

MOTHERLAND

"SAY THE WORDS"

Written by

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More people jump, and more. People on the lower levels begin to surge up escalators so they too can jump from the upper level, like it's the thing to do, until everyone is doing it, until it's raining bodies, making an obscene, writhing, screaming pile...

3 EXT. MEGAMALL/PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS 3

Balloon Girl walks to her car though you can tell she wants to run.

GIRL
(softly, to herself)
We are the Spree.

She peels off in her hatchback, skidding on the fresh snow.

4 INT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS 4

Balloon Girl speeds down the highway, headlights making cones in the swirling snow. She keeps looking in the rear view to see if she's being followed. She punches the lighter. When it pops, she jams the thing in the center of her forehead.

The glowing ring singes and flame consumes her, skin burning off like old paper, revealing new skin underneath, a WHOLE NEW GIRL UNDERNEATH - 18, freckly and plain, an all American dishwater blonde, much plainer than the Balloon Girl, but with the identical roughness behind the eyes...

5 AERIEL INTO TITLES - CONTINUOUS 5

Pulling up over her speeding car, trailing smoke and ash, and higher up and up, until the storm is beneath us, until we make out an America we recognize in shape, but not in division as--

--the footage morphs smartly and subtly into an illuminated MAP, borders swirling with bunting and symbols both MILITARY and OCCULT, a map describing States we don't recognize and a stripe dividing the country into east and west. The map ages before our eyes, becoming--

--a moldering quilt made from scraps of flags flown at battles, dancing with animated scraps of ribbon and MEDALS, telling stories of wars and finally, of--

--a gallows on a lonely hill, and a young girl being led to her death, or so the puritans thought - but the girl begins to sing, calling a terrible storm, and in the swirling grey velvet clouds, written in red, white and blue ribbon -
MOTHERLAND.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

6 EXT. OVER NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

6

We're falling now, through clouds, with Manhattan rushing up to meet us in flashes. Marching band music warbles in the icy air... Oh Columbia, a parade, far below, inching up Broadway like a snake as grey winter clouds part on cue above the route. We're falling again--

OVER a rooftop, empty except for a huge, writhing army drab CATERPILLAR--

--CLOSER now, it's a sleeping bag, two bodies fumbling, hastily dressing, laughing then - ABIGAIL CROZIER, 18, black, fine-featured, unquestionably alpha, unzips the bag and emerges, hair wild--

--still zipping her jeans, looking around for something on the ground - beat up binoculars. She grabs them and rushes to the ledge--

BINOCULAR POV - the tail end of an EQUESTRIAN REGIMENT followed by 40 OFFICER CADETS, all female, all splendid in dress navy--

ABIGAIL
(to herself)
That's me in a year.

From the bag, a muffled voice--

MAN
It's cold.

ABIGAIL
Shhhhhh.

He makes his way to standing, dresses quickly and shuffles over. He's good looking, early twenties. He wraps his arms around her, kissing her neck.

MAN
Can we say goodbye again?

BINOCULAR POV-- the cadets are marching in perfect time. Abigail focuses on ONE GIRL, red-skinned, beads in black, plaited hair. Suddenly, without breaking stride, she looks right precisely at Abigail, from 20 stories down. The girl smiles. So does Abigail--

ABIGAIL
Weaponized...

MAN
Who?

ABIGAIL
This girl.

Paul nuzzles closer, starts working on her neck. Abigail can't help but smile... it starts to progress but she stops it--

MAN
Come back to the bag.

ABIGAIL
I knew you had a military fetish,
but wow...

MAN
You think that's what this is?

She turns, faces him, traces a finger down his brow, nose, looks right in his eyes.

ABIGAIL
Listen...

Something subtle changes in her voice... it's more resonant. The effect on him is visible. She's got him--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
(gently)
This is when you go to college,
find a girl, get married,
everything nice and good. This is
when I go grind our great nations
enemies into dust.

She kisses him tenderly. He stands there dazed--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Go.

He complies, seemingly against his will--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
And don't walk into traffic.

Abigail turns her attention back to the parade. OFF her smile--

7 EXT. CHIPPEWA CESSION - MORNING 7

RAELLE COLLAR, 18, albino blonde, pale and frail, thick glasses, fairly despondent, kicks beercans along a dry riverbed, her manner immediately conveying that she spends a lot of time alone, and prefers it.

She cuts across a cracked asphalt road towards an odd arrangement of shipping container homes, enters the shabbiest by far, kicking open her kitchen door--

8 INT. COLLAR HOMESTEAD - SAME 8

--surprised to see MELBA HULL, late 50's, uptight in a floral shell, beer belly, sitting at the kitchen table reading a COMMERCIAL FREEZER CATALOG. Melba gets up--

MELBA

Hey! Your daddy let me in.

Melba hugs Raelle too hard--

MELBA (CONT'D)

Did you have school?

RAELLE

Half day.

Melba hands Raelle a foil-covered dish and three neatly folded TWENTIES.

MELBA

Little extra for you. I know you're off to Salem tomorrow, god bless.

RAELLE

Yes ma'am. Permanent government vacation. Come on through.

Raelle leads Melba through the den, past her father EDWIN, late 50's, lanky, Native American, asleep in front of soccer.

