extends her hand.

LIV (CONT'D)

Come on, grumpy. We'd better get down there.

ROBERT

I'm not hungry.

LIV

I am. And I'm tired of cattail bread.

He doesn't move.

Then he takes her hand and lets himself be pulled to his feet.

ROBERT

This changes nothing. I'm still grumpy.

LIV

Noted.

SCENE 7 - "BELLE CREEK"

EXT. MIRA'S SETTLEMENT, BELLE CREEK, MONTANA - EVENING

The soundscape opens. It is loud, layered, alive. A blacksmith's hammer rings against an anvil - steady, purposeful. Goats bleat.

Children chase each other between structures, their laughter tangling with the clatter of wooden bowls being stacked.

A hand-cranked grain mill turns with a rhythmic whirl. Women call instructions across cook fires. Men argue - not fighting, just loud.

Somewhere, a fiddle saws through a melody that keeps losing its way and starting over.

This is not a quiet place. It is not an efficient place. It is a human place.

LIV

(taking it in)

God. It's so... much. More than the last time we were here.

ROBERT

A hundred and twenty people, last I heard.

A voice calls out to them from across the clearing.

MIRA - (she/her, 40s), the founder and leader of Belle Creek - she built something that works by hard work and tough rules, and she'll burn anything that threatens it.

MIRA

Robert! You actually came.

Her footsteps approach - confident, unhurried. She clasps Liv's hands first.

LIV

Hi, Mira.

MIRA

Liv. I'm glad. Come, join us. Your father keeping you fed?

LIV

One egg at a time.

MIRA

(a small laugh)

Well, you're welcome at our table any evening. Both of you.

ROBERT

We appreciate that.

MIRA

I mean it. Community matters, Robert. Especially now. Come on. We slaughtered a few goats this morning - there's plenty.

She leads them through the settlement. The sounds press in from every side - footsteps on packed earth, a dog barking, someone sawing wood nearby. Mira walks through all of it like water through rock.

A woman intercepts them, a toddler crying on her hip.

WOMAN

Mira - Jonah's fever still hasn't broken.

MIRA

(without slowing)

Did you try the willow bark tea?

WOMAN

He won't keep it down.

MIRA

Crush it into honey. Small doses, every hour. If he's not better by morning, come find me.

WOMAN

Ok.

The woman nods and peels away.

Ahead, two women are arguing - loud, sharp, overlapping.

WOMAN 2

- said I could use the south garden through February, and now you're -

WOMAN 3

I said no such thing, and you know
it -

Mira stops. The two women notice her and go quiet.

MIRA

Elena. Whose seeds are in the
ground right now?

WOMAN 3

(reluctantly)

Hers.

MIRA

Then it's her garden through
harvest. After that, you two work
it out or I'll give it to someone
who doesn't make me listen to this.

Both women mutter agreement. Mira is already walking again.

She is everywhere here. Not as a tyrant. As a center of
gravity.

They reach a long table beneath an open-sided timber shelter.
People crowd the benches - passing bread, pouring water,
talking over each other.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Come, sit. There's two chairs over
there, by Ingrid.

LIV

That roasted goat smells amazing!

MIRA

Lena's recipe. She won't tell
anyone. We've tried bribery,
threats - nothing works.

A woman down the table laughs and waves them off.

LIV

And flatbread, and carrots?
(mouth full)
This is incredible.

MIRA

And mead, for Robert, anyway.

She pours a mug, hands it to him.

ROBERT

Oh... It's a very fine meal. Thank you, Mira. It's really generous of you.

A girl close to Liv's age leans over.

SETTLEMENT GIRL

You're Robert's daughter? From up the hill?

LIV

That's me.

SETTLEMENT GIRL

You should come down more often. It gets boring talking to the same people every night.

LIV

(a real smile)

I just might.

Robert sees that smile. Something crosses his face - not jealousy, but recognition. This is what she's missing. This is what living alone on that hill costs her.

Mira notices him watching.

MIRA

(quietly, to Robert)

You and she could stay, you know. If things ever got difficult. There's a place for you here.

ROBERT

(after a beat)

I appreciate that.

MIRA

I mean it. Whatever else you and I disagree on.

That sits between them.

A sound enters at the edge of hearing. The hum. Low, resonant, unmistakable. A probe, approaching from the east.

Robert's whole body tightens. His hand grips the edge of the table.

