

Subsurface

written by

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TEASER

BLACK.

Heavy, aquatic static crackles beneath. Faint sonar pings echo like distant whale songs lost in the dark.

A voice. Distorted. Female.

MARA (V.O.)
This is Quinn. Station Midas is
compromised. I repeat—don't come
down here.

Silence.

Then a low, grinding whine.

A moment later—

INT. COMMUNICATIONS BAY - MIDAS STATION - NIGHT

A grainy feed. Static stutters across the image. Fluorescent lights buzz. Everything's just a little too still.

MARA QUINN stands in the center of the frame. Late 30s. Her station uniform is wrinkled, stained around the collar. One sleeve is damp. Her hair hangs limp and wet.

She smiles. Too wide. Too still.

MARA
We're all fine now.

Behind her, something flickers. A motion. Indistinct. It's gone when you blink.

INT. MIDAS STATION - MAINTENANCE SHAFT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A boot, slipping slightly in wet algae-slick metal.

MARA's breath is tight, fast. Not panicked—yet. She lowers herself, one rung at a time, ladder groaning beneath her weight.

A faint hum, somewhere above. Mechanical. Breathing? Or maybe just air circulation.

She winces. Her hand slips. She catches herself, hard. Sucks air through her teeth.

INT. MIDAS STATION - LOWER MAINTENANCE DECK - CONTINUOUS

She lands.

The deck is darker than it should be. The overhead light flickers, pulse-like. Condensation drips from the ceiling. Puddles pool across the uneven floor.

The sound is worse here—deeper. Like the station's hull is groaning in its sleep.

MARA moves forward. One hand on the wall. Her fingers trail across cold, damp metal. She stops at a bulkhead door.

Paint flakes from the emergency signage. The words "BIO-CONTROL" are barely legible beneath layers of grime.

A keypad beside the door flashes red. Mara enters a code.

BUZZ. DENIED.

She stares at it.

BUZZ. DENIED.

A third time.

BUZZ. ACCESS GRANTED.

The door hisses open.

INT. BIO-CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She steps inside. Dark.

Then motion-sensor lights flicker on, revealing rows of bio-pods—tall, sleek glass cylinders. Most are dark, empty. One glows faintly blue.

She walks past the dead ones. Stops in front of the lit pod. A body inside. A man. Face swollen. Pale. Eyes open. Lips peeled back in a snarl—or a scream. One hand floats up near the glass, fingers curled, reaching.

Mara places her hand against the glass.

She doesn't blink. Her face slackens. Something behind her shifts. Liquid, not solid. She doesn't turn.

MARA (V.O.)
They didn't tell us what the signal
really was.

INT. MIDAS STATION - UPPER HAB MODULE - EARLIER

Banter. Messy, overlapping conversation.

Three other crewmembers—LEN, mid-40s; DR. ANOUK KLEIN, late 30s; and CASEY, early 20s—sit around a narrow table. Steam rises off metal mugs.

LEN gestures toward a screen above them. Sonar mapping—circular pulses radiating from a dark center.

LEN

Whatever it is, it's old.
Geologically anomalous, Klein said.
Like pre-terrestrial.

ANOUK

I said it predated our sonar
assumptions. Not that it's pre-
terrestrial. Don't start another
Atlantis theory.

CASEY

Still creepy. Sounds like it's...
talking. That last ping? That
wasn't reflection.

They all fall silent. Then the station hums again. That same low moan, deeper than before.

INT. MIDAS STATION - SLEEP QUARTERS - NIGHT

Mara lies on her side. Awake.

Eyes open. Focused on nothing.

There's a slow pulse of light outside her door. Emergency yellow. Then green. Then nothing.

She whispers to herself.

MARA

It's just pressure shifts. Just the
tide. Just—

From the wall above her head, a faint tapping. Rhythmic. Deliberate.

She freezes.

Another tap. Tap. Tap.

She closes her eyes. Doesn't sleep.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS BAY - LATER

Mara at the console. Fingers flying.

ON SCREEN: INCOMING MESSAGE - PRIORITY CODE RED.

She opens it.

TEXT DISPLAYED:

--URGENT--

SECURITY BREACH: QUINN, M.

STATUS: UNDER REVIEW.

RECOMMEND IMMEDIATE ISOLATION.

She stares at it. Doesn't move.

Behind her, a figure shifts in the shadows of the room.

But when she turns--nothing.

The lights dim. Just slightly. Almost like the room is breathing.

MARA (V.O.)
They told me to isolate myself.

INT. MIDAS STATION - AIRLOCK CHAMBER - LATER

She stands alone. Helmet under her arm. Her other hand shakes.

A reflection in the glass ahead--her face, but not quite. A twitch at the cheek. A smirk that isn't hers.

MARA (V.O.)
I think they got it backward.

INT. MIDAS STATION - CORE LAB - EARLIER

Dr. Klein adjusts a dial.

ANOUK
Signal's ramping again. It's like
it's syncing to our systems. To us.

LEN (O.S.)
Can a signal do that?

CASEY (O.S.)
It's not just a signal, is it?

The screens flicker.

Sound cuts out. Then roars back—sonar, screaming.

All three jerk back.

Then static.

The lights die.

Dark.

INT. MIDAS STATION - COMMUNICATIONS BAY - PRESENT

Grainy footage again.

Mara stands in the center. Same uniform. Same posture.

Her mouth moves, but there's no sound.

Then:

MARA
(playback voice)
We're all fine now.

She smiles again.

This time, she doesn't blink.

END TEASER.

ACT ONE

INT. BATHYSCAPHE - DESCENT POD

Blackness.

A tremor in the silence—like breath held too long. Then, slowly, a faint blue glow seeps in, trembling through the seams of the pod.

SONAR PINGS. Measured. Hollow. Each one fainter than the last.

Inside, MARIA QUINN sits strapped into a crash seat. Late 30s. Pale, sharp features under too little sleep and too much waiting. Sweat beads at her temples. Her breathing is shallow. Controlled, but not calm.

She removes a blister pack from her sleeve. Fumbles it. One pill drops to the floor. She stares at it like it betrayed her.

Her hand moves again, slower this time. The second pill makes it to her mouth.

She swallows. No water.

Condensation gathers on the inside of the dome above her. Drops slither like something watching. The descent light outside pulses—a dim, pulsing heartbeat in the depths.

A faint CRACKLE in her headset.

She shifts, tensing.

Nothing. Then—

DISTORTED VOICE (V.O.)
—uinn. Midas is compromised. I
repeat. Don't—

She flinches.

Faint static laughter. Or maybe it's just the ocean.

Her gloved hand moves to the side console. She adjusts the gain.

The voice dies.

A mechanical chime.

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Final approach confirmed. Impact
cushion sequence initiated.
Estimated arrival in three minutes.

She closes her eyes.

Three minutes.

Her fingers, unconsciously, rub a pale, curved scar on the inside of her wrist. Old. Clean. Surgical.

She opens her eyes. Forces stillness. Her lips move—silent, breathless—like a prayer she doesn't believe in anymore.

The static returns, softer this time.

DISTANT VOICE (V.O.)

We're all fine now...

She jerks upright. Stares at the comm.

Nothing.

Her breath fogs the visor.

She wipes it away, like it matters.

Silence again.

Then a faint thud, far below—deep as the earth's own pulse.

Her knuckles whiten.

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Atmospheric breach achieved.
Adjusting descent trajectory.

She nods. Not to the voice. To herself. Like someone trying to mean it.

MARA (V.O.)

Don't fall apart before you even
get there.

She reaches into a side pouch, pulls out a folded photo. Worn at the corners. Two figures—her and a man. Wind whipping their hair. He's grinning. Her face is turned, half-laughing, half looking away.

She tucks it back.

Another ping. Closer now.

A sudden creak—metal tensing under pressure.

She doesn't move.

Another.

Then quiet.

Mara breathes. One slow inhale. One slower exhale.

SYNTHETIC VOICE
Station Midas exterior lights
acquired. Docking in twenty-five
seconds.

The condensation on the dome vibrates—just slightly—as if something brushed against it from the outside.

She doesn't look up.

INT. DOCKING TUBE - AIRLOCK INTERIOR

A muffled *hiss*. Not sharp—drawn-out, like something reluctant to let go.

The outer seal releases with a low groan, followed by a faint release of vapor that curls toward Mara's boots.

She steps forward. Helmet clipped to her belt. Movements careful but not tentative—like someone trying not to spook a room.

INT. MIDAS STATION - DOCKING VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

The red emergency lights cast long shadows across the narrow corridor. Everything is slightly wet—ceilings sweating, rivulets running along the seams of the walls. The station hums low and wrong, like an engine with a cracked tooth.

A lone sign flickers overhead:

WELCOME TO MIDAS STATION - ATLANTIC SHELF SECTOR 9C

The letters glitch. The "MIDAS" stutters in red, then blanks out entirely.

No crew waiting.

No sound but the slow drip of condensation and the occasional zap of a loose wire sparking behind a busted conduit panel.

Mara clears her throat.