Raelle holds open a rainbow printed sheet covering a low door. Melba walks through--

9 INT. RAEELLE'S FIXING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 9

--to a small room with a quilt-covered cot and a folding chair. Every inch of wallspace is covered with POST CARDS, writing side out.

As Melba removes her shirt and lies down on the cot, Raelle's eyes fall on the cards...

...all bearing MILITARY POSTMARKS from every corner of the globe, all in the same careful hand, all addressed to Raelle from her loving mom who "misses her more than words can say."

Melba snaps Raelle out of it--

MELBA

It got worse.

ON Melba's exposed side-body - an archipelago of angry RED BLISTERS. Raelle winces a little.

RAELLE

We'll fix you up.

Raelle grabs a bottle of RUM from under the chair, unscrews the lid and closes her eyes--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

For those who dwell in the earth.
For those beyond the veil.
For those we remember.

Raelle splashes rum on the packed dirt floor. When it hits, it flares with HISSING BLUE FLAME. Raelle sits down and grips the back of Melba's neck--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

With me now...

They speak as one, merging voices causing ODD SONIC DISTORTION--

MELBA AND RAELE

Ask, and it shall be given you;
seek, and ye shall find; knock, and
it shall be opened unto you--

Raelle and Melba both SHUDDER at the same time moment.

MELBA AND RAELE (CONT'D)

For every one that asketh
receiveth; and he that seeketh
findeth; and to him that knocketh
it shall be opened.

ON Melba's blisters fading away--

MELBA AND RAELE (CONT'D)

For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.

ON a patch of belly visible between Raelle's t-shirt and jeans - a cluster of red blisters bloom on white skin.

10 INT. TALLY'S HOME, KITCHEN - EVENING

10

TALLY CRAVEN, 18, kind and curious, glowing red hair, a living exclamation point who knows too much, feels too much is watching the news--

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...cowardly attack at the Mall of America on Independence Day.... we are on the scene right now. The Army has been set up for a perimeter--

Tally's mom MAY, late 40's, earthy, a wreck, is clanging pots and pans around, visibly unhinged, red-eyed--

Tally switches channels--

REPORTER (V.O.)

...sixteen hundred people are dead today, the result of an unknown bomber who may have fled the scene.

Tally switches again, looking for the top of the story. May's BANGING AROUND is ratcheting in hostility--

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...what happened today redefines 'suicide bomb' in a way that shocks me to the marrow. While they have not yet claimed responsibility, the ruthlessness has all the earmarks of the Spree. Not to mention the timing of the attack, on Conscription Day, when so many of our bravest are called up--

MAY

You know what?! This is abusive.
Turn that off--

You can tell they've been fighting like this for weeks--

TALLY

Are we really gonna do this again?

May throws the BEAUTIFUL FOOD she was cooking in the sink and runs water all over it--

MAY

I give up. Cook your own goodbye dinner, since you're in such a hurry to get yourself killed--

Tally storms away to her room with May still yelling--

MAY (CONT'D)

Get back here! Tally!

May starts to crack and we see how vulnerable she is--

MAY (CONT'D)

You're smarter than this Tally!

11 INT. TALLY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER 11

Tally slams the door, leans her back against it--

MAY (O.S.)

You're breaking my heart...

OFF Tally, eyes brimming with tears--

12 INT. ABIGAIL'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING 12

All the windows are open, with baskets of confetti on every sill. Sounds of the parade from the streets below fill the expansive apartment furnished with IMPORTANT EARLY-AMERICAN FURNITURE. A fire ROARS in a large fireplace. A TV blares parade footage, even though it's right outside. Laughter from the kitchen--

--where Abigail and her mother, MAJOR GENERAL BELL CROZIER, 55 and happy to be on furlough, are assembling mini POT PIES.

BELL

What did you tell him, the poor thing?

ABIGAIL

I sent him on his way, with a little oomph...

BELL

You better save some oomph for the Army.

(then)

Did you tell him I'll be..

(MORE)

BELL (CONT'D)
 (cracking up)
 ...thinking of your face when I'm
 out there... on that battlefield--

Now they both crack up, then--

BELL (CONT'D)
 I remember my last civilian... a
 Virginian. He wept. They all do
 honey. Wouldn't you cry if you
 could never have you again.

The NEWS ON TV switches from benign parade footage to a
 BREAKING STORY. Bell glances over on the way to the table
 with a big salad--

BELL (CONT'D)
 Oh no...

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
 What?

ON TV aerial footage of ANOTHER MEGAMALL, already surrounded
 by helicopters, a substantial MILITARY PRESENCE and a
 TEMPORARY HOSPITAL in the parking lot. The banner at the
 bottom of the screen reads: Spree Attack Leaves Over 1300
 Dead and Injured in Galveston.

BELL
 Another mall... the Spree.

Abigail rushes over, more excited than scared--

13 INT. RAELE'S HOME

13

Raelle's dad Edwin is in his chair, watching the news.
 Raelle is on the floor, looking at old family pictures -
 Edwin had a mustache back then, and there's a woman who must
 be Raelle's mom, same pale blonde hair, same sadness. Edwin
 changes channels--

ON TV - another news program, two talking heads: the ANCHOR
 and the Secretary of Defense, MEREDITH TRINIUS, 40's horsey
 and solid. Graphics banner rolls across the bottom of the
 screen: Death toll rises to 1600 in Megamall massacre.

