

STATION ONE

Written by

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INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - ORBITAL DAY

Silence.

Then, under it, the slow mechanical breath of an air scrubber. Push. Pause. Push.

A red grease pencil drifts across a scratched viewport. Beyond the glass, the blue curve of Earth. Cloud moving over open water, four hundred kilometers down.

A hand comes up and closes around the pencil. Nobody looked.

INES VASQUEZ, 54. Gray hair cropped close and uneven at the back, like she did it herself with the wrong scissors. Weathered, wiry. Grease worked into the edges of her nails.

Across her left palm, a thick band of white scar tissue. Shiny. Puckered at the edges.

She wears an oversized green fleece vest over her flightsuit. On the chest, a rectangle of darker fabric and a row of tiny stitch holes where a name tag used to be.

A brass torque wrench rides her right thigh on a short lanyard. The knurled handle is rubbed bright.

She hooks a toe under a handrail and faces an aluminum placard bolted to the console.

STATION ONE - DE-ORBIT SEQUENCE - PHASE 1. Twenty-odd lines. Most already ticked.

Above it, a digital clock: T-MINUS 47:58:12.

She uncaps the pencil with her teeth. Finds her line: CUPOLA BULKHEAD SEALS - VERIFY/TAG.

She runs her thumb along the window gasket. Presses. Moves six inches. Presses again. She works her way all the way around the frame without skipping a section.

One spot she presses twice.

Then she ticks the line. A small, hard mark.

She caps the pencil and sticks it to a strip of Velcro on the console, next to a row of others, each one worn down to a stub.

Earth rolls past below her. She doesn't look at it.

She pushes off toward the aft hatch. The wrench swings on its lanyard and knocks the hatch frame on the way through. A

dull, solid note.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Narrow. Equipment racks on every surface. The gray Velcro strips have gone brown from twenty years of hands.

Somewhere behind the paneling, a coolant pump hums slightly flat. The handrails shiver with it.

Ines floats along a row of valves. Red paper tags on steel wire. She twists one onto a valve stem, crimps the wire with her teeth. Next valve. Next.

At the end of the rack, a cargo bag strapped open. Inside: EVA harnesses, a tangle of yellowed webbing and old D-rings. A stenciled sticker on the bag: DISPOSAL - BURN WITH HULL.

She pulls a harness free. Checks the serial on the buckle against a list taped to the rack. Ticks it. Stuffs the harness back. Pulls another.

A two-tone COMM CHIME.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Station, Houston. Morning.

Ines keeps working.

INES
Houston, Station. Go.

INTERCUT - INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - FLIGHT DIRECTOR
CONSOLE - DAY

MARCUS VANCE, 58. Tall, a little stooped. Reading glasses pushed up onto his forehead where he's forgotten them. Pressed Oxford shirt, sleeves rolled.

He clicks the cap of a blue dry-erase pen against his knuckles. Click. Click.

Beside his keyboard, a ceramic Apollo 11 anniversary mug. Black decaf, cold, a skin on top.

MARCUS
Loop B's reading nominal. Nice work on the isolation.

INES
Copy.

MARCUS
We're showing you in Sol.

INES
Harness inventory.

MARCUS
That's on tomorrow's sheet.

INES
Then tomorrow it's done.

Click. Marcus glances at his telemetry.

MARCUS
How many you got?

INES
Eleven. Twelve on the manifest.

MARCUS
Call it eleven.

INES
Twelve on the manifest.

She digs deeper. Pulls out one more harness from the bottom of the bag. Older than the rest. The webbing is frayed at one hip ring, and somebody wrapped the fray in copper wire to hold it.

She turns the buckle toward the light. Doesn't check it against the list.

She just holds it.

MARCUS
Ines.

INES
Stand by.

MARCUS
It's all going in the ocean. Every strap. Don't get attached to that stuff.

She puts the harness back in the bag. On top, where she can see it.

Marcus sets the pen down. Picks it up again.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Maya purge is still showing open.

INES
It's on the list.

MARCUS

It's been on the list since Tuesday.

Nothing from the station.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It's a hatch, Ines. You close it on what's dead so everybody else keeps breathing. That's all it ever was.

Ines takes a ratchet strap off the rack. Loops it around the cargo bag. Cranks it.

The ratchet clicks, loud in the small space, one tooth at a time. She cranks past where it needs to go. The bag creases in the middle.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Station, Houston. You copy?

She cranks once more. The strap creaks.

INES

Maya's next.

She unclips her tether and pushes aft, toward the dim end of the module.

Behind her, the harness bag hangs on the rack, strapped tight enough to bend.

INT. STATION ONE - MAYA AIRLOCK VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

Low ceiling. Main lights off. Emergency strips along the seams throw everything amber.

At the far end, the inner airlock hatch. A round port of thick glass, scratched, gone cloudy at the rim. Below it, a manual dog-wheel. Brass. Worn smooth where hands go.

Beside the hatch, legacy oxygen piping marked with yellow diagonal tape. Red ball-valves secured with thin safety wire.

Ines floats in feet first and stops herself on a rail.

A checklist card is clipped to her sleeve. MAYA LEGACY O2 - ISOLATE/PURGE. Step one: VERIFY INNER HATCH DOGGED.

She skips it.

She snips the safety wire on the first ball-valve. Turns it a quarter. A thin hiss behind the wall, then nothing. Second valve. Hiss. Nothing.

Third valve. She stops with the cutters open.

Step one.

She moves along the rail to the hatch. Stops an arm's length away.

Her left hand opens and closes. Opens. She presses her right thumb into the scar, hard, the way you'd press on a bruise to check it's still there.

She reaches for the wheel.

Her hand stops two inches off the brass. The fingers tremble. Not much. She watches them do it.

INT. MAYA AIRLOCK VESTIBULE - ELEVEN YEARS AGO

Red strobes. Loose paper whipping toward the hatch. A roar of air.

Through the round port, a white EVA helmet slams against the glass. Gold visor down. A gloved hand flat beside it.

A younger hand, unscarred, on the brass wheel. Spinning it. The skin tears on the metal and keeps spinning.

INT. MAYA AIRLOCK VESTIBULE - PRESENT

Silence. Amber light. Ines's hand still hanging in the air.

Her breath has gone short. High in her chest.

The scar has flushed pink at the edges.

On the vestibule panel, a small biometric readout tracks her vest sensor. HR 131. It ticks. 134. 136.

She doesn't move.

A sharp two-tone ALERT. The panel flashes: LOS - T-MINUS 02:00.

Ines yanks her hand back.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Station, Houston. Two minutes to LOS.
We'll pick you up on the other side in
about twenty-two.

She goes for the comm key on her vest. Misses it. Finds it.

INES

Copy. Twenty-two.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Your heart rate's up there a little.

INES
Moving pipe.

A pause on the loop.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Copy.

She clips the card back to her sleeve. Step one still unchecked.

Through the small viewport beside the rail, the edge of the planet goes orange. Then red. Then black.

INT. STATION ONE - MAYA MODULE - ORBITAL NIGHT

Dark except for the amber strips and the green glow of a wall panel.

The comm speaker hisses. Marcus comes through in pieces.

MARCUS (V.O.)
...Houston... see you on... other...

Static. Then nothing. The panel reads: S-BAND - NO SIGNAL.

The scrubber breathes. The pump hums. Without a voice on the loop, the station sounds bigger.

Ines works by headlamp, bundling loose cable against the curved wall. Her left hand flat on the hull to steady herself, the right working a zip tie. Pull. Snip. Next one.

KNOCK.

A hard metallic note. Not loud. Deep. It comes through the wall, not the air.

She stops.

Her left hand is still on the hull. She spreads the fingers wide.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Three. Evenly spaced. The third a little heavier.

The metal under her palm keeps humming after the sound is gone.

The zip tie drifts away from her fingers. She lets it go.

INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - VALPARAISO - NIGHT

A painted wooden door, blue, peeling at the corners. A boy's knuckles rap it three times. The third a little harder.

GIRL (O.S.)

Ya, Tomas. Pasa.

INT. STATION ONE - MAYA MODULE - ORBITAL NIGHT

Ines pulls herself to the wall panel. Brings up the micrometeoroid impact grid. Every cell green.

MMOD EVENTS - LAST 60 MIN: 0

She taps refresh.

MMOD EVENTS - LAST 60 MIN: 0

She checks the pressure trace for the module. Flat. Checks the thermal log. Nothing moving that fast.

She floats back to the spot on the wall. Puts her palm flat to the cold titanium ribbing between two racks. Waits.

Scrubber. Pump. Her own breathing.

She moves her hand a foot to the left. Waits.

She turns off her headlamp. Full dark now, the panel glow on one side of her face.

She turns her head and lays her ear against the hull.

Nothing.

She stays there. A long time.

Then she lifts her right hand. Curls it into a loose fist. Holds her knuckles an inch from the wall.

She doesn't knock.

The hand comes down slowly and hooks back onto the rail.

The panel CHIRPS. S-BAND - ACQUIRING. Through the small viewport, a line of hard white light cracks open along the planet's edge.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Station, Houston. AOS. How we doing up there?

Ines keeps her palm on the wall.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Station, Houston.

INES
Nominal.

Sunlight crosses the module and lands on her hand, still flat against the hull.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - ORBITAL NIGHT

The console clock: STATION TIME 03:02. Below it, T-MINUS 45:29:51.

Clear polycarbonate sheets drift around the Cupola on short tethers. On each one, a grease-pencil outline of the station. Sol, Maya, Kibo, the Cupola, and the long spine of the truss running out to the solar arrays. Numbers crowd the margins.

Ines hangs in the middle of them, a silver vacuum pouch in one hand. She pulls out a strip of dried mango and chews without looking at it.

On the console, the external acoustic array. Eight accelerometer channels, eight thin green traces running flat.

On her wrist, a timer she set when the first knock hit. 00:00:41. Counting down.

She puts the mango pouch away. Wipes her fingers on the vest.

00:00:15.

She puts her left hand flat on the Cupola frame.

00:00:03. 00:00:02. Zero.

The timer beeps. The traces stay flat.

She waits. Her jaw stops moving.

Four seconds.

The traces jump. Channel three first, then two, five, seven, in a ragged stagger. At the same time it comes through the frame into her hand.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

The third heavier.

She hits CAPTURE. Freezes the window.

She leans in close. Reads the arrival times off each channel with a fingertip, lips moving. Grabs the nearest sheet and a pencil. Writes the deltas down in a column. Milliseconds.

She does the arithmetic by hand, fast, crossing out one line and redoing it.

She pulls a length of string from a pocket, pins one end to a sensor location on the drawing with her thumb, and swings an arc in red. Second sensor. Another arc. Third.

The arcs don't cross inside the station.

They cross outside it. Out on the truss, almost at the end. She draws a small, hard circle there and writes P6 beside it.

She checks it against the other sheet. The first knocks, the ones in Maya, ninety minutes ago. She lays one sheet over the other.

Same circle.

She hangs there looking at it.

INES
That's outside.

Nobody to hear it.

She turns to the console. Opens the station ledger. A cursor blinks in a new entry field.

She types: 0304 - THREE KNOCKS ON HULL, RECURRING, 90 MIN

She stops. Deletes KNOCKS ON HULL.

Types: PERIODIC IMPULSE LOADING, EXTERIOR, SOURCE UNIDENTIFIED. RECURRENCE 90 MIN +4 SEC. TOA TRIANGULATION FIX: P6 TRUSS, RESIDUAL 1.8 CM. MMOD: NO EVENTS. RAW DATA ATTACHED.

Her finger hovers over SUBMIT.

The small biometric field in the corner of the screen: HR 104.

She watches the number. It doesn't come down.

She presses SUBMIT.

ENTRY LOGGED - DOWNLINKED.

She tethers the drawings together one by one and clips the bundle to the console.

The console CHIMES. Different tone from the regular loop.

PRIVATE MED CONF REQUESTED - RUIZ, E. - KIBO MED STATION - NOW

Ines looks at the message. Then back at the red circle on the truss.

INT. STATION ONE - KIBO MODULE - MEDICAL STATION - CONTINUOUS

White panels. A fold-down exam surface. A monitor on an arm, too bright for the hour.

On it: DR. ELENA RUIZ, 40s, in a Houston office with a mug and a stack of printouts. Her hair tied back fast. She's been up too.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
Morning. Sorry about the hour. Can you put the cuff on for me?