MARA
This is Communications Officer
Quinn, Station Midas. Confirm
receipt.

Her voice sounds too loud in the stale air.

Nothing responds. Just a lingering hum. A single light bulb
at the far end of the corridor blinks twice and stays off.

Mara's shoulders shift slightly. Not quite a flinch.

She moves forward, steps echoing softly—too softly, as though
the walls are listening. Her boots leave faint marks in a
layer of unseen grime that only shows when she passes under
red light.

She approaches a bulkhead console.

Touchscreen flickers to life at her approach, sluggish, like
it had to wake up.

SCREEN DISPLAY:

CREW STATUS: 14 ACTIVE

The line pulses once.

Then flickers.

Then updates:

BIOMETRIC SIGNALS ONLINE: 9

She frowns.

Runs a diagnostics check.

SCREEN FLASHES:

ERROR IN INTEGRATION SUBNET. RETRY?

Y/N

She hits Y.

Nothing happens.

She mutters under her breath, voice nearly inaudible.

MARA (CONT'D)
Nine. Why nine?

No alarms. No emergency protocols. No "quarantine in effect" or "environmental hazard." Just silence. The kind that feels like it's hiding something.

She looks up. The walls seem to breathe—just the faintest expansion and contraction of the flexible tubing along the ceiling as pressure adjusts. Or maybe it's just the air.

She continues walking. The next corridor curves slightly, and as she rounds the bend she passes a faded wall stencil.

MIDAS STATION / ATLANTIC SHELF SECTOR 9C

Half the words are smeared—either mold, soot, or something more viscous once and now dry. A handprint overlaps the "SECTOR 9C." The fingers are slightly too long.

Mara stares at it a second too long.

Then turns away.

Keeps moving.

INT. MIDAS STATION - TRANSIT HUB ENTRY

Another display panel blinks to life as she steps into the larger chamber—if "larger" means a few extra feet in every direction.

The lights are dimmer here. Emergency strips pulse every four seconds.

The floor beneath her foot clicks. She freezes.

Nothing happens.

She shifts weight. Another click.

A low-frequency tremor rumbles through the walls. Barely audible—but her body tenses before her brain registers it.

Another biometric panel is mounted beside the next pressure-sealed door.

TOUCHSCREEN DISPLAY:

ZONE ACCESS: MAINTENANCE - GREEN

HABITATION - GREEN

SCIENCE WING - GREEN

COMMS BAY - GREEN

SECURITY - RED - CLEARANCE REQUIRED

Her eyes stop at SECURITY. The red indicator blinks like a warning.

Mara steps closer to the panel.

Attempts to override.

ACCESS DENIED.

She exhales through her nose. Frustration. Or maybe relief.

Her eyes drift to the corner of the ceiling. A security camera hangs slack, cable frayed. The lens has been smeared with something greasy—no longer reflective, just dull and dark like a blind eye.

A soft whisper rises—barely more than air passing through pipes—but it echoes oddly in this space. Like something speaking around corners.

MARA (V.O.)
Not your imagination. Not this
time. You heard it. You always hear
it.

She presses on.

INT. MIDAS STATION - PRIMARY CORRIDOR

She moves slower now. Not afraid—deliberate. Her breath is measured. One, two, hold. One, two...

She passes a locker bay. One of the doors is open. Inside: an empty rig suit, hanging by the shoulders like it was skinned.

A faint buzzing. Then—

A THUD behind her.

She spins.

Nothing.

Just the corridor, empty and damp.

Her eyes scan the walls. Vents. Junctions. She's alone.

Probably.

MARA
Station Midas, this is Officer
Quinn. If anyone's receiving—
respond.

Silence.

TOUCHSCREEN PANEL beside her blinks on.

COMMUNICATIONS UPLINK: INACTIVE

RECEIVERS: STANDBY MODE

MANUAL REBOOT REQUIRED: CORE COMMS CONSOLE - LEVEL B3

MARA (V.O.)
Of course it is. Because of course
it is.

She doesn't speak it. She just exhales. Looks around. The
air's grown heavier.

She takes a step forward. A soft squelch.

Looks down.

Her footprint in the grime is now wet.

Not just wet—shiny. Thick.

She crouches. Runs a gloved finger through the fluid.

Brings it close.

Not water. Not coolant.

Sticky.

She wipes her glove off against the wall. Doesn't look back
at the spot.

Just keeps walking.

INT. MIDAS STATION - HAB ACCESS ENTRY

The corridor forks.

Left: "SCIENCE WING."

Right: "HABITATION + COMMS."

Ahead: a sealed blast door with no marking at all.

She pauses. Lifts her wrist console.

BIOSIGNS:

Location: Scattered.

Five clustered in the *Hab Wing*.

Two moving slowly in *Science*.

Two... static. *Near Core Systems*.

The rest—gone. No trace. No death logs. No logs at all.

MARA (V.O.)
What the hell happened down here?

A low pop from one of the lights. It doesn't go out—but the color shifts slightly.

From red... to a dull amber.

It holds.

She starts toward HABITATION, boots silent on the grating now.

Something shifts behind the blast door.

She stops.

Watches it.

No noise. No movement.

Just a presence.

She turns away. Keeps walking.

But the red light behind her flicks again.

Once.

Twice.

And goes out.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DOCKING BAY - CONTINUOUS

The air hums faintly—charged, unsettled. Mara walks with slow, steady steps, the kind people take through a place they haven't decided is safe.

Behind her, a sound.

A footstep, soft, wrong.

She turns.

LUCÍA RAMOS stands in the threshold of a side hallway. Mid-30s. Pale from too many days below. Hair tied back. Uniform wrinkled like she slept in it. If she slept.

They lock eyes. Lucía doesn't blink.

LUCÍA
You're early.

Flat. No smile. No warmth. Just the words.

Mara straightens instinctively, like someone checking for blame.

MARA
Manifest said I was scheduled for
0400 drop.

Beat.

Lucía doesn't move. Just watches.

LUCÍA
Right. That's what I meant.

Another beat.

Neither woman blinks.

Mara shifts, uncertain if she's missed something—or if Lucía has.

MARA
Was there a change?

LUCÍA
No.

Still no motion to greet her. No hand offered. No welcome.

Mara exhales lightly. The kind of breath meant to move past awkward tension. It doesn't.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
Come on. They'll want you to check
in.

She turns. Walks.

Not brisk. Not slow. Just... moving.

Mara hesitates, glancing back toward the docking seal. Still hissing faintly, as if exhaling its last breath.

Then she follows.

INT. CORRIDOR - MIDAS STATION - WALKING

Mara trails Lucía down the narrow spine of the station.

Pipes hiss above them. The overhead lights pulse every few meters, leaving gaps of darkness between them like missing teeth.

Lucía doesn't look back.

MARA

Comms said there'd be a debrief.
Has that changed?

Lucía stops.

Not all at once. Like something glitched in the body between the intention to stop and the stop itself.

Then turns—slow, smooth.

LUCÍA

What do you mean?

Mara slows. Careful.

MARA

Standard protocol. Arrival brief.
Risk assessment. Status summary.

Lucía's eyes narrow, but only for a blink.

LUCÍA

That's... right. You'll get one.

A beat.

Mara studies her. Nothing overtly wrong. But everything off by a few degrees.

MARA

Your team logged nine biosigns.

Lucía tilts her head.

LUCÍA
Nine's accurate.

No clarification. No concern. Just a statement.

MARA
Fourteen listed as active.

Lucía smiles. Brief. Mechanical.

LUCÍA
Data sometimes lags. Integration
subnet's a mess.

She turns again. Keeps walking.

Mara hesitates.

Watches her go.

Then follows.

INT. MIDAS STATION - CROSS-JUNCTION NEAR HAB ENTRY

They pause at a junction—three corridors branch out, each marked with faded signs. The lights here flicker in a rhythmic pattern. Not random. Almost like... breathing.

Lucía leans against the wall. Not relaxed. Bracing.

LUCÍA
Your bunk's in D-3. Third on the
left. Sheets are clean.

A weak smile. Like she remembered to smile halfway through it.

MARA
And the others?

Lucía doesn't answer right away.

LUCÍA
You'll meet them.

Then something shifts behind her eyes. The muscles at the corners of her mouth twitch, like she's just tasted something metallic.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
You'll see.

She pushes off the wall and gestures toward the rightmost corridor.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)

After you.

Mara looks down that hall.

Dim. Warped slightly from pressure expansion.

And so quiet.

MARA (V.O.)

This isn't how people act. This
isn't how welcome works.

She walks anyway.

Lucía follows.

INT. CORRIDOR - TOWARD HABITATION SECTOR

Their footsteps echo faintly. One-two. One-two.

Lucía finally speaks.

LUCÍA

You said comms were offline?

Mara nods.

MARA

Manual reboot flagged. Core
console. Level B3.

Lucía doesn't respond right away.

Then—

LUCÍA

Figures.

Just that.

Another few steps.

MARA

Were they working before?

Lucía stops again.

LUCÍA
You'll get your answers in the
brief.