LIV

(panicked)

Dad??

The hum grows. It passes over the tree line and into the settlement. Close. The sound of rotating sensor clusters - metallic clicks, shifting - fills the air above them.

ROBERT
Just be still, honey.

The community notices. Conversations lower - not to silence, but to a hush. A mother pulls her child onto her lap. A man at the end of the table sets his cup down and waits. The blacksmith pauses mid-swing, holds the hammer at his side.

No one runs. No one hides. They just hold still.

LIV
Another one?!

The probe drifts through the village. Its scanning hum vibrates in their chests.

Robert is rigid. His breath is shallow. The memory of the field - Liv beside him in the grass - is written in every locked muscle.

ROBERT
Mira...

MIRA
Samuel, pass me those potatoes,
would you?

She takes the passed dish, and ladles some food from it onto her plate.

MIRA (CONT'D)
Thanks.

The probe clears the shelter. Its hum recedes toward the western ridge. The sensor clicks diminish.

The blacksmith resumes his rhythm. Conversations resurface, one by one, like birds after a storm.

MIRA (CONT'D)
(to Robert, evenly)
Robert, you can release that death
grip on the table now.

Robert releases his grip. He exhales.

ROBERT
How do you do that?

MIRA

Do what?

ROBERT

Sit there like that. Not even
flinch.

MIRA

Practice. And the understanding
that it has no reason to harm us.

ROBERT

They've never needed a reason. Not
to derail humanity and not to keep
us from ever getting our future
back. They're predator and we're
prey.

MIRA

That's where you're wrong. They're
the most rational things on this
planet. They follow rules. If you
follow the same rules, they're
furniture.

ROBERT

Furniture.

MIRA

Well, furniture that can kill you.

A commotion at the edge of the settlement. Two of Mira's
riders come up the main path, a third figure between them.
Not restrained exactly - but steered. A young man, early
twenties. He walks with his chin up, but his hands are
shaking.

HARLAN - (he/him, 60s), a dry, laconic horseman with a dog at
his heel and a harmonica in his pocket - says less than
anyone and notices more.

The click of claws on packed earth - a dog, close at his
heel.

HARLAN

Mira.

Keeper settles onto the ground beside him. A quiet exhale
through his nose, then still.

She turns. Her expression doesn't change, but something
behind her eyes sets.

MIRA
What is it?

HARLAN
Found this in Callum's workshop.
Under the floorboards.

The rider holds something out. Small, wrapped in oilcloth.
Mira takes it, unwraps it. The clink of small components -
metal and wire.

MIRA
(examining it)
Callum.

CALLUM - (he/him, early 20s), a young tinkerer who built the
wrong thing at the wrong time.

CALLUM
It's not what it looks like.

MIRA
It's a wire coil and a magnetic
core. Wound copper, hand-stripped
wire, and a salvaged magnet. It's
exactly what it looks like. A crude
generator.

CALLUM
I wasn't going to power it. I was
just studying it. The principles.
It's not even -

MIRA
We literally just had a nanny pass
through.

CALLUM
I know.

MIRA
Where does the study end, Callum?

He doesn't answer.

MIRA (CONT'D)
Where does it end? You study the
coil. Then you spin it. Then you
feel that first tiny spark and you
think - just a little more. You
build a bigger version. And then
the sky opens and everyone within a
quarter mile learns the cost of
your curiosity.

CALLUM

(voice breaking)

My mother is sick, Mira. You know that. I've read about a procedure - but it needs-

MIRA

I know what she needs.

That softens her. For a moment, the audience hears it - the weight. She knows. She's not indifferent.

MIRA (CONT'D)

I lost people because someone thought a week of electricity was worth the risk. They were right that it was beautiful. They were wrong that it was safe. I won't let you make that choice for the people sleeping in those houses tonight.

She wraps the device back in its cloth. Hands it to her rider.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Take it to the forge. Melt it down.

No one speaks. The wind moves through the settlement.

Somewhere, a child laughs - oblivious. The moment holds.

CALLUM

Mira-

MIRA

(quieter now, which is worse)

This is the first time, Callum. And I know what drove you to it. So we talk. You understand what happens if there's a second time?

He stares at her.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Say it.

CALLUM

There won't be a second time.

MIRA

No. There won't. Your mother needs you here.

She holds his eyes. Then she turns back to the table. Sits. Picks up her cup. Somewhere across the settlement, the forge bellows hiss to life.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Lena - is there more of that goat?

