

SHADOW WAR

Pilot
"Dreamland"

Written by
Peter Marshall Smith

"Hide the truth and it becomes your enemy.
Disclose the truth and it becomes your weapon."

- Col. Philip J. Corso, *The Day After Roswell*, 1997

TITLE CREDITS.

MUSIC: Ancient Names Pt. I by Lord Huron / Time Loop (PLAY)

FADE IN:

OPEN ON EARTH floating in a sea of darkness with a swarm of orbiting satellites. Only half of the globe is illuminated, with its swirling clouds and oceanic expanses bathed in blue.

On the night side, dots of artificial light glimmer like constellations in reverse. A vast shadow drifts across them.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

American and Texas flags fly side by side against a gray sky. Guard towers punctuate the horizon. A compound of one-story brick buildings are surrounded by double rows of ten-foot chain-link fence topped with coils of electrified razor-wire.

UNIFORMED GUARDS watch female INMATES marching single file.

A brick sign: TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, GATESVILLE.

INT. PRISON SHOWERS - DAY

BELLADONNA "BELLA" SYKES, 46, stands alone in a communal shower. The spray soaks her long, dark hair with its Mallen streak. Water cascades down her back which is adorned with intricate Naval tattoos. Her eyes are shut tight, but her face is hard, hiding an edge incarceration has not dulled.

INT. PRISON, CELL - DAY

A heavyweight inmate sits in her cell. TOA-TOA, 33, Samoan, 6'0", cornrows, a shot-caller sentenced to death for murder.

The cell gate BUZZES and CREAKS open.

Toa-Toa slowly rises from her bunk. Deliberate and predatory. She lifts her thin mattress to retrieve a makeshift shiv.

INT. PRISON, CELL BLOCK - CONTINUOUS

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER (C.O.) JONES stands his post by leaning on a wall. A wiry female PRISONER approaches. She passes him a roll of cash on the sly. He palms it and strolls away. The Prisoner pivots and walks casually down the cell block.

Toa-Toa strides in the opposite direction. The Prisoner nods as she passes by. Toa-Toa nods back, and keeps walking to...

THE SHOWERS

Bella senses movement behind her. Her eyes shift right. She reaches up for her TOWEL, pulling it down off the rack.

BELLA

Ya reckon there's life after death?

Toa-Toa steps up, towering over Bella, armed with the shiv. Bella turns to face her, showing no fear. A tense silence.

BELLA

Fuck around n' find out.

Toa-Toa charges, but Bella SNAPS the wet towel with precision across the convict's eyes, momentarily blinding her.

Bella whips the towel backwards, wrapping it around her own left forearm. She lunges forward with a right-handed upward flat palm strike, breaking Toa-Toa's nose.

Blood pours down Toa-Toa's face. She stabs the shiv downward in a high arc. Bella blocks with her left arm. The blade cuts deep into the towel. They lock up, grappling for control.

Toa-Toa shoves Bella, SLAMMING her back against the wall.

Toa-Toa hooks Bella in the jaw, whipping her around, then drives her face-first into the concrete wall with an armbar.

Bella pushes off the wall and head-butts Toa-Toa in the face.

Bella then grabs her arm, pulls her in, and drops into a sweeping hip throw. They CRASH down together, Bella on top.

Bella rabbit PUNCHES Toa-Toa twice in the face. Teeth fly.

Bella pulls the shiv out of her own arm and holds it high.

The blade drips blood. Toa-Toa's eyes go wide with fear.

Bella strikes downward, and savagely STABS again and again.

Blood splatters her face and body, pooling in the drain.

She stops to catch her breath, unleashing a primal SCREAM.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL - PARIS, FRANCE - DAY

Sunlight fractures through Notre Dame's North Rose Window, silhouetting two figures in the center of the concentric rings of stained glass panels that radiate outward like the petals of a celestial flower.

The two Caucasian men are GABRIEL BISHOP, 57, a Machiavellian spymaster, and his aide-de-camp, BENEDICT TURNER, 50, a fastidious spook with a sadistic impulse to punish.

BISHOP

The General sends his regards.

TURNER

(hand to heart)

Relay my reply: The honor is mine,
for to me thou gavest many gates.

BISHOP

From mouth to ear. He looks forward
to hearing your after-action report.

TURNER

Unfortunately, the asset failed to
neutralize the threat, sir.

BISHOP

You mean... you failed. Accept
responsibility for the ops you run.

TURNER

You're right. I failed. Forgive me.
(bows his head)
We had a contingency. We sprayed
her meals, but she refused to eat.

BISHOP

That course of action was not
approved by the Committee.

TURNER

With all due respect, sir, there
was no time to seek approval or
debate tactics. And the loss of
life is considered acceptable if
conditions or delays to preserve
that life in any way compromise the
security of The Pro--

BISHOP

(raises a hand)

Noted. But don't quote the manual
to me.

The BELLS of cathedral strike three times.

INT. PRISON, SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL - DAY

Light streams through the bars of Bella's cell. She's seated on her bed. Her forearm is bandaged. In the corner is an uneaten tray of food. She stares at a PHOTO of her daughter.

INT. ANNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Bella reads a bedtime story to ANNABELLA "ANNIE" SYKES, 7, radiant, non-speaking, motor-limited. Her bright eyes track everything, understanding far more than she can express.

BELLA

"It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," the Queen remarked. "What sort of things do you remember best?" Alice ventured to ask. "Oh, things that happened the week after next," the Queen replied in a careless tone. "For instance, now," she went on, sticking a large piece of plaster on her finger as she spoke, "there's the King's Messenger. He's in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all."

Annie laughs, delighted and unguarded.

BELLA

"Suppose he never commits the crime?" said Alice. "That would be all the better, wouldn't it?" the Queen said.*

INT. PRISON, SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL - DAY

A warning bell RINGS, echoing down the cellblock. Bella's cell door slides open. She stands and tucks the photo away.

C.O. Jones is present to accompany the prisoner for transport. He looks at her, then at the tray, and back to her.

C.O. JONES

Roll it up, Sykes. Time to go.

* - "Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There" by Lewis Carroll, 1871

Bella steps out of her cell and looks at the C.O. sideways.

C.O. JONES
Don't cut your eyes at me, convict.

INT. CELLBLOCK - DAY

C.O. Jones escorts Bella through a series of locked gates.

C.O. JONES
You're lucky it was self-defense.

BELLA
Ya know... ya got horns holdin' up
that halo... but yer the lucky one.

C.O. JONES
Why's that?

BELLA
Cuz I ain't in a horn-tossin' mood.

He bristles. She walks on with resolute purpose.

INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - DAY

C.O. Jones and Bella walk down a row of cells. She keeps her eyes front amid HOLLERING, CATCALLS and CLANGING on the bars.

TURNER (V.O.)
Sometimes one must simply act, sir.

BISHOP (V.O.)
Actions have consequences, Mr.
Turner. Consequences that need to
be controlled.

INT. NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL - DAY

Bishop and Turner stand on the organ balcony near the front of Notre Dame Cathedral.

TURNER
We can't control her, sir. There's
no way of barring her testimony.

BISHOP
No one will believe her anyway.

TURNER
True. That would require courage.

Turner looks down at the TOURISTS milling below with distain.

TURNER (CONT'D)

And the profane are nothing but
complacent cowards.

BISHOP

Who's the judge?

TURNER

Roberts. Not one of ours. Refused
all efforts to suborn him. Beyond
reproach. Also, his son reported a
CE4 in 1987, so the judge is an
advocate for disclosure.

Bishop looks at Turner with an eyebrow raised.

BISHOP

Hm. A synchronicity in her favor.

EXT. PRISON, MAIN GATE - DAY

A sally-port in the main gate opens. C.O. Jones follows
Bella, who is cuffed and shackled at the waist and ankles.
She shuffles toward the back of a TRANSPORT VAN.

INT./EXT. TRANSPORT VAN, STATIONARY - DAY

Bella climbs into the van and sits on a bench inside a cage.
C.O. Jones locks the interior cage, while a U.S. MARSHAL
stands outside the open doors of the van, holding a shotgun.

C.O. JONES

We'll keep the lights on for ya.

BELLA

Don't bother. I won't be back.

Bella looks at him with a steady gaze. He SLAMS the doors
shut. A decal on the doors read: TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

INT. NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL, ORGAN BALCONY - DAY (INTERCUT)

Bishop and Turner watch the crowd milling about below.

BISHOP

Where's her family?

TURNER

Her mother and daughter are in
hiding. We don't know where. Yet.

BISHOP

Find them. We need leverage.

TURNER

Yes, sir. All assets are engaged,
including the Sisters.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The road cuts through a landscape of barren desert flatland.
The TRANSPORT VAN appears on the horizon.

BISHOP (V.O.)

If she has nothing to lose, she has
nothing to fear.

INT. TRANSPORT VAN, MOVING - DAY

Bella stares at the highway receding beyond the rear window.
She rocks back and forth with the motion of the van.

TURNER (V.O.)

She fears God.