Again that ghost of a smile. It doesn't reach her eyes.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
Just follow protocol. You remember
protocol, right?

Mara studies her. Her voice—flat. Her posture—composed. But
there's something held too tightly in the skin of her face.

MARA
Yeah. I remember.

Lucía nods once.

They walk on.

Behind them, one of the hallway lights fizzles and dies. The
darkness doesn't rush in. It just... settles.

INT. MAIN CORRIDOR - WALK AND TALK - CONTINUOUS

Lucía leads.

Mara walks behind her, just out of reach, like following a
shadow that might not want to be caught.

The corridor stretches ahead—long, ribbed with vented tubing.
The walls sweat. Patches of mold bloom in quiet corners where
no one seems to look anymore.

Above them, holograms flicker—half-functional projections
from a time when MIDAS tried to feel like home. A manta ray
phases in overhead. Its tail spasms. Then it jitters once,
twice, and vanishes into static.

On one wall, the faded mural of a whale—paint chipped and
curled at the edges—looms in a half-smile, its eye long since
scrubbed blank. Its body is cracked open down the middle like
something once burst out.

Mara watches it pass. Breathes in a mix of old brine and
machine oil.

MARA
Half the lights are down. What
happened to uplink integrity?

Lucía doesn't stop walking. Doesn't turn.

LUCÍA
It happens. We're deep.

That's all she offers.

Mara's brows knit. She walks faster to match pace.

MARA
Surface said the last check-in was
over ninety-six hours ago.

Lucía makes a sound—half cough, half dismissive exhale.

LUCÍA
We've had bigger problems.

They pass a junction. The floor slopes slightly, warping the shape of the overhead beams. One of them groans under tension as they walk beneath it.

MARA
What kind of problems?

Lucía slows just a hair.

LUCÍA
The kind that don't go in reports.

She says it like a joke, but there's no curve to her lips.

Mara doesn't laugh.

They keep walking.

The red strip-lighting above them pulses unevenly. Another flickering hologram tries to initiate—a school of fish, looping endlessly, trapped in their animation cycle. Their bodies distort each time the light pulses.

Lucía glances at them. Her jaw tightens.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
They were supposed to update these
displays last quarter.

MARA
You think that's the problem?

Lucía doesn't answer.

They pass a wall panel with emergency contact instructions etched into it—names and photos beneath. Five of the images are scratched out. Not digitally. Scratched. With something sharp.

Mara stops walking.

Lucía doesn't.

MARA (CONT'D)

Lucía.

Lucía slows. Doesn't turn.

MARA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

What happened here?

Lucía finally turns her head. Her eyes are unreadable.

LUCÍA

They were reassigned.

A long pause.

MARA

Reassigned?

Lucía's voice lowers.

LUCÍA

Look, Quinn. You're here now.
Doesn't matter what happened
before. Focus on your role. Keep
the system clean. Keep comms alive.
That's your job.

Mara doesn't move.

MARA

And the missing biosigns?

Lucía just stares.

Then turns and keeps walking.

Mara watches her go.

Then follows.

They descend a short stairwell where mosslike buildup creeps out from the seams between panels. A warning sign reads: *SECURE ALL EQUIPMENT - GRAVITY STABILIZERS AT 78%*. It's been hastily taped over with a sticky note: *STILL TRUE LOL - LEN*.

Mara notices. Lucía doesn't comment.

MARA (CONT'D)

What's the system load?

LUCÍA
Don't worry about it.

MARA
I wasn't worried. I was asking.

Lucía stops at a corridor junction.

Turns. Her face is blank.

LUCÍA
You'll be bunking in E12. Comms Hub
is two decks down. When you're done
unpacking, go straight there. Don't
wander.

Her tone is even. But there's a tension behind her eyes. Like
someone waiting to see if Mara listens.

MARA
Unpacking won't take long.

Lucía gives a single nod.

Then turns, walking back the way they came—no goodbye.

Just gone.

Mara stays in the junction for a moment.

Listens.

Nothing.

Just the low drone of MIDAS humming around her, like it's
clearing its throat.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - BUNK ROOM E12 - CONTINUOUS

A pneumatic sigh as the hatch opens. The room beyond is dim,
washed in the ever-present amber gloom of MIDAS's emergency
lighting.

Mara steps in, letting the hatch seal behind her.

Silence. The kind that amplifies itself.

Four bunks. Two unmade. One stripped to the mattress. The
last—hers—tightly made, synthetic blanket pulled taut like a
skin.

The air smells like old insulation and something faintly
organic—like kelp dried too long in recycled air.

Mara sets her gear down with a soft thud.

She moves to the locker embedded in the wall—E12 stenciled above it, paint half-peeled. She places her hand on the palm-scan.

The lock clicks.

She opens it.

And freezes.

Inside:

A dented black metal mug, enamel chipped, handle slightly melted on one edge.

A notebook—soggy at the corners, warped with water damage, cover peeling back like skin after a sunburn.

A name tag stuck to the inside door:

QUINN, M.

Exact spelling.

Exact placement.

Even the model of ID tag—an older variant phased out cycles ago.

Mara doesn't move.

Just stands there, eyes locked on the tag.

Then, slowly, she reaches out. Runs a finger along the metal.

It flakes.

Oxidized.

Rough red-brown pitting. The edges are dulled, corners rust-soft. Like it's been here for years.

But she's never been here before.

Not until today.

She pulls her hand back, stares at her fingertips. A smear of rust dusts the glove.

Her breath catches.

She turns—quickly—toward the door.

Empty hallway beyond the viewport. Still. Watching.

No one there.

She closes the locker. Doesn't slam it. Doesn't rush. Just... closes it.

The room feels tighter now. Like the walls have noticed her.

She sits on the edge of the bunk. Not tired. Not ready. Just trying to anchor herself to something.

Then opens the notebook.

The first few pages are blurred illegible. Ink exploded by moisture. Scribbles melted into Rorschach shapes.

She flips ahead.

One word appears, scrawled in sharp, deliberate print:

"REMEMBER."

Beneath it, a phrase. Faded. But there.

"Check the pipes in D-wing."

She flips another page.

There's a crude sketch. Looks like the central junction by the filtration core. Something's circled.

Something labeled "?NOT NEW?"

She slams the notebook shut.

Leans forward. Elbows on knees. Head in hands.

MARA (V.O.)

No. You're tired. Decompression.
High-oxygen descent. Pressure
hallucinations. Standard stuff.

But she doesn't believe it.

Not really.

She exhales. Rises. Stows the notebook back in the locker.

Then—because she has to—she looks again at the name tag.

Still there.

Still hers.

But not hers.

A long pause.

Then she shuts the locker again. This time firmer.

Grabs her kit. Slings it over her shoulder.

And leaves.

INT. COMMS HUB - LATER

The hatch lets out a dull groan as it seals behind Mara. She stands in the middle of the Communications Bay, taking it in.

The room is larger than expected. Domed ceiling. Modular consoles curve around the perimeter. Screens hang loose from some of the stations, cables curling like veins from their backs. A red emergency lamp pulses once every ten seconds.

The place feels *hollow*—like sound itself is thinner here.

Mara crosses to the central terminal.

She powers it up. The screen flutters, fights itself, then stabilizes—barely.

INPUT: USER LOGIN — [QUINN, M.]

She types.

The system hesitates. Then chirps acceptance.

She begins a series of diagnostic commands.

Fingers glide across cracked keys. Each keystroke followed by a hesitant beep from a machine trying to remember how to obey.

 **SCREEN DISPLAY:
INITIATE UPLINK DIAGNOSTIC

 SCAN LOG ARCHIVE
OUTBOUND SIGNAL QUEUE - LAST 7
DAYS**

The station hums as the queries churn.

Mara watches the progress bars inch forward.

One of the side monitors kicks on. A ghostly blue flicker blinks through the cracked screen.

SYSTEM LOG: USER 'QUINN, M.' — OUTBOUND TRANSMISSION — D4-
CODE ENCRYPTION — TIMESTAMP: -4D 03H 19M

She frowns.

MARA
That's not possible.

She clicks the file.

PROMPT: DECRYPT Y/N?

She hesitates.

Then hits Y.

The screen stutters.

Static floods the interface—thick, underwater noise. A faint
feedback whine, like something caught behind glass.

A video window opens.

Her own face.

Not just similar—identical.

Same bone structure. Same scar inside the left brow.

But this Mara is pale, lips cracked, hair wet and stuck to
her face. Her uniform collar is stained.

She leans in toward the lens, eyes hollow.

She whispers.

RECORDED MARA (ON SCREEN)
Do not trust yourself.

Then the video fractures.

Sound spikes. A digital scream of white noise shreds the feed
—

The screen cuts to black.

Mara doesn't breathe.

She just stares.

Her reflection flickers faintly in the dead monitor—eyes
wide, barely blinking, jaw tense like a held scream.

Then—

BLIP.

The terminal wakes again.

A new line of text types itself, one keystroke at a time. No sound. Just the growing unease of it.

>> WELCOME BACK, MARA.