Ines wraps a blood pressure cuff around her right arm. The Velcro rasps. She hits the button. The cuff inflates.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
How'd you sleep?

INES
Some.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
Your actigraphy says an hour forty. In three pieces.

INES
Loop B isolation.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
That was yesterday afternoon.

The cuff hisses down. Ruiz glances at a tablet, reads the number off it.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
I read your ledger entry.

Ines waits.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Periodic impulse loading. You felt it
through the hull?

INES
Four accelerometers recorded it. I felt
it too.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
Okay.

She scrolls on the tablet. Takes her time.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Yesterday's saliva swab came down on
the last dump. Your cortisol's a little
over double your baseline. And
yesterday, at the Maya hatch, your
heart rate hit one thirty-eight.

INES
I was moving pipe.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
You weren't moving anything. The
accelerometer in your vest says you
were still for almost two minutes.

Ines looks at the cuff on her arm. Pulls it off. Rips the
Velcro apart and folds it.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Isolation. No sleep. Forty hours left
on a station that's... where you've
been all this time.

She doesn't finish that.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
The brain fills in gaps. It does it to
everybody. And that structure pings
every orbit, going in and out of
sunlight. You know that better than I
do.

INES
Thermal pinging is broadband. Random
spacing. This is three discrete
impulses, same interval, same source,
every ninety minutes.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
I'm not going to argue sensors with
you.

INES

Then don't.

Ruiz sets the tablet down. Leans closer to her camera.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)

Here's where I am. If you tell me you were exhausted and heard the structure settle, I write fatigue. I prescribe eight hours and a sleep aid. We're done.

Ines says nothing.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

If you tell me something's out there knocking on the hull, I have to pull your clearance. And if you're not cleared, you don't fly anything. Not the station. Not the burn.

INES

Who flies it.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)

Ground can fly it.

INES

Remotely.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)

Remotely. You'd go to the return vehicle and wait.

A long beat. The fans hum. Ines floats a few inches off the exam surface and pulls herself back down.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Ines. Just tell me you're tired.

INES

P6 truss. Four-sensor time-of-arrival fix. Residual under two centimeters. Send it to Structures. Have them run it.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)

That's not what I asked you.

INES

Accelerometers don't hallucinate, Doctor.

Ruiz holds her look. Then picks up a pen and writes something on the printout in front of her. Short.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
I'm noting non-compliance with a
medical recommendation.

INES
Note it.

RUIZ (ON SCREEN)
Marcus is calling a management meeting
at six. I'd try to sleep before then.

The screen goes to a blue CONFERENCE ENDED card.

Ines stays where she is. The folded cuff drifts off the exam surface. She reaches out and catches it without looking.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Morning shift change. Controllers in wireless headsets, laminated access passes on lanyards. Coffee. Printouts. The low overlapping murmur of a dozen loops.

On the front wall, a ground track of Station One sliding across the Pacific. A countdown clock: T-MINUS 43:12:07.

Marcus sits at the flight director console. Behind his monitor, a framed photo: Station One's original 2002 launch crew, grinning, in blue polos.

Ruiz stands at his shoulder with her tablet.

BRADLEY THORNE, 47, leans beside Marcus's keyboard. Tailored knit sweater, athletic, immaculate. A carbon-fiber pass turns between two manicured fingers as he reads three screens. He never looks past the monitor at the framed crew photo.

THORNE
Clearance opens oh-four-hundred
Thursday. Notices filed. The box is
clearing now.

MARCUS
We know when the window is, Brad.

THORNE
Past oh-four-hundred: one-eighty an
hour to the underwriter. Now Medical
has a flag.

He taps his titanium smartwatch. It shows a small red ticking figure.

RUIZ

It's a non-compliance note. It's not a diagnosis.

THORNE

She logged knocks.

MARCUS

She's reading accelerometers.

THORNE

Structures looked at her data?

MARCUS

They're looking.

THORNE

They're looking.

Click. Click. Marcus's pen cap against his knuckles.

THORNE (CONT'D)

She triangulated it to the end of the truss. Marcus. What's the next thing she does?

Marcus doesn't answer.

THORNE (CONT'D)

EVA. One crew. No buddy. Medical flag. That claim starts at eight figures.

MARCUS

She's the best engineer we've ever put up there.

THORNE

Then she can engineer her way into the return vehicle.

Ruiz looks at her tablet. Ines's live heart rate: 96.

RUIZ

She's not sleeping. That part's real.

Marcus glances at her. She doesn't look back.

THORNE

Lock exterior hatches. Cut camera control. Burn options by end of shift.

MARCUS

Negative on the burn. It stays where it is until I see numbers.

THORNE

Then I'll find a flight director who can get me numbers.

The floor around them goes a little quieter. Two controllers at the next row stop typing.

MARCUS

You don't have that authority.

THORNE

The consortium does. I'm on the phone with them at nine.

He stops twirling the pass.

THORNE (CONT'D)

You can do this, or you can explain to them why you didn't.

A muscle in Marcus's jaw jumps. Once. Again. He puts his hand to his chin like he's thinking, holds it there.

His eyes go to the framed photo behind the monitor. Six faces. One of them young, lopsided smile, a silver marker tucked behind his ear.

MARCUS

Hatches only. Burn stays.

THORNE

For now.

Marcus pulls up a directive template. EXT HATCH RELAY LOCKOUT - MEDICAL HOLD. A second box: EXT CAMERA CONTROL - RESTRICTED.

He reads it all the way through. Lowers his glasses off his forehead to do it.

He signs with a stylus. His signature is small.

COMMAND QUEUED - STAND BY FOR UPLINK.

He keys his loop.

MARCUS

Network, Flight. Stand by for uplink on the station command package.

NETWORK (V.O.)
Flight, Network, copy. Uplinking.

On the screen, a progress bar fills. Green.

UPLINK COMPLETE. EXT HATCH RELAYS: LOCKED.

Thorne is already walking away, phone to his ear.

Marcus picks up the Apollo mug. Looks at the skin on the cold coffee. Puts it back down without drinking.

He presses the pen cap on until it clicks shut, and sets the pen flat on the desk.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - DAY

Ines floats in front of the master terminal, a coffee bag in one hand. The screen has gone red at the top.

ADMINISTRATIVE OVERRIDE - EXT HATCH CMD LOCKED - MEDICAL
HOLD - AUTH: VANCE, M.

She sets the coffee bag against a Velcro patch. Types.

HATCH MAYA OUTER - STATUS

LOCKED - REMOTE AUTH REQUIRED

She types a manual override string from memory. Enter.

COMMAND REJECTED

She opens the external camera menu. Selects CAM EXT-4, the one that covers the truss.

CAMERA CONTROL RESTRICTED - GROUND ONLY

She looks at the screen a moment. Then turns her back on it.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKBENCH - CONTINUOUS

The back corner of Sol. A workbench bolted to the wall, a nest of hand tools on yellow tethers turning slowly in the air. Crimpers, a soldering iron, a dog-latch spanner on frayed twine. Coils of obsolete cable held down with bungee.

An old amber CRT terminal sits in a bracket at eye level. Somebody taped the power switch so it can't be turned off by accident.

Ines switches the monitor on. It warms up slowly, a hum and then amber text.

She navigates a file tree by keyboard. MAINT. LEGACY.
T.VASQUEZ. BITACORA.

Scanned notebook pages. Graph paper with oil fingerprints on it. Handwriting that slants hard to the right, in Spanish and English and a mix of both.

She pages through. Wiring runs. A pump schematic with a coffee ring over it. A margin note in capitals:

FLACA: SI EL BUS 3 TE ODIA, PEGALE.

Next to it, a little drawing of a fist.

The corner of her mouth moves. Not quite a smile.

She keeps going. Faster now. Looking for something.

A page headed MAINT BUS 3 - CAMARAS. A hand-drawn diagram: a serial port on the workbench panel, a line running around the flight computer instead of through it, straight to the external camera heads.

Underneath: SIN PASAR POR EL FLIGHT COMPUTER. NO LE DIGAS A HOUSTON.

She reads it twice.

She reaches under the bench and pulls a panel cover off with her fingers. Behind it, an old nine-pin serial port. Dusty. Labeled in faded silver marker: B3.

She pages forward to see what else is in the routine.

The next page is a drawing.

A crawler. Four jointed legs with magnetic feet. A squat body. One arm folded up underneath like a mantis, a welding tip at the end. Every part labeled in Tomas's slant. PATA 1. PATA 2. SOLDADOR. BATERIA - ALCANZA? The question mark gone over three times.

Beneath the sketch, written larger and slower than the rest:

A good machine never leaves an open seam.

And under that, just: - T.

Ines stops scrolling.

Her hands come off the keyboard.

She looks at the four legs. At the arm. At the handwriting.

Her right thumb finds the stitch holes on her vest where the name tag was. Runs along them. Back.

The pump hums behind the paneling.

She looks back over her shoulder at the master terminal. The red banner still across the top.

Then she pulls a gray serial cable off its coil, finds the right end, and plugs it into B3. It seats with a click.

She types on the amber terminal. Slow, checking the scanned page between each line.

B3 CAM EXT-4 MAINT

A long pause. The CRT flickers.

CAM EXT-4 - MAINTENANCE MODE - LOCAL CONTROL

She exhales through her nose.

She types one more line. ROUTE VIDEO: CUPOLA 2.

She unclips the cable from the bench, pays it out behind her, and pulls herself forward toward the Cupola, hand over hand, the cable unspooling off the coil.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - ORBITAL NIGHT

Outside the windows: black. No Earth, no moon. A thin smear of stars.

Ines jacks the serial cable into a port under the control panel. The second display blinks to a grainy feed. CAM EXT-4.

Mostly black. A faint gray edge of truss structure at the bottom of the frame.

She types slew commands by keyboard. Each one takes a second to arrive. The image lurches, stops. Lurches again.

The truss slides across the frame in a dark lattice. Cable runs. Handrails. The long silhouette of a radiator panel.

She checks her grease-pencil drawing, tethered at her elbow. The red circle. Slews again.

The camera stops on the far end of the truss. Too dark. Shapes, nothing she can read.

She waits.

The console clock ticks. The scrubber breathes.

The edge of the windows goes deep blue. Then orange.

Orbital dawn hits all at once. The camera feed blows out. A solid white rectangle.

Ines squints. Opens a manual iris menu. Steps the aperture down. One click. Another.

The white collapses into shapes. The truss. A rail. Hard black shadow under everything.

And on the rail, something that isn't part of the truss.

She zooms. The image goes soft, then sharp.

A machine. Four jointed legs, feet clamped to the guide rail. A squat body the size of a suitcase, its white paint scorched brown and pitted with tiny black craters. One leg a different color from the others, a replacement. An arm folded underneath the body, its welding tip pressed against the metal.

Ines doesn't move.

On the screen, one leg lifts. Swings forward six inches. Sets down. The feet re-clamp.

The arm draws back.

It taps the truss. Once. Twice. A third time, a little harder.

A second later it arrives through the Cupola frame, under her left hand.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Ines breathes out. It shakes a little on the way out.

She looks from the screen to the tethered drawing. Not hers. She's pulled up the amber page on the small display beside it. Tomas's sketch. Four legs. The arm folded like a mantis.

She looks back at the feed.

Her hand goes to the frame capture key. Presses it. The screen stutters. FRAME 001 SAVED.

She zooms tighter on the body. Presses it again. 002. 003.

A COMM CHIME.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Station, Houston.

She keeps her finger on the capture key.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines, we're showing EXT-4 moving.
Nobody down here commanded that.

Her eyes go to the comm key on her vest. Her hand drifts toward it. Stops.

On the feed, the machine takes another step along the rail.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Station, Houston, how do you read.

She takes her hand back and presses capture. 004. 005.

She zooms tighter. The image breaks into pixels, then settles on the side of the chassis. A small status light, set into a scorched panel.

Red. It blinks.

She counts under her breath, lips moving.

It blinks again. Slower.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines.

She doesn't answer. She puts her palm flat against the window, and watches the red light go on and off on the end of the truss.

INT. STATION ONE - MAYA AIRLOCK VESTIBULE - ORBITAL DAY

Ines floats in her EVA suit, helmet open. Tomas's green fleece vest is gone. The brass torque wrench now rides on the suit's right thigh.