EXT. BEXAR COUNTY COURTHOUSE - SAN ANTONIO, TX - DAY

Outside the Bexar County Courthouse stands a twelve foot
cast-iron fountain crowned by Themis, or Lady Justice.
Blindfolded. Scales in one hand, a sword in the other.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A CROWD is massed in the gallery of a grand, wood-paneled
courtroom. REPORTERS line the first row beside a COURTROOM
ARTIST, since cameras are barred in federal court.

At the prosecutor's table sit three men between a lectern and
an empty jury box. The lead: KENNETH CROWLEY, 54, an elite
Southern prosecutor who can strut sitting down.

Opposite them, alone at the defense table, sits LUKE MADDOX,
49, gallant, razor-sharp, with a bless-your-heart smile.

A COURTROOM MARSHAL, BAILIFF, DEPUTY, and COURT STENOGRAPHER
stands watch near the empty bench and witness chair.

The doors open. Two U.S. MARSHALS escort BELLA, shackled, into the courtroom. Every eye tracks her as she shuffles toward the defense table. The chains come off. She sits.

Maddox notices the bruises on her neck. Bandage on her arm.

MADDOX

What the hell happened to you?

BELLA

Just a scratch. They sent a dog. I put it down.

She grabs a bottle of water, unscrews the cap and drinks it.

MADDOX

Jesus, Bella. Why wasn't I told?

She shrugs a bit and keeps drinking.

MADDOX

Thank God you're okay. Did you eat?

She shakes her head, still chugging water.

He opens his briefcase and hands her a protein bar. She tears it open and takes a big bite, chewing fast.

He gestures to his thermos in the briefcase.

MADDOX

Want some coffee?

BELLA

(mouth full)

Quit caffeine.

MADDOX

Your mom called.

She looks at him.

MADDOX

She wanted to be here. Annie, too. But they know it's too dangerous.

BELLA

Are they safe?

MADDOX

They're *safe*... wherever they are.

She sighs with relief.

MADDUX

This is gonna be a fight, ya know?

She nods as she sits up straight, facing forward.

BELLA

Nothin' of value comes without a
fight, so keep your powder dry,
Counselor.

Just then the Courtroom Marshal stands at his desk. Behind him is a U.S. flag in the front corner of the courtroom.

COURTROOM MARSHAL

All rise and come to order.

Bella stands first. Maddox and everyone else follow suit.

COURTROOM MARSHAL

The U.S. District Court for Western
District of Texas is now in
session. The Honorable Jackson
Roberts, judge presiding.

A door behind the bench opens. The broad-shouldered, black-robed JUDGE JACKSON ROBERTS, 68, enters with a slow swagger.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Good morning. You may be seated.

Everyone in the courtroom sits, as does the Judge.

JUDGE ROBERTS

(consulting his laptop)

In the matter of Sykes versus the
State of Texas we have a habeas
corpus petition. Will counsel
identify themselves for the record?

Maddox rises.

MADDUX

Luke Maddox, for the plaintiff,
Your Honor.

Crowley stands.

CROWLEY

Kenneth Crowley for the State of
Texas, representing the people of
Texas, Your Honor.

Both attorneys sit back down. Maddox leans over to Bella.

MADDOX

Here we go.

JUDGE ROBERTS

I've got a motion here from the State to seal the plaintiff's sworn affidavit from the pre-trial hearing, and bar her testimony today on the basis that it would disclose classified material, and cause identifiable damage to the national security of the United States. Is that right, Mr. Crowley?

CROWLEY

Yes, Your Honor. May I approach?

JUDGE ROBERTS

(waves him over)

You may.

Crowley and Maddox walk over to the bench for a sidebar with the Judge, out of earshot of the spectators in the gallery.

CROWLEY

This morning we received an affidavit to support our objection.

Crowley hands over the paperwork. Judge Roberts puts on reading glasses.

MADDOX

(shaking his head)

No... No, not no. Hell no.

CROWLEY

(to Maddox)

Is that your argument?

Crowley sneers as he passes Maddox a copy of the affidavit.

MADDOX

What the fuck is this?

CROWLEY

You can read can'tcha?

JUDGE ROBERTS

(reading)

Gentlemen, please. Decorum.

CROWLEY

(points at the document)
Your Honor, that affidavit is
signed by the Director of the DIA,
and explains the need to withhold
any classified information the
witness may disclose in regard to
The Program.

The Judge glances up from reading the paper.

JUDGE ROBERTS

What *Program*?

Maddox looks at Crowley, who freezes with an "oh shit" face.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Is this the same *illegal* and
unconstitutional Program outlined
in the plaintiff's habeas petition?

Maddox stifles a laugh.

CROWLEY

No, uh-- I mean-- in fact, uh-- no
such program exists, Your Honor.

JUDGE ROBERTS

I see. That's all.

The Judge shoos them away with a wave of his hand.

As they walk away from the bench, Maddox chuckles.

CROWLEY

(sotto)
Oh, you think that's funny?

MADDOX

(shrugs)
I could watch you fumble all day.

CROWLEY

(sotto)
Fuck you and that ratfuck snitch.

Maddox stops abruptly, and pivots to face off with Crowley.

MADDOX

Call her that again and I'll fold
yer clothes while yer still in 'em.

CROWLEY
(snickers)
I don't rattle, boy. I'm no snake.

MADDOX
(looks him up and down)
Nah, you're just bucket of smoke in
a suit.

JUDGE ROBERTS (O.S.)
Gentlemen.

They both look back at the Judge. He has a stern expression.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Do you boys need a recess?

Crowley holds up his hands and flashes a smile.

CROWLEY
No, Your Honor. My apologies.

As he turns away from the bench, he whispers to Maddox.

CROWLEY
(sotto)
I can't wait to crucify your client
on cross.

They return to their respective tables.

The Judge removes his glasses to address the courtroom.

JUDGE ROBERTS
The court recognizes the gravity of
national security. However... it
also recognizes the petitioner's
constitutional right to due
process, and this court has a
mandate to uphold the writ of
habeas corpus, which ensures that
an individual can challenge their
detention if they present new
evidence that they are imprisoned
without sufficient cause. To bar
that individual from presenting
that evidence by testifying on
their own behalf is to deny them
their constitutional right, and
there is no argument that will make
me do that. So, I'm going to *deny*
the State's motion.

Maddox lights up, shaking his fist. He pats Bella's shoulder.

BELLA
(whispered)
That's good, right?

MADDOX
(beaming)
Oh yeah, that's good.

Crowley leaps to his feet.

CROWLEY
Objection, Your Honor! As CIPA 6
clearly states--

The Judge RAPS his gavel, silencing the courtroom.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Overruled, Mr. Crowley. It's a
failure of reciprocity for the
State to rely on classified
evidence while refusing to let the
plaintiff rebut it. You can't have
your cake and eat it too, sir. At
least not in Texas.

Crowley clenches his fists, but remains standing.

CROWLEY
Exception.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Noted.

CROWLEY
The State reserves its right for
reconsideration and to pursue an
immediate appeal of this ruling.

JUDGE ROBERTS
And you may do so, but not today.

Crowley sinks into his seat, dejected and seething. His
second chair, CLAY HUGHES, 40s, leans in and whispers
urgently. Crowley shakes his head sharply.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Any other motions?

Maddox stands.

MADDOX
Your Honor, the plaintiff wishes to
request the Rule be invoked.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Very well. Anyone present that's on the witness list for either side is now excused from the courtroom, until called upon to testify. Failure to comply will result in the witness being held in contempt of court.

Bella turns and glances around the courtroom.

In the back of the gallery, among the seated crowd, GABRIEL BISHOP stands and begins to make his way towards the aisle.

Bella locks eyes with him. There's a simmering rage in her, while he shows no emotion.

Bishop walks to the aisle, turns his back on her, and exits.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Mr. Maddox, are you ready to proceed?

Maddox nods to Bella, who nods back.

MADDOX

We're ready, Your Honor.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Very well, call your first witness.

MADDOX

I call Belladonna Sykes.

Bella rises, walks to the witness box, and remains standing.

BAILIFF

Raise your right hand.

She complies, holding her right hand up flat, shoulders back.

BAILIFF

Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BELLA

I do.

JUDGE ROBERTS

You may be seated.

She sits and looks at Maddox, who steps up to the lectern.

MADDOX

Ms. Skyes, do you mind if I call you Bella?

BELLA

Uh, no--

MADDOX

Please speak into the microphone.

Bella clears her throat, adjusts the mic and leans into it.

BELLA

(amplified)

No, sir. Call me anythin' ya like, just don't call me late for supper.

MADDOX

(grins)

Ok, so, Bella, you uh-- currently reside in the O'Daniel Unit in Gatesville, Texas, where all of the state's female Death Row inmates are housed, is that correct?

BELLA

Uh, yessir, I do.

MADDOX

How long have you been in prison?

BELLA

It's been, uh-- five-hun'ert an' forty dark days. They stole near two years o' my life... kept me from my lil girl.

MADDOX

I'm sorry. Before that, you were an officer in the United States Navy?

BELLA

That's right. I was a lieutenant commander.

MADDOX

How long were you in the Navy?

BELLA

Nineteen years. Just shy o' my twenty. They stripped my pension.