The cursor blinks.

Once.

Twice.

She steps back.

But the text remains.

Blinking.

Waiting.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. COMMONS AREA - EARLY MORNING CYCLE

The Commons was built to feel open. Comforting. A break from tight corridors and steel. Now it feels like a room trying to remember how to be human.

The overhead lights pulse low-dim amber cycling through slow flickers. Tables are overturned. Chairs abandoned mid-swivel. A screen on the far wall plays a looping video: deep-sea footage of a giant squid drifting past the wreck of a submersible. No audio. Just the visual, glitching every few seconds. The squid jerks backward and resets. Again. Again.

Mara enters.

Every footstep echoes longer than it should.

She walks slowly, scanning. Not just for people—signs of life. Something recent. Something that explains the warm air on the back of her neck, like someone just left.

She steps over a fallen thermos. Nearly trips.

Looks down.

A ceramic mug rests upright at the edge of the nearest table.

She picks it up.

Steam curls faintly from inside.

She touches the side.

Still warm.

Her brow creases.

She turns in place, looking.

MARA (V.O.)

No boots. No voices. No pressure
seals opening. So who the hell was
just here?

She sets the mug down carefully. It clinks.

Somewhere behind her—

A door creaks open.

She spins fast.

A corridor door. Just swinging open on its own. Hinge slow, sound long.

No one there.

She squints into the hallway beyond it. Nothing but pulse light and emptiness.

Mara backs up slowly.

Her eyes scan above now-vents, ducts, seams. One of them hums louder than the rest. A tight whine under the standard flow of recirc air.

She stares at it.

The humming rises—not louder, but closer. Sharper.

Her hand goes to the comm on her collar.

Suddenly, crackling static.

She winces.

Then—

Her own voice in her ear. Whispered. Thin as thread through water:

COMM VOICE (MARA'S VOICE)
We remember you.

She goes still.

MARA
Repeat. Say again?

Silence.

The hum fades. Ventilation returns to its usual drone.

She taps her comm interface.

Nothing.

Dead channel.

She looks back at the mug.

Still steaming.

She turns toward the screen—the looping squid.

Now it's paused.

Just the wreck.

Then the feed cuts to black.

And on that black screen, for just a moment, faint text flickers. Blurred. Gone before she can fully read it.

She steps closer.

The screen resets. Loop restarts.

Squid. Wreck. Squid. Wreck.

Mara takes a step back. Then another.

She leaves the mug where it is.

And walks toward the exit.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Mara steps into the Observation Deck—or what's left of it.

The chamber rises in a quiet arc, glass dome curving over a wraparound console. Or at least, it *used* to be glass. The entire upper viewport is fractured, spiderwebbed with a thick resin seal layered unevenly across the break.

Light filters through it—a muted, bruised red, pulsing faintly as though from something moving on the other side. But the distortion is wrong. It isn't just water refracting. It *shifts* when she isn't looking directly at it.

She approaches.

The resin looks soft from a distance. Up close, it's matte, solid, textured like muscle tissue frozen mid-spasm.

Mara leans in. Watches.

Nothing moves.

But something feels *alive* in the wall. Something *pressing back*.

She stares, breath shallow.

A single sonar ping cuts through the room—sharp, close. Then silence.

She jolts—then catches herself.

A beat.

Then—

DR. IVES N'KOMO (O.S.)
Beautiful, isn't it? Even when it
breaks.

Mara turns sharply.

DR. IVES N'KOMO stands just inside the doorway. Forties.
Tall, clean uniform, sleeves too crisp for someone who's been
here long. His smile is pleasant. Measured. Practiced.

N'KOMO
I find people forget that—beauty
doesn't end with damage. Sometimes
it starts there.

She doesn't reply.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)
Sorry. I didn't mean to startle.
Thought you might be headed this
way. It's the only place on the
station where the signal isn't
screaming, after all.

He steps forward. Offers a hand.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)
Dr. Ives N'komo. Behavioral
Analytics Lead. Psychological Ops
Division. But most people just say
"station shrink."

Mara shakes his hand. Slowly.

MARA
Quinn. Communications Officer.

He smiles wider, as if it's a punchline only he hears.

N'KOMO
Of course. We've... met.

She tilts her head.

MARA
We haven't.

Beat.

N'KOMO
Ah. Yes. You're right. *First time.*
My mistake.

His eyes flick away—briefly. Too quickly.

Mara watches him.

He moves toward the edge of the deck. Taps a panel that doesn't respond. Taps it again, then stops.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

This station resists being known,
you know. Most places surrender to
human presence eventually. But
MIDAS... MIDAS holds things close.
Like a secret with breath.

He turns back, smile tight.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

Drink?

He produces a small glass vial from his jacket. Metallic cap. Unlabeled. Offers it casually, like it's a coffee refill.

Mara doesn't move.

MARA

I'm on shift.

N'KOMO

Everyone's always on shift here. No
one knows when the cycle really
begins or ends. You'll lose that
tether soon enough.

She doesn't take the drink.

MARA

You said we've met.

N'komo lifts the vial. Sips from it himself. Grimaces, then nods approvingly, as if that were the plan all along.

N'KOMO

Did I?

MARA

Yes.

Beat.

N'KOMO

Must've been thinking of someone
else.

MARA

Someone who looks like me?

He meets her gaze. And for the first time, there's something behind his eyes.

N'KOMO

Not *exactly* like you.

He says it lightly. But her stomach turns.

MARA

Has there been another Quinn on this station?

N'KOMO

Only in theory.

She takes a step forward.

MARA

What does that mean?

N'komo looks back toward the resin-coated viewport.

The red light pulses once, as if reacting to the question.

N'KOMO

It means some people come down here and leave pieces of themselves behind. Names, echoes, decisions. Most forget. Some remember too much.

He turns back.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

You should be careful, Mara. There's a difference between knowing who you are and knowing *when* you are.

Mara's jaw tightens.

MARA

I think I'll report this conversation.

N'KOMO

Of course.

He smiles again. Too quickly.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)
Let me know how that goes.

Behind them, the resin pulses again. This time visibly. As if something stirred within it.

They both feel it. Neither acknowledges it.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)
Welcome aboard.

He turns and walks out, not waiting for her to follow.

Mara stays.

Alone with the red glow.

She watches it.

And this time—

It *flickers*.

Just once.

Like a blink.

INT. RESEARCH WING - SEALED HATCH (PASSAGEWAY) - LATER

The corridor narrows the deeper Mara walks. Overhead lights flicker at long intervals, throwing broken shadows against the ribbed walls.

She stops at a junction.

To the left, the hallway continues toward living quarters and hydroponics.

To the right, a reinforced blast door seals off the Research Wing.

She turns right.

Steps closer.

The hatch looms at the end of a short, sloped hallway. Pitted from impact. Streaked with streaks that aren't quite rust-darker, stickier. Like something inside tried to claw its way out.

A faint orange glow pulses from the edges.

She approaches.

The wall to her right flickers to life—an old holographic warning display barely hanging together:

⚠ PRESSURE DAMAGE - ENTRY RESTRICTED

AUTHORIZATION OVERRIDDEN

The message repeats. Then skips.
Then repeats again.

Mara reaches for the panel beside the hatch. Taps it.

Nothing happens.

She taps harder.

The screen flickers. Glows. Then goes black again.

The hatch stays sealed.

Behind the metal—just faintly—scratching.

It starts soft.

Then stops.

Then starts again.

Like someone trying not to be heard. Or something trying to remember how to move.

Mara steps back.

She scans the area. Notices the wall just left of the panel—rough metal covered in overlapping grime, patches where the wall's been scraped clean by hand.

Graffiti scratched into the alloy.

The letters are deep. Uneven. Like they were carved over time. With something sharp. Something desperate.

"THE FLOOR BREATHES."

She stares at it.

The air in the corridor feels thinner now. Slightly humid. Like it was holding back.

She kneels beside the graffiti.

Touches one of the letters.

The groove is too deep for a fingernail. Tool marks? No. Jagged. Inexact. Something else.

She hears the scratching again.

Turns to the hatch.

Nothing visible.

But now there's a sound from below. A creaking tension in the floor panels. Metal straining. Like pressure equalizing—but not from above. From beneath.

MARA (V.O.)
Pressure shifts. Tectonic stress.
Station mooring adjusting. That's
all. Standard deep-sink behavior.
Nothing anomalous.

But her eyes drift down.

And stay there.

Her boots vibrate just slightly. Barely enough to register. But it's not the standard hum of MIDAS. It's... a pulse.

One-two.

One-two.

She backs away from the hatch.

Slowly.

The warning hologram glitches again.

The orange light from the door flickers—

And turns red.

Just for a moment.

SCRATCHING resumes. Louder this time.

Not random now. Rhythmic. Deliberate.

Like breathing.

She turns. Walks fast. Doesn't run.

Her steps echo all the way back down the corridor.

As she passes the junction again—

She glances back.

The light by the hatch is off now.

The graffiti glows faintly in the dark.

Like it's been burned in.