She locks the inner hatch. Pulls the brass dog-wheel until every indicator shows seated.

On the cycling panel:

EVA AUTHORIZATION REJECTED

MEDICAL HOLD - GROUND CONTROL

Ines enters her credentials again.

The panel answers with the same red notice. Beneath it, the chamber pressure holds at 14.6 PSI.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Ines, step out of the lock. That's a direct instruction.

SHE SWITCHES THE PANEL TO LOCAL. THE WORD CHANGES TO:

LOCAL CONTROL INHIBITED

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Copy that you may be suited. Do not close your helmet. Stand by for an uplink.

Ines closes the helmet. The neck ring locks with a hard metallic click.

INES

Suit integrity nominal.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Negative on EVA. We are not negotiating that.

Ines pulls a yellow diagonal strip of tape from beneath the cycling console. Behind it, two recessed bolt heads and a handwritten grease-pencil mark: M.B.

She fits the brass torque wrench. Breaks both bolts loose.

The narrow access plate lifts away. Old pipes crowd the dark cavity. Red manual ball-valves, brittle labels, safety wire browned with age.

At the back lies a brass bypass bar folded flat against the plumbing.

Ines reaches for it. Her pressurized glove will not fit.

She turns sideways, wedges her forearm into the opening and catches the bar with two fingers. It refuses to move.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We're showing the cycle panel open.
Ines, leave it alone.

She bears down. Nothing.

INES

Mechanical isolation test.

MARCUS (V.O.)

There is no scheduled isolation test.

INES

There is now.

She braces one boot under a handrail and pulls with both hands. The old hinge gives a fraction, shedding flakes of green sealant.

The bar swings out.

Ines studies the plumbing. Twenty years of added labels, crossed-out arrows and grease-pencil corrections. Her own handwriting.

She twists the manual bleed valve. It moves one degree, then binds.

A yellow warning begins to circle the vestibule lights. Silent. Patient.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Close that valve. Pressure transducer just moved.

INES

Two hundredths.

MARCUS (V.O.)

It shouldn't move at all.

She clips the bypass bar over the valve stem. The bar is short. No leverage.

Ines threads the serialized dog-latch spanner through its end, extending it. She leans her full weight against the improvised handle.

Her left palm presses the metal. The scar flushes pink inside the glove.

The valve GROANS.

The pressure display drops to 14.2.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Stop. Ines, listen to me. You force that open and Houston reads it as a hull breach.

She looks through the outer hatch port. Sunlight burns along the edge of the truss.

INES
Then read quickly.

She drives the bar down.

The bleed valve tears open.

Atmosphere screams through the bypass pipe. Ice blooms around the fittings and races across the open access panel. Through the outer port, a white plume erupts from the dump nozzle and vanishes into sunlight.

The yellow warning loops turn red.

Pressure numbers tumble.

10.8. 7.1. 3.6.

Ines grips the handrail against the rush. A loose checklist lashes on its tether.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Close the manual bleed! Ines, close it now!

The gauge reaches 0.2. Then 0.0.

The roar dies. Frost drifts through the chamber in bright flakes.

On the panel:

VACUUM CONFIRMED

UNAUTHORIZED EXTERIOR ACCESS

Ines folds the bypass bar clear of the hatch mechanism.

Her gloved hand settles on the outer release.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - BACK TELEMETRY ROW - DAY

Red warnings multiply across the flight-control displays.

AIRLOCK DEPRESSURIZATION

MAYA EXT HATCH ARMED

Marcus crosses toward the director console, headset clamped tight.

MARCUS
Station, Houston. Abort the cycle.
Stand by for repress.

At the dim back row, MATEO COLE watches structural data pour down his screen. Slight, curly-haired, swallowed by an oversized sweater over his mission-control polo. A vintage Soviet cosmonaut pin catches the monitor light.

He bites through the end of a wooden coffee stirrer.

His display carries the calibrated feed: flat lines, red fault banners, no useful position data.

Mateo opens a raw diagnostic window.

A spray of unfiltered numbers appears. Truss temperature gradients. Suit beacon reflections. Acoustic returns stamped UNCALIBRATED - DO NOT USE FOR FLIGHT.

One return repeats from P6.

Three tight peaks.

Mateo leans closer. Another signal rides beneath them, weak but regular.

TRANSPONDER CARRIER DETECTED

NO REGISTERED VEHICLE ID

He writes the frequency in a pocket notebook, calculates beside it, then opens a maintenance audio menu.

A SUPERVISOR passes behind him.

SUPERVISOR

Cole, flight wants all station voice
routed through director.

MATEO

Yes. Routing now.

He closes the menu until the supervisor moves on.

At the main console, Marcus clicks his blue pen against his knuckles.

MARCUS

Cut local cycling power. Send the
repress command.

A CONTROLLER works the command.

CONTROLLER

No response. Mechanical vent path is
still open.

MARCUS

Then inhibit the outer release.

CONTROLLER

Outer controller dropped offline at
zero pressure.

Mateo glances toward them. No one looks back.

He brings up MAINT BUS 3, then a dormant suit-service frequency. He strips off the voice identifier and replaces it with a thermal telemetry packet.

A warning appears:

CHANNEL NOT RECORDED BY FLIGHT LOOP

His hand stops over ENTER.

Marcus's voice fills the room.

MARCUS

All nonessential station channels go
dark. I want her on my loop only.

Mateo looks at the repeating carrier. Its amplitude falls with each pulse.

He presses ENTER.

A small green line opens.

MATEO

Station EVA, raw maintenance data. No
acknowledgment.

Static.

He lowers his voice.

MATEO (CONT'D)

Thermal coordinates only. P6 reference
plane. Azimuth plus zero-six-seven.
Elevation minus one-eight. Range
thirty-nine point four meters.

On his display, Ines's suit beacon shifts toward the outer hatch.

MATEO (CONT'D)

Your target is moving outboard at four
centimeters per second. Carrier is
one-seven kilohertz below registered

(MORE)

MATEO (CONT'D)

crawler band. Signal-to-noise, three point two and falling.

A beat of static.

INES (V.O.)

Source confidence.

Mateo almost smiles. He checks the raw returns.

MATEO

Acoustic, sixty-one percent. Thermal, eighty-four. Active carrier confirmed on six consecutive samples.

INES (V.O.)

Copy raw data.

MATEO

Sun vector will cross the handrail in ninety seconds. Keep the radiator between your visor and the limb.

He sees a command request blink on the network: DISABLE MAINTENANCE CHANNELS.

Mateo routes his packets through a temperature-sensor test port. The request clears without touching his line.

On his suit schematic, the outer hatch changes from amber to green.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Who still has traffic to Station?

Mateo removes the coffee stirrer from his mouth and drops it into a cold paper cup.

On his screen, Ines's beacon passes beyond the pressure hull.

MATEO

Range thirty-eight point nine. Track is clean.

EXT. STATION ONE - MAYA MODULE / P6 TRUSS - ORBITAL DAY

The outer hatch opens onto pure white sunlight.

Ines pulls herself through. Her magnetic boots meet the external translation rail.

CLACK. CLACK.

The magnets lock.

Below her, Earth fills half the universe. Blue water, white weather, no visible motion. Above, black space.

Her suit carries every breath, every fan bearing, every small movement of fabric. The station itself gives her nothing.

INES

Exterior. Translation begun.

No answer from Marcus.

Mateo's unmarked data tone ticks in her headset.

MATEO (V.O.)

Raw range thirty-seven point six.

Relative motion still outboard.

Ines clips her primary carabiner to the guide cable. Her secondary lanyard follows on the rail. She tests both, then advances.

Boot up. Magnet release. Hand forward. Boot down.

The P6 truss stretches forty meters ahead, a rigid ladder in hard light. White Nomex blankets have yellowed to old bone. Micrometeoroid pits pepper the handrails.

A thermal cover lifts at one corner. Ines catches it, smooths it down and fastens the loose tab without stopping.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Range thirty-four. Sun angle increasing.

INES

I have the geometry.

She lowers her gold visor. The glare dims from blinding white to brass.

She moves beneath a communications box and around a bundle of exposed cable. Her magnetic boot strikes something raised on the station skin.

Ines stops.

A titanium plate lies welded over the hull beneath her. Roughly cut. Palm-sized. Its bead is wide and slightly flattened at every turn.

She directs her suit lamp under the truss.

Another plate gleams there.

Then another.

Her light travels farther. The underside of Station One is covered with patches: small circles, long strips, crooked diamonds fitted around conduits. Dozens of them, running away into shadow.

Ines kneels against her boot magnets and wipes atomic-oxygen dust from the nearest seam.

The weld starts heavy, eases at the corner, then doubles back over its own tail.

Her glove traces the bead.

INES (CONT'D)

Wide feed. Low current on the turn.

MATEO (V.O.)

Say again?

She shifts her lamp to an older plate. Its exposed edge is bleached and finely eroded. The next is less worn. Farther out, one shines almost silver.

INES

Pull archived exterior imagery. P6 nadir skin.

MATEO (V.O.)

I can't put archive traffic on this route without flagging it.

INES

Last recorded EVA repair.

Keyboard clicks faintly through his open microphone.

MATEO (V.O.)

Crew-installed hull plate... eleven years, twenty-six days ago. No logged patch work after that.

Ines counts three plates within reach. None appears in the old maintenance diagram clipped inside her cuff.

She reaches to the farthest. The weld carries the same broad bead, the same overlap.

INES

Tomas ran the torch too rich. Said
narrow beads looked nervous.

Her thumb follows the seam once more, gentle now.

Farther along the truss, the four-legged crawler moves
through a blade of sunlight. One mismatched leg rises,
plants, clamps. Its welding arm hangs beneath it.

The crawler pauses over a dark pinhole in the hull.

Its arm unfolds.

A brief blue-white spark jumps at the tip.

Ines watches reflected light flicker across the patched
skin.

MATEO (V.O.)

Thermal event at target. Twelve hundred
Kelvin, point six seconds.

The welding arm retracts. The crawler takes another uneven
step toward the radiator mast.

Ines looks back over the field of plates. Old to new, all
the way from Maya.

INES

It kept the seam closed.

MATEO (V.O.)

Range twenty-eight point one.

She pushes off the patch and resumes her traverse.

The sun reaches the edge of Earth. A black line climbs
across the solar arrays, swallowing them section by section.

Ahead, the crawler enters shadow and disappears.

The temperature digits inside Ines's visor begin to fall.

Plus eighteen.

Plus eleven.

Plus three.

She increases her pace toward the dark radiator mast.

EXT. STATION ONE - RADIATOR MAST JOINT - ORBITAL NIGHT

Earth eclipses the sun.

The truss drops into darkness. Ines's suit lamp cuts a narrow tunnel through handrails and brittle thermal blanket.

Her visor reads minus twenty-two Celsius outside and falling.

The suit heater engages with a heavy click.

Ines reaches the radiator mast joint. A translation cable hangs slack across the route, severed strands glittering in her light.

She draws the cable aside.

Her primary carabiner slides into the frayed section and jams.

Ines stops hard. The damaged wire twists around the gate of the carabiner. One broken strand hooks beneath the outer fabric at her hip.

She holds perfectly still.

MATEO (V.O.)

Your suit thermal draw just doubled.
Battery estimate revised to two hours,
nine minutes.

INES

Ignore the estimate.

She works the carabiner backward. The strand tightens against her suit.

A thermostat relay CHATTERS behind her shoulder.

The heater cuts out.

Suit temperature drops through nine Celsius.

Ines takes a compact cutter from her tool board, positions it over the guide cable, then stops. Cutting it would leave no continuous path back to Maya.

She stows the cutter.

INES (CONT'D)

Need a load transfer.

MATEO (V.O.)

There is a fixed hard point forty
centimeters zenith of your left glove.
Raw lidar only. I can't certify it.

Ines sweeps her lamp. Finds a recessed eyelet half buried
under a folded radiator blanket.

She pulls her secondary lanyard from the rail and clips it
to the eyelet.

Now she hangs from one point in the dark.

She releases her right boot magnet. Rotates sideways around
the snag. The hooked strand lifts the outer thermal layer
into a sharp peak.

The thermostat clicks again. Heat floods the suit.

Her visor temperature jumps from six to fourteen.

INES

Heater breaker is cycling.