Crowley stands.

CROWLEY

Objection, Your Honor. Relevance. She was dishonorably discharged after pleading guilty to capital murder. Her service is a matter of record. What does it have to do with the petition before the court?

JUDGE ROBERTS

Sustained.

(to Maddox)

Get to the point, Counselor.

MADDOX

I'm about to, Your Honor.

(to Bella)

Ok, so Bella, you served nearly twenty years in the Navy, or as Mr. Crowley put it, *your service is a matter of record.*

Maddox picks up a thick file on his desk and holds it up.

MADDOX

In fact, I have that record. Your official military personnel file. Plaintiff's Exhibit A. Your Honor, may I approach the witness?

JUDGE ROBERTS

You may.

Maddox walks up to the witness box and hands Bella the file.

MADDOX

Will you take a look at that, Bella? Take your time.

She looks through the file. Turns a page. Then another.

MADDOX

Would you say that is an accurate record of your service in the Navy?

BELLA

(shakes her head)

No, it ain't lookin' right.

MADDOX

Why do you say that?

BELLA

Cuz there ain't no mention o' the Seven Sisters.

MADDOX

And who are the Seven Sisters?

BELLA

It's a codename for a covert psi-warfare unit of controlled remote viewers. I was part of that unit for, uh-- seventeen years. It was the successor to Project Stargate, the psychic spy program. We had joint clearances and operated in conjunction with the Department of Energy, CIA, NSA and the Defense Intelligence Agency. We reported to the National Security Council's Special Studies Group.

MADDOX

Why is there no mention of this covert unit in your military record?

BELLA

Cuz it's a waived U.S.A.P.*-- a uh, Unacknowledged Special Access Program -- outside of DoD and Congressional oversight. Our ops were classified *above* top secret. Deep black. Off the record.

MADDOX

Ok, ok, let's circle back to that. Bella... did you kill your husband, Joseph Sykes?

She takes a deep breath and leans into the microphone.

BELLA

No, I did not.

MADDOX

But you signed a confession. You pled guilty to capital murder with aggravated circumstances. Why'd you do that if you didn't kill him?

BELLA

Cuz I had no choice. At the time, they had our daughter, Annie. They threatened her life. So, I did what I had to do to keep her safe.

MADDOX
You said, "They threatened her
life." Who are *they*?

BELLA
They are the MAJI.

MADDOX
What do mean by that word, MAJI?

BELLA
M.A.J.I. stands for the Majority
Agency for Joint Intelligence. I
was an agent for 'em.

MADDOX
You were a MAJI agent?

BELLA
Yessir. And so was Joe.

MADDOX
Commander Joe Sykes was a MAJI
agent and your commanding officer
in the Seven Sisters?

BELLA
Yessir, before we were married.

MADDOX
He was a former Navy Seal, right?

BELLA
That's right.

MADDOX
Because you know what's strange?
When I subpoenaed *his* personnel
file, I was told the Navy had *no*
record of a Commander Joe Sykes.

CROWLEY
(springs to his feet)
Objection! Counsel's testifying!
Assumes facts not in evidence!

MADDOX
My point exactly.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Sustained.

MADDOX

I'll rephrase, Your Honor. Bella, do you know of any reason why your husband's Official Military Personnel File would be missing?

BELLA

Yessir, I do. He was sheep-dipped.

MADDOX

What does that mean, *sheep-dipped*?

BELLA

It's an intel term for makin' all records of a covert operative's ol' life *disappear*.

MADDOX

By *all records*, you mean like school records, social security, DMV, IRS, even military service?

BELLA

They can make *all* records vanish, as if a person never existed. Then they can disavow an operator in case of an unauthorized disclosure.

MADDOX

Who has the power to do that?

BELLA

The MAJI, and those they report to.

MADDOX

Who do the MAJI report to?

BELLA

That's a core secret. These men-- an' they're *all* fuckin' men, pardon my French-- play God. They decide what national security information is too sensitive for even the President to know.

MADDOX

About what? Operations classified above top secret?

BELLA

Security classification's like one o' them Russian dolls, secrets upon secrets. Compartmentalized. Need-to-know. Black ops.

(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)

Some so dark, they'll most likely never be known. Personally, I had TS/ESI SIOP* clearance. That gave me access to Keystone secrets, which are MAJI-Controlled, or simply MAJIC, with a *J*. MAJIC applies to anythin' in The Program, includin' electrogravitic propulsion, advanced technology of unknown origin, and ultra or extra-terrestrial biological entities.

Audible GASPS in the gallery. The Judge CRACKS his gavel.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Order! Order in the court! Keep quiet, or you will be removed.

A hush falls over the courtroom.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Continue, Mr. Maddox.

MADDOX

Thank you, Your Honor. Bella, you said, *extraterrestrial*. By that do you mean *aliens*?

BELLA

It's, uh-- more complicated than that, but essentially, *yes*, aliens.

MADDOX

Is that considered a core secret?

BELLA

(scoffs)

Damn right. By goin' on the record I'm breakin' my national security oath. And for that, they won't just prosecute me, they'll *assassinate* me-- hell, they already tried.

CROWLEY

(on his feet)

Objection! Speculative and highly prejudicial. Move to strike.

MADDOX

Your Honor, the evidence will show she acted in lawful self-defense against a premeditated attack.

Judge Roberts meets Bella's gaze. She doesn't blink.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Overruled. Proceed, Counselor.

Crowley seethes. Maddox pivots to Bella.

MADDOX
Bella, what happened yesterday
while you were in state custody?

BELLA
I was attacked in the prison
showers by another inmate with a
knife. I-- I defended myself.

The gallery stirs. Maddox nods, letting that sink in.

MADDOX
I'm sorry that happened to you,
but you're on death row. Danger is
constant. What matters here is
this: if you didn't kill your
husband, do you know who did, and
can you help us understand *why*?

BELLA
That *is* the point, ain't it? Not
just to *know*, but to *understand*.

Her dark eyes FILL THE FRAME. PRE-LAP sounds of the OCEAN.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CARIBBEAN SEA - NIGHT (YEARS EARLIER)

White water roils in a turgid "V" cut across the dark expanse
of the Caribbean Sea under a night sky full of stars.

BELLA (V.O.)
And the paradox is that we live our
lives forwards, but only understand
'em backwards.

This is the wake of a massive AIRCRAFT CARRIER, the U.S.S.
John F. Kennedy, a floating city of over 5,000 crew members.

On the horizon is a battle group of ten other U.S. WARSHIPS
in an open-ocean formation in the waters near Puerto Rico.

SUPER:

CARIBBEAN SEA, PUERTO RICO
13 October 2001 - 1917 Zulu
19° 45' 12.3" N, 66° 30' 45.6" W

There is a sudden STREAK OF LIGHT in the night sky. Something descends straight down from the stars to the surface of the water and submerges without a splash – all in a split second.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, COMMUNICATIONS SECTION – NIGHT

Bella, now at age 19, is an IT2 in the communications section of the Kennedy. Her dark hair doesn't have that white streak yet. Her maiden name, ROMERO, is patched on her blue uniform.

She raises a hand to her headset as the Commander, Naval Fleet Forces Command (COMNAVFLT) issues orders over radio.

COMMANDER (O.S.)
(filtered)
All ships hold course. Comms
encrypted. Radios quiet. Out.

Bella reads encrypted comms onscreen and registers surprise.

BELLA
Yo, Raf, I need yer latest DR
track. Com-Nav-Fleet wants round-
the-clock position updates at five
minute intervals.
(beat)
Somethin' spooked the brass.

RAFAEL RAMIREZ, 20s, Quartermaster, a capable sailor with wit and grit, glances over at Bella from his navigation station.

RAMIREZ
050 true, 18 knots, plotted two
mikes ago. What's the panic,
someone lose a drone?

BELLA
(lowering her voice)
No drone. CIC logged a fast-mover
at 80,000 feet. Dropped to sea
level in under thirty seconds. No
transponder. No IFF.

Ramirez narrows his eyes, and looks at the radio repeater.

RAMIREZ
That's gotta be glitch. Where's the
contact now?

BELLA
Gone. Whatever it was, it popped
off radar the second it kissed the
deck... without a splash.

RAMIREZ

Great. Aliens show up during our blue water cert. You think that counts toward warfare qual?

BELLA

Yeah right, maybe it should.

All of a sudden the array of monitors and the overhead lights FLICKER. Anything in the room that's electronic goes HAYWIRE.

RAMIREZ

Whoa.

BELLA

(into headset)

CIC, Comms. Do ya read? Over.

No response. Nothing but STATIC.

RAMIREZ

Radar and Nav's offline.

BELLA

Comms are down, too.

Bella and Ramirez share a concerned look.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The CIC is dimly lit. Red lights glow over radar scopes and sonar stations. Over radio static a contact ALARM sounds.

LT. ROURKE, 40s, a volatile Tactical Action Officer, close-cropped gray hair, leans over the shoulder of a fresh-faced, eager Petty Officer BLAKE, 20s, operating the sonar station.