INT. SURVEILLANCE ROOM - ARCHIVE TERMINAL - LATER

Dim and cramped, the Surveillance Room hums with the low, constant churn of cooling fans. The air smells faintly of melted plastic and dust. One chair. One terminal. Four dead monitors and one that still tries to live.

Mara enters. Pulls the door shut behind her. Locks it.

The only light is the terminal display, its glow flickering unevenly, like it's underwater.

She slides into the chair. Types.

INPUT: DOCKING LOG - USER QUINN, M.

ACCESS REQUEST: VISUAL RECORDS - BAY C, CORRIDOR NETWORK

The system hesitates.

Then chokes.

Then loads.

A grid of timestamps and corridor identifiers stutters onto the screen, blinking erratically as if buffering from memory it barely trusts.

She selects: "CORRIDOR C - CAMERA 14 - TIME RANGE: -01:15 to +00:00 since Docking Event."

Video begins to scroll. No sound.

Mara leans in. Watches.

Footage: Corridor C.

Sparse. Lights flickering. Walls sweating. Normal, if anything down here still qualifies.

T+00:04:37 - A figure appears at the far end.
Her.

Walking slowly. Head scanning left and right. Clearly uncertain. Boots precise on the grating.

MARA (V.O.)
Okay. That's me. That's-

She taps the keyboard. Skips ahead.

T+00:10:51.

Another figure.

Same corridor. Opposite direction.

Also her.

Mara freezes.

She scrubs the footage back.

First Mara walking one way.

Second Mara walking the other. Six minutes apart.

She slows the footage.

And in one glitch-frame—both bodies occupy the same corridor.
Same shot. Same lighting.

Left Mara passes through the center of frame. Right Mara
pauses—

And turns.

Looks directly at the surveillance camera.

Locks eyes with the lens.

Expression blank. Lips parted slightly, like she's about to
speak.

Then the footage jumps. Pixel smear. Color inversion.

Resumes with only empty corridor.

Mara sits completely still. One hand over her mouth.

She rewinds again.

Frame by frame.

There.

Her other self—watching. Not caught. Not surprised. Like she
knows the camera is there. Like she's been waiting.

MARA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's not playback. That's not—

She taps another key. Pulls up internal diagnostics.

Nothing wrong. No flagged anomalies. System believes this is *normal behavior*.

MARA

No. No, this isn't—

She pauses.

Breathes.

And types:

INPUT: CAMERA ARCHIVE - ALL INSTANCES: USER 'QUINN, M.'
DETECTED

The terminal thinks. Whirring louder now. Fans rattling in the back casing.

RESPONSE:

19 APPEARANCES DETECTED

FILTER: TIMESTAMP DUPLICATES - ACTIVE

RESULT: 6 ANOMALOUS DUPLICATES FOUND

Six.

Six different instances where she appears more than once—same corridors, same cycles. Different behavior. Different paths.

She opens the first.

Camera 23. Hallway outside mess.

Her—leaning against the wall, breathing hard.

And her again—walking past, expression vacant.

They don't see each other.

Next file.

Camera 9. Lift shaft.

She's inside the lift.

And outside it. Watching.

MARA (V.O.)

No. No, I don't remember any of this.

The terminal glitches.

Then the video closes itself.

A line of text types slowly on the console.

>> STOP LOOKING

She jerks away from the keyboard.

The cursor blinks. Waiting.

Then types again.

>> YOU'RE MAKING IT WORSE

A final message populates beneath.

>> RETURN TO D-WING

The screen goes black.

Mara stares.

Her reflection stares back.

Only—just for a second—her reflection doesn't blink when she does.

INT. MARA'S QUARTERS - NIGHT CYCLE

Low lights hum at half-life. A recycled fan ticks behind the wall like an insect that doesn't know it's dying.

Mara sits on the edge of her bunk, boots still on, uniform creased, fingers stained with grease and time. Her posture is rigid—but her eyes drift. Glazed. Watching nothing.

On her lap: her personal device, wired into a station console port.

Body cam footage plays silently across the screen.

She watches herself inside the bathyscaphe—descending. Silent. Still.

Readouts in the lower corner confirm date, time, oxygen mix. Everything checks out.

T-minus 5:12:44 and counting.

Mara leans in. Scrubs forward, scanning—

T-minus 5:07:29

The descent proceeds normally. She takes a sip from a hydration pouch. Her eyelids droop—half-asleep.

T-minus 5:05:04

T-minus 5:02:48

T-minus 5:01:03

Then—

JUMP CUT.

The timestamp skips forward:

T-minus 00:12:55

The bathyscaphe is just above docking range. Her posture has changed. Her hair is damp. Her uniform jacket is unzipped.

There's a thin line of blood under her left nostril.

MARA
(quietly)
No.

She rewinds.

Same jump.

Five hours—gone.

She checks the metadata. No errors. No corruption flags. But it's clean. Too clean.

She pulls up her biometric data from the same window. Heart rate, eye movement, temp readouts.

MARA (CONT'D)
(reading)
REM state. Stable vitals. No
cortical spikes. No movement. No—

She cuts herself off.

The monitor reflects her face now, pale and tense, eyes wide.

She reaches into the small satchel beside her bed.

Pulls out the notebook.

Flips past the warped first page.

Stops.

Her handwriting. Blocky. Tilted slightly to the left.

It reads: "Check the archive. You already saw this."

Her throat tightens.

She flips again.

Next page: "You won't remember."

Next: "Do not talk to Ives."

A small blotch of ink bleeds over the word "not," as if someone had tried to erase it and failed.

She stares at the page.

Then tears her eyes away and closes the book.

Breath ragged.

MARA (V.O.)
I didn't write that. I didn't— *But*
it's your handwriting. I didn't.
But you know it is.

She glances around her quarters. At the locker. At the walls.

Suddenly too quiet.

She opens her console again. Types:

INPUT: USER ACTIVITY LOG - BATHYSCAPHE DESCENT - PERSONAL
PROFILE QUINN, M.

The log blinks to life.

A list of actions scrolls across the screen—timestamps lining each one.

The five-hour gap is there too. Logged as:

"Inactive - Sleep Phase - REM State Maintained"

And beneath that:

"System Override - Identity Confirmation Logged // User:
QUINN, M."

She leans forward.

MARA
(under her breath)
I didn't override anything.

The screen flickers.

A small audio clip plays from her speaker-clipped, crackling.
Her own voice.

RECORDED VOICE (MARA)
You're not asking the right
questions.

She jerks back.

Silence.

No file open. No source visible.

The notebook falls to the floor. Pages fanning open.

On the inside cover, something newly written:

"CHECK THE FLOOR."

She stares.

Doesn't move.

Only breathes.

Shallow.

Measured.

A hand grips her thigh-tight, unconscious. Bracing against
something her mind can't yet name.

The lights dim further.

Her console powers down.

One final line of green text scrolls across the dark screen.

>> SHE'S STILL IN HERE.

The cursor blinks.

Once.

Then everything goes black.

INT. COMMS HUB - RETURN VISIT - NIGHT CYCLE

The lights in the Comms Bay have dimmed since Mara's last
visit, but the terminal still hums-like it's been waiting.
Dust motes drift through the faint emergency glow.

The red pulse from the auxiliary systems gives the walls a sick rhythm.

Mara enters, slow, cautious, clutching her notebook against her side like armor. Her other hand hovers near her comms earpiece, but doesn't touch it.

She sits at the central terminal.

Activates the screen.

INPUT: ARCHIVAL SIGNAL LOGS - USER: QUINN, M.

SEARCH PARAMETERS: UNAUTHORIZED MESSAGES

TIMESTAMP RANGE: LAST 30 DAYS

The system hesitates.

Then scrolls.

Line after line of encoded transmissions, inbound and outbound. Most corrupted. A few tagged unknown origin. Many timestamped before her arrival.

One entry draws her eye.

AUTO-LABELED: "QUINNLOGDAYSPRIOR0017"

No metadata. No creator ID.

She hesitates.

Opens it.

The video flickers into life.

On screen: Mara.

Same chair. Same posture. Same room. But sickened. Gaunt. Hair wet. Her breathing shallow and fast.

She leans toward the lens.

RECORDED MARA

There's something under the floor.

She grabs her side like something inside her is waking up.

RECORDED MARA (CONT'D)

It's not rock. It's not alive. Not dead either. It hears us. It... reflects us.

A static spike fractures the screen.

Her face distorts—one frame, elongated, wrong—and the eyes go black.

RECORDED MARA (CONT'D)
If this message gets out—don't send
anyone.
And for God's sake, don't send me.

The image implodes into static. White-red-black. Then silence. Mara recoils from the screen, chest rising and falling. She checks the timestamp.

Dated: 7 days before her arrival.

No anomaly in the system clock. File is authenticated.

She opens the notebook. Flips to the middle.

Her handwriting. Fresh ink. Deep enough to bleed.

"YOU SENT YOURSELF."

She stares at the page. Breath shallow.

The console flickers.

A prompt types itself:

>> WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY THE NEXT FILE?

Mara doesn't answer.