MATEO (V.O.)

Current oscillation, four to eleven
amps. Period is irregular. If it holds
above twelve--

INES

Give me voltage.

MATEO (V.O.)

Twenty-six point eight. Twenty-five
point one. Back to twenty-six.

Ines braces one boot against the mast and pinches the broken
strand with her cutter. Not through it -- just enough to
bend it away from the suit.

The strand springs loose.

Her primary carabiner comes free.

She inspects the fabric. A silver scrape across the outer
layer. No puncture.

INES

Pressure stable.

The guide cable still drifts across the path. Ines opens a
pouch and draws out a short length of braided line. She
loops it through the cable's severed end, passes it around
the mast eyelet and rigs a tension hitch.

Her gloves stiffen in the cold. The first knot slips.

She works it again, slower. Pulls the hitch tight until the guide cable straightens between the truss sections.

The heater dies once more.

Minus forty outside. Four Celsius inside.

Her breath fogs a small crescent at the bottom of the visor.

Ines reconnects her primary carabiner to the repaired guide line. She tests it with both hands.

It holds.

She unclips the secondary lanyard from the eyelet and reattaches it behind the primary.

MATEO (V.O.)

I have new network traffic. Houston
acquired your exterior beacon through
the S-band backup.

A burst of carrier noise cuts across their private channel.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Ines, Houston. We have your position.
Stop where you are.

Ines looks ahead.

Beyond the repaired cable, the radiator mast rises into darkness. A weak red light blinks between its ribs.

INES

Guide path secure.

She pulls herself past the joint.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - FLIGHT DIRECTOR CONSOLE - DAY

Ines's beacon burns red on a wire-frame model of Station One.

Marcus stands over the console. Thorne watches from behind him, carbon-fiber pass turning between two fingers.

MARCUS

Station, remain fixed. We are
inhibiting all vehicle motion.

INES (V.O.)

Then inhibit it.

THORNE

Propellant isn't settled. Her vent put gas into the attitude envelope.

MARCUS

She is on the truss.

THORNE

And every minute she stays there, we lose the burn model.

Thorne taps a command field on a controller's display.

PROP SETTLE PULSE - READY

MARCUS

Negative on that request.

THORNE

It's not a request. Two-tenths of a second, aft bank. Freeze the fuel and give Navigation clean numbers.

Marcus's jaw tightens. The blue pen cap clicks once against his knuckle.

MARCUS

Her loads aren't configured for thrust.

THORNE

EVA complement is one. That's the approved number.

His pass touches the reader. Stops there for one beat. Then presses flat.

The command field turns green.

EXT. STATION ONE - TRUSS OVERHANG - ORBITAL NIGHT

Ines climbs beyond the mast joint. Her lamp catches the crawler ten meters ahead, wedged between two radiator ribs.

Its red light blinks weakly.

MATEO (V.O.)

Station attitude command just armed.

INES

Which command?

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - FLIGHT DIRECTOR CONSOLE - DAY

Marcus reaches for the inhibit key.

THORNE

Execute.

The controller obeys.

EXT. STATION ONE - TRUSS OVERHANG - ORBITAL NIGHT

MATEO (V.O.)

Pulse. Aft bank. Two-tenths--

The thrusters FIRE.

Station One kicks sideways.

The radiator truss flexes like a struck bow. Ines's boots rip free of the rail. Her body slams against the guide cable and rebounds over the edge.

Her primary carabiner races along the repaired line.

It strikes the mast joint.

The guide cable whips out of its hitch.

Ines tumbles beyond the truss.

Her secondary lanyard snaps taut. The station catches her for one violent instant.

The webbing parts at the frayed whipping twine.

She flies free.

Earth rolls into view, blue and enormous. Then black sky. Then Station One, already shrinking above her.

Her suit alarm shrieks.

TETHER FAILURE

ROTATION RATE EXCEEDED

INES

Houston, tether failure.

No answer penetrates the overlapping alarms.

She reaches for the guide rail. It passes several feet beyond her glove.

Her rotation accelerates. Earth. Black. Station. Earth.

Ines extends both arms, trying to change her moment of inertia. The spin slows by a fraction, but her distance from

the station keeps opening.

Six feet.

Nine.

Twelve.

MATEO (V.O.)

Ines, radiator flange crossing your
right side in four seconds. Relative
speed one point three.

She cannot see it.

INES

Clock it.

MATEO (V.O.)

Three. Two--

The radiator strut flashes past beneath her boots.

Ines tears the brass torque wrench from her thigh. The short
lanyard remains clipped to her suit.

She swings the wrench outward.

It misses the strut and whips back.

Her rotation carries her around again. The radiator flange
approaches, a black bar against the blue Earth.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Second pass. One point one. Now.

Ines hurls the wrench.

The brass head sails through the flange opening. The tether
follows.

She yanks sideways.

The wrench catches crosswise behind the flange.

The lanyard snaps tight.

Ines stops with bone-jarring force. Her right shoulder
wrenches against the suit restraint. A cry escapes before
she can bite it back.

She hangs from the short line, fifty feet off the truss.
Earth turns beneath her boots.

The torque wrench grinds toward the edge of the flange.

Ines wraps both hands around the lanyard and pulls it against her chest. Her right arm trembles.

INES
Contact arrested.

MATEO (V.O.)
I have you. Relative motion zero point
zero-three. Hold exactly that load.

Behind her, the truss continues to shudder from the pulse.

At the radiator mast, the crawler's mismatched leg tears loose from its clamp.

Its body shifts out of the crevice.

The welding arm strikes metal three times.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

The crawler tips toward open space.

EXT. STATION ONE - RADIATOR FLANGE - ORBITAL NIGHT

Ines hangs from the short lanyard. The brass wrench grinds a quarter inch along the flange lip.

Stops.

Her breathing fills the helmet, fast and wet.

Her right glove opens and closes on the line. The fingers come back late.

MATEO (V.O.)
Ines. Talk to me.

INES
Here.

MATEO (V.O.)
Guidance hated that pulse. Residuals
are way off. They're building a trim.

INES
When.

MATEO (V.O.)
I don't -- under two minutes. Maybe
ninety seconds.

She reaches up with her left hand, grips the lanyard above the right, and pulls. The right hand follows, slower.

Again. The wrench shifts on the lip.

Again.

Her left glove closes on the flange. Then the strut.

She hooks an elbow over the metal and hangs there. Frees the wrench from behind the flange by feel and clips it back to her thigh. It takes three tries with the right hand. She finishes with the left.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sorry. Someone's behind me.

She waits. Stars. The black edge of the Earth.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Okay. Aft bank's powered. They want it before Santiago acquisition.

INES
How long.

MATEO (V.O.)
Seventy seconds. About.

She goes hand over hand down the strut toward the mast base. The metal hums under her gloves. Still ringing from the first pulse.

The keel rail runs below her, a pale line in her lamp.

Her boots dangle a meter above it.

She thumbs the magnet control on her wrist. Swings her legs.

The left boot clacks off the rail and bounces away.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Forty.

She swings again. Shorter. The right boot touches, skids -- Bites.

The left comes down beside it.

MAG LOCK flashes green on her display.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They're firing. Now --

She folds flat against the rail.

The station shudders. Lower this time. A long groan comes up through her boots into her knees, her ribs, her teeth.

She holds.

It passes.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's the trim. You're still on my
screen. You're still -- okay.

She lifts her head.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Maya outer hatch is thirty-one meters
aft. Rail's clear the whole way.

She looks back. Far down the truss, the airlock is a small square of amber light.

She looks forward. Between the radiator ribs, nothing.
Black.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If they need another trim, I won't get
a warning. Not a good one.

Ines unclips her primary hook. Reaches forward, into the dark. Clamps it on the rail an arm's length ahead.

Unlocks one boot. Steps.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines --

INES
Tell me when you see it coming.

She steps again. Her lamp swings across the ribs.

Ten meters ahead, the crawler hangs half out of the crevice, one leg torn loose, its welding arm still stuck to the hull. The arm is the only thing holding it on.

EXT. STATION ONE - RADIATOR MAST CREVICE - ORBITAL NIGHT

No sound but her breath and the tick of her suit fans.

Ines wedges her boots against the rib and eases in beside the crawler.

Her lamp moves over it slowly.

Four legs. Three match. The fourth is thicker, older, a hand-drill motor bolted into the hip joint, the housing wrapped in copper wire. Its clamp foot is ripped half off.

The chassis is pitted all over. Hundreds of tiny black craters. One side is baked brown by the sun.

The welding arm is locked mid-stroke. Its tip sits fused to the hull at the end of a half-finished bead, a seam two-thirds closed over a puncture the size of a coin.

The red status light blinks. Waits. Blinks.

She turns the lamp to the access hatch.

Letters in silver marker, faded almost to nothing:

PEANUT

She looks at the word for a long time.

MATEO (V.O.)

Your suit's reporting temperature swings again. Heater breaker.

INES

I know.

She doesn't move.

She touches the copper wire on the odd leg. Turns the wrap with one finger.

INES (CONT'D)

A drill motor. In a flight leg.

MATEO (V.O.)

Say again?

INES

Nothing.

She tips the lamp to the crawler's head. A single lens, scratched, cloudy. Not aimed at the hull. Aimed out.

She follows the line of it with her eyes. Turns her whole body, slowly, on the rail.

Across the gap, down the length of the station, the Maya outer hatch. The small round viewport. Amber light behind it.

She holds there.

Her breathing slows. Then stops. Then starts again.

MATEO (V.O.)

Ines? I've got your beacon, but no motion.

INES

Stand by.

She turns back to the crawler.

She unclips the wrench. Sets its jaw against the base of the welding arm, where the joint is locked.

One hard turn would snap it free.

She looks at the unfinished seam.

She takes the wrench away. Clips it back.

She pulls the recovery tether from her hip pouch. Feeds it under the chassis, careful of the arm. Around once. Under the odd leg. Around again. Snugs it through the cinch.

She clips the free end to her harness ring.

Tugs it. It holds.

INES (CONT'D)

Okay.

The red light blinks.

Then flares white. Once. Bright enough to throw her shadow on the ribs.

Dark.

She waits.

Nothing.

MATEO (V.O.)

I just lost the carrier.

She puts her glove flat on the chassis and leaves it there.

EXT. STATION ONE - RADIATOR MAST CREVICE - ORBITAL DAWN

A thin line of blue burns along the Earth's edge.

Then the sun. All at once.

Ines's visor snaps dark. The truss goes from black to white-hot glare.

Light pours across Peanut's back, across a panel of cracked solar cells.

Under her glove, something clicks. She feels it before she sees anything.

MATEO (V.O.)
Carrier's back. Stronger. Wait -- it's
sending a status packet.

A faint three-note chime comes through her headset, patched from Mateo's channel. Thin. Old.

The welding arm twitches.

Ines pulls her hand back.

The arm draws the last third of the bead across the puncture. Slow, steady, wide. The seam closes.

The tip lifts off the hull and folds to its rest position.

A small cracked display on the flank flickers on. Green characters crawl across it.

BLK BOX / SEALED

AUD_UNCMP_01

REC START 14:52:10 UTC

WRITE PROTECT: ON

Ines reads it.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm getting a directory. One file.
Uncompressed audio, sealed,
write-protected. Timestamp is -- that's
eleven years back.

INES
What time.

MATEO (V.O.)
Fourteen fifty-two and ten seconds.

She doesn't answer.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines?

INES

Hatch was dogged at fourteen fifty-one.

Silence on the loop.

The display flickers. The characters fade, come back fainter.

MATEO (V.O.)

I could try to pull it down the carrier. Low rate. It'd take hours. And the battery's -- it's running off the sun. Ninety minutes, you're in shadow again.

INES

And Houston gets a copy.

MATEO (V.O.)

...Yeah. Probably.

She looks at the file line one more time.

She unclips the wrench left-handed and sets the jaw on the release cam of the first magnetic foot. Turns. The cam gives. The foot drops free.

Second foot. Free.

The third cam won't move. Cold-welded.

She turns harder. Her right hand comes in to help and shakes on the handle.

She strikes the cam with the brass head. Once. Twice.

It gives.

The torn fourth foot hangs by its bent clamp. She pries it loose and it floats off the rail.

Peanut comes away from the station.