Raelle's more interested in the old photographs--

ANCHOR
 Madame Secretary, we understand
 survivors of both mall attacks are
 continuing to attempt suicide hours
 after being removed from the site.
 (MORE)

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Even after treatment. Help us understand what's going on in a way that a civilian might understand.

MEREDITH

Malicious work like this is designed to attach itself to the effected, to be unleashed at some random or specific time.

ANCHOR

And when you say 'the effected,' that means anyone in audible range of the balloon's popping noise?

MEREDITH

Anyone who heard the sound, that's correct. It would appear that something truly terrible was buried inside the sound--

Edwin turns off the TV, looks down at Raelle--

RAELLE

How come you didn't eat?

EDWIN

I don't want that woman's tainted enchiladas. The hell she got anyway?

Raelle shrugs her shoulders--

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Let me see.

Raelle lifts her shirt - Melba's angry RED BLISTERS cover her belly. Edwin peers closer with a disgusted look--

RAELLE

Should be gone by next week.

EDWIN

Looks like a fuckin' herpes pizza. With extra herpes.

RAELLE

May be my ticket out.

EDWIN

How you figure?

RAELLE

You'll see.

A long tense beat. Edwin looks at the clock--

EDWIN
Any minute now huh?

RAELLE
Pretty much.

EDWIN
Guess I better...

RAELLE
Night dad.

He kisses her forehead and heads off to bed. Raelle puts the pictures away then sits in the center of the rug, waiting for something, looking annoyed--

She glances at a clock with dread in her heart - 11:54.

14 INT. TALLY'S BEDROOM

14

Tally is packing when there's a knock--

TALLY
Come in.

The door opens. It's May, much more subdued, in a cozy robe, holding a big steaming mug--

MAY
I brought you some leek broth.

TALLY
Thanks. Mom, I'm sorry. I've given this so much careful thought--

May motions for Tally to stop talking while she wipes her face--

MAY
(gently at first)
I spoke to the attorney. When the call comes, just don't say the words. That's all we have to do right now. Should be any minute, right--

TALLY
Mom, I'm going--

May's starting to get wild again, grabbing Tally by the shoulders--

MAY

Please do not say the words--

Tally starts to walk May out--

TALLY

Okay Mom, I want to go. It's my choice to go.

MAY

If you say the words, they've got you--

Tally pushes May out the door--

MAY (CONT'D)

Tally!

--and slams it. May starts banging--

MAY (CONT'D)

(from the other side of the door)

Do you know how hard I worked to get you and your sister out of the lottery of death?!

The doorknob twists wildly as May tries to get back in. Tally draws something on the knob with her pinky and the doorknob STOPS MOVING--

May screams in frustration--

MAY (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Don't say the words!

Tally draws another tiny symbol on the door with her pinky and May's screaming is SILENCED. Just then--

--the clock strikes TWELVE and something flashes behind Tally. She spins around too see--

--the air in front of her spark and catch fire like old-fashioned fireworks, sending plumes of smoke swirling at the ceiling. Something overtakes Tally, the words speak themselves--

TALLY

I, Tally Craven, do solemnly pledge to protect and defend the United States of America against all enemies...

From the flame blooms a thick curl of red, WHITE and BLUE GROSGRAIN RIBBON, lustrous and silky, which begins to unfurl--

15 INT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 15

Abigail kneels before the same manifestation that visits Tally. Bell stands behind her, looking proud and serene. At the bottom of Abigail's ribbon is a small GOLD MEDAL--

ABIGAIL

...foreign or domestic. I will faithfully serve and obey the rules and articles for the government of the Army...

16 INT. RAELE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 16

Raelle watches the ribbon burn with TEARS IN HER EYES as she says the words-- *

RAELLE

...of the United States of America, all secrets keep, all lawful commands willingly perform as dictated by the Salem Accord.

When the ribbon's gone, the medal falls into Raelle's tentative palm, still hot. She considers it for a moment, red-eyed, then puts it on the coffee table.

She begins to vacuum up the ashes the burning ribbon left.

VERY CLOSE ON MEDAL - a laurel wreath surrounding a pentacle, lightning on one side and funnel clouds on the other with a tiny banner at the bottom - Raelle Collar, Pvt. 1st Class.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

17 AERIAL OVER FORT SALEM - EVENING

17

Night spreads over the sprawling, manicured acres of the base. It looks like a small town from above, with avenues radiating from a central point - a DENSELY WOODED area right below us. As we drop closer, we start to make out an outdoor stage, and hundreds of soldiers gathered. We hear the sounds of BOOTS ON GRANITE--

18 EXT. AMPHITHEATER, FORT SALEM - SAME

18

RECRUITS stomp their boots louder than thunder. We observe Tally, Abigail and Raelle from above. They're seated in different parts of the audience. Tally and Abigail look so excited they're going to explode. Raelle, less so.

All of the sudden, lights flood the stage as GENERAL SARAH ALDER - ageless, impossibly beautiful, uniform dripping with medals - takes center stage. Behind her, forming a close semicircle, are her BIDDIES, SEVEN ANCIENT WOMEN, also in dress navy--

*

SARAH

I am General Sarah Alder. Welcome to Fort Salem. A moment for the fallen today, who live in our hearts.