She just stares into the screen.

And as she does—

Her reflection begins to glitch. A stutter. A blur.

Then—

The lights flicker. In the reflection: her eyes turn black. Two bottomless voids.

Then—cut back. Normal. Too fast to trust.

She flinches.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ENGINEERING SHAFT - NEARLY EMPTY COMMON AREA - LATER

Low ceilings. Sparse lighting. One wall hums with open heat ducts and exposed piping. The space smells like old coolant and metal fatigue. Nearby, a systems node-half-gutted-spills coiled hydraulic lines and cracked foam insulation like viscera.

Lucía Ramos crouches beside the node, sleeves rolled to the elbow, tightening a coupler with rhythmic force. She doesn't look up.

Mara stands a few feet away.

Watching her.

Tight grip on the edge of her notebook. Like if she lets go of that, she'll float off the floor.

A long silence.

Then—

MARA

You said Rowe was sick.

Lucía keeps working. Doesn't glance her way.

MARA (CONT'D)

N'komo said he went topside.

A longer pause.

Lucía sighs through her nose.

LUCÍA

People say things.

She yanks the wrench counterclockwise—too hard, metal screeching.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)

Doesn't make them true.

MARA

Which one's the lie?

Lucía stands. Wipes her hands on her pant leg.

Moves toward another conduit.

MARA (CONT'D)
 There are logs showing you sealed
 access to the Command Core.
 Four days before my arrival.
 Why?

Lucía freezes.

Doesn't turn around.

Then—softly, but sharp:

LUCÍA
 Because the Core started talking
 back.

She yanks open a panel. Reaches in, adjusts something. Avoids
 eye contact.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
 Because it stopped being just a
 room and became... something else.

MARA
 That's not in any report.

Lucía smiles—small, bitter.

LUCÍA
 Reports don't mean shit down here.
 We don't log nightmares.

Mara steps closer.

MARA
 What happened to Rowe?

Lucía exhales. Frustrated. Leans hard against the panel.

MARA (CONT'D)
 Why seal the Core?

LUCÍA
 Because it listens. Because it
 mimics. Because sometimes it sends
 things out that sound like you.

She turns.

Face pale. Hands shaking slightly.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
 You want the truth?

Beat.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
 Why do you keep asking the same
 things every time you show up?

Mara freezes.

A beat passes. Then another.

MARA
 What do you mean—every time?

Lucía's expression goes still. That one second of
 vulnerability locks back down. Steel over ice.

LUCÍA
 Forget it.

She starts to walk past.

MARA
 Lucía.

Lucía doesn't stop.

MARA (CONT'D)
 Tell me what I've done.

LUCÍA
 (over her shoulder)
 You don't want to know.

MARA
 Try me.

Lucía pauses at the edge of the corridor. Her voice comes
 low, flat:

LUCÍA
 Every time, you come down thinking
 it's the first. Every time, you dig
 in. You ask about Rowe. About the
 Core. Every time, you don't listen.

MARA
 How many times?

Lucía doesn't answer.

Just walks out. Boots echoing away. Mara stands alone.

The pipe behind her groans. A faint hiss. Then silence again.
 She opens the notebook.

Blank page.

Then—without moving the pen—words appear: "YOU'RE NOT ASKING THE RIGHT VERSION."

She shuts the notebook.

Hard.

INT. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - OUTER CHAMBER - LATER

The door clicks open after Mara finishes the bypass. The manual lock override wheezes as it releases, like the door hasn't opened in days—or longer.

She steps into the outer office.

A stale heaviness clings to the air. Dust floats like sediment suspended in water. Desks line the wall, unused. A cracked screen dangles from a broken armature. One digital clock above the doorway blinks the same second over and over—04:07:58. 04:07:58. 04:07:58.

She scans the space. No sign of Captain Rowe.

A used ration wrapper lies balled in the corner, still carrying the faint chemical smell of processed heat-meal. Next to it, a half-empty water pack. Recently opened.

She crosses to the personal console mounted into the wall. Dust has settled on the surface—but the keyboard is clean, keys worn smooth. Someone's been using it.

MARA
(under breath)
If you're gone, why are you still
logging in?

She taps the screen.

The system hesitates, then flickers to life. The command interface pulses weakly—low power mode.

She pulls up the station logs.

INPUT: MEDICAL INCIDENT REPORTS - LAST 30 DAYS

SEARCHING...

RESULT: 0 FILES FOUND.

No illnesses. No quarantines. Nothing logged for Rowe. Nothing at all.

She narrows the query.

INPUT: PERSONNEL STATUS - ROWE, C.

MANIFEST FILE OPEN.

Rowe's file loads. Photo, credentials, clearance level.

Then:

STATUS: EVACUATED

SHUTTLE: SURFACE TRANSPORT 4B

DATE: -3 DAYS

She stares at the record.

Then pulls up DOCK LOGS.

Scrolls to the matching date.

SHUTTLE 4B - STATUS: OFFLINE

MAINTENANCE HOLD - INOPERABLE

REPAIR TICKET: STALLED - PARTS UNAVAILABLE

No launch. No lift. No departure clearance.

She flips back to Rowe's log.

Still marked evacuated.

MARA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
So you didn't leave.

She backs out of the record.

Runs a full access log trace on his credentials.

They continue through yesterday.

Multiple login entries.

None of them in public modules.

All from restricted nodes: Command Core. D-Wing. Storage 3B.
Observation Deck.

Her blood chills.

She checks the most recent access.

Timestamp: 04:07:58.

The same moment repeating on the digital wall clock.

Her eyes flick back up.

04:07:58. 04:07:58. 04:07:58.

It hasn't moved.

She touches the console again.

Static.

The screen stutters. Then clears.

A single new entry populates the log:

>> USER: ROWE, C. - ACTIVE SESSION RESUMED

Mara stares. Then—on the far desk—one of the comms units chirps. A faint hum rises under the floor. She freezes. The wall clock blinks once. Then again. But the time doesn't change.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - MEMORY SEQUENCE (IS IT?)

SMASH CUT.

Bright light. Blinding at first.

A sterile, softly lit therapy room. Earthside—or so it seems.

Walls white. Corners curved. Soft furniture, real wood. A small succulent sits in the center of a round table, perfectly still.

Mara sits across from an unseen figure. Civilian clothes. No insignia. Pale. Her hands tremble, barely noticeable unless you're watching for it.

A low aquatic murmur fills the space, like you're underwater in a distant pool.

A voice, warm and practiced, speaks from behind the lens of her gaze.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Why don't you think you're dreaming anymore?

Mara doesn't answer right away.

She shifts in the chair, as if she's too aware of her body.

Then—quiet, fragile:

MARA
Because I only remember things I
haven't done yet.

Silence.

The sound in the room dips lower, deeper. Pressure changes.

Mara's eyes flicker up, over the therapist's shoulder—to a mirror mounted on the back wall.

Her face reflected there.

But not as she is.

In the mirror—she's wearing her station uniform. Wet.
Shoulders soaked. Hair clinging to her scalp. Her eyes—
bloodshot, the whites tinged gray.

The reflection doesn't blink when she does.

A deep, concussive boom ripples through the glass.

The mirror fractures, jagging outward in spiderweb cracks—
soundless and slow—before a delayed, echoing sonar blast
shudders through the room like it traveled from miles
beneath.

Mara flinches. Grabs the arms of the chair.

The white light flickers—

And—

INT. MARA'S BUNKROOM - SAME MOMENT

The lighting is now the same as it was in the "therapy room."

Same expression on Mara's face.

But she's in her station bunk.

Alone.

The same crack forms down the wall beside her bed—subtle, but
familiar. Like a scar repeating itself.

Her hands still tremble.

She doesn't know where she is.

Or when she is.

INT. MIDAS STATION - LOWER ACCESS TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

A mechanical scream tears through the station. Harsh. Primal.

Not a drill.

Real.

ALARM (AUTOMATED VOICE)
*Airlock 2B breach detected. Seal
protocols compromised. Repeat:
Airlock 2B-*

The message loops, broken by bursts of static and warping pitch, as if the station's throat is catching on the words.

Lights snap from amber to red-pulsing like a warning heartbeat.

Mara bolts from her bunk.

Still disoriented, but the body knows what the mind doesn't-move now, ask later.

She races through the narrow corridors, footing unsteady as pressure fluctuates. The walls flex. Floor grates shudder beneath her weight.

She hits the lower tunnel, breath ragged.

The secondary airlock module yawns open before her.

The inner hatch is wide. Gaping. Bent slightly at the frame, like something forced it wider than it was meant to go.

No crew in sight. No protocol team. No suits. No signs of a breach response.

But-

Water drips steadily from the floor grating.

Pools gather beneath her boots, feeding into the drainage system with slow reluctance.

She edges forward, eyes scanning.

The outer lock is sealed again now-re-engaged automatically. The pressure sensor reads NORMAL. No trace of who-or what-entered.

She crouches low.

And there it is.

One wet footprint.

Bare.

Human-sized.

Facing away from the hatch.

It didn't arrive here.

