

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY

Dim light.

One wall is open.

Beyond it - a deep pool leading out to the sea. A WHALE moves slowly through the water.

On the opposite wall - banners:

"BUILD FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR"

"MAKE THE WORLD KINDER"

At the center - a projection surface.

At the head of the table sits the LION, the council's head.

The BEAR paces nearby, holding a jar of nuts. He snacks as he walks.

OCTOPUS RICK reclines across several chairs in a transparent anatomical suit. His tentacles sort through papers.

The Bear approaches him, trying to offer the jar to different tentacles.

No response.

The Bear tosses a nut into his mouth.

CRUNCH.

LION

The The Great Burrow Program begins.
Rotation is mandatory.

SLOTH AIDE

Not everyone is here yet.

The Lion lifts his head sharply. A low growl.

The Sloth nods.

The projection flickers to life.

ON SCREEN:

- BOWERBIRD VILLAGE. SHIK adjusts a blue pyramid.

- SHORELINE. PUFFERFISH arrange mandalas.

- FOREST. TERMITES move in formation.

The images overlap, existing at once.

Rick watches only Shik.

The projections merge into a single system.

SLOTH SECRETARY

Within one month, each group must
build:
Bowerbirds - a termite mound.
Termites - mandalas by the sea.
Pufferfish - a village for the
bowerbirds.

He scrolls.

SLOTH SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Beavers relocate to the desert.

The Bear steps closer to the Lion.

BEAR
Can they even live there?

LION
Inspection in one month.

BEAR
And if they can't?

Rick flips a page.

RICK
No structure - relocation.

The Bear doesn't move.

BEAR
That's not what I meant...

The Lion places a paw gently on his back.

LION
Then - Antarctica.

The Whale glides past in the water.

A burst of spray.

WHALE
I believe in the beavers.

LION
The system will hold.

The Bear walks to the edge of the pool, sits, and eats.

CRUNCH. CRUNCH.

ON SCREEN - CLOSE

The blue pyramid.

Perfect.

Almost.

One cap shifts – barely.

SOUND: A nut crunch blends into–

EXT. BOWERBIRD VILLAGE - DAY

–a sharp BEAK CLICK.

SHIK, a bowerbird, freezes over a blue pyramid made of bottle caps.

He sees what we saw on the projection: one cap is slightly out of place.

On one side – neat rows of bowers. Clean. Trimmed lawns, all the same color.

On the other – crooked huts. Piles of mixed trash.

SHIK stands by his bower.

In front of him – the blue pyramid.

Behind him – a dump: red plastic, green fragments, cracked glass.

PYU hammers a yellow piece into his mandala.

A male bowerbird walks past with a chick.

The chick reaches toward the blue top.

SHIK snaps his beak right in front of it.

The father pulls the chick away, quickens his pace.

SHIK turns back.

His claw hovers over the pyramid.

He looks at the caps.

Then at the trash behind him.

An OLD BOWERBIRD passes by.

Patchy feathers. Dirt piled on his back.

He stumbles. Some of it falls.

He gathers it. His claws shake.

Neighbors cover their children's eyes and lead them away.

SHIK watches.

A CLICK.

The old bird moves on.
SHIK turns to the pyramid.
His movements falter.
His claw catches the edge.
The pyramid shifts.
He adjusts a cap.
Then another.

EXT. FOREST - ANOTHER VILLAGE - NIGHT

Rain.
SHIK moves between branches. Wet leaves catch on his feathers.
Ahead - another bower. Inside - blue objects, carefully arranged.
No one there.
He slips in.
SHIK grabs one - a shiny blue metal cap.
Then another. And another.
He slips back out.
His head turns sharply, listening.
Rain runs down his feathers.
Drops fall from his beak.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Mud. Water.
SHIK spreads his wings.
Three bowerbirds surround him.
A blow to the chest.
He falls. Caps scatter.
One pins him to the ground.
Another strikes his wing with its beak.
Shik struggles. Slips.
He swings his wing blindly.

Hits. A jerk.

He breaks free.

A couple of caps clutched in his claw.

He takes off.

Below – three blue caps in the mud.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The bowerbirds chase him through the trees.

They begin to fall behind.

Rain intensifies.

Shik's feathers grow heavy. He loses height.

Lightning.

On the ground – a blue glint.

Shik dives.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

In the grass – a butterfly. Motionless.

Lightning.

Raindrops flash on its blue wings.

Shik holds a cap against it.

It matches.

SHIK

There it is. The top.

One wing is broken.

He takes a large leaf.

Carefully wraps the butterfly.

Caps in one claw, the bundle in the other.

He takes off.

INT. SHIK'S BOWER - NIGHT

The table is covered with blue objects.

Shik places the bundle at the edge.

He sways. Feathers caked with mud.