Twenty kilos, weightless, still heavy. She catches the mass against her chest. It pushes her back a step on her boots. She rides it out. Holds it there with both arms, the display dim against her suit.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Station, Houston.

She closes her eyes.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We are commanding Maya airlock
recovery. Outer hatch close and
emergency repress. Sequence starts in
one-eight-zero seconds. Ines. If you're
coming in, come in now.

MATEO (V.O.)
It's on a timer. I can't touch it.

She turns on the rail, Peanut in her arms, and faces the
airlock.

EXT. STATION ONE - KEEL RAIL - ORBITAL DAY

Ines moves aft. Hook forward, clamp. Boot. Boot. Peanut
riding the tether at her chest, bumping her visor.

Her right arm hangs off the rail more than it grips.

MATEO (V.O.)
Two minutes. Twenty-two meters.

She clamps. Steps.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ninety. Fourteen.

The amber square grows. The outer hatch stands open, a
bright mouth in the sunlit hull.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sixty.

She unclips the hook at the rail's end. Pushes off the last
handhold and glides the final meters, drone first.

The outer hatch starts to swing.

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They moved it up. It's closing --

INT./EXT. STATION ONE - MAYA AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

Ines shoots through the narrowing gap and slams against the
inner wall of the lock. The tether snaps taut behind her.

Peanut is still outside.

The hatch closes on it.

The welding arm catches crosswise in the frame. Metal on
metal. The hatch motor whines. Stalls. Pushes again.

The drone's chassis creaks under the load.

Overhead, the repress valve opens. Air rushes into the lock and straight out through the gap around the arm in a roaring plume of white ice.

The cycling panel flashes:

OBSTRUCTION - SAFING - DEPRESS

The repress valve slams shut. A vent valve opens. What little air there was screams out.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Station, you have an obstruction in the outer hatch. Clear the hatch. Clear it and we can bring you in.

Ines plants her boots on the frame and hauls on the tether with her left arm. Peanut doesn't move. The motor grinds.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ines, it's a machine. Cut the line.

She looks at the tether cutter on her wrist.

She turns her back to the hatch instead. Wedges her shoulders against the chassis where it sticks through the gap. Braces her boots on the far wall.

The arm is stuck at the elbow joint. She jams the wrench into it and turns. The joint gives a quarter turn and folds.

She pushes with her legs.

Her right shoulder takes the load. A sound comes out of her. She keeps pushing.

The arm scrapes along the frame, bends, and pops free.

Peanut tumbles in over her and bangs off the ceiling.

The hatch motor lurches forward, then faults, the door hanging a hand's width open.

MOTOR FAULT - MANUAL

Ines grabs the brass dog-wheel on the hatch with her left hand. Pulls the door in on its hinge. Spins the wheel.

It fights her. She spins.

The dogs slide home, one after another. Clunk. Clunk. Clunk.

The vent valve is still open, still sucking. She pulls herself down to the console, finds the red ball-valve under the yellow-taped line, and snaps its safety wire with her thumb.

She throws it over.

Air roars in. The lock fills with white mist. Frost blooms on the hatch window. The pressure needle climbs off zero, shivers, keeps climbing.

MATEO (V.O.)
I'm reading pressure in Maya. Ines? I'm
reading pressure.

She doesn't answer.

Four psi. Eight. Fourteen point seven.

She twists the helmet ring. It sticks. She twists harder, and the helmet comes off with a hiss.

She gasps. Cold air. It fogs out of her mouth in clouds.

Peanut drifts down from the ceiling and taps against her knee.

She catches it by the drill-motor leg and holds it there while she breathes.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Ines backs through the hatch from Maya, towing Peanut by its drill-motor leg. She's down to the cooling garment, Tomas's vest zipped over it. Her right forearm is shoved inside the vest, fist tucked under the collar.

Behind her, through the open hatchway, her empty suit torso turns slowly in the Maya lock.

The workbench. Spools of solder wire velcroed to the rack. A roll of copper tape drifting on its tether. The amber CRT held to the bulkhead with silver tape.

She sets Peanut in the bench vise. Folds a towel around the chassis. Cranks the jaws with her left hand until they bite.

The access hatch. Faded silver marker: Peanut.

Four screws. Three come out. The fourth is stripped. She fits the tail of the brass wrench into the slot and leans on it. It turns.

Behind the panel, the data port. The pins are fused under a crust of white-green bloom.

She takes the standard cable off the bench and tries to seat it. It stops halfway. She pushes harder.

Stops herself.

She clips a multimeter probe to one pin, the other to chassis. The reading jumps. Settles. Jumps.

She looks at the red power lead clipped to the bench's 28-volt bus. Picks it up. Holds it over the port.

Doesn't touch.

Beside the bench, a laminated card velcroed to the wall: SOL WORKBENCH - HAZMAT STOWAGE. One corner has lifted. Pencil underneath.

She peels the card off.

Pencil on bare aluminum, gone silver with age. A connector face, twelve pins drawn and numbered in a quick slanted hand. Arrows. Above it: J4 - EL MANÍ.

Under pin 6, circled twice:

6 = TIERRA. NO LE METAS 28V, FLACA. LIMPIA PRIMERO.

Ines reads it. Her mouth moves on the last word.

She unclips the red lead and lets it float back to its hook.

A citric acid wipe from the dispenser. A fiberglass scratch pen from the drawer. She holds the pen in her teeth, wipes a pin, takes the pen out, scrubs. Blows the dust off. Next pin.

Pin 1. Pin 2. Bright copper coming up out of the green.

Pin 7 won't clean. She scrubs. Checks the wall. Seven is a dash. NC.

She leaves it.

She cuts six lengths of wire. Strips the ends with her teeth and spits the insulation into the air. It drifts off in little curls.

The iron. She tins the first lead one-handed, braces the wire against the pin with her thumb, touches the iron down. A small ball of solder smoke forms in front of her face and hangs there, going nowhere.

She waves it off. Next pin.

Her right hand comes out of the vest to steady a wire. It shakes. She puts it back.

Six bridges. She crimps them into an old legacy bus plug and checks each one against the pencil.

INES

Uno. Dos. Tres. Cinco... seis, tierra.
Ocho.

She seats the plug in the terminal header.

Nothing.

Then two small lights on Peanut's board. Green. Green.

The CRT scrolls:

DEVICE: T.VASQUEZ/PNT-01

AUD_UNCMP_01 - READ ONLY

COPY TO LOCAL? Y/N

She presses Y.

XFER 9600 BAUD - EST 00:34:10 0%

She watches it.

1%

She finds a silver pouch in the vest pocket, tears off a strip of dried mango with her teeth. Chews. Doesn't look away from the screen.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKSHOP - LATER

XFER 11%

The overhead lights dim, recover, dim. The CRT picture shrinks a hair and swells back.

A squelch tone from the bench speaker. A banner on the comm panel: GND PRIORITY - AUDIO OVERRIDE.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Station, Houston, on priority. Ines,
I've got you on the vest. You're in
Sol. That's good. Talk to me about the
shoulder.

She checks the bench voltage. 27.4.

INES
It's attached.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Copy. CRV is prepped and holding. I'd like you to start ingress. I'll read you the card. You don't have to do anything but listen.

She pushes a curl of floating insulation away from the plug.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines.

INES
Busy.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Busy with what.

Nothing. A click on the loop. Another. His pen cap.

12%

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We saw a current spike on the workbench bus. You've got something wired up down there.

INES
Bench diagnostics.

MARCUS (V.O.)
On the drone.

She doesn't answer.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay. Here's where we are. Elena is standing right here. She has a form. I've asked her not to sign it. I need you to help me with that.

INES
Then don't let her.

MARCUS (V.O.)
That's not-- it doesn't work like that. You know it doesn't.

The lights stutter. The CRT rolls a band of noise. She holds the terminal case flat with her left hand until the picture

settles.

13%

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Whatever you think is on that thing,
it's been in the sun eleven years. It's
cooked. It's a welding bot running a
bad loop. It's been banging on the hull
because nobody shut it off. That's all.

INES
It finished a seam this morning.

MARCUS (V.O.)
It's a loop!

Louder than he means it. She stops moving.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He's dead, Ines. Tomas is dead. I was
on the loop. I was on the loop that
day, I heard every-- I don't need--

He breaks off. Comes back lower. Harder.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That robot is scrap. It was scrap the
day he bolted a drill to it. And you're
sitting alone in a can with one arm,
talking to it, asking me to call that
fit for flight. You want to die up
there, say it. Say it out loud, so I
can put it in the--

She lifts the red guard over the primary transceiver switch
and pulls the switch down.

The speaker goes dead in the middle of the word.

Comm panel: A/G XCVR 1 - OFF.

Fans. The water pumps behind the wall, wet and slow.

She lowers the guard back over the switch. Presses it until
it clicks.

Peanut's green lights blink with the data.

14%

**INT. HOUSTON - MISSION CONTROL - FLIGHT DIRECTOR CONSOLE -
CONTINUOUS**

Marcus, headset on, pen cap in his fist.

MARCUS
--record. Station, Houston.

His loop panel: A/G 1 - NO CARRIER - CREW XCVR OFF.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Station, Houston, how do you read.

Red caution lines stack down both his screens. The console is lit by them. Two rows down, MATEO COLE sits very still, headset half off one ear.

DR. ELENA RUIZ stands at Marcus's shoulder with a tablet. BRADLEY THORNE behind her, lanyard pass spinning on one finger.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Station, Houston--

RUIZ
Marcus.

He takes his finger off the key.

RUIZ (CONT'D)
She killed voice in the middle of an airlock anomaly. She's got an injury she won't describe and a core temp I can't see because the suit's off. I can't hold her cleared on that.

MARCUS
One more pass. Give me one.

RUIZ
You had one.

She signs with the stylus. Turns the tablet toward him.

MEDICAL INCAPACITY DETERMINATION - VASQUEZ, I. - CREW
COMMAND AUTHORITY SUSPENDED. E. RUIZ, MD.

A beat later it lands on his console: CREW CMD AUTH -
REVOKED.

Thorne sets his own tablet on the desk, over Marcus's checklist.

THORNE

Rev C. Helm locked. Gyros to Ground.
Burn runs on our clock.

Marcus pulls his glasses down off his forehead and reads.

MARCUS

Your clock is twelve hours early.

THORNE

It's inside the corridor.

MARCUS

Barely.

THORNE

Inside.

Marcus scrolls. Stops.

MARCUS

This vents Maya.

THORNE

Maya's got a faulted outer hatch and
twenty kilos of unlogged mass rattling
around. Venting trims c.g. for the
burn. Your people wrote that step.

MARCUS

For an empty station.

THORNE

So where is she?

Marcus looks down the rows.

MARCUS

Cole. Crew location.

Mateo turns. Takes a second too long.

MATEO

Vest has her in Sol. At the bench.

MARCUS

Sol-Maya hatch.

MATEO

Open. It closes on the vent. Automatic.
It'll close.

MARCUS

She's not in the hatchway.

MATEO

No, sir. Not right now.

Thorne's watch ticks through a number. He glances at it, turns his wrist inward.

THORNE

Six CRV orders. Zero compliance.

Marcus's jaw sets. A small tremor at the hinge of it. He rests his chin on his hand to stop it.

Behind his monitor, the framed 2002 crew. A young man at the end of the row, silver marker behind his ear.

RUIZ

She's not in command anymore. You are.

He clicks the pen cap against his knuckle. Once. Twice.

THORNE

Flight?

A long moment.

MARCUS

Stand by for uplink.

Thorne nods to the operator at the next console, who keys it in. Mateo doesn't turn back to his screen.

UPLINK REV C - 100% - AVIONICS: GROUND

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Copy. Uplink complete.

On the attitude display, four gyro speeds tick upward under GND CMD. The station icon rolls a degree off its line. Then two. Then four.

Marcus reaches for the Apollo mug. It's empty. He holds it anyway.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

XFER 38%

A whine comes up through the bench, into the rack, into the tools on their tethers. Rising. Somewhere forward, the frame groans. A long, low complaint.

Ines looks up.

Through the small porthole over the bench, the sun slides in. A white bar sweeps across the vise, across Peanut, across her face. She shuts her eyes.

Then it's gone. The porthole goes black. Stars wheel past, too fast.

Sun. Black. Sun.

Bench voltage: 26.8. 25.1. 23.9.