It left here.

The toes are splayed slightly. Skin-wrinkled edges. The weight distribution uneven—like the foot wasn't confident where it stepped.

It leads toward the corridor.

Mara follows.

Foot by foot.

Each new step fainter than the last—like the trail was evaporating, or being erased behind it.

The air cools as she rounds the first bend. The lights above sputter, struggling to stabilize.

She spots the last visible print.

Half-formed. On the edge of a deck plate.

And then—nothing.

The trail ends.

No smudge. No drag. No streaks.

As if the thing that made it either vanished, or never needed to walk again.

Mara turns slowly.

The corridor behind her is empty.

But her ears register something below the threshold of hearing—a vibration, maybe. Faint. Like a presence pressing against the station's bones.

She touches the wall.

It's warm.

The metal *shouldn't* be warm. She closes her eyes. Tries to breathe. Behind her, the lights flicker again. Then hold.

Red.

INT. COMMS CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT CYCLE

Mara drags open the maintenance hatch tucked behind the primary uplink node. A narrow opening yawns like a throat too small to swallow.

She slides inside.

The crawlspace is tight—walls pressing close, ceiling barely above her crouched back. Cables hang in bundles, pulsing faintly with power. Emergency LEDs flicker in a stuttering rhythm. Red, then dark. Red again.

The air is stagnant. Smells like copper and old plastic. A constant low whine of signal current buzzes through the conduit pipes.

She crawls forward.

Each movement echoes. Wire coils rustle. Her hand brushes sticky insulation. Her flashlight sweeps the wall—looking for the line breach, a crack, anything explaining the signal distortions.

Nothing.

She moves farther in.

Another few feet.

Then—

The beam of her light snags on a patch of steel bulkhead where the insulation's been torn away.

At first it looks like scrape marks.

Then she sees the words.

QUINN DIED HERE

Carved deep. Not scratched, not graffiti-carved. Repetitive motions. Clean, narrow lettering. Precise.

Beneath it: WE TRIED TO TELL YOU

Mara stares. Frozen.

Breathing shallow.

MARA (V.O.)
You didn't write this.

But someone with your name did.

Or someone wearing your face.

Or—

She steps back.

Her shoulder hits a pipe. She flinches.

Slips.

Her head cracks against a support strut.

THUD.

She gasps. Rolls to her side. Blood beads on her temple—
small, but sharp.

Then—

A voice.

Right behind her ear.

Quiet as breath.

VOICE (WHISPERING)
You were too late last time.

Mara whips around.

Nothing.

Just cables. Flickering light. Empty space.

She breathes faster now. Trapped in the crawlspace. Knees and
elbows pressed against steel.

She scans again. Every shadow suddenly too long.

Her flashlight flickers.

Stabilizes.

She turns to crawl out.

But at the far end of the passage, where it bends into black—
A figure stands. Silhouetted. Still. Not moving. Just
watching. No face. No sound. Mara's light flickers again—

And the figure is gone. She stares into the empty dark. Heart
pounding.

The carving still behind her.

The whisper still inside her.

The station holds its breath.

Then—

INT. AUDIO ANALYSIS SUITE - MARA'S WORKSTATION - NIGHT CYCLE

Rows of dead terminals line the walls like forgotten mouths.
Only one screen glows, pulsing pale-green where Mara sits
hunched, breath held like she might wake something if she
lets it go.

She's deep into the signal stack—digging through the
corrupted transmission from her first shift:

"This is Quinn. Station Midas is compromised..."

The raw file crackles through speakers—low fidelity, warped
at the edges. Her own voice. But wrong. Drawn thin, stretched
like tape warped in heat.

She loops it again.

Applies a second analog filter.

Then third.

Onscreen: lines of static noise collapse into tight sine
bands. The distortion begins to clear. The background hiss
stabilizes.

She inputs a custom deep-clean protocol—filters designed to
remove underwater signal drag, micro-resonance warble, and
satellite lag.

Each tick of progress peels back another layer.

Until—

Nothing is left but the voice.

Perfectly clean.

MARA
 (V.O. from transmission)
 This is Quinn. Station Midas is
 compromised. I repeat—don't come
 down here.

No ambient distortion. No oceanic signature. No long-distance
 decay.

Mara's hands pause on the console.

MARA (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 No bounce. No relay curve...

She checks the signal metadata.

ORIGIN:

LOCAL NODE - MIDAS COMMS ARRAY // LOOPBACK ADDRESS

TRANSMISSION TYPE: INTERNAL TEST // MANUAL OVERRIDE - USER:
 QUINN, M.

Her eyes narrow.

LOOPBACK.

Meaning: the signal was never sent. Never bounced. Never went
 anywhere.

It was generated here.

She opens the voiceprint confirmation log.

A match.

100% VOCAL SIGNATURE: QUINN, MARA.

She stares at the confirmation. The terminal reflects her
 face—pale, drawn, eyes wide.

She hits replay.

The message plays again.

Her voice. Her cadence. Her hesitation.

MARA (CONT'D)
 (V.O. on playback)
 Don't come down here.

But her mouth never said it.

Not once.

MARA (CONT'D)
I didn't record this.

She whispers it like a prayer to no one.

The cursor on the terminal blinks.

Then moves.

New line of text populates, unprompted.

>> YOU DID. JUST NOT THIS TIME.

She jerks back.

The terminal flickers—half a second of inverted color, then stabilizes.

The waveform begins to loop again, visual only.

And in that waveform—if you look too long—the pulse almost looks like a shape.

Like a body curled inside the sound.

INT. COMMONS - DR. NKOMO'S "THERAPY ROOM" - LATER

The Commons is mostly empty—dim again, lit only by a row of maintenance LEDs blinking from some unseen error upstream. The far side of the room has been retrofitted—curtains drawn between welded pipe columns to form a rough partitioned alcove.

Inside: Dr. Ives N'komo's "therapy space."

No desk. No files. Just a wooden chair, a second metal stool, and a hydroponic trough where something dark grows.

Fungal stalks twist up from nutrient water. Wrong color for food. Pale gray stems, swollen black caps. Spongy. Wet-looking. Alive, but not the kind you eat.

N'komo tends them with a metal ladle, watering them slowly. Carefully. Like it matters.

Mara steps into the partition.

He doesn't look up.

N'KOMO

They're sensitive to tone. You
overwater with the wrong rhythm,
and they collapse. Like grief.

MARA

Why is my voice coming from inside
the system?

He stops ladling.

Still doesn't turn.

N'KOMO

The station's old. It echoes.

He finally looks at her.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

You know how underwater acoustics
work. Pressure waves don't just
bounce—they fold.

MARA

It wasn't bounceback. No latency.
No relay noise. Internal loopback.
It never left.

N'KOMO

That's what I said. It echoes.

He sets the ladle down. Wipes his hands.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

Places like this... they soak up
people. Bits of them. Resonance.
You yell into the dark, and the
dark remembers the pitch.

MARA

That wasn't a memory. That was a
voiceprint match.

N'KOMO

Sure. Of course it was.

She steps closer. The fungus shifts slightly in the trough,
reacting. Or breathing.

MARA

Have you heard of resonant memory
loops?

He smiles. But not like someone happy. More like someone remembering how to perform the shape of kindness.

N'KOMO

I've heard of them. Deep-space
psych research in the '40s. Lunar
confinement labs. Some of the Mars-
buried stations.

MARA

They said environments could mimic
thought patterns.

N'KOMO

Only under stress. Only under
prolonged repetition. Closed
circuits, closed minds.

He leans closer, resting elbows on knees.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

It's like the walls remember how
you felt. They store it. And then
they reflect it back—not the
content. Just the vibration.

MARA

So I never said it. But something
remembered me almost saying it.

He nods, almost proudly.

N'KOMO

It's not about truth. It's about
fidelity. The station isn't lying.
It's just... playing a song you
forgot you wrote.

A long pause.

He looks at her for the first time without smiling.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)

You said that once, you know. That
exact phrase.

MARA

What phrase?

N'KOMO

"How do I know what's real?"

She goes still.

Her stomach flips. Because she did say that. Alone.
 Whispered. In her bunk. After decrypting the loopback.

MARA (softly)
 When?

He only shrugs.

N'KOMO (CONT'D)
 You say it every time.

INT. MESS HALL - NIGHT CYCLE

The mess hall is hushed—more an echo chamber than a place to eat. Cold strip lights flicker overhead. No music. No chatter. Just the hum of refrigeration units and the soft hiss of thermal vents.

Mara sits alone at the far edge of the room, a single meal tray in front of her.

Rehydrated protein. Stiff bread. Untouched.

She chews with slow, mechanical rhythm, eyes fixed on nothing.

Across the room, four crew members sit together at a long table. No one else is around. Just them. All facing Mara. Their trays are empty. They don't eat.

Among them—Lucía Ramos. Hair tied back. Uniform crisp. That same too-still smile on her lips.

They're speaking.

But the sound is wrong.

Too fluid.