The community exhales. The dinner resumes. The fiddle starts up again. Callum is walked away by the riders, his head lower now.

The evening winds down. People drift from the table. Children are carried to bed.

SCENE 8 - "AFTER DINNER"

EXT. PATH FROM MIRA'S SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

Footsteps uphill. Slower than the walk down.

A long silence.

LIV

Cold night.

ROBERT

No cloud cover. Makes for a great view of the Milky Way though.

They walk in silence.

LIV

She's not wrong. About the risk.

ROBERT

She's not wrong about the risk.
She's wrong about the response.

LIV

That boy wanted to help his mother.

ROBERT

I know.

LIV

And she melted it down.

ROBERT

I know.

Their footsteps on cold ground.

★

LIV
Would she do that to you?

Robert doesn't answer for a long time.

ROBERT
She wouldn't need to melt anything
of mine. She'd skip straight to the
last warning.

LIV
(quiet)
That's not funny.

ROBERT
It's not a joke.

They walk. The settlement sounds fade behind them.

LIV
It was nice, though. Being around
people.

ROBERT
Yeah. It was.

SCENE 9 - "MIRA'S MUSING"

EXT. MIRA'S SETTLEMENT, BELLE CREEK, MONTANA - LATE NIGHT

The community has gone quiet. The fiddle is done. The last
voices have faded into houses.

A fire burns low - the soft collapse of embers settling, an
occasional pop.

A gentle clatter of dishes.

MIRA
Katherine, go to sleep. The last of
the dishes can wait.

KATHERINE - (she/her, 30s), one of Mira's people - the last
one still cleaning up after everyone else has gone to bed.

KATHERINE

You know what? Not going to fight
you on that. See you tomorrow,
Mira.

MIRA

'Night

A long silence. Just footsteps and fire.

CALLOWAY - (he/him, 30s), Mira's quiet right hand - equally
comfortable with a rifle or a bow, and the kind of stillness
that makes you wonder what he's holding back.

CALLOWAY

Was a good night.

MIRA

Calloway. I wondered where you were
hiding. Yeah. Everyone needed that.

CALLOWAY

You've been quiet since they left.

MIRA

I'm always quiet.

CALLOWAY

You're quiet like you're chewing on
something.

Mira doesn't answer right away. A goat shifts in its pen. A
dog lifts his head - claws scraping on packed earth - then
settles back down.

MIRA

Did you see his face? During the
Callum business?

CALLOWAY

Robert's?

MIRA

He wasn't watching Callum. He was
watching me. Measuring what I'd do.

CALLOWAY

And?

MIRA

And I think he's planning
something.

(MORE)

MIRA (CONT'D)

The way he talked tonight -
derailing humanity's future. And
the way he held that girl during
the probe.

The fire crackles.

Someone had too much to drink, and is being helped home.

SETTLEMENT DRUNK

I'm fine... Really...

KATHERINE

Sure you are, Joseph. Come on,
now...

SETTLEMENT DRUNK

You are such a good friend...

CALLOWAY

Robert's one man on a hill with a
teenager and a revolver. What's he
going to do?

MIRA

I don't know. That's what bothers
me. He wasn't born for this world,
not like you and I were.

CALLOWAY

You think he really wants the old
world back again?

MIRA

He wouldn't be the only one.

A beat.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Callum built that coil for his
mother. After I ordered it melted,
you know what spooked me? The look
on every face at that table. Half
of them were afraid. The other half
were thinking - if Callum almost
got away with it, maybe I could
too.

CALLOWAY

That's always been true. You can't
stop people from wanting.

MIRA

No. But I can stop one man from giving them a reason to try.

The wind picks up. Somewhere far off, a coyote.

MIRA (CONT'D)

That girl is dying.

CALLOWAY

What?

MIRA

That scar. You've seen it. She's hiding something underneath, from the nannies. Something electrical.

CALLOWAY

Shit. A pacemaker?

MIRA

Installed before the invasion, when she was small. Batteries don't last forever and the way he's been the last few times we've seen him...they're running out of time.

CALLOWAY

You think he'll do something desperate.

MIRA

Desperate, and big. Putting those together is how people end up in the ground.

CALLOWAY

One Eighteen.

MIRA

One Eighteen...

CALLOWAY

You think he has a plan?