LOW VOLT - BUS B

The CRT collapses to a bright line. Holds. Comes back.

38%. 38%. 38%.

She pushes off to the breaker panel. Grease pencil labels on the polycarbonate, some in her hand, some older. CABIN HTR 1. CABIN HTR 2.

She pulls both.

The heater fans wind down to nothing.

39%. 40%.

The sun sweeps through again. The bus sags. 22.6.

She looks through the open hatchway into Maya. On the far wall, the Maya utility panel glows steady green: 27.9.

She unhooks a coil of heavy cable from the rack, hauls herself through the hatch ring one-handed, and plugs one end into the Maya outlet. Pays the cable back through the ring, across the Sol floor, into the bench aux input.

The readout climbs. Steadies. 26.2.

Her breath comes out white.

Frost is starting along the edge of the CRT bezel, a thin gray fur. On the voltmeter glass. On the brass of the wrench at her thigh.

She jams her left hand into her armpit. Pulls it out to type. Puts it back.

51%

The rack creaks. The whine climbs a note. The porthole goes dark and stays dark longer. 24.0. The bar slows to a crawl.

She floats in front of the panel again. Her finger on the breaker marked CDRA - CO2 SCRUB. Under everything, the scrubber's steady beat.

She keeps her finger there.

She pulls it.

The beat stops.

Only the gyros now. And her breathing.

58%. 61%.

Frost creeps across the pencil on the bulkhead. Over the 6. Over TIERRA.

She reaches out and wipes it clear with her sleeve.

67%. 71%.

She pulls the vest collar up over her mouth and watches the numbers.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

83%

Ines hangs at the bench, left hand wedged in her armpit, eyes on the screen. Frost on her eyelashes.

A bang from Maya. Not loud. Deep. Through the frame and into her teeth.

Then the roar.

Everything loose goes past her toward the hatch. A grease pencil. Curls of insulation. The mango pouch lifts off the bench and shoots through the ring into Maya.

She grabs the bench rail. Her body swings toward the hatch, legs streaming out behind her.

The cable across the floor lifts and snaps taut, humming like a wire in wind.

Sol pressure: 14.7. 14.1. 13.4.

A klaxon. The hatch ring flashes amber: EMERG PRESS HATCH - AUTO CLOSE.

The hatch starts to swing.

INES

No. No, no--

She lets go of the rail and lunges for the cable. The air flattens her back against the bench. Her fingers close on nothing.

The hatch comes around on its hinge and slams into the ring.

On the cable.

A crack. Sparks spit off the cut copper at the seal. The dogs drive home and chew the cable in half.

The roar stops. Her ears ring.

12.9.

Bench voltage: 0.0.

The CRT picture shrinks toward a point. Peanut's two green lights stutter.

84%

She gets her hand on the jumper plug. Grips it. Her thumb braced against the header to pull.

She looks at Peanut. At the plug.

She doesn't pull.

The CRT goes black.

The amber number stays in the glass a moment, burned into the phosphor. 84. Fading.

Then nothing.

On Peanut's own small display, one last flicker off something inside it:

AUD_UNCMP_01

XFER ABORT

CRC ERR

It goes dark.

Ines still holds the plug.

The master alarm starts. Over the hatch, the life support panel runs down its column, line by line:

O2 FLOW 0.0

CO2 SCRUB OFF

CABIN TEMP 3C

BUS B 0.0

Red. All of it.

The alarm wails. She doesn't let go of the plug.

INT. STATION ONE - SOL MODULE - WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

The alarm wails. Ines's breath clouds in front of her face.

She finally opens her hand. Looks at the plug. Tapes it flat against Peanut's chassis with a strip of silver duct tape. Presses it down twice.

She unscrews the bench vise one-handed. Peanut floats free in its towel, the copper-wrapped drill leg turning slowly.

The emergency locker. She pulls a yellow oxygen mask and a small orange bottle, fits the mask over her nose and mouth, and yanks the strap tight with her teeth. The bottle gauge needle sits in the green.

She clips the bottle to her vest. Loops Peanut's recovery tether through the vest's armhole and knots it.

The hatch to Maya. The pressure gauge beside it:

MAYA 2.6 PSI

She looks at the bench behind her. The dead CRT. The pencil pinout on the bulkhead.

She fits the brass wrench onto the equalization valve and turns.

A shriek of escaping air. Her ears pop hard. Frost blooms across the hatch port.

She cranks the dog-wheel with her left hand. It fights her. She braces a knee and throws her weight into it. The hatch swings.

INT. STATION ONE - MAYA MODULE - CONTINUOUS

Black. Her flashlight finds pieces of it.

Cargo bags hanging in the dark. A cloud of ice crystals that sparkle and turn away from the beam. Her grease pencil. The

mango pouch, puffed tight as a balloon.

She pulls the Sol hatch shut behind her. Dogs it.

The only sound is her own breathing inside the mask. Fast. Wet.

Her knuckles are already swelling. She flexes them. Pulls herself forward along the handrail.

Peanut drifts behind her on the tether, then keeps coming, twenty kilos of it. It rams into the small of her back and shoves her into the wall. She grunts. Catches the rail. Stops it with her hip.

Something big turns in the beam ahead. Her EVA suit. Arms out, empty, the helmet ring cracked where it hit the hatch frame. It rolls past her like a person asleep.

She lets it go.

At the far end of the module: the Maya inner airlock hatch. The round scratched port. The brass dog-wheel.

She stops.

Her light rests on the wheel. Her left palm is flat against the rail, and the scar is dark red with cold.

Behind her, a loose cargo bag, knocked by the suit, tumbles out of the black. It hits her square in the face.

A crack. Her head snaps back.

The outer visor of the mask spider-webs. A thin whistle starts at the edge of the seal.

She slaps her palm over the crack. Holds it. The whistle drops. Doesn't stop.

She looks back. The Sol hatch, ten meters behind. Its little port still glows with the bench's emergency light.

She looks forward. Past the airlock hatch, the Cupola ring. Dark.

She takes her hand off the mask. Reaches up. Grabs the overhead conduit.

Pulls.

Hand over hand. Her right arm hangs, useless, elbow hooked through the tether to keep Peanut close. Past the airlock hatch. She doesn't look at the port. Her light does, for one

frame, and moves on.

The Cupola pressure hatch. She jams her boots against the frame and hits the equalization valve with the wrench.

On her vest, the bottle gauge ticks.

The needle clicks into the red.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

The hatch swings open. A gust of air punches past her into Maya, and she drags Peanut through against it and dogs the hatch shut.

CUPOLA 9.1 PSI

Sunlight. Hard white slabs of it through the seven windows, swinging across the cabin as the station rolls. Earth wheels past, blue, then the black, then blue again.

She peels the mask up off her mouth. Takes one breath of cabin air. Coughs. Pulls it back down.

The auxiliary terminal. Dark. She hits the power key. Hits it again.

Nothing.

She ties Peanut off to a handrail by the window. Rips open a floor panel with her fingers.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - LOWER AVIONICS CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

She goes in head first. Her flashlight on a snarl of cable bundles, half of them brown and bubbled at the jackets. The smell reaches her even through the mask. She turns her face away from it.

The aux bus panel. Three high-amp fuses:

AUX F1 AUX F2 AUX F3

All three melted into their holders. Black glass. Slumped metal.

She pries at F2 with a fingernail. It doesn't move. She digs in the spares pouch clipped inside the panel door. Pulls out a spare. Holds it against the holder.

Too short. Wrong series. She lets it float away.

She puts the flashlight in her teeth, under the mask edge. Looks at the two bare copper bus bars behind the fuses. The gap between them.

She unclips the brass wrench from her thigh.

Turns it in the light. The worn knurling. A small, rough T.V. scratched into the handle near the head. She holds it up to the gap.

The open jaw sits across both bars. Just.

She looks at her glove hand. No glove. Bare, swollen knuckles.

She backs out of the crawlspace.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

She unwraps the towel from Peanut. Tucks the chassis's loose drill leg in against its body so it won't swing. Touches the taped plug once.

Then she winds the towel around the wrench handle. Four turns. Tight.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - LOWER AVIONICS CRAWLSPACE - CONTINUOUS

She lines it up. Her hand is shaking from the cold. She breathes out. Waits. The shaking gets smaller.

She shoves the wrench home.

A bang. White arc, blinding, crawling off the jaw. Sparks spray up her sleeve. The cuff of her cooling garment smokes, then blackens. She doesn't let go.

The arc settles to a crackle. Then a hum.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

The auxiliary screens flicker. Roll. Come up gray, then blue.

The window beneath them is full of Earth.

In the corner of the main screen, a Houston window opens on its own. A clock:

DEORBIT BURN 1 - GND ARMED

T - 00:02:41

Then 40. Then 39.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

Ines hauls herself up out of the floor. Her sleeve is still smoking. She pats it out against her thigh.

She types. Fast, one-handed.

MANUAL ABORT - BURN 1

The screen answers:

CMD AUTH REVOKED - MED HOLD

She types it again. Same answer. She tries the helm page.

LOCAL INPUT INHIBIT - GND

INES

Okay.

She stops typing.

T - 00:01:52

She turns to Peanut. Pulls the tape off the plug. Finds the aux data port on the console, a legacy one, and seats the jumper plug. It clicks in on the second try.

The sunlight comes around the station and lands on Peanut's back.

The small solar cells glint. Inside the chassis, a relay clicks. The faint three-note chime.

Its little display flickers up:

AUD_UNCMP_01

PARTIAL 84%

Her breath fogs the cracked mask. She wipes it with her wrist. It doesn't help.

On the aux screen, a line of text: DEVICE T.VASQUEZ/PNT-01. RE-SCAN?

She reaches for the key.

T - 00:00:00

The whole station moans.

Not a sound so much as the frame itself: a deep grinding shudder through the handrails, the floor, her teeth. Everything loose in the Cupola starts moving. Slowly at first. Then not slowly.

A checklist card slaps the window. A pen. Her flashlight tumbles past her head.

The tether on Peanut's chassis goes taut. The knot at the handrail holds.

The handrail doesn't. Its bracket shears with a snap.

Peanut comes loose and goes, straight for the window frame, the bent welding arm first, the memory housing behind it.

The emergency seat is right there, beside the console. The straps float loose.

Ines goes the other way. She pushes off the console and gets herself between the robot and the frame.

Peanut hits her in the chest. The frame hits her in the back. The drill leg drives into her ribs.

She makes a sound through the mask. Short. Ugly.

The burn keeps pressing. It pins them both against the metal. She gets her left arm around Peanut's housing and holds it to her the way you'd hold a child on a bus that's braking. Her face is an inch from the window. Earth below. Too close. Filling it.

The shudder goes on.

Then it quits.

Silence. The loose things drift back out into the room.

She hangs there against the frame. Doesn't move. Breathes in small pieces.

The aux screen:

BURN 1 COMPLETE - PERIGEE 96 KM

ENTRY INTERFACE EST 00:41:00

Outside, along the leading edge of the solar array, the faintest orange shimmer. There, and gone, and there.

She looks down at Peanut in her arm.

The display flickers.

MEM CORE FAULT

AUD_UNCMP_01

SECTOR MAP LOST - UNRECOVERABLE

She reads it. Presses the scarred palm flat over the little screen, as if to keep it warm.

It keeps glowing through her fingers.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - TELEMETRY BACK ROOM - SAME

A windowless room off the main floor. Four simulation screens. The biggest one shows the South Pacific, a neat green box over Point Nemo, and a white debris ellipse sitting inside it.

FOOTPRINT PREDICT - NOMINAL

MATEO COLE is not looking at it. He's hunched over his pocket notebook, a wooden coffee stirrer between his teeth, chewed flat. He copies numbers off the raw telemetry feed in pencil.

ACHIEVED DV. ATT ERR AT IGNITION. ATT ERR AT CUTOFF.

He does the subtraction by hand. Stops. Does it again.

He pulls up the burn attitude log. The station's roll trace: a lazy sine wave that never flattens.

MATEO
(to himself)
Eleven degrees. It burned sideways.

He flips to a clean page. Draws the ground track. Pencil squeaking. He writes a latitude, crosses it out, writes another one.

38.2 S / 73.6 W

He puts the pencil down. Picks it back up. Looks at the big screen. The white ellipse, safe in its green box.

He clicks into the sim settings.