CASEY
 (softly)
 —It's strange when it starts—

ANOUK
 —You don't realize it's happened—

LEN
 —Until you hear yourself from the outside—

Lucía tilts her head, still smiling.

LUCÍA
—and think: that's not me.

Mara stops chewing.

The crew continues, perfectly fluid, sentence to sentence,
like a shared thought split four ways.

CASEY
Sometimes the breath comes first—

ANOUK
Then the sentence after.

LEN
Memory's just a current—

LUCÍA
And this place is full of water.

They all look directly at Mara. Still speaking. But not
acknowledging her presence. No eye contact broken. No smiles
shift. No forks lifted.

CASEY
Do you think she remembers now?

ANOUK
This time's different.

LEN
She stayed longer this cycle.

Lucía's smile stretches a fraction tighter.

Still no blinking.

LUCÍA
She always stays longer—until the
station notices.

Mara stands.

Her chair screeches across the floor. The sound bounces hard
and sharp off the metal walls.

No one else moves.

No reaction.

She takes a single step toward them.

They all stop talking.

Lucía finally blinks.

Once.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)
(calmly)
We're glad you're eating again.

Mara doesn't speak.

The light overhead pops. Goes out.

Darkness creeps in.

INT. TOOL CRATE STAGING BAY - LATER

The space is industrial, cold. Long metal cases stacked two high, some labeled with serials, others blacked out. A wheeled cart creaks softly as Lucía winds a length of sensor cable around her forearm with calm, mechanical repetition.

Mara enters, breath tight from whatever followed her out of the mess.

She watches Lucía work for a beat.

MARA
You said Rowe was gone. That the Core was sealed because of interference. Now you're pulling cables for "field scans."

Lucía doesn't look up.

MARA (CONT'D)
What's a "Layer," Lucía?

Lucía keeps coiling. Her voice is flat, but not dismissive.

LUCÍA
It's what we hit beneath the ocean floor. Not magma. Not rock. Something... folded.

MARA
Folded?

Lucía's hands twitch slightly as she ties the coil.

LUCÍA
You'll see it soon enough.

A beat.

The sensor cable trembles slightly as it loops off her hand, but her expression doesn't change.

MARA

Is it alive?

Lucía finally glances up. A pause. Like the word doesn't mean what it used to.

LUCÍA

It reflects. That's enough.

Behind them, a faint thump echoes from inside a closed supply locker. Low. Muffled.

Neither woman looks.

Lucía finishes wrapping the coil and slides it into a case.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)

You want real answers? Go to Sublevel 5. That's where the first scan was taken. That's where the signal bent the wrong way.

She lifts another crate. Stares at Mara for just a beat too long.

LUCÍA (CONT'D)

Don't go alone.

INT. MARA'S QUARTERS - LATER THAT "NIGHT"

The lights cycle into night phase—cool blue and faint. Mara sits at her console, fingers tight on the controls.

She scrolls through archived security logs.

ROOM FEED:

LOOP-042 - PLAYBACK: 0.25X SPEED

The file opens. Footage of her sleeping. Side position. One hand over her chest.

Normal. Still. Then—

At the edge of frame, the door slides open.

No chime. No ID log. Nothing. A figure enters. Tall. Silent. Moves with no wasted motion.

It's her. Same face. Same build. But not exactly the same. The head tilts wrong. Limbs too fluid. Like someone learned how to walk by watching her on a screen.

The double approaches the bed. Stands still. Watches. Thirteen full seconds pass. Then it smiles. Just a slight lift of the mouth. Cut.

The next frame is empty. No transition. No exit. Just gone.

Mara stares at the monitor. Pulse hammering. She stands too fast. Her knees almost give. Breathing loud in the quiet.

MARA
(whispering)
That wasn't me. That can't be me.

The screen remains frozen on her sleeping self.

Behind her, something creaks.

INT. COMMS HUB - FINAL MOMENTS OF ACT FOUR

The familiar cold blue glow of the Comms Bay. Mara sits at the console, trembling slightly. A new protocol running. She's typing slowly—an encrypted log, manual input only.

Private. No loops. No voice. The screen flickers once. Then again.

She pauses.

A new file appears on the desktop.

UNKNOWNSOURCECHO.001

She didn't request it. No timestamp. No sender. No origin path.

She hesitates.

Then opens it. A voice message begins to play.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(whispering)
This isn't your first time here,
Quinn.

It's her voice. But aged. Cracked. Weathered by more than time. Mara's fingers lift from the keyboard. She doesn't breathe. The message plays again—slower, deeper.

OLDER MARA (V.O.)
You didn't make it last time
either.

The console light reflects her face. She looks into the screen. Her reflection stares back.

And then—

It tilts its head. She doesn't. Stillness. Her reflection's mouth opens. Hers does not.

INT. UNMAPPED CRAWLSPACE - INITIATION POINT

A low corridor that shouldn't exist. The walls sweat condensation. Power cables dangle like veins along the ceiling, twitching with static pulses.

Mara moves slowly, crouched, following a flickering light—pale green, fading in and out ahead like a lure.

Her handheld device displays no map. Just a blank grid. No recorded structure in this direction. She reaches a hand-cranked hatch at the end of the narrowing corridor. Rust coats the handle. It groans under pressure.

From behind it—a low thrum, steady and alive. She cranks it open. Beyond is a triangular crawlspace. Just high enough to crawl. The walls are coated in marine growth—not algae, not coral. A pale, lichenous moss, riddled with black strands that pulse gently, as though syncing to the station's hum.

She crawls forward.

At the far end: a warped mirror-like panel fused into the hull. Distorted by pressure. Its surface: smooth silver, like cooled mercury.

Water drips from overhead cables. The droplets fall onto the panel's face like tears. She crawls closer.

Words are smeared across the surface—ink or blood, it's impossible to say: "IF YOU'RE READING THIS, IT'S ALREADY STARTED."

She raises a hand. Touches the surface. No reflection. Not distorted.

Absent.

INT. STATION CORRIDORS - ALARM PHASE (REALITY BREAK)

A deep, low-frequency siren begins to rise—subharmonic. Felt more than heard. Emergency lights strobe—blinding white over emergency red. The floor panels shake.

Mara runs.

She races down a corridor—but it's wrong now. The walls shimmer, phasing between clean, pristine alloy and rotted, rust-cloaked metal. One step shows stainless steel. The next, lichen-choked decay.

A support beam above fractures, then disappears as if erased. She runs harder.

She passes a window. Beyond it—the ocean is glowing. Pale gold. Luminous. Infinite. And in it—something moves.

Massive.

Indistinct.

Watching.

She stumbles. Regains footing. Ahead—the crew.

All of them. Standing in a line at the end of the corridor. Not speaking at first. Just watching her. Eyes wide. No blinking.

Then, in unison:

CREW
(as one)
You were here. You left. You came
back. You forgot.

Their mouths move together.

Each voice layered inside the others. Mara backs away. The walls fold in. The lights snap to total darkness—then blaze. The crew remains.

Unmoving.

INT. SYSTEM MAINTENANCE SHAFT - FLOOD EVENT

A metal groan, sharp and high, like the sound of something finally failing. A vent ruptures behind her. Water blasts through the corridor. A pressure surge. Enough to tear a body apart. Mara turns—

But doesn't flinch. The water rushes over her, around her—

She doesn't get wet. She looks at her hands. They are dry. Perfectly dry. She breathes. Shakes.

Turns.

There—embedded in a maintenance hatch—a cracked glass panel. Her reflection stands inside it. Half a second out of sync. She lifts her hand. The reflection lags—

Then moves. Raises its own hand. Waves.

Then—

It moves on its own. The reflection's palm touches the inside of the glass. Fingers splayed.

Mara stares. It smiles. It has no eyes.

INT. DARKNESS → SHUTTLE BAY - LOOP INITIATION

Mara jolts upright. She's back in the descent pod. Clean interior.

Air-tight seal.

Fluorescent lights steady overhead. In her hand—the anti-nausea pill. Still sealed in the blister pack. No alarms. No flickering red. Just low cabin hum. She turns slowly.

Looks to the side viewport. MIDAS STATION drifts below. Dark. Monolithic. Still.

A soft chime.

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Final approach confirmed.

Welcome to Midas Station.

She exhales. Barely audible.

Fingers trembling.

MARA
(softly)
Did I dream that?

The airlock cycles open.

INT. DOCKING BAY - ARRIVAL REPEATED (LOOP CLOSURE)

Fog.

The hatch opens. Lucía stands in the corridor.

Same place. Same posture. But this time—

She speaks softer. Like she's not sure.

LUCÍA
You're early...

Mara doesn't respond right away. Her eyes drift to her chest.

To the jumpsuit tag: QUINN, M.

She runs her fingers across the stitching. Rust flakes off.
She opens her mouth. But says nothing. Just a breath.

BLACK.

FINAL IMAGE / AUDIO TAG

Over darkness—

STATIC CRACKLES.

Then—

A voice.

OLDER MARA (V.O.)
If this gets through... If I don't
come back— Burn the ocean. Don't
send me again.

END ACT FIVE.

END PILOT