MIRA

Not yet. But I bet he knows he's not going to find the answer he needs here. And if they leave this valley alone, one of two things happens. Either he dies out there and that girl dies with him.

(MORE)

MIRA (CONT'D)

Or he finds what he's looking for,
and he brings it back, and
everything we've built here burns.

CALLOWAY

So we stop him.

A long pause.

MIRA

No.

CALLOWAY

No?

MIRA

If I stop him and the girl dies,
I'm the woman who killed a child to
keep the peace. Every mother in
this settlement will look at me and
see that. Every father. That's
poison.

The thing that holds this place
together isn't the water well or
the crops. It's the belief that
what I do, I do for their children.
The moment I sacrifice someone
else's...

She trails off. The fire pops.

CALLOWAY

So what, then?

MIRA

I go with him.

The fire settles. An ember falls. The settlement is asleep
around them - all those houses, all those people, breathing
in the dark. Everything she built.

CALLOWAY

You - what?

MIRA

He's not a kid with a generator
coil. He's a NASA engineer with a
dying daughter. If he's going to
find something dangerous, I need to
be standing next to it when he
does. Not here, waiting for the
consequences to ride home.

CALLOWAY

Mira, you can't just leave. You're-

MIRA

What? Irreplaceable? Then I've built this place wrong. Elena can manage the council. Thomas runs the fields. The mill runs fine with Sarah. You handle security. I've spent ten years making sure this community is built to last. It can survive without me for a few weeks.

CALLOWAY

And if it can't?

MIRA

Then it was never going to last anyway.

That sits. Calloway absorbs it.

The fire pops. When she speaks again, her voice is quieter.

MIRA (CONT'D)

I owe Eleanor that much.

CALLOWAY

I'm coming with you.

MIRA

Damn right you are. And all your guns. I don't think Robert appreciates how desperate people can be out there. Liv sure as hell doesn't.

CALLOWAY

Right.

MIRA

Bring Harlan too. And Keeper. So be ready to go - could be any day now.

CALLOWAY

He won't like it.

MIRA

Doesn't have to. He has to be good on a horse and keep his mouth shut. Both of which are his finest qualities.

A beat. Almost a laugh between them. Almost.

MIRA (CONT'D)
Come on, walk me home.

They stand and make their way outside.

SCENE 10 - "THE ARK PAPERS"

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens. Cold air, then warmth - the stove still holds embers. They shed their coats. Liv lights a candle, while Robert loads wood into the stove.

ROBERT
I'll get the fire back up. Nice thing about a small home, it heats up quickly.

LIV
Yes, please. Then, I want you to show me the Arks. Take your mind off things.

He keeps loading firewood.

LIV (CONT'D)
You know you want to...

She's teasing him now, and they both know it's working.

LIV (CONT'D)
What was that artificial brain thing called? The one you worked on? An... A.Y.?

ROBERT
(flat)
You're hilarious.

LIV
Smart people think so.

He closes the stove.

She pulls a heavy pile of thick binders from a shelf and drops them onto the table.

LIV (CONT'D)

Come on. This stuff has gathered
dust long enough.

The thud carries weight. These are substantial documents.

A binder is opened. The spine cracks. Pages turn - stiff,
old, official.

He comes over, settles into a chair.

ROBERT

OK, I surrender. God... It's like
looking into another world.

LIV

What's this one?

ROBERT

NASA tech documents. Exoplanet
Sustainability Vehicle program.

LIV

Oh. Sure. That sounds like a real
thing that exists.

Pages turn faster. Robert's voice changes - lighter, younger,
the voice of a man reconnecting with something he loved.

ROBERT

Here. Here's the Ark specs. Seventy
feet long, hovering platform
design. Eight-person crew capacity.

LIV

Hovering? Like, flying?

ROBERT

More like floating. A repulsion
field. You could park one in an
alien swamp and it would just - sit
there, six feet off the ground.
Clean. Stable.

LIV

That's insane.

ROBERT

That was the easy part. Look -
living quarters here. Kitchen.
Hydroponics for growing food. Water
reclamation. A full science lab.

He turns a page and stops. His breathing catches.

LIV

What?

ROBERT

(reading slowly)

Medical bay. Here. See this?

His finger taps the page.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

The auto-doc unit. The Ark's AI would run it. Automated surgical system. Capable of most any procedure. Organ repair, implant replacement, microsurgery...