BLAKE

Fast-mover pinged just before we lost CEC, bearing two-four-zero. Depth reading 100 feet and holding. I've never seen anything like it. No cavitation. No prop signature. No screw. Just... pulse returns.

ROURKE

Son of a bitch. Where was it?

BLAKE

Directly beneath our keel, sir.

Rourke slaps the Cooperative Engagement Capability monitors.

ROURKE
Get CEC back up!

BLAKE
I-- I can do a hard reset, but--

ROURKE
Do it! We're blind here!

Rourke shakes his head, and puts a hand to his headset.

ROURKE
(into headset)
Bridge, CIC. We've got an anomalous
submerged contact. Over.
(STATIC)
GODDAMMIT! I need Comms!

There's FEEDBACK over the 1MC, the ship's announcing system.

VOICE (O.S.)
(filtered)
WE'RE NOT IN CONTROL!

SIGNALMAN (O.S.)
(filtered off-mic)
Restrain that man!

Rourke and Blake react with surprise.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, COMMUNICATIONS SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Bella and Ramirez listen to broadcast over the 1MC.

VOICE (O.S.)
(filtered)
THEY DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH! GOD
IS HERE! IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!

SIGNALMAN (O.S.)
(filtered off-mic)
Sedate him if you have to!

VOICE (O.S.)
(filtered)
NO! THEY NEED TO KNOW--

The intercom SQUELCHES and cuts off. Bella and Ramirez look at each other in disbelief.

BELLA
That boy's a nut factory runnin' on
over-salted 'n all the wrong oils.

RAMIREZ

Not our circus, not our monkeys.

They both laugh until FEEDBACK from the LMC interrupts them.

ROURKE (O.S.)

(filtered)

All hands, we've got unidentified
contact beneath the ship with an
unknown propulsion signature.

Repeat: contact beneath the ship.

Away the SNOOPIE* team, away.

Bella and Ramirez jump to their feet, put on life vests, grab their gear and run out.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, HANGAR DECK TRANSIT - CONTINUOUS

They double-time it down an internal passageway that runs along the length of the hangar deck.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, LADDERWELL - CONTINUOUS

Ramirez climbs a ladder up one level to the flight deck.

Bella hesitates, as if sensing danger, then shakes it off, loops the camera strap around her neck and climbs up.

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bella emerges onto the flight deck and looks out. The dark water is lit from below, shimmering like an Aurora Borealis.

From high above the Kennedy we see the UFO/USO PASS DIRECTLY UNDERNEATH the aircraft carrier. It's at least 1,500 feet in diameter, almost 6 times the width of Kennedy's flight deck.

The slow counter-clockwise rotation of the underwater craft's spokes of light pulse in a radiant band. For a moment the Kennedy is at the center of a pinwheel of luminescence.

INT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Tangled in a web of wires, Blake finishes the cold reboot. He scrambles back into his chair as his station flickers to life. He grins triumphantly and looks around. No one noticed.

* - Ship's Nautical Or Otherwise Photographic Interpretation and Exploitation team

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER, FLIGHT DECK - CONTINUOUS

Bella looks out as a phosphorescent glow rises from the deep, rippling blue-green light beneath the clouds.

Shadows of Seahawks and F-14s dance across the flight deck.

The deck VIBRATES beneath Bella's boots. She freezes.

BELLA

Look! Miss'l away!

She points at USS The Sullivans, a guided missile destroyer on the horizon. A puff of smoke and fire from the VLS array.

Bella and Ramirez look up as an Anti-Submarine Rocket (ASROC) arcs into the night sky and disappears. Silence. Then...

SPLASHDOWN.

The glow from below intensifies. Bella squints at the sea.

Then a DEEP PULSE BOOMS. The Kennedy SHUDDERS, not from the rocket exploding, but something... responding.

EXT. UNDERWATER BENEATH THE CARRIER - CONTINUOUS

Near the rim of the submerged UFO the torpedo EXPLODES in a bright flash, with a concussive THUMP that echoes underwater.

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

The CIC deck SHAKES violently. Rourke steadies himself.

BLAKE

Undersea detonation. 100 yards.

ROURKE

Confirm hull integrity. Anything breach proximity?

BLAKE

Negative, sir.

The sonar screens blossom with concentric green rings.

UNDERWATER

A white cloud of bubbles and debris dissipates to reveal... the UFO craft is completely undamaged.

Instead, its spokes of light intensify, rotating faster, now in tight synchronized SUBSONIC PULSES.

FLIGHT DECK

Bella's eyes lock onto the phosphorescent glow below.

It pulses and grows, a luminescent halo lighting the ocean's surface in rhythmic waves.

Ramirez grips a handheld compass, its needle spinning wildly.

RAMIREZ

This doesn't make any sense.

A blinding light shoots straight upward from the sea.

Bella and Ramirez are bathed in blue. They gaze up in awe.

The beam is brilliant, silent, a vertical column of energy rising hundreds of feet into the sky, splitting the darkness.

BELLA

GET DOWN!

She grabs him and dives for cover behind jet blast deflector.

WHOOOOMP -- a massive ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE ripples outward from under the sea, invisible but devastating.

All lights on the Kennedy flicker and die.

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

On the CIC deck all screens suddenly go dead. Consoles SPARK. Lights go out. Backup batteries attempt to CYCLE, but fail.

BLAKE

Oh shit.

ROURKE

Don't tell me we lost sonar *again*.

BLAKE

Uh-- sir, we lost *everything*.

FLIGHT DECK

Bella and Ramirez rise slowly from behind the deflector.

Eerie silence blankets the carrier. No wind. No engines. No running lights. She raises her camera, scanning the horizon.

Across the horizon, the entire battle group has gone dark.

BELLA

My God... all our ships are dead in
the water.

Then she spots it. The ocean begins to part.

A circular dome of water bulges upward from the sea, not from pressure, but as if space itself is bending. From within this bubble, the craft ascends.

It doesn't break the surface, it displaces it.

The spinning spokes of light, now rotating faster, cast a lattice of impossible geometry onto the flight deck.

A low-frequency HUM can be heard, and felt in the bones.

BELLA

Run.

They turn and run, passing other SAILORS who are looking up.

The UFO craft clears the water, and glides silently over the carrier. It's the width of 5 football fields laid end-to-end.

A perfect wheel of light and dark. Its surface is smooth, without rivets or seams. It emits no vapor and no thrust.

The HUM harmonizes with itself like tones vibrating in phase.

Then a ring of golden light spirals beneath it.

All at once: the sky opens, clouds flatten and are drawn in towards the core. Sea water is pulled upward in a spiral.

The water begins to rain down from above, drenching Bella. Her eardrums tighten, and she covers her ears.

Ramirez drops to his knees, disoriented.

BELLA

RAF, GET UP! SOME--

Her voice is cut off, not by another sound, but by the absence of it. The world is muffled, like sound underwater.

All around her is insanity and fear. Some are running in panic, while others look up in terror and scream silently.

They are all engulfed in white-blue light, not from above, but inside the air itself. It's everywhere and nowhere.

Then GRAVITY SHIFTS.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN, UNDERWATER - DAWN

Bella floats underwater, silhouetted by rays of sunlight.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN, SURFACE - DAWN

LOW ANGLE on the surface on the ocean at sunrise. The sea is calm, but it stretches on and on, as far as the eye can see.

Bella ascends from underwater, buoyed by her life vest with a AIS MOB (Man OverBoard) beacon integrated in the shoulder.

She floats and bobs face up, either dead or unconscious.

In a vast distance, a black dot appears on the horizon. It's approaching fast, silhouetted by a rising Omega sun, a type of mirage at sea when a layer of warm air is over warm water.

The light seems to bend upward behind the men on approach in a Zodiac CRCC rubber boat with an OUTBOARD MOTOR at the rear.

As the boat nears, Bella coughs up water and GASPS for air.

She raises her hand as the Zodiac pulls up alongside her.

The man at the bow is U.S. Navy SEAL Lt. Cmdr JOE SYKES, 30s, a rock-solid man of honor and conscience. He leans out, takes her hand, and pulls her out of the water into the boat.

INT./EXT. ZODIAC BOAT - DAWN

Sykes wraps a wool blanket around Bella's shoulders.

SYKES
You're safe now.

She squeezes his hand, trembling. They share a look.

Sykes raises a tactical SATCOM radio.

SYKES
(into radio)
NJFK, Delta Oscar Echo. Man over-
board recovered. We're RTB, over.

The radio SQUAWKS with a signal.

RADIO (O.S.)
(filtered)
Roger Delta Oscar Echo, over-n-out.

The 55 horsepower engine ROARS as the rubber boat makes a tight U-turn and resumes speed, kicking up ocean spray.

Bella huddles down, looking up at Sykes with blurry vision.

SYKES
(over the engine)
It's gonna be ok.

She shuts her eyes to keep her head from swimming.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS - DAY

A heart monitor BEEPS, its green lines jagged and urgent.

The sterile hospital room warps at the edges. Two shadow figures loom over Bella's bed - tall, faceless, menacing.

The rhythmic BEEP of the electrocardiogram rises in pitch.

Bella's eyes snap open. She SCREAMS, thrashing at the sheets.