ATTITUDE SOURCE: COMMANDED

Not actual. He sits back.

On the next screen, a live feed from the Cupola camera: a gray still, the frame jerking once. Something pale and small against a window.

He stands up so fast the chair rolls into the wall.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Quiet, busy. Headsets. The big front wall shows Station One's track bending down.

MARCUS VANCE at the flight director console, glasses pushed up, pen cap clicking against his knuckles. BRADLEY THORNE beside him, leaning on the console, watching his smartwatch. The risk ticker on it has turned green.

THORNE

Burn booked. Corridor green.
Underwriters tonight.

MARCUS

We tell them after entry.

Mateo stops two steps from them. The notebook in his hand.

MATEO

Mr. Vance.

Marcus doesn't turn.

MARCUS

Not now, Mateo.

MATEO

The sim's running commanded attitude.
Not actual. She was rolling during the
burn, eleven degrees off at cutoff,
achieved delta-v is seventy-one percent
of--

THORNE

Who is this?

MATEO

--of plan, so perigee's high, entry's
late, the footprint walks northeast. A
lot.

Marcus finally looks at him.

MARCUS

The model says Nemo.

MATEO

The model's wrong.

It comes out louder than he meant. A couple of heads turn at nearby consoles.

Mateo swallows. Takes the stirrer out of his mouth. Then he steps forward and puts the notebook down on the console, on top of Marcus's checklist, open to the page.

The latitude, circled twice.

MATEO (CONT'D)

That's the heavy stuff. The truss core.
The docking ring. That's Arauco. That's
the coast.

Marcus pulls his glasses down. Reads. Turns the page back.
Reads the subtraction. Turns it forward.

The pen stops clicking.

THORNE

It's a kid's notebook, Marcus.

MARCUS

(still reading)
Did you check his math?

THORNE

I don't need to check his math. We have
a model.

Marcus sets the pen down on the notebook. His jaw moves. A
small tremor at the hinge.

He looks at the front wall. At the track bending down toward
South America.

He looks at Thorne. At the lanyard pass looped around
Thorne's finger. At Thorne's hand, flat on the console,
beside the command terminal.

MARCUS

Bradley. Take your hand off my
terminal.

Thorne doesn't move.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Now.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - NIGHT

Dull orange light swells and fades along the leading edge of
the solar array outside. Glow, then dark, then glow.

The aux screens hum. Below them the crawlspace panel hangs
open. The brass wrench sits jammed across the bus bars,
towel around the handle.

INES, yellow mask on, outer visor spider-webbed, the plastic fogging with every breath. Right forearm tucked inside the green fleece vest. She pins Peanut against her thigh with one knee.

Peanut's display: MEM CORE FAULT / SECTOR MAP LOST - UNRECOVERABLE.

She works a jeweler's flathead under the access hatch, the one with PEANUT in faded silver marker. Left hand only. The screw head strips. She moves to the next one.

The hatch lifts. Inside, a tidy board, every chip labeled in silver marker. A drive the size of a matchbook sits in a sprung clip, a strip of kapton tape across it.

On the tape, in Tomas's handwriting: NO.

She peels the tape off. Presses the clip. It sticks. She presses harder. The drive pops loose and tumbles. She snatches it out of the air.

She seats it in a legacy adapter, pushes it into the aux console.

MOUNTING... MOUNTED - DEGRADED

One file. AUD_UNCMP_01. A progress line that stops at 84%.

She checks the O2 gauge on the orange bottle. Red. She turns the aux speaker all the way up.

She presses PLAY.

Static. Loud, tearing, flat. She flinches and turns it down.

The waveform on screen is a solid block, edge to edge. She drags the cursor forward. Static. Forward again. Static.

The hull groans, long and low, somewhere behind her.

She hooks a finger under the mask strap and pulls the edge off her ear. Puts her ear to the speaker grille. Listens.

Static.

She snaps the mask back. Opens the console's noise reduction. NR 1. The hiss thins. NR 2. Thinner. NR 3. Almost nothing. A clean, empty hush.

The counter runs out. 00:00.

She plays it again. The same.

INES

Tomas.

The speaker hisses.

INES (CONT'D)

Háblame.

Nothing.

She pushes off the console, too hard, and hits the window. Her mask knocks the glass. She stays there. Forehead to the pane. Orange light slides across her face.

Her left palm goes flat on the glass. The thick white scar, pink now.

Her shoulders start. Then all of her. It hurts her ribs and she holds them with the bad arm and keeps crying anyway, the mask fogging solid.

INES (CONT'D)

Perdón. Perdóname, Tomi. I did the checklist. I did it --

She can't finish it. The static loops behind her. The glow outside gets brighter and doesn't fade this time.

INES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

A small tone from the console.

She doesn't turn.

The tone again.

On the screen, over the dead waveform:

INCOMING - S-BAND DATA - MAINT CH 7

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

The cabin trembles. A steady vibration through the frame, rising. A loose cargo strap turns slowly in the air.

Ines drifts back to the console. Wipes at the visor with her sleeve. It's the outside she's wiping. The fog is on the inside.

On the screen, a file and a text block:

FROM: M.COLE
 FILT_PNT01.scr NOISE FLOOR = SUIT FAN
 212 HZ + HARMONICS, BUS HASH 400 HZ-2
 KHZ. NOTCHED BOTH. VOICE BAND SHOULD BE
 UNDER IT. DON'T USE CONSOLE NR, IT
 CLIPS SPEECH. -M

She reads it twice. Her finger over the key.

The hull groans. Closer this time.

She runs it.

FILTERING... 12%... 31%...

The waveform starts to change. The solid block splits.
 Underneath, a slow pattern. Rise and fall. Rise and fall.

Breathing.

100%.

She presses PLAY.

A hiss, softer. The rhythmic push of a suit regulator. A
 breath close to the mic.

TOMAS (V.O.)
 (filtered, thin)
 -- aca. Flaca. ¿Me escuchai?

Ines stops breathing.

TOMAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Okay. Okay. I can see you. I can see
 your hand on the wheel. Leave it. Latch
 it, Flaca. Keep the door latched.

A scrape. Glove on metal.

TOMAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 No, listen. Don't open it for me. The
 outer seal's gone, the whole seam, it's
 not gonna hold. You open that and it's
 all of you.

Ines's left hand closes. The scar whitens.

TOMAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 You did right. You hear me? Hiciste
 bien. Look at me. Calm. First time in
 my life.

The regulator hisses. His breath is slower now.

TOMAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Bring them home. All four. I'm sending
 El Maní out. He'll finish the seam.
 He's better at it than me anyway, the
 little --

A cough. A long breath.

TOMAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 He'll knock. Three. So you know it's
 me. And then you go home. Vive, ¿ya?
 Live, Ines. That's the job.

Breathing. Hiss.

Then nothing. The line on the screen hits 84% and stops.

Ines doesn't move.

Then the air comes out of her all at once. A sound more than
 a breath. The mask fogs white.

Her hand goes to the replay key. Hovers.

She doesn't press it.

She lets go of the handrail she's been gripping since the
 static started. Drifts a few inches off the console. Nothing
 holding her. Her chest going in and out.

She laughs once. It breaks in the middle and she covers the
 mask with her hand.

The hull groans, a deep bending sound. Outside, the orange
 glow crawls from the array onto the window frame itself.

INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Thorne lifts his hand off the command terminal. Slowly. Like
 it was his idea.

On a side screen, a line blinks amber:

MAINT CH 7 - OUTBOUND DATA - 212 KB - BACK ROOM 2

Thorne sees it before Marcus does.

THORNE
 Who's on maintenance seven?

A COMM CONTROLLER half-turns in her seat.

COMM
 That's -- back room, sir.

Marcus looks at the empty spot where Mateo was standing. The notebook is still on his console.

Thorne waves at the SECURITY OFFICER by the door.

THORNE

Back room two. Cole. Badge him out.

The officer goes.

MARCUS

Bradley.

THORNE

He's uplinking to a medically incapacitated crew member on a channel nobody records. That's a firing, Marcus. That's yours too, if you sit there.

The floor has gone quiet. Nobody typing.

Marcus's jaw moves. The tremor.

Marcus's eyes go past Thorne to the framed 2002 crew. The young man at the end of the row, grinning, silver marker behind his ear. Thorne follows Marcus's look despite himself. The carbon-fiber pass stops dead. He faces the command terminal again.

Marcus reaches into his collar. Pulls out a lanyard. On it, a heavy steel key with a worn orange tag: FD MASTER.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Don't.

Marcus pushes back his chair, rolls to the primary override terminal. Fits the key. Turns it.

FD MASTER - KEY AUTH ACCEPTED

THORNE (CONT'D)

Marcus. The consortium will have you in a deposition by Friday. You will never sit in this room again.

Marcus types. Two fingers.

REVOKE GND CMD - USER: B.THORNE / CORP - CONFIRM?

MARCUS

Negative on that request.

He hits confirm.

Thorne's smartwatch buzzes against the console. He looks at it. The ticker's still green. Under it, a new line: CMD CLEARANCE REVOKED.

Marcus picks up his desk phone.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Security, this is Flight. Leave Cole where he is.

He hangs up. Looks at Comm.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Give me S-band two, open voice. And the aux data path into the Cupola.

COMM
Flight, she's under med hold.

MARCUS
I know what she's under. Log it. Flight director override of medical hold. My name.

Comm hesitates. Types.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Uplink local command keys. Full helm, gyro, trim. Everything Rev C took. Give it back.

COMM
Copy. Stand by for uplink.

Thorne takes his pass off his finger. Stands there holding it.

The bar on Comm's screen fills. Slow.

Marcus keys his headset.

MARCUS
Station, Houston, S-band two. Ines. It's Marcus.

No answer. Just carrier.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
You have the helm. All of it. Burn, trim, CRV. Mateo's numbers put the core on the Arauco coast. We can't fix it from down here. You can.

COMM

Uplink complete. Keys accepted onboard.

Marcus lets go of the headset switch. Reaches for the Apollo mug. His hand shakes and the cold decaf slops over the rim. He sets it down.

He doesn't wipe it up.

INT. STATION ONE - CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS

Gold light now, pouring through the windows, flickering at the edges.

The aux screen rewrites itself line by line:

LOCAL CMD - ENABLED

MANUAL TRIM AUTH - AVAILABLE
CRV-3 HATCH - MANUAL - UNLOCKED

Marcus's voice, small and scratchy through the aux speaker:

MARCUS (V.O.)
-- can. Station, Houston. Do you copy?

Ines looks at the speaker. Doesn't answer.

She turns to the power panel. AUX GEN 1. She flips it. A fan somewhere behind the panels spins down and stops.

AUX GEN 2. Off. A pump gives one wet burp and goes quiet.

AUX GEN 3. Her finger rests on it. Off.

Only the aux screens and the rumble of the hull now.

She ejects the drive from the console. Holds it a second between two fingers. Unzips the chest pocket of her flightsuit under the vest, one-handed, clumsy. Pushes the drive in. Zips it. Pats it flat.

Peanut floats beside the console. Access hatch open, board empty where the drive was. The welding arm bent from the hatch frame. The drill-motor leg in its copper wire.

She takes the chassis in her good arm. Looks toward the vestibule hatch. Looks back at Peanut.

She pulls a ratchet strap off a cargo bag. Hooks Peanut against the Cupola window frame, lens toward the glass, toward the glow. She cinches the strap. Her right hand tries to help and can't. She does it with the left and her teeth.

Peanut sits there. Gold light on the scorched shell.

She puts two fingers on the faded silver PEANUT. Leaves them there.

Then she folds her fingers into a knuckle and knocks on the hatch.

Once. Twice. The third a little heavier.

She waits a second. Nothing knocks back.

She pulls herself down to the crawlspace. Grips the towel-wrapped wrench handle. Yanks.

A crack of blue spark. Every aux screen goes black. Emergency strip lighting, dim green.

She clips the wrench back on her thigh lanyard. Her thumb finds T.V. on the handle.

INT. STATION ONE - CRV DOCKING VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

Narrow. Gold light through a tiny port. The CRV-3 hatch: round, heavy, a brass manual dog-wheel set in the center.

The wheel is already backed off. Unlocked. The hatch hangs open an inch.

Ines stops in front of it. Her left palm, pink. She pushes the hatch wide with her forearm, not her hand.