(then)

It is a solemn day. Much like the day, some three hundred and eleven years ago when I made a deal with the Massachusetts Bay Militia. My terms were simple, honor me, make a place for me and my kind and we will win your wars. That was before we were even America.

(long pause for stomping)

Since that day we've never been defeated in a military engagement, not once, from the Revolutionary War, right up to this solemn day.

The soldiers STOMP LIKE THUNDER. General Alder raises her hand to quiet the crowd--

SARAH (CONT'D)

The next nine months will hurt your feelings and your bodies, but they will also be exhilarating.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

You are the daughters of ancient lines. You are called to greatness. You have bravely pledged to serve and defend this great country. I assure you, dark days await us. We live in a time of ancient hatred and emerging threats.

(pause)

They are ruthless and savage, the Spree. We saw that again today. They speak of liberation, but it's no kind of freedom I care to be a part of. We will need all of you to meet what's coming. And we will meet it. With storm and fury.

More epic stomping--

SARAH (CONT'D)

Many of you have spent your whole lives out there. You are among your own kind now. Take comfort in it. Find strength in it. A blessing on all of you, a blessing on this place, this witch's place.

ON Raelle, barely stifling a yawn. Afterwards, she follows the general drift of WOMEN along a wooded path dense with ancient trees, finding herself eventually...

19 EXT. CIRCE BARRACKS - LATER 19

...in front old brick building with decorative ivy, more Monticello than Army drab. She walks in--

20 INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, COMMON ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 20

--ANACOSTIA, 30's, dry as a bone, matter of fact, addresses the CONFUSED MASS of recruits, standing around with duffles. *

ANACOSTIA

Welcome to all-suites Circe Barracks, the finest on the base. I am Drill Sergeant Anacostia Quartermaine. My job is to keep you alive through basic so the Military High Council can determine if you go on to War College or not. Starting this year, you will rise or fall as units. *

Much grumbling from the assembled recruits--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

That means how anyone in your unit performs during basic, is how everyone in your unit performs during basic. Your job is to be effective soldiers, displaying at all times those most military of virtues; discipline and mutual respect, including the property of others. Suite numbers on the back of your medals. Go meet your the rest of your units. Aren't you excited? Go!

The recruits stand around looking dazed--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

Now ladies.

21 INT. SUITE - CIRCE BARRACKS

21

Raelle walks in to find Tally and Abigail unpacking in a bare bones but elegant wood-paneled room. There's one alcove bed and a set of bunks. Tally runs over--

TALLY

You must be Raelle!

RAELLE

Hi.

TALLY

I'm Tally and this is Abigail.
Sounds like we're going all the way together.

ABIGAIL

Onward to glory, soldiers.

Abigail shakes Raelle's hand briskly and continues to unpack on the alcove bed. That leaves bunks for Tally and Raelle--

TALLY

I'm good with upper or lower.

Raelle shrugs and takes the lower bunk, removes a quilt from her bag and hangs it up as a curtain. Abigail notices--

ABIGAIL

(re: quilt)

No way is that gonna fly.

RAELLE

Cross that bridge I guess.

Each girl has a narrow closet, just wide enough for three crisp, BLACK UNIFORMS and one pair of elegant, GLOVE-LEATHER COMBAT BOOTS.

Tally and Abigail check out their uniforms in front of a mirror--

ABIGAIL

I think they self-adjust... if you--

Abigail mimes a pregnant belly. Tally laughs, then thinks about it--

TALLY

Really?

*
*

ABIGAIL

(to Raelle)

Where you from?

RAELLE

Chippewa Cession, near Carolina.

ABIGAIL

Are you Chippewa?

RAELLE

Half. Where you from?

ABIGAIL

New York and Annapolis.

RAELLE

How can you be from two places?

ABIGAIL

We summer in Maryland, by the water.

RAELLE

We summer the same place we winter.

Tally, catching a whiff of tension, jumps in--

TALLY

Me too. I'm from Norcal.
Sacramento.

RAELLE

Sounds pretty.

TALLY

It is I guess... if you like sharing sourdough starter with your heirloom avocado growing neighbors, lots of ceramicists, weavers, midwives, no dudes, like ever, ever. Matrifocal compound really far from the city..

ABIGAIL

Are you a virgin?

Tally nods--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

I was kidding but, wow, okay. Let me see your mark.

Tally lifts the hair behind her ear. CLOSE ON an IRRIDESCENT birthmark shaped like a south sea island, behind Tally's ear- *

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

It changes when you have sex the first time.

Abigail lifts up her shirt - her mark is right by her bellybutton - a mauvey patch, like a egret in flight--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

It gets better.. shinier.. The way it catches the light..

TALLY

(to Raelle)

Where's yours?

RAELLE

Literally an inch from my vagina so.. maybe when we get to know each other better.

Everyone laughs--

TALLY

But is it shiny?

Everyone laughs harder--

TIME JUMP TO:

The girls are seated around a candle in the middle of the room. Tally holds a NAVY BLUE ROSE. As she speaks she plucks petals and throws them into the candle flame, where they puff into smoke--

TALLY

My mom lost four sisters to combat. When she turned eighteen, they gave her a dispensation. The Army said our Line had become unduly depleted. She reopened the case to get one for me. And then I ruined her life by coming. Nice to meet you guys. I'll be here for the next 45 years!