BELLA'S POV

The figures resolve into a serene female parapsychologist, DR. MADELYN HARPER, 44, a blonde with a pale complexion and ocean blue eyes, wearing a lab coat. Standing beside her is GABRIEL BISHOP, at age 32, in a US Navy Captain's uniform.

Bella is drenched in sweat, eyes wild, confused.

BELLA
(panicked)
Get away! No, NO!--

HARPER
(calm)
Easy there. Just breathe.

Harper adjusts an oxygen cannula under Bella's nostrils.

She is breathing fast.

BELLA
(disoriented)
Oooh-- my head's achin'-- feels
heavy. Where--?

Harper checks the IV line, and takes out a syringe.

BISHOP

Welcome back, sailor. I'm Captain Gabriel Bishop, Office of Naval Intelligence. This is Dr. Madelyn Harper, head of the ONI's Cognitive Science unit. You're at Roosevelt Roads. You were rescued at sea.

Bella's eyes dart between them.

BELLA

(trembling)

What happened?

Bishop and Harper glance each other. Harper gently presses a syringe into the IV port.

HARPER

Ketorolac for the headache.

Bella's breathing slows.

HARPER

BP's stabilizing. Pupils reactive. She's lucid enough for questions, Captain, but not for long.

BISHOP

Just a few, doctor, thank you.

Harper hesitates, then steps to the corner, hands off.

BISHOP

You were found adrift, barely conscious, 75 miles to the north of Puerto Rico. Your life vest had a distress signal. Do you remember how you got there? Do you remember anything?

BELLA

(agitated)

I-- I was on the Kennedy. We were-- on the flight deck. Somethin' was--

SPLIT SECOND FLASHES

White uniforms stained red. Blinding blue-white light. The sea BOILING. A sudden SNAP like the world folds in half.

Bella recoils.

BELLA
(blinding migraine)
No... I dunno. Ah-- my head--
somethin's wrong with my head.

BISHOP
It's OK. Memory loss is common
after extreme trauma. The mind
sometimes *erases* what it can't
endure.

BELLA
(whispers)
I think somethin' took us.

BISHOP
(neutral)
Took you?

BELLA
Oh God! The others-- I heard 'em--

FLASHES of inhuman hands touch her face. A shadow descending.
A human SCREAM. A Layered sounds of STATIC and WHISPERING.

Bella blinks, lost. Bishop leans over her.

BISHOP
Bella, events aboard a U.S. naval
vessel, especially one on active
deployment, fall under strict
classification protocols. What
happened on that flight deck is top
secret. It must not be discussed
with anyone. Not with doctors, not
with family, not even your ship-
mates. If you talk, you could be
imprisoned, fined, and lose all
paid allowances. Is that clear?

BELLA
(small)
Yessir.

BISHOP
Good sailor. Now get some rest.
(to Harper)
She's restricted to base. No
visitors unless cleared through me.

HARPER
Yes, sir. Understood.

Bishop walks to the door, pauses.

BISHOP
You're lucky to be alive, Bella.
Let's keep it that way.

He exits. Bella stares after him and then turns to Harper.

BELLA
Please, doc, tell me what happened.

HARPER
(looks around)
I only know what I heard... that
you're the only survivor.

Harper gives her a sympathetic look, and then walks out.

Bella breathes unevenly, clutching the bed sheets. Tears stream. Her body convulses. She covers her face.

INT. NAVAL MEDICAL LAB, ROOSEVELT ROADS - VARIOUS

MONTAGE

INT. EXAM ROOM - HYPERSENSITIVE RESPONSE

Bishop and another OFFICER look through a one-way mirror into a darkened exam room where Bella sits as Dr. Harper shines a penlight into her eyes. She violently flinches.

BISHOP
Note: heightened photic response.

The Officer writes on a clipboard.

INT. SOUND ISOLATION CHAMBER - HIGH FREQUENCY TESTING

Bella sits alone inside a sealed chamber with headphones on. TONES play. She raises her hand.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - HIGH FREQUENCY TESTING

A TECHNICIAN monitors her. Bishop observes, his arms crossed.

TECHNICIAN
Above 20 kilohertz. That's not
possible without--

BISHOP
Without crystalline resonance.
Mark it.

INT. SCAN ROOM - MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Bella lies on an exam table inside the cold steel tunnel of an MRI scanner. The low HUM of machinery pulses. A red laser crosshair bisects her forehead. She shuts her eyes.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Multiple MONITORS display diagnostic images. One shows a live scan of a ghostly blue cross-section of BELLA'S BRAIN.

The MRI TECH squints at the screen, his tone uneasy.

MRI TECH

That's a puncture biopsy. Someone clearly went in and took tissue.

(points)

But *that*... is not normal.

ONSCREEN is a perfect, spherical object, approximately 50 microns in size, nestled near the optic nerve in her brain.

Bishop stands behind him, unmoved.

BISHOP

Log it and dog it.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - REMOTE VIEWING EXERCISE

A thick-glassed observation room. Bella wears bio-sensors to monitor brainwaves while she sits in front of a screen that flashes a series of Zener cards: Star, Waves, or Square.

HARPER (O.S.)

(filtered)

What's on the next card?

Bella hesitates. A bead of sweat trails down. She closes her eyes. Her hand moves to a touchscreen: STAR.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - REMOTE VIEWING EXERCISE

Harper holds up the card with a Star to Bishop.

HARPER

She's five-for-five.

Harper points out the waveform on the monitor.

HARPER
See the neural spike? Theta-delta
hybrid. Like remote viewers during
REM states.

BISHOP
So, she's a candidate.

HARPER
She fits the profile. High harmonic
receptor. Trauma-induced unlock.
She's exactly what The Program was
designed to find.

BISHOP
Accelerate the testing.

He stares at Bella through the one-way glass. She looks back.

BISHOP (O.S.)
Make her ready.

END MONTAGE

INT. CLEAN ROOM, POLYGRAPH - DAY

Bella sits in a clean, sterile room, wired to a polygraph.
Dr. Harper sits opposite her, clipboard in hand.

HARPER
This isn't a lie detector. It
detects stress responses. Just
relax, and answer yes or no.

Bella nods.

HARPER
Did you knowingly provide false
information in your written
statement?

BELLA
No.

The needles spike and then flatten. Harper notes it.

HARPER
Have you experienced gaps in time
surrounding the incident?

BELLA
Yes.

The polygraph needles twitch. Harper leans forward slightly.

HARPER
Since the encounter, have you
perceived thoughts or emotions that
did not originate with you?

BELLA
(stiffens)
Yes.

The needles surge, and then lock into a calm rhythm.

Harper stops the test. She studies the readout, then Bella.
She reaches out and gently disconnects the leads.

HARPER
No deception indicated.

Something unspoken passes between them.

HARPER (V.O.)
(telepathically)
You're not the only one with gifts.
They fear what you may become.

Harper raises one finger and presses it to her closed lips.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Bella sits across from a panel of officers. One is Bishop.

BISHOP
Do you believe you're psychic?

BELLA
No, sir.

BISHOP
Do you believe something was...
activated during your encounter?

She doesn't answer. A moment too long.

BISHOP
It's OK. You're cleared for release
and return to duty. You can fly to
the North Arabian Sea, and rejoin
The Kennedy on its combat mission.

BELLA
Do I have another choice, sir?

BISHOP

I'm offering you one. A promotion.
Continued service under my command.
Special reconnaissance.

BELLA

Special reconnaissance? Sir, that
seems... irregular.

BISHOP

Because it is. As are you.

She shifts in her chair, squaring her shoulders.

BELLA

I need to know the truth about my
shipmates and don't tell me nothin'
happened, cuz that dog won't hunt.

Bishop looks at the others, and then stares at her a moment.

BISHOP

Nine sailors were taken. Once power
was restored, the battle group
withdrew from the operating area.
When you were found, you'd been
gone seven and a half hours. Eight
men are still missing in action.

Bella's eyes widen. Her breath catches, but she holds steady.

BELLA

What'd y'all tell their families?

BISHOP

I'm not at liberty to say, but I
can promise you this: if you accept
this new assignment, you'll get to
go after those responsible for
abducting you and your shipmates.

BELLA

Then I accept.

BISHOP

Good sailor. In that case, your
flight out is at 0600 tomorrow.

BELLA

To where, sir?

FADE TO WHITE

EXT. SKY ABOVE NEVADA DESERT - DAY

A C-2A GREYHOUND slices through cloud banks, twin propellers DRONING against vast desert emptiness.

FROM ABOVE

The plane's shadow glides over jagged ridge-lines and scorched barren flats.

SUPER:

AREA 51 - GROOM LAKE, NEVADA
Air Force Flight Test Center Det. 3
23 May 2002 - 1315 Zulu
37°14'06.0"N, 115°48'40.0"W

INT. GREYHOUND COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Two NAVY PILOTS sit in the cockpit, sunlight glinting off the dark visors of their flight helmets.

CO-PILOT
(into radio)
Pyramid, Greyhound Zero-Niner.
Ten miles out, angels twenty-five,
squawking seven-one-four-three.
Request final approach, cargo drop.