Falls to the floor. Falls asleep.

INT. SHIK'S BOWER - MORNING

A quiet humming.

Shik opens his eyes.

On the table - the butterfly. Alive. Wing bent.

LUMI (V.O., THROUGH COMMUNICATOR)
Hi. It's cozy here.

She gestures lightly with her wing toward a pile of blue objects.

LUMI (CONT'D)
Mine is nicer.

Shik slowly sits up. Rubs his eyes.

Lumi looks at him, lightly moving her legs.

LUMI (CONT'D)
Should I go there?

She nods toward the blue objects.

Shik looks at her wing.

He carefully takes Lumi.

EXT. SHIK'S YARD - MORNING

The pyramid is almost complete.

SHIK lifts LUMI toward the top.

A perfect match.

He freezes. Moves closer.

Closer.

Almost touching.

He stops.

Slowly lowers his wing.

INT. SHIK'S BOWER - MORNING

Shik places Lumi back on the table.

He takes a thin leaf.

Carefully secures her wing.

Then takes two blue caps.

Starts finishing the pyramid.

His movements are quick. Sharp. Almost nervous.

Lumi watches.

SHIK
(not looking)
You don't fit.

LUMI
I'm alive. I'm Lumi.

Shik doesn't respond. Works faster.

EXT. SHIK'S YARD - MORNING

The pyramid is almost complete.

The top is slightly off.

Shik stops.

Looks.

His breathing falters.

Suddenly - he knocks the top row down.

Caps scatter across the ground.

He quickly builds a small triangular cage from twigs.

Sets it beside him.

Takes Lumi. Places her inside.

SHIK
Where should I take you?

LUMI
(quietly)
I... don't have a place like that.

Nearby, PYU adjusts a yellow piece in his mandala.

Then changes it back.

PYU
A new friend?

PYU (CONT'D)
Inspection tomorrow. They beat you
again?

Shik flinches.

SHIK
I don't think so.

PYU
Ten eggs this year.
And a hundred of us.

Shik freezes, a twig in his claw.

CRACK.

He looks at the scattered pyramid.

EXT. BOWERBIRD VILLAGE - DAY

COMMISSION - three female bowerbirds. Behind them, RICK in a suit.

TRANSPORT: ten cradles. Eight empty.

They stop at PYU'S bower.

Pyu stands beside his mandala.

In his claws - a yellow cradle.

Empty.

The females circle it. Examine from different angles. Exchange looks. Nod.

Rick takes an egg from the transport with one tentacle.

With another - lightly touches Pyu's wing.

Carefully places the egg into the yellow cradle.

FEMALES
Congratulations. Inspection in one
week.

Pyu smiles too quickly, like he hasn't decided what to feel.

The commission moves on.

EXT. SHIK'S BOWER - DAY

Shik walks around his pyramid.

Shifts the blue cradle from one wing to the other.

He sees Pyu receiving the egg.

Only one remains in the transport.

Pyu sets the cradle down. Starts dancing around it.

Claps his wings. Jumps.

Shik digs at the ground with his claw.

Lumi hums quietly nearby. The tune falters.

The commission approaches. Studies the pyramid. For a long time.

The females exchange looks. Shake their heads.

Rick isn't looking at Shik. He studies the pyramid.

Then shifts his gaze to Lumi.

She hides behind Shik.

RICK

I'm certain.

He opens the transport. Takes the last egg.

A tentacle moves along the pyramid without touching it - like measuring.

A slight motion.

One cap shifts by a fraction.

Shik moves to fix it - pulls his wing back.

RICK (CONT'D)

The color is consistent.

The females turn away.

Rick extends the egg to Shik.

Shik glances at the pyramid.

It's no longer perfect.

He slowly takes the egg.

SHIK ...yes.

RICK (CONT'D)

I hope you understand the responsibility.

A surprise inspection is coming.

Shik nods. Once. Twice. Three times.

He carefully places the egg into the blue cradle. Sets it on the table.

Returns to the pyramid.

Adjusts a cap.

INT. SHIK'S BOWER - DAY

An egg in a cradle at the center of the table.

LUMI studies it. Gently touches it with her healthy wing. Hums softly.

The egg moves, barely.

Shik sits in the corner. Looking down.

LUMI

Have you wanted it for a long time?
It's a good one.
What if they hadn't given it to you?

In the doorway - the OLD BOWERBIRD.

He stands there too long. A tear on his cheek.

Shik snaps his beak sharply. Once. Then again.

The old bird flinches. Turns and leaves.

A dirty feather remains on the threshold.

Shik gets up. Takes the egg. Places it on a high shelf.

Empty.

He starts adjusting it.

Too carefully.

Steps back.

Then another step.

LUMI (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SHIK

Finding a place.

LUMI

It's alive.