A long silence. The fire crackles in the stove.

Robert's breathing changes - shorter, tighter. He starts to say something. Doesn't.

LIV

Well. That'd be pretty damn handy right now.

ROBERT

(barely audible)

Yeah.

A beat. Neither looks at the other.

LIV

How many did they build?

ROBERT

Two prototypes. One launched - made it off-planet before the invasion. The other stayed on Earth. In some underground lab, somewhere.

LIV

And you don't know where.

ROBERT

I helped design the AI. But it was all remote - through the internet. Everything was tightly compartmentalized. My team and I wrote code. We never saw the actual vehicle. Never visited the facility.

LIV

That's so weird.

ROBERT
The internet was a strange beast.

LIV
And this artificial brain - you
said it was... alive?

ROBERT
Not alive, the way we are. It's a
machine, built by people. But yeah,
you could talk with it, and you'd
feel like it was a person.

LIV
Crazy.

Liv gets up and pulls a box from the shelf.

LIV (CONT'D)
What about this box? I've never
seen you go through it.

ROBERT
Some of your mom's old papers. I-
(softer)
Every time I think about seeing
even just her handwriting again...

LIV
Yeah.

She brings the box over.

LIV (CONT'D)
What's in it?

ROBERT
Just old financial records I think.

She pushes it toward him.

LIV
Might cheer you up. I know it's
hard, but maybe it'll actually be
kind of nice too.

ROBERT
(sighs)

He opens it. Shuffles through papers.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Yep. Expense reports. Purchase
orders. This is all accounting
papers from the program.

LIV
She worked with you, right?

ROBERT
In the financial office. She helped
control how the money got spent.
Every dollar accounted for.

He's rifling through pages now. The sound of paper on paper -
rapid, searching.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(distracted)
Your mother was meticulous. Every
receipt, every transfer...

He trails off. A page has caught his attention.

LIV
Feeling better?

No answer. He's reading.

LIV (CONT'D)
Dad?

ROBERT
(distant)
Hmm? Yeah. Yeah, you were right -
this is nice.

LIV
Good.

She kisses his cheek.

LIV (CONT'D)
Enjoy. I'm going to get some sleep.

ROBERT
(absorbed, not looking up)
OK, honey. Sleep well.

Her footsteps go up the stairs. A door closes above.

The fire crackles. A candle flame flickers. Robert turns
pages.

Time passes. The fire settles. A coyote calls out, and is answered.

Paper turning. Paper turning. Paper turning.

SCENE 11 - "YOUR MOTHER SHOWED ME"

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DAWN

First light. The rooster. Footsteps on the stairs. Liv descends, still half-asleep.

LIV
(yawning)
Damn, it's freezing in here. Dad?
Did you stay up all -

She stops. He is exactly where she left him.

LIV (CONT'D)
Are you ok?

He turns in his chair to face her.

ROBERT
I'm ok.

A beat.

LIV
What's...

ROBERT
And you will be too.

Silence. Liv doesn't move.

LIV
(carefully)
You found it. The Ark?

ROBERT
Your mother showed me.

Liv freezes.

The moment drags out.

LIV
Explain that, please.

A beat.

LIV (CONT'D)

What do you mean?

ROBERT

(standing, gathering
papers)

Even classified facilities leave paper trails, Liv. Equipment gets purchased. Construction materials get shipped. And all of that generates expense reports that have to be filed, approved, and mailed somewhere.

LIV

Mailed where?

ROBERT

That's the question I spent all night answering. Your mother tracked every dollar. Vendor payments, shipping receipts, construction invoices - all going to the same cluster of addresses. All within the same half-mile radius.

He turns to her.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Twenty miles north of Seattle, Washington. A decommissioned military facility. The invoices show a hundred and thirty feet of underground excavation, custom environmental shielding, and equipment transfers that match the Ark's component list exactly.

LIV

(sitting down)

It's really there.

ROBERT

It's there.

LIV

At least - it was there. Ten years ago. We have no idea if it survived the invasion.

ROBERT

A hundred and thirty feet underground, inside military-grade shielding. The Arks had their own nuclear power core. If anything survived, it did.

LIV

Seattle is a thousand miles away, Dad.

He looks at her. Then at the calendar. The red circle.

ROBERT

Then we'd better not waste the morning.

LIV

What - right now?

ROBERT

How many days are on that calendar, Liv?