INT. GREYHOUND, CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

Bella sits strapped to a bench seat in the cargo bay, her new Chief Petty Officer badge gleaming against crisp dress blues.

RADIO (V.O.)
(crackles, flat)
Greyhound Zero-Niner, Pyramid
copies. Vector zero-seven-zero for
Runway fourteen. Cleared to land.

Bella rocks forward as the plane banks left in a 180° turn.

EXT. GROOM LAKE, RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The C-2A slams down on the runway running north and south. Tires SCREECH and dust swirls. The plane taxis to the right and takes a left toward a hangar guarded by armed Air Force SECURITY FORCES beside matte grey Chevy 4x4 PICKUPS.

INT. GREYHOUND, CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

The rear ramp drops. Light pours in, silhouetting Bella, her seabag gripped tight, eyes narrowed against the desert sun.

EXT. GROOM LAKE, HANGAR APRON - MOMENTS LATER

Her boots crunch sand as she steps down. She scans the horizon. Desert, mountains, buildings without windows, a razor-wire fence line. The wind snaps a U.S. flag.

From across the tarmac, JOE SYKES approaches with Oakley Straight Jacket sunglasses, a salt and pepper beard, black DOE coveralls, badge, and a Belgian Shepherd by his side.

SYKES

Bella. Right on time.

(arms out, easy smile)

Welcome to Dreamland. I'm Joe Sykes, your CO. We never got a chance to meet-- when I, uh--

BELLA

Saved my life?

SYKES

(waves his hand)

Nah.

BELLA

Came to my rescue then.

SYKES

Nevermind. Forget it.

BELLA

It ain't no nevermind, and I'll never forget it.

She offers her hand. He shakes it.

BELLA

Nice to meetcha, sir.

SYKES

No "sir", just Joe.

The dog BARKS once. They both glance down and laugh a little.

SYKES

This is Duke. He's a good boy.

Bella kneels, scratching Duke behind the ears.

BELLA
Aw, hey there, Duke.

SYKES
Come on, hop in. I'll give ya the
nickel tour.

He walks to a four-door PICKUP on the tarmac. She follows.
He opens the passenger door, pulls out folding stairs. Bella
stows her bag, and climbs in as Sykes unfolds the stairs.

Duke waits until Sykes opens the back door, gives a signal,
then bounds up the steps, settling in the back.

Bella smiles as Sykes slips the dog a treat.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sykes slides in behind the wheel.

BELLA
Reckon there's a reason some folks
like dogs more'n people.

SYKES
Dogs are loyal. People lie.
(glances at her)
But you seem alright.

He fires up the turbo V8. She smiles as she buckles up.

INT./EXT. PICKUP TRUCK, VARIOUS AREA 51 LOCATIONS - DAY

They cruise past hangars, their massive doors sealed tight.

A taxiway lined with aircraft with angular silhouettes.

Checkpoints manned by GUARDS in cammo with black berets.

A line of white vans with blacked-out windows idle in a
fenced lot. A MECHANIC smokes, eyes tracking the pickup.

Another dust-coated matte gray Chevy 4x4 pickup RUMBLES past
them, the DRIVER hidden behind wraparound shades.

A burn pit smolders in the distance. Bella watches a column
of black smoke curling skyward.

BELLA
So, did ya read my file?

SYKES

Of course.

BELLA

Did it include my medical records?

SYKES

No, why?

BELLA

Cuz I requested a copy, but it was *denied*, ya believe that? They said my own records were classified.

SYKES

That ain't right.

(beat)

Request it from the Colonel.
You'll meet him tomorrow. He'll read you in, and make you sign a mountain of paperwork to get your clearance. Tell him you want your medical file, or you won't sign.

BELLA

Is there a reason I shouldn't?

SYKES

Were ya *voluntold* this assignment?

She smiles and nods.

SYKES

Thought so. And ya know what NAVY stands for, right?

BELLA

Never Again Volunteer Yourself.

They both laugh as they drive past a sign on a fence that reads: RESTRICTED AREA - USE OF DEADLY FORCE AUTHORIZED.

EXT. AREA 51, CANTINA - DAY

They pull up to the Cantina and climb out. Duke hops down, tail wagging. Sykes holds the door for Bella.

SYKES

Lunch is on me.

They step inside. A sign on the door reads: "SAM'S PLACE".

INT. AREA 51, CANTINA - DAY

Sykes and Bella sit in the back booth of the cantina. He drinks black coffee. She eats her lunch. Duke naps.

SYKES

What'd you remember about your abduction?

BELLA

Last thing I remember was pure terror... raw *fear*... and this column of light, brighter than a welder's arc. It felt-- I don't know-- *alive*. I can't explain it. It paralyzed me. And there was a voice... in my head. The words weren't in English, but somehow... I understood them.

He glances around and leans in.

SYKES

What'd it say?

BELLA

"Do not fear. Time was created..."

They share a look, wondering what it means.

SYKES

Why wasn't that in the report?

BELLA

Cuz I never told anyone until now.

He nods in earnest.

SYKES

You gotta right to know what they did to you and your shipmates, but what if *knowing* changes you?

She considers that and looks at him with apprehension.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Remember, once you sign, there's no going back. And The Program's a bureaucratic shit show of need-to-know wrapped in a lotta red tape.

BELLA

That bad, huh?

SYKES
Trust me ya ain't seen nothing yet.

BELLA
(mischievous grin)
Yer right. Where're all the UFOs?

SYKES
Oh, you wanna go to the weather
station?

BELLA
What are ya, the weatherman?

SYKES
(easy smile)
Yeah, I'm the weatherman.

He pushes back from the table with a sideways nod.

SYKES
Let's roll.

BELLA
(wry)
Like thunder.

He huffs in amusement as they walk out, followed by Duke.

EXT. NORTHERN RANGE 4, THE WEATHER STATION - DAY

The truck drives up to a squat metal building bristling with
antennas and wind vanes. No signage. No numbers. No windows.

Sykes cracks his window, pats Duke on the head and steps out.

They approach a heavy steel security door. A RETINAL SCANNER
flickers, then accepts Sykes' presence with a soft chirp.

INT. THE WEATHER STATION, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The inside is another world. Polished tile floors, scuffed
from years of boots. SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS in every corner. A
sign states: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY. NO PHOTOGRAPHY.

Dual CT SCANNERS frame a checkpoint manned by three GUARDS
wearing all black uniforms, including black berets, and armed
with M4 assault rifles. They snap a salute at Sykes.

SYKES
At ease boys. I need a visitor's
badge for her.

GUARD #1
Yessir. Sign here, ma'am.

Guard #1 hands Bella a clipboard. She signs in.

GUARD #2
(holds up a racing form)
Got any tips for us, Commander?

Sykes puts his cell phone and sidearm in a metal box on the desk. He steps into the CT scanner, a rotating X-ray emitter.

SYKES
Oh, you know I do. A filly in the third at Santa Anita on Friday. Phantasia with a "P-H". Her trials were *fast*. Going off at eighteen to one. Hard to beat. I'm going big.

GUARD #2
I'll do the same. Good lookin' out.

They exchange a quick side-five handshake.

SYKES
My man.

Sykes steps out. Bella steps into the CT scanner. It HUMS. A 3D image of her full body appears on the desk monitor.

GUARD #3
You're good to go, ma'am.

As Bella steps out of the scanner Guard #1 hands her a laminated badge with a DOE insignia, and radiation dosimeter.

GUARD #1
Wear this at all times, and never leave your escort. Understood?

BELLA
Yessir.

INT. THE WEATHER STATION, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sykes and Bella walk down a hallway painted government gray. At the end is an elevator with no buttons beside the door. The doors slide open. Sykes gestures to Bella.

INT. THE WEATHER STATION, ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

She steps inside. He follows. The doors seal shut. No buttons. No floor lights. Just walls. She steadies herself.

BELLA

So, if that was the nickel tour out there, what's this?

The elevator lurches, descending.

SYKES

The real deal. Two billion a year.

She scoffs in disbelief. He nods, dead serious.

SYKES

That's just a drop in the bucket.

INT. ANTHILL, SUBTERRANEAN LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

The doors part onto a vast underground hangar.

The cavernous space is a hive of activity. ARMED GUARDS and LAB TECHNICIANS in clean suits, forklifts hauling containers.

SYKES

We call it the Anthill.

Bella steps forward, in awe of the scale.

Her gaze catches a BLACK TRIANGLE craft on a platform. The underside has 3 spheres on the edges and one in the center.

SYKES

That's a TR-3B Astra. One of *ours*.
Reverse-engineered...
(points)
from one of *theirs*.

Then she sees it. A jet black DELTA-SHAPED CRAFT, hovering, silent, tethered to floor. It's fifty feet per side, and etched with faint hieroglyphs.

SYKES

We pulled that one outta the seabed off Okinawa. It'd been down there at least 30 years, but whatever's still powering it is a mystery, because we can't open it.

Bella drifts toward it, entranced. Her hand reaches out.

SYKES

Wait, don't--

Her palm touches the craft's hull. The surface ripples like liquid mercury. A seam of light carves itself into existence.