ABIGAIL

You did the right thing. We need everybody for what's coming.

Tally passes Abigail the rose.

TALLY

Who have you lost?

Abigail plucks petals too, and tosses them into the flame--

ABIGAIL

Aunts, so many cousins, both grandmothers died in their 50's, in combat in really terrible ways, one in the air when her salva ran out, the other rotting in a tent crawling with plague rats.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

What about you, Raelle?

Raelle takes the rose from Abigail and holds the entire thing over the candle flame, where it bursts into a MASSIVE FLAME that scorches the ceiling--

RAELLE

My mom died in a firefight in Liberia last year. On a beach. The sand turned to glass around her. Had to crack her out... what was left. All we got back were tags.

When Raelle finishes speaking, the rose crumbles to black dust.

ABIGAIL

My mom was stationed in Greenville
last spring. Rough tour.

Something about this piece of information catches in Raelle's
psyche--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

She died an honorable death.

RAELLE

I think my mom was tired when she
died. And scared. And used up. I
think she wanted to come home.

Tally grabs Raelle's hand first, then Abigail, still feeling
schooled and stung by Raelle's retort.

They speak as one--

UNIT

For those who dwell in the earth.
For those who gave their lives.
For those, we remember.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

23 INT. SUITE - CIRCE BARRACKS 23

Tally's eyes POP OPEN the next morning to the DEEP RINGING OF A BELL. Abigail is already dressing in the near dark, wan light barely pushing through a stained glass window - a pentagram in thick red, white and blue glass.

Raelle is still asleep, snoring lightly. Tally wakes her up, not the easiest task, then looks out the window--

--A SOLDIER rides side-saddle on a bike in front of the barracks as tidy rectangular rainclouds water the lawns.

24 AERIAL - HIGH OVER FORT SALEM - EARLY MORNING 24

We register tiny shapes making their way along a wooded path... closer now, through layers of cloud and mist... it's a bunch of girls in uniform... there's Raelle's white blonde hair... and Tally and Abigail--

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

Quick cuts of preliminary vocal and physical training at various locations around base:

- BELLS ring out over an aerial of the Base.

- Recruits spar in the gymnasium. Abigail is athletic. Tally tries hard. Raelle is clumsy, lethargic. *

- Abigail, and OTHER RECRUITS, observe a tiny TORNADO, whirling in a glass cube. *

- Recruits run in formation, carrying logs, in through ALTERNATING WEATHER - desert sun followed by blizzards. *

End TRAINING MONTAGE

25 INT. CHORAL CHAMBER - LATE MORNING 25

Abigail, Raelle and Tally are SINGING ALONG with hundreds of other girls in a high ceiled room that looks like a modernist church made from heavily re-enforced cement. It's not hymns they're singing, more abstract... more like cascading repetitions of tones, not music exactly but beautiful and eerie.

In the center of the room - a wide, shallow copper tureen in the shape of a Liberty Eagle, wings outspread, filled with a half inch of water. SENIOR OFFICERS monitor the surface of the water intently as it dances with strange, coruscating geometric patterns - a result of the singing.

When no one's looking, Raelle takes the opportunity to ditch these thrilling proceedings, exiting through a side door-

26 AERIAL OVER FORT SALEM - MIDDAY 26

FOLLOWING someone from high above... a tiny figure walking down a bland service road... someone blonde, CLOSER NOW - it's Raelle, kicking stones, looking as forlorn as she did when we met her.

27 EXT. FORT SALEM, NEAR THE STORM FIELDS - MORNING 27

She walks down a long service road, with extreme weather on either side - a raging BLIZZARD on the left, a tropical TYPHOON on the right, both ending in clear lines at the boundary of the road.

Raelle eventually stops behind a chain link fence to watch what's going on. In the distance, at a TIDY ROW OF EIGHT TORNADOS rake the land in FORMATION, their touchpoints cutting deep, parallel trenches in the earth. Tiny against the maelstrom, a YOUNG SOLDIER in fatigues squats nearby making quick, repetitive gestures with her hands.

Raelle watches from the fence. In the sky behind her, so high you could miss it, floats a lonely PALE BLUE BALLOON.

On cue, the funnels CRISSCROSS in precise time, like a terrible dance, pace quickening, advancing steadily on four tall stacks of CEMENT SLABS, eventually consuming them under huge clouds with a TERRIBLE GRINDING, leaving no trace in their wake. Then--

GIRL'S VOICE
Sounds like a freight train.

Raelle spins around to see SCYLLA, 18, a willowy brunette, lovely, brittle trouble. Scylla joins her by the fence--

*

SCYLLA
Who knew wind could cut rock?
Wouldn't mind learning to do that.

RAELLE
With my luck I'll wind up a medic.

Scylla sees something in the distance and grabs Raelle, pulling her behind a row of shrubs. Moments later, THREE OFFICERS speed by on bikes, kicking up dust.

Raelle and Scylla watch them go--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
You're kinda good at being a reprobate.

SCYLLA
You have no idea.

Suddenly, a VOICE BEHIND THEM--

OFFICER
Medals?

Raelle and Scylla spin around, freaking out - the OFFICERS they just watched bike by are now behind them, looking smug--

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Hand over your medals.