She looks at it. She doesn't answer.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Gear up, honey. We've got a long way to go.

A beat. Then Liv stands.

LIV

Meet you outside in ten minutes.

SCENE 12 - "LEAVING HOME"

EXT. ROBERT'S YARD - EARLY MORNING

Horses stamping. Leather cinching. Saddlebags being secured - the soft thump of supplies settling. Buckles clicking.

Robert leads one horse to where another is already loaded. His movements are quick, purposeful.

A door opens and closes. Liv crosses the yard, a full backpack over one shoulder, the rifle in her other hand.

LIV

Left a note for James. He'll feed the chickens.

ROBERT

Good.

She throws the pack onto the horse, secures it. The rifle slides into a leather holster with a whisper. She swings up into the saddle.

Robert checks the cinch one more time. Mounts.

They sit there for a moment. Looking at the house. The yard. The chickens, oblivious.

LIV

You think we'll see this place again?

ROBERT

I think your kids are going to grow up here.

LIV

(quiet)

That's a lot of pressure on a thousand-mile horse ride.

ROBERT

One mile at a time. Let's get those supplies.

LIV

We should be quick. In and out.

ROBERT

We need dried meat, oats, grain, salt, and something for the horses.

LIV

And if Mira asks where we're going?

ROBERT

We're going hunting. Long trip. Heard there's elk north of the basin.

LIV

You're a terrible liar.

ROBERT

Then don't let me do the talking.

SCENE 13 - "TO MARKET"

EXT. MIRA'S SETTLEMENT - MARKET - EARLY MORNING

The market is already humming. Voices barter and overlap.

SETTLEMENT MAN
Got my shovel fixed yet?

BLACKSMITH
Yeah, right over there.

SETTLEMENT MAN 2
Oh man, my head...

Dried meats slap onto wooden counters.

Grain pours into sacks. A hand scale clanks. Chickens complain from a crate.

ROBERT
Good morning. We need venison. Ten pounds. Three of pemmican. Two of salt. Sack of flour, and a sack of oats. What'll it cost me?

VENDOR
What've you got?

Robert sets something down. A metallic clink.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
Three.

Another two clicks on the countertop.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
Done.

LIV
That's most of it. We still need more blankets -

She stops talking. From ahead, at the far end of the market row, comes the sound of horses approaching.

Three of them, shifting their weight, approaching, leather creaking under full loads. And beside them, the quick padding of a dog's paws on hard ground - Keeper, trotting at the horses' flank.

LIV (CONT'D)
(Too brightly, surprised)
Oh, hi, Mira!

MIRA
Good morning, Liv. Going somewhere?

LIV
Um...hunting. You?

MIRA
Well, we saw you coming down the
ridge - you're packed pretty heavy
for a hunting trip.
(beat)
Where are you going?

Robert says nothing.

MIRA (CONT'D)
Robert. Where are you taking her?

ROBERT
Somewhere we need to be.

MIRA
That's not an answer.

ROBERT
It's the only one I've got.

MIRA
I'd expected you to leave one of
these days. Can't say I knew it was
going to be today, though. How much
time do you have left?

LIV
Mira, we -

MIRA
Liv. I know about the pacemaker.
I've known for a while.

A beat. Liv's breathing catches.

LIV
What...?

MIRA
That scar. The way you touch your
chest when you think no one's
watching.
(MORE)

MIRA (CONT'D)

Guessing you don't have much more time. I'm so sorry, darlin.

ROBERT

That's... OK - I admit, I'm impressed.

MIRA

Robert. Listen to me. Good men with impossible plans get people killed. I have watched it happen. I have buried the proof.

ROBERT

And scared women with good intentions let people die slow. I've watched that too.

MIRA

(absorbing the blow)

There was a man in the eastern settlements. Found a generator and a cache of old batteries. Was going to power an old radio tower- contact other survivors across three states. Coordinate, rebuild. A good, hopeful plan... The nannies response is always proportional to what they detect. They destroyed everything within half a mile. Not combatants, Robert. Families.

ROBERT

And that's a tragedy. But it's not a reason to stop.

MIRA

The man survived. Lived with it for a year. Then he walked straight into a hot zone and didn't come back.

That lands. The horses breathe.

MIRA (CONT'D)

Hope is the most dangerous thing in this world. More dangerous than the nannies. Because hope makes you believe the rules don't apply to you.