With a hiss a DOOR opens.

Sykes stares, wide-eyed.

Bella stands framed in the open doorway, her back to him.

She turns and freezes. A wall of ARMED GUARDS has closed in.

Sykes stands between them, arms raised, holding them at bay.

INT. AREA 51, ANTE ROOM OF THE TANK - LATER THAT DAY

A pale green metallic vault door looms, mute. Soundproof.

Bella stands in the ante room, her eyes fixed on the door to The Tank, a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF). From inside, voices begin to bleed into her mind.

TURNER (O.S.)

What were you thinking, Commander?
How could you let this happen?

BISHOP (O.S.)

The question isn't what happened.
It's *why her*?

Bella breathes in and exhales, closing her eyes. Then almost by reflex, she's inside the room without being inside.

INT. THE TANK - CONTINUOUS

A polished conference table gleams under honeycomb lights.

COL. SAM HAWTHORNE, 60s, base commander (AF Intel/CIA), GABRIEL BISHOP (Navy/ONI) and BENEDICT TURNER (CIA) sit in judgment. Flags along the wall stand like silent jurors.

HAWTHORNE

No, the question *is...* why did the
Commander expose critical
compartments of Special Projects
to a civilian without clearance?

Hawthorne points an accusatory finger at Sykes, who sits at the far end of the table, stiff-backed, enduring their ire.

SYKES

With all due respect, sir, she's not a civilian. She's a sailor... under my command.

HAWTHORNE

Until she signs the oath, she's a liability.

SYKES

Stop pointing that finger and start pulling that thumb. Eight sailors are MIA because the Chair Force green-lit Operation Interloper.

HAWTHORNE

How dare you.

SYKES

How dare you, sir. Honor their sacrifice.

Hawthorne goes rigid. The room chills.

INT. ANTE ROOM OF THE TANK - CONTINUOUS

Bella listens intently outside the green door, tuned in now.

BISHOP (O.S.)

Gentlemen, please. If the Commander acknowledges that he broke OPSEC protocol by giving her access before she had clearance, can we move on?

TURNER (O.S.)

He didn't just give her access, he showed her a *craft*, and she unlocked it by just *touching* it.

INT. THE TANK - CONTINUOUS

Sykes looks Turner in the eye.

SYKES

She deserves to know what she's signing up for.

TURNER

Deserves?

HAWTHORNE

And you deserve a court-martial.
This is a career-ending violation.

SYKES

Which career? Solider or spy?

HAWTHORNE

You're a Tier 1 operator, son.

SYKES

(scoffs)

I'm no operator. I'm a garbage man.

BISHOP

That's enough. This inquiry isn't
even about him, Colonel.

(to Turner)

Go fetch her.

Turner rises, unlocks the heavy door, and swings it open.
Bella is already there, waiting. Turner freezes.

She marches past him and stops, perfectly at attention.

BELLA

It wasn't locked. It was waitin'.
It opened cuz it *chose* to.

Turner stiffens. Hawthorne shifts. Bishop's eyes narrow.

BISHOP

You mean... it chose *you*.

BELLA

Yer words, sir, not mine. I don't
know if I'm chosen or... damned.

HAWTHORNE

Could you hear us?

BELLA

Every word.

TURNER

Impossible. This SCIF is sealed.

BELLA

Then what's Operation Interloper?

The silence sharpens. Sykes can't help but smile, impressed.

BISHOP

Have a seat, Bella.

Bella doesn't blink and remains standing.

BELLA
I'd rather stand... 'n would y'all
mind sharin' my medical report?

TURNER
I'm afraid that's not how it works.

BELLA
I'm sorry, we haven't met. Bella.

She extends her hand. Turner hesitates and then shakes.

TURNER
Benedict T.

BELLA
Don't get all het up 'bout it, Mr.
T. All y'all Agency boys, always
first name, last initial. It's a
dead giveaway.

Turner's cheeks flush. Bella pivots to Hawthorne.

BELLA
An' you must be the Colonel?

HAWTHORNE
Sam Hawthorne, base commander.

They shake.

BELLA
Oh, is the bar here named after ya?

HAWTHORNE
As a matter-of-fact it is.

BELLA
That was the last stop on the tour.

HAWTHORNE
I bet it was.

BELLA
Now, 'bout my medical report...

HAWTHORNE
(to Turner)
You heard the lady. Give it to her.

Turner reluctantly pulls her medical file and hands it over.

TURNER

Read it thoroughly. It won't be
made available to you again.

Bella gracefully floats down to a seat at the table.

BELLA

Bless yer heart.

HAWTHORNE

(to Bishop)
Read her in.

Hawthorne stands to exit. Turner follows him out.

Bella meets Sykes' gaze with a wink and a smile, vindicated.

INT. ANTE ROOM OF THE TANK - CONTINUOUS

Turner shuts the door behind him. Hawthorne lights his cigar.

TURNER

That sanctimonious son of a bitch.
He jeopardized the entire Program.

Hawthorne's eyes become slits. Smoke curls like a fuse.

HAWTHORNE

You ever seen combat, Turner?

TURNER

Uh-- no, sir.

HAWTHORNE

Sykes has. Men like him *earn* their
mistakes. Men like you file them.

Turner shifts, humiliated.

HAWTHORNE

Write him up. I'll inform the
General.

TURNER

What about her?

HAWTHORNE

Keep the worm in the dark and bait
the hook.

TURNER

(scoffs)
Times have changed.
(MORE)

TURNER (CONT'D)
(off his look)
We used to burn witches like her.

HAWTHORNE
(raspy chuckle)
Careful, son. Never know who's
listening.

Hawthorne walks away, trailing smoke.

TURNER
Give my regards to The General.

HAWTHORNE
Keep pushing that paper.

Turner fumes.

INT. THE TANK - CONTINUOUS

Bella turns a page in her medical report.

BELLA
(reading)
"Subject's biological improvements
may be mutually beneficial."
(looks up)
What's that mean?

Bishop meets Sykes' eye, who already knows this is bad.

BISHOP
We strive to keep the peace, but
there are rogue factions that don't
abide by the terms of the treaty.

BELLA
What treaty?

BISHOP
That's need-to-know and beside the
point. For reasons we don't fully
understand, this faction chose you.
(points at her)
They put something in your head.

BELLA
What'd ya talkin' bout? How?

BISHOP
There's a surgical implant behind
your optic nerve.

She's thunderstruck, mouth agape. Her eyes dart to Sykes. He looks as stunned as she feels.

BELLA

What in the actual fuck?

SYKES

What does it do?

BISHOP

We don't know exactly, but it seems to enhance whatever latent psionic abilities the subject already has. It strengthens their direct mental influence on living systems, which may be *why* the craft opened for you, because it's somehow... *alive*.
(pats Bella's hand)
Don't you see? This is a *gift*.

She recoils, tearing her hand away, balling it in a fist.

BELLA

Well, I don't accept it, an' I don't want it! TAKE IT OUT! NOW!!

She SLAMS the table. The room tightens. Bishop tenses.

BISHOP

We can't. Every attempt to remove it surgically has proven fatal to--

His nose starts to bleed.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Oh shit, uh-- excuse me.

Sykes grabs a tissue from a box nearby and offers it to him.

Bishop takes the tissue and holds it to his nose.

BISHOP

Thanks. It's OK, I'm fine-- I'm fine. This-- this isn't your fault.

BELLA

Oh God, it is.

BISHOP

It's OK. Let us help. We can train you to control it. That's why you're here. But first, the oaths.

Bishop places two documents on the table. One is a contract, the other a criminal liability form. He places a pen on top.

BISHOP

This contract is to work for us.
And this one is for the United States government. Break these and you expose yourself to civil and criminal prosecution.

BELLA

Criminal? On what charge?

BISHOP

Treason.

Bella stares down at the papers. For a moment nothing moves.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Are you with us?

She meets his gaze, unflinching, and reaches for the pen.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Bella leans into the mic.

BELLA

I signed 'em, an' they read me in.
And after that... it was like a new reality. Everythin' changed.
Everythin'... It was a new world.

Maddox lets her words hang in the air for a moment.

MADDOX

So, what was Operation Interloper?

Crowley stands abruptly and points at Bella.

CROWLEY

Objection! Your Honor, we invoke the State Secrets Privilege and renew our objection to ban further testimony. The witness admitted she signed a secrecy agreement. If she continues to testify, she not only endangers national security, but exposes herself to treason.

Bella scoffs and throws her arms out wide.

BELLA

Then charge me. I'm already lookin' at a needle for a murder I didn't commit. What's one more death sentence?

The gallery stirs. The Judge POUNDS his gavel.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Order! Order in court!

MADDOX

Your Honor--

JUDGE ROBERTS

One moment, Counselor.

(to the gallery)

People, I will not tolerate any further disruptions to these proceedings. If this witness' testimony is interrupted again, I'll instruct the Bailiff to remove the entire gallery. Understood?

The gallery falls silent.

JUDGE ROBERTS

And the witness will limit her testimony to direct answers to questions. Is *that* understood?

BELLA

Or what? Y'all censor my speech? Strike it from the record? Gag me?