She looks back once. Down the vestibule, through the Cupola hatch. The strap. The little shape against the window.

She goes in.

INT. CRV-3 - CONTINUOUS

Cramped. Three couches. Clean, never used. Displays wake as she pulls herself into the commander's couch: CRV-3 / BUS A NOMINAL / CABIN 14.7 PSI.

She gets the lap belt on. The right shoulder strap takes her three tries. She makes a sound through her teeth and gets it.

She unhooks the yellow mask. Pulls it off. Breathes. Coughs. Breathes again.

The orange bottle drifts off, empty.

She puts her hand on the chest pocket.

The center display flashes red.

DEBRIS FOOTPRINT - STATION CORE

38.2 S / 73.6 W

IMPACT T+15:00

TRIM REQUIRED - STATION DOCKED

It beeps. And beeps. Ines looks at it.

INT. CRV-3 - CONTINUOUS

The beeping. A low buzz runs through the couch frame, into her back, into her teeth.

Ines reaches left. A guarded switch on the side panel: SEP / UNDOCK. She thumbs the cover up.

Stops.

On the center display, under the numbers, a small map. A thin gray line of coast. A red ellipse sitting on it.

She looks at the ellipse.

She lets the cover drop shut.

She taps through pages. STATION RCS - AUX - MANUAL. A hand controller folds out of the right couch arm.

Her right hand goes to it. The fingers close halfway and won't hold. The arm slides off into her lap.

She unlatches the controller mount and drags it across her body to the left. The cable pulls tight. It reaches. Just.

The overhead speaker crackles. S-band.

MARCUS (V.O.)

CRV-3, Houston. We show you still
hard-docked. Sep window is about three
minutes. Recommend immediate
separation.

She twists the controller.

A deep thud comes through the docking ring behind her head. The capsule lurches. Something rattles in a stowage locker.

The numbers flicker.

38.9 S / 76.2 W

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ines. Separate now. That's a --

MATEO (V.O.)
Flight, she's trimming. Footprint's
moving.

Nothing on the loop for a second. Just hiss.

She fires again, longer. The whole stack groans around her.
The ellipse slides off the gray line. Half on blue now.

40.3 S / 81.0 W

The tiny viewport has gone from gold to orange. A flutter of
light licks at its edge.

A new line on the display, amber:

DOCK RING TEMP 640 C

AUTO SEP AT 900 C

She pulses. Pulses. Deceleration presses her down into the
couch. Her left forearm shakes on the grip.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Ring's at six-eighty. At nine hundred
the vehicle separates on its own. Ines.
Let it take you. You don't have to --

She lets go of the controller long enough to key the mic.
Her voice comes out cracked. First word in hours.

INES
Houston, CRV. Negative.

Hiss.

INES (CONT'D)
My display lags. I need numbers.

A long beat on the loop. Somebody breathing close to a
headset.

MARCUS (V.O.)
... Copy. Mateo. Give her numbers.

MATEO (V.O.)
Okay. Okay. Yaw left, two degrees. Long
pulse. Longer than that.

She holds it. The thud behind her becomes a steady shove.

DOCK RING TEMP 810 C

MATEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Forty-four south, one-oh-five west.
 Still short. Same again.

The AUTO SEP line starts blinking. 850. 870.

She finds the guarded switch beside it. Flips the cover.
 AUTO SEP - INHIBIT. Presses it.

The alarm changes pitch. Sharper. Faster.

CAUTION - AUTO SEP INHIBITED - CREW OVERRIDE

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Ines --

She fires. Holds. The buzz in the frame turns into a shake
 that blurs the displays. Her teeth click together. She
 clamps her jaw and keeps the controller over.

The numbers roll.

47.1 S / 118.4 W

48.6 S / 122.9 W

MATEO (V.O.)
 That's in. That's in the box. Ines,
 you're in the box.

The ellipse turns green. Nothing under it but blue.

IMPACT ZONE - SPOUA - 48.9 S / 123.4 W - NOMINAL

She lets go of the controller. Her fingers stay curled the
 shape of the grip. She uncurls them one at a time.

INES
 Trim complete.

She reaches up and lifts one more cover. PYRO ARM. Presses.

SEP BOLTS - ARMED

A second line, red, beneath it:

SEP INHIBIT - HATCH NOT SECURE

She turns her head.

The hatch hangs open an inch. Orange light seeps around its
 rim.

INT. CRV-3 - CONTINUOUS

She pops the lap belt. The shoulder strap she has to shrug off, left side first, then the right, slow, a hiss through her teeth.

The deceleration pulls her toward the aft bulkhead. She hooks a foot under the couch and hauls herself to the hatch.

She pushes it closed with her forearm. It seats against the ring with a dull clank.

The round port in its center frames the vestibule. Beyond that, the Cupola hatch. Beyond that, orange glare. A small dark shape strapped against the window.

The glass hums against her cheek.

She draws back.

The brass dog-wheel sits in front of her face. Six spokes. Scuffed where someone's gloves turned it once on the ground, in a test, and never again.

Her left hand comes up. The scar across the palm is flushed dark pink.

It stops an inch from the brass. Opens. Closes.

On the speaker, only hiss. Then:

MATEO (V.O.)
In-- Ines? Ring's at nine-forty.

She puts her palm on the wheel.

The brass is warm. The scar lies right along the spoke.

She turns. The first quarter won't go. She braces her knee on the hatch ring, throws her shoulder into it. Her ribs catch. She makes a short sound and keeps pushing.

The wheel gives. Then it runs.

She spins it hand over hand, left hand only, grabbing spoke after spoke. Out at the rim, the dogs slide into their keepers.

Thunk. Thunk. Thunk.

The wheel slams against its stop.

She gives it one more hard pull. It doesn't move.

The display behind her chimes. Softer than all the alarms.

HATCH SECURE

She takes her hand off the wheel. Looks at the palm. Red. A gray smear of brass across the scar.

She wipes it once on the vest.

She doesn't look through the port.

She pulls herself back down into the couch. Lap belt. The shoulder straps take two tries this time.

The red line on the display is gone.

INES

Houston, CRV. Hatch dogged. Separating.

Hiss. Then:

MARCUS (V.O.)

Copy, CRV. Go ahead, Ines.

She lifts the cover on SEP / UNDOCK.

Presses it.

BANG.

EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE - CONTINUOUS

A ring of white flashes at the docking collar. CRV-3 kicks free.

Station One tumbles away from it, slow and huge, wrapped in an orange skin of fire. The solar arrays trail behind it, flapping.

INT. CRV-3 - CONTINUOUS

She's thrown sideways against the straps. The capsule yaws, rights itself. Small thrusters pop outside.

The speaker gives one burst of Mateo's voice, chopped to nothing.

COMM - LOS - PLASMA

Then only the roar.

A G readout climbs in the corner of the display. 2.8. 3.4.

Her head wants to go back into the headrest. She turns it toward the viewport instead. It takes everything in her neck.

THROUGH THE VIEWPORT

Station One, off to the side and falling behind. A long bright shape.

One of the arrays tears off. It flares white and folds away into a spray of sparks.

The truss glows through its skin. Then the second array goes.

BACK TO SCENE

4.6. Her breath comes in short pieces. Her left hand grips the couch arm. The right lies in her lap, shaking with the vibration.

She squints. Doesn't close her eyes.

THROUGH THE VIEWPORT

The station comes apart.

Not all at once. A piece, then two. Then it is a bright head with a dozen tails behind it, orange and violet, spreading across the dark blue.

Somewhere at the front of it, the Cupola. A hard white bead.

The streaks fan wider. Thin out. One goes dark. Another.

BACK TO SCENE

5.9. Her vision grays at the edges. Her lips pull back from her teeth.

She keeps her eyes on the glass.

THROUGH THE VIEWPORT

The white bead flickers.

Then goes out.

A few last sparks, drifting. Gone.

The capsule's own fire washes up over the viewport, orange, and there is nothing to see.

BACK TO SCENE

6.2. She lies there and breathes what she can.

The roar thins. The shake eases. The G number drops. 4.1.
2.7.

The orange at the viewport fades to pale blue sky.

She lets her head fall back.

A crack from above --

The drogues. The capsule jerks upward so hard the straps
bite. She cries out.

Then swinging. Long, slow, swinging.

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - DAY

Three striped main chutes over a burned black capsule.
Nothing else to the horizon in any direction.

It hits. A white burst of water. The chutes crumple down
onto the sea beside it.

INT. CRV-3 - DAY

The capsule rolls. Settles. Rolls back.

Water slaps the hull. A slow rise. A slow fall.

Ines lies in the couch. Her eyes open.

She listens.

No fans. No pump. No scrubber. Water against the outside.
Her own breathing.

She holds her breath. Listens harder.

Nothing hums.

She breathes out.

She runs her left hand over herself, slow. Collarbone. Ribs,
where she stops and winces. The right shoulder. She tries to
lift the arm. It comes up a few inches and she lets it down.

Chest pocket. The drive is a small hard square under the
cloth. She presses it flat.

The speaker clicks.

MARCUS (V.O.)
CRV-3, Houston. How do you read.

She finds the mic key.

INES
Loud and clear.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Copy. Tracking confirms station debris
down inside the box. Nothing outside
it. No -- no reports of anything.
Recovery's about twelve minutes out.
Stay in the vehicle.

She doesn't answer. The capsule rises on a swell. Falls.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - HOUSTON - DAY

Marcus sits back. He takes off his headset and sets it next to the Apollo 11 mug. The decaf in it has a skin.

He looks at the framed launch-crew photo behind his monitor. The young man with the silver marker behind his ear.

He clicks the pen cap once against his knuckle. Puts the pen down.

Through the glass of Back Room 2, Mateo has both hands over his face. His shoulders are shaking. It could be laughing.

INT. CRV-3 - DAY

Ines unbuckles. Slow. The straps fall away.

She pulls herself up in the sudden weight of her own body. Her legs don't work right. She gets a knee under her. Then the other.

The side hatch. A handle and a short lever lock, stenciled PUSH - ROTATE - OUT.

She puts her left hand on it. Rests there a moment.

She rotates it. It grinds. She leans into it.

The seal breaks with a soft sigh.

She pushes. A bright line of daylight. Then a wider one.

Air comes in. Cold. Wet. Salt.

She breathes it. Coughs. Breathes it again, deeper, with her eyes shut.

A helicopter's rotors, far off, getting closer.

Then -- knocks on the hull. Four or five, quick, careless. A gloved fist.

RECOVERY DIVER (O.S.)
Hello in there! You okay?

She opens her eyes. Almost laughs. It hurts her ribs.

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC - CRV-3 - DAY

An inflated orange collar rings the capsule now. A RECOVERY DIVER in a black wetsuit crouches on it, mask pushed up on his forehead, hand out.

Ines comes out through the hatch on her knees.

The sun hits her. She throws her left forearm over her eyes.

RECOVERY DIVER
Easy. Easy. Can you stand?

INES
Give me a second.

She stays on her knees on the collar. The sea lifts it, lowers it. She lowers the arm a little at a time.

Blue. Blue water, blue sky, no edge between them.

A helicopter circles wide, low. Its downwash chops the water a hundred yards off.

She looks up.

High up, very faint, a white trail. Long and thin. Already breaking into pieces. The wind up there pulling it apart.

She watches it.

The diver follows her look. Sees nothing much. Waits.

The trail thins to a smudge. Then there's just sky.

RECOVERY DIVER
Anything in there you need us to grab?

Her hand goes to her chest pocket. Presses.

INES
No. I have it.

She looks down at her thigh. The brass torque wrench on its short lanyard. Salt water already beading on it.

She unclips it. Holds it in her left hand. Heavy. Her thumb finds T.V. on the handle. Moves across the letters.

She holds it out over the side of the collar. Over the water.

The diver watches. Doesn't say anything.

She opens her hand.

The wrench drops in without much of a splash. Brass flashes once in the blue, turning. Then smaller. Then gone.

She keeps looking at the place where it went in.

A swell slaps the collar. Spray comes up over her face.

She doesn't wipe it off. She smiles. Just barely at first.

She tastes the salt on her lips.

RECOVERY DIVER

Ma'am?

She holds her left hand out to him.

INES

Okay.

He takes it. She gets one foot under her. Then the other.

She stands there in the sun, rocking with the sea, and breathes.