Raelle and Scylla comply, fumblingly as clouds part above them, bathing them in a CRUEL SPOTLIGHT, which keeps intensifying, making them sweat.

The Officer makes a series of minute adjustments to the back of both medals, then hands them back.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Where are you two supposed to be exactly?

Raelle looks at her medal, amazed--

CLOSE ON MEDAL - a large red "D" has appeared over the face. *

RAELLE
I was looking for the infirmary. *

SCYLLA
Me too. *

Another OFFICER pipes in--

OFFICER 2
The Infirmary is right by the PX which is right next to Circe. That's your barracks right? How did you get over here?

The third OFFICER gets right in Raelle's face--

OFFICER 3

Hope it's not shitbird-itis. Quite contagious.

*
*
*

OFFICER

You two have 7 minutes to find your Drill Sergeants to discuss your demerits. They already know.

*
*
*
*

The Officer backs off from Raelle and gets on her bike. The other do as well. Cloud cover returns as the Officers speed off, kicking up a cloud of dust. Scylla looks shaken--

*
*

RAELLE

Walk you back?

*

SCYLLA

I'm Scylla.

*
*

RAELLE

Who else could you be?

*
*

OFF Raelle's tentative smile--

*

28

INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, COMMON ROOM - LATER

28

Raelle walks in to find Anacostia waiting for her--

ANACOSTIA

Medal?

Raelle hands it over. Anacostia makes an adjustment on the back of the medal and the D disappears. Hands it back to Raelle--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

First week?

RAELLE

Sorry.

ANACOSTIA

Are you? Do you know what happens to soldiers who shit the bed in basic? War meat, Private. Front lines disposable war sausage in some of worst places on Earth.

*
*
*

RAELLE

Officers die just as good as enlisted.

ANACOSTIA

Seems like you don't want to be here.

*

RAELLE

I just lost my mom.

*

*

ANACOSTIA

I get it. And I get not wanting the same thing to happen to you. But you're here, girl. And it's not just you your bad behavior affects. Makes me look bad, your unit takes a hit every time you do this kind of thing. They see everything.

*

*

*

*

Anacostia grabs Raelle and walks her to a corner for privacy--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

Takes some advice... pretend you're not you for one minute and listen. You have a Crozier in your Unit. I'm gonna guess that Abigail is a lot. The gifted one's always are. But remember, there's more Four Stars in her line than any other. Use it. Ride it all the way to War College.

*

*

*

*

*

*

Anacostia hands her a bulky envelope--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

This came for you today. Stop fucking up.

Anacostia walks away. Raelle sits down and opens it--

CLOSE ON CONTENTS - lots of old letters with military postmarks. And an ODD LOOKING CHARM. Raelle examines it - a BIRDS FOOT grasping a tiny turquoise bead, tiny bow tied around it with dusty old ribbon.

29

INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, PHONE BOOTH - LATER

29

Raelle is on a payphone, talking to her dad, drinking a GRAPE SODA--

EDWIN (O.C.)

Get the letters?

RAELLE

Thanks dad. What's the bird foot?

EDWIN (O.C.)

That was your momma's. And her
momma's before her. Going back and
back, passed down through the
generations. Supposed to wear it
in combat. Keep you safe.

Raelle considers the charm again, turning it in her hand.
She's about to say something but stops herself--

RAELLE

I got in trouble already.

*

*

EDWIN (O.C.)

At least you're consistent. How's
your unit?

*

*

RAELLE

One's alright. The other,
Abigail...

EDWIN (O.C.)

Snooty?

RAELLE

Kinda rich-ety-rich. How'd you
know?

EDWIN (O.C.)

They're all kinda snootsville.
Least that's what your mom always
said.

RAELLE

I miss her dad.

EDWIN (O.C.)

Me too girl, every single day.

30

EXT. MESS HALL - EVENING

30

Abigail and Tally are walking to mess, exhausted from a long
day, when they pause outside to see a LOT OF GIRLS looking at
a small piece of paper posted by the entrance.

CLOSE ON PAPER, Abigail finds their unit in a hundred seventy
fifth place, with an 'A' and 'S' next to their position.
There's a key on the side - 'A' means absenteeism. 'S' means
shirking duty--

*

*

*

TALLY

Daily rankings?! Wouldn't want us
to get too competitive or anything.

ABIGAIL

This isn't going to go like this.

Abigail storms into mess--

31

INT. MESS HALL - CONTINUOUS

31

Abigail walks in to find Raelle seated alone--

*

ABIGAIL

Where were you today? We were worried.

RAELLE

Didn't feel good.

ABIGAIL

Anything I can do?

RAELLE

Doubtful. Your mom ever tell you anything about Liberia? Last spring. Seem to remember my mom saying it was a mess.

*
*
*
*

ABIGAIL

They're all a mess. She said Greenville was no different.

*
*

RAELLE

Interesting.

*
*

ABIGAIL

We had training all day. None of this is elective. Your absence was noted.

*

RAELLE

Call the commander in chief.

ABIGAIL

I know this is a lot. But it's just the beginning.

Tally approaches--

TALLY

Guys, please. Let's all take a breath--

*
*

ABIGAIL

This is not a vacation. It's life and death out there.