JUDGE ROBERTS

Answer only the questions that are asked or I'll hold you in contempt.

BELLA

After bein' locked up for nearly two years, I ain't got nothin' but *contempt*. Gimme some fuckin' *hope*.

JUDGE ROBERTS

Watch your language, Ms. Sykes.

BELLA

Gimme somethin', Your Honor. Show me "a government can be held to the principles of its constitution".

She looks him dead in the eye and stares him down.

JUDGE ROBERTS
Who said that?

BELLA
Thomas Jefferson.

He nods slightly. His stern look softens. A hint of a smile.

JUDGE ROBERTS
The court recognizes the gravity of national security. However... it also recognizes the petitioner's constitutional right to due process. The court will hear her testimony. Objection overruled.

Crowley sits, seething.

MADDOX
Thank you, Your Honor.
(to Bella)
Again, Bella... what was Operation Interloper?

Bella grips the stand, steady now.

BELLA
It was the real reason the Kennedy was over the trench that night, in the deepest part of the Atlantic. The brass told us it was for trainin' exercises, but that was just a cover. The truth was The Program sent a battle group that included nuclear-powered submarines out there for one objective: to draw out alien craft below. They were the fish...

CUT TO:

INT. AREA 51, BRIEFING ROOM - DAY (PAST)

Through a wire mesh glass window in a door, we see a briefing room painted DIA drab green. Bella is seated at a desk across from Bishop. Sykes leans on the wall with his arms crossed.

BELLA (V.O.)
We were the bait.

Bishop puts a gray 3/4 inch tape into a deck and hits play.

BISHOP
We're engaged in a shadow war.

A satellite image of Earth appears on a television screen.

BISHOP

This is the battlefield.

SYKES

And what we're sworn to protect.
Our sacred duty.

BISHOP

Our way of life is under attack.
Not from something that arrived
from the stars, but something
that's been here for a long time.
There's been no formal declaration
of war, and probably never will be,
because the danger is neither clear
nor present. It hides. It waits.

Bella's sharp eyes follow Bishop as he paces back and forth.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

When people talk about "aliens",
they look up, not below. The real
frontier isn't space, it's the
ocean, which covers seventy percent
of this planet, but we've mapped
less than five percent. Down
there... it's another world.

ONSCREEN is tape from an underwater camera with dive data and
a timestamp. Depth: 2421.1 meters. May 3, 2002, 10:04:31 GST.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

This video was captured by a deep-
sea oil exploration team in the
Gulf of Mexico two weeks ago.

Floodlights illuminate dark water. An alien-like CEPHALOPOD
drifts in the current. Its broad fins form a mantle sail, and
its long, elbowed appendages hang down like silken threads.

BELLA

What is that?

BISHOP

A bigfin squid called Magnapinna.
Very rare, but that's not it. Wait
for it...

A massive STREAK OF LIGHT cuts diagonally through the frame.
The creature jerks violently and vanishes into the abyss.

BISHOP
(points)
There.

Bella's breath catches and her eyes go wide.

BELLA
Oh, go back!

Bishop rewinds and pauses on a colossal SPHERICAL USO CRAFT, featureless except for a faint corona of light on its edges.

BELLA
My God, it's *massive*!

BISHOP
And under intelligent control. If we get too close, it *evades* by diving beyond the maximum operating depth of anything we've got.

BELLA
What'd y'all think it is?

BISHOP
Our best guess... some kind of Ark, or mobile construction base that builds smaller craft to spec. Whatever their missions call for.

SYKES
We've tracked hundreds of smaller ones flying in and out the trench.

BELLA
I get it, but what can I do?

SYKES
More than you know. We can train you to be a remote viewer.

BELLA
What's that?

BISHOP
You'll see. We use remote viewing to hunt high-value targets. And you're in a unique position to I.D. the enemy, because you've already seen them... face to face.

BELLA
I wish I could, sir, but...
(shakes her head)
it's all a blank. All of it.

BISHOP
We can help you remember.

She looks up, wanting to believe him.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. AREA 51, DR. HARPER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A CANDLE FLAME dances in the dark of a dim office, clinical but intimate. A white noise machine HUMS softly.

HARPER (O.S.)
If the suppressed memories were of
traumatic experiences, recalling
them could re-trigger the trauma.

The candlelight reflects a fierce resilience in Bella's eyes.

BELLA
Let's git-r-done, doc.

Dr. Harper nods and leans forward, her voice low.

HARPER
Alright. Just relax and breathe, as
if you're going to sleep. Down into
yourself. Into your own mind. No
one can harm you here. You're safe.

Dr. Harper sits in a comfortable leather seat across from Bella. A candle burns on a wooden coffee table between them. Harper's tone of voice rises higher and then lowers again.

HARPER
That's it. Just breathe. Your whole
body has a feeling of warmth and
peace. Let the world fall away. Let
your memories of that night rise
up. Breathe. Tell me what you see.

Bella's eyes close as she falls deeper into a hypnotic sleep.

BELLA
Water... dark rushing water...

HARPER
Can you hear the water?

The white noise shifts, sounding almost like SURF.

BELLA
Yes... I hear it...

Bella's lips part, breath shallow. Her fingers twitch.

EXT. UNDERWATER, PUERTO RICO TRENCH - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

BELLA'S POV flickers, sinking down into the trench, through black water.

BELLA (V.O.)
They're takin' me down... deeper...

Her arms float limp, hair drifting. She's being pulled down to the chasm at an impossible speed.

BELLA (V.O.)
I'm... floating...

A rush of bubbles rise past her face. Lights bloom below. It's a sprawling UNDERWATER BASE, glowing like a dark star.

A SHUDDERING VIBRATION as the USO docks with the mothership.

INT. UNDERWATER BASE - NIGHT

Her POV lurches. She's suddenly inside a hive of rounded corridors. The floor vibrates. Small GREY FIGURES shuffle past, cloaked, hooded, with thin, four-fingered hands.

BELLA (V.O.)
I can't move...

Her POV jolts into a cavernous room. The ceiling is lost in darkness. She turns to see a row of vertical cryo-chambers, ten feet high, each venting mist. Something TWITCHES inside.

Bella's breath quickens as she recognizes RAFAEL RAMIREZ, her friend and Quartermaster, floating inside one of the tubes.

BELLA (V.O.)
Raf... oh God, Raf...

Raf's eyes snap open. He sees her. Her POV moves past him.

She turns her head to see machinery pulsing faintly. Conduits run like veins to glowing tanks with figures curled inside.

BACK IN THE OFFICE (INTERCUT)

Bella's breathing becomes ragged. Her eyes flutter.

HARPER

Take a deep breath. Stay with me.
Look around. What do you see?

Light from the candle streaks, stretching impossibly long.

UNDERWATER BASE, EXAM ROOM

Bella looks down. Her POV shows her arms and legs strapped, her bare chest harnessed to translucent cables. A device hovers above her, red and blue lights strobing in sequence.

BELLA

They're keepin' me... *ahh--*
(her breath catches)
right on the edge...

A tall NORDIC MAN (MISTER X) with chiseled features steps out of the shadows. He has shoulder-length platinum blond hair, and wears a gray uniform. His pallid face is stretched into a broad grin, but there is no humor in his shining blue eyes.

MISTER X holds up a rod-like instrument with a rounded bulb on one end. Bella tenses as he lowers it between her legs. His grin remains fixed but his deep voice is inside her head.

MISTER X (V.O.)

(telepathically)
Do not fear. Time was created to
prevent everything from happening
all at once. This too shall pass,
but in some ways...
(inserts the instrument)
It has already happened.

BACK IN THE OFFICE

Harper flinches as Bella screams, her fear and rage braided.

BELLA

AYYIEEEEEEEEEEE! DON'T TOUCH ME
MOTHERFUCKER! YA GOT NO RIGHT!

UNDERWATER BASE, EXAM ROOM

MISTER X places his hand on Bella's forehead, looking down at her, his gaze both clinical and predatory, his grin unmoving.

MISTER X (V.O.)

(telepathically)
You will learn might makes right,
and to speak only what is permitted.

Bella gasps as she's YANKED out of her body. As her POV tears away, she glimpses herself naked on a metal table, amid a cluster of wires, before being flung into...

A BLACK BOX

Bella looks up at four impossibly high walls. Then the entire ceiling SLAMS shut, echoing in the ringing silence. BLACKOUT.

BELLA (O.S.)

NOOOOO!

BACK IN THE OFFICE

Bella thrashes in the chair, tears streaking her face.

BELLA

No, not the box... please, don't
put me back in the box--

HARPER

Bella, come back! You're here with
me. You're safe. Come back...

BLACK BOX

Endless dark. Total isolation. Loneliness so raw it claws at her mind. She clutches her head. Her own words echo back.

BELLA (O.S.)

...please, don't put me back...

BELLA

That's my voice...

Bella is a tiny figure in the nothingness, drawing herself into a fetal position. Her cry reverberates in the void.

BELLA

Help me--

FADE TO BLACK

Absolute silence. And then a small, broken voice:

BELLA (O.S.)

Somebody... please... help me...

END