ROBERT

Their rules shouldn't apply to any of us, Mira. That's the whole goddamned point.

A long silence. The blacksmith's hammer starts up in the distance - Mira's community, beginning its day.

LIV

(quiet)

How long have you known?

MIRA

Long enough.

ROBERT

Then you know I'm not asking permission.

MIRA

I'm not offering any. I'm telling you what's happening. You're riding out to find something. Something technological. Something you believe will save your daughter. And if it still exists, after ten years of those things purging the land? Then it's the most dangerous object on this continent.

ROBERT

It's not a weapon. It's a medical facility.

CALLOWAY

Ah shit.

MIRA

(incensed)

A medical... As if that makes any fucking difference?

ROBERT

So what - you're going to stop me?

He cocks the hammer on his handgun.

The market goes quiet. Not all at once - a vendor stops mid-sentence. A sack of grain settles to the counter. The chickens in their crate are the last sound to die.

Two seconds. Just horses breathing and the distant hammer of the forge.

HARLAN

You don't want things to go that way.

MIRA

Robert, if I wanted to stop you, I'd have taken your horses in the night.

ROBERT

(a beat)

Then... No.

Absolutely not.

MIRA

It's not a request.

ROBERT

I'm not riding with someone who wants to destroy the thing I'm looking for.

MIRA

And I'm not sitting here for a month wondering what you'll drag back to my valley. So one of us adjusts.

LIV

Dad.

ROBERT

Liv, stay out of this.

LIV

No. Listen. She's got three horses packed with gear. And five guns is a lot better than two. 'Always trust the math', right?

A long beat. Robert's breathing. The horses shifting. The blacksmith's hammer, steady in the distance.

ROBERT

You're getting more like your mother every day.

LIV

Seattle is a thousand miles away.

ROBERT

It is.

LIV
Through territory we've never seen.

ROBERT
Yes.

LIV
And God knows what we'll run into
along the way.

ROBERT
All manner of shit, and most of it
dangerous.

LIV
OK, then.

A beat.

ROBERT
OK, then.

MIRA
Alright, good. I always like a
consensus. Let's get moving.
Calloway, scout a bit ahead of us.
No surprises.

CALLOWAY
Sure, Mira.

He guides his horse out in front, and moves ahead quickly.

MIRA
Harlan, grab some more blankets,
then catch up with us.

HARLAN
You got it.

He whistles to Keeper.

HARLAN (CONT'D)
Let's go, boy.

MIRA
(Yelling)
And some whiskey!
(Softer)
Think we'll need it.

The horses pick up the pace, leaving the village behind.
Among the hoofbeats, the lighter, quicker rhythm of Keeper's
paws on the dirt trail, keeping pace.

The sounds of civilization fade. Replacing by wind, hooves on dirt.

LIV (V.O.)

Dad says trajectory is what matters. That humanity's worth is measured by where it's heading, not where it's been. Mira says restraint. That the thing that proves we deserve a future is the wisdom to wait for one.

The horses continue.

LIV (V.O.)

I don't know which of them is right. Maybe neither. Maybe both. All I know is there's a road in front of us we've never traveled, and a clock inside me that doesn't care about philosophy.

A beat.

LIV (V.O.)

Mom would've said something smart right now. Something about how the answer is always simpler than the argument. I wish I'd gotten to know her long enough to learn how she did that.

The horses walk. The wind moves through the trees.

The low hum of a nanny in the distance.

Liv takes a breath.

Her heartbeat is audible now, growing louder.

LIV

(Uncomfortable)

Hmm

And then - her hand goes to her chest. A quick, involuntary movement. Her breathing hitches. Not pain. Something different.

Her heartbeat falters. One beat lands wrong. A gap where there shouldn't be one. Then it catches, resumes. Unsteady for a moment. Then regular again.

She breathes through it. The horses keep walking. The wind doesn't change. Nothing in the world acknowledges what just happened inside her chest.

Five seconds. Just hooves on earth. Breathing. The creak of leather.

LIV (V.O.)

I think the answer is somewhere
ahead of us. On a road we've never
traveled, in a place we've never
seen, inside a machine my father
helped build and has never touched.

The probe hum lingers. Steady. Patient.

LIV (V.O.)

I just hope we get there before the
clock runs out.

The hum holds for three seconds - alone, separated from everything else.

Then silence.

END OF EPISODE ONE