*

RAELLE

You think I don't know that?!

ABIGAIL

Then act like it. We're supposed
to have each other's backs. I
won't have you holding me back, or
Tally for that matter--

*
*
*

TALLY

There was another...

*
*

There's a commotion near one of the wall-mounted TV's -
people are GASPING. Abigail, Tally and eventually even
Raelle wanders over.

*

ON TV, a shaken anchor at a desk--

*

ANCHOR

...another attack from the Spree,
this time in the North Atlantic
where all passengers on a
commercial cruise liner have jumped
to their deaths today. As with the
mall attacks, the Spree have
claimed responsibility--

*

Switch to footage of a cruise ship with a wake of bodies
behind it--

*
*

TALLY

How do we fight them.. if you can't
even tell.. who's one of them.. or
what they believe on any given
day.. how do you fight madness that
jumps bodies?

*
*
*
*
*
*

ABIGAIL

Like Alder said. With storm and
fury.

*
*
*

OFF Raelle looking sick and Tally looking more excited than
scared--

*
*
*

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

*

32 INT. **TENT**, FORT SALEM - NEXT MORNING 32 *

Abigail, Tally and a DOZEN OTHER RECRUITS sit in folding chairs watching a presentation by **Anacostia**.

*

ANACOSTIA

*

...preying on the ideologically weak, they say they want to dismantle the global military industrial complex, liberating the witches who are drafted to fight their nation's wars. They call the system tyranny, slavery, but all this is a distraction from their true aim.

Photos scroll by - a chubby suburban mom; a handsome Nigerian teenager; an old french man, mixed with images of BIZARRE CARNAGE - a GLACIER cutting through downtown Vienna, a mudslide, studded with cars on the Mall in D.C.

NEW FOOTAGE of the EMPTY CRUISE SHIP, with **the** wake of bodies- *

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

*

And this from last night. 3,400 people gone forever...

(then)

The Spree has no great leader, no field Army, no desire for wealth or land. They're composed of parallel hierarchies, clandestine cell systems designed to collapse under scrutiny. They will appear normal in every way, and maybe even are normal in many ways, except for being agents of The End.

*

OFF Tally looking more scared than excited-- *

33 INT. BARRACKS, SUITE - NEXT MORNING 33

Raelle and Tally are folding uniforms, getting suite ready for inspection--

RAELLE

Why'd you come? If you didn't have to.

TALLY

Travel the world, do something
great, protect the innocent.

*

RAELLE

Well, rah, rah, rah. Sounds like a
poster. None of that is real.
It's a grind out there. That's all
it is.

TALLY

It's so much more than that. Like
Alder said--

*
*

RAELLE

Now you're gonna start quoting her--

*
*

TALLY

I get that she's controversial--

*
*

RAELLE

No witch in history has more blood
on her hands--

*
*
*

TALLY

--however you feel about her, part
of what she said was agenda-less
and true - that Fort Salem is a
witch's place. It's the only place
where it's just us. How beautiful
is that? I mean, bask in it for a
moment--

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

RAELLE

Are you literally made of sunshine
and candy dafodils? And can I have
some?

Raelle hugs Tally--

TALLY

Anytime. Am I annoying?

RAELLE

Never. Almost never. Only when
I'm awake--

A KNOCK at the door. Anacostia walks in, not waiting for an
invitation--

ANACOSTIA

Weepy, weepy in here. Perk up
soldiers. The future of the free
world is in your hands.

(MORE)

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)
 (looks them up and down)
 Goddess help.

Anacostia commences inspecting.

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

Quick cuts of preliminary vocal and physical training at various locations around base:

- Tally and ANOTHER SOLDIER back away from each other until they are 20 yards apart, way out of earshot, then stop. Tally's partner WHISPERS a series of numbers - camera follows the sound to Tally's ear. Tally jots down the numbers. *

- Recruits march in formation through FLASH FLOOD conditions carrying logs while vocalizing.

- Recruits breathe into elaborate equipment with antique leather bellows and complicated gears.

End TRAINING MONTAGE

34 INT. COMMON ROOM - CIRCE BARRACKS 34

Anacostia has gathered recruits for an announcement. Everyone looks beaten down by the week of training--

ANACOSTIA

It's been a long week... cruel and unusual... 'bout time you had some fun. We have a little field trip in store for you ladies to Salem town. Mayor's doing a little thing on Gallow's Hill and we're busing you through in groups. You have an hour to walk around. Bus departs at 0800. The night is yours, in a brief, highly supervised way.

So much STOMPING in response--

35 INT. MILITARY BUS - LATER 35

Our ladies ride in a bumpy bus, in dress uniforms. Spirits are high. Everyone looks happy to be off base. There's much chatter. Tally zones out next to Abigail and Raelle, looking out the window at a SUBURBAN MALL. She picks up bits of conversations--

VARIOUS
 Eleven guys for two hundred
 eleven girls... how is that
 gonna work?

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 This girl on my floor got
 both arms torn off by
 windshear.

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 Who's ready to sit on a dick?

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 My vocal chords started
 bleeding in training today.

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 ...another attack...

VARIOUS
 Shifts? I'm not kidding.
 Figure it out.

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 One arm I could see... but
 both?

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 I want to sit on a bag of
 dicks.

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 They have a tea for that.

VARIOUS (CONT'D)
 ...in Germany, another mall..

LIZ CHAUSABLE, 18 blonde, horsey, turns around from the seat
 in front of them--

LIZ
 How bullshit is it that they bumped
 guys until next week? Like a field
 trip to Ye Olde Sale Towne would
 pacify us.

TALLY
 I'm excited. I've never been.

LIZ
 You'll see soon enough. Salem is a
 town in a minor key. Like one of
 those grubby little fishes that
 live underneath sharks and eat
 their poo or whatever. Fort Salem
 being the shark in this equation.
 (then)
 Where do you think they're keeping
 them? The men?

ABIGAIL
 I heard they're on another base.

LIZ
 Good will tour--

LOTS of girls laugh at this--

LIZ (CONT'D)

Are you guys comenstruating yet?
We are! Don't worry, you will be.
We one Army, y'all.

Much STOMPING. Raelle turns arounds scanning the bus--

RAELLE

Are the other buses right behind
us?

TALLY

Who are you looking for?

Raelle clams up. Abigail rolls her eyes and looks out the window.

36

EXT. GALLOWS HILL

36

An authentic looking WOODEN GALLOWS sits in a lonely hill, brightly lit and cordoned by a velvet rope. The bus from Fort Salem pulls up nearby and SOLDIERS spill out, looking wide-eyed, like released prisoners, so happy to be in the world again--

There are CONCESSION STANDS, information booths, posters for sale of SARAH ALDER CROSSING THE DELAWARE, tables full of MILITARY KITSCH - tiny globes with SWIRLING TORNADOS of red, white and blue confetti, plastic medals, patriotic witches hats. Raelle, Tally and Abigail laugh at the corny junk as TOURISTS mill about, reading National Register of Historic Places plaques, listening to TOUR GUIDES, watching OVERZEALOUS RE-ENACTORS. One is particularly pirate-y--

RE-ENACTOR

(ominous)

I was there the day they tried to
hang Sarah Alder. Lucky to be
alive, I am. I saw what happened
when young Alder began to sing and
darkness poured as ink from the
ruined sky, snuffing every lamp for
a hundred miles. Then came the
wind, weaving, winding bands of it,
churning and grinding like the
Devil's clockwork--

ABIGAIL

Boo!

Tally and Raelle jump. Abigail begins to walk away. Raelle and Tally tag along--

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

(disgusted)

Our gods were ancient **beyond**
reckoning by the time their devil
set foot in this world.

*
*

RAELLE

Here here.

*
*

TALLY

Our shit makes their shit look like
baby toys. How fun is this guys!

*
*
*

RAELLE

Hoof.

*
*

ABIGAIL

Huh?

*
*

RAELLE

Since the devil set hoof. If we're
being accurate--

*

ABIGAIL

I think Raelle just made a humor
joke, using humor--

*
*
*

Tally and Abigail laugh--

*

RAELLE

I'm funny.

*
*

ABIGAIL

Like a puppy funeral...

*
*

This finally gets Raelle laughing too. The CIVILIANS are
keenly aware of the our Unit and the rest of the conscripts,
watching them as much as they watch the re-enactors,
regarding them with awe and a little fear. KIDS point until
their PARENTS stop them.

*

TALLY

Do you guys want johnnycakes?

RAELLE

So many johnnycakes.

Tally starts off to buy some from a stall when a SENIOR
CITIZEN begins to clap in their general direction, stopping
her in her tracks. Others join in tepidly.

SENIOR

Thank you for your service!

Tally stands awkwardly, not sure what to do. A LITTLE BOY runs up and gives Tally a flower. People ooh and aww at the photo-op until a frantic voice cuts through the crowd--

MOTHER

Dylan! Honey... where are you?!
Dylan?

His MOTHER cuts through the crowd, rushing to collect him, yanking him away from Tally like she's saving him from a rabid hyena. The mother tries to cover her BLIND PANIC as she drags the boy away, but there's contempt in her eyes. Dylan starts wailing. Many recruits see this, feel this. Raelle and Abigail go to Tally's side--

ABIGAIL

Don't let it get to you.

Raelle scans the crowd, spotting Scylla by a food stall. She sees Raelle too.

RAELLE

Who wants johnnycakes?!

Tally smiles. Raelle finds Scylla in line--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

I was hoping I'd see you. You're never in my sections, not that I always go.

SCYLLA

I'm Necro. They keep us away from the general populace.

RAELLE

(re: Tally)
Did you see that?

SCYLLA

Yeah, the pitchforks and burning torches are *invisible* now. The burning times never really stopped burning. I hate them too. We're even.

(then)
Come with me.

RAELLE

Where?

SCYLLA

You'll see.

*

Raelle looks back at Tally and Abigail, considering for a moment, then follows Scylla through an alley between some old buildings, over a low wall to an enclosed courtyard where Scylla removes some thick black rope from her bag. She begins to tie an end to her ankle--

SCYLLA (CONT'D)
Tie the other end to yours.

RAELLE
I don't--

SCYLLA
Have some fun.

Raelle complies. Once the rope is secured, Scylla hands Raelle a tiny rectangle of glossy film--

RAELLE
What's this?

SCYLLA
Salva. Government issue. It's how they do combat drops.

Scylla places her rectangle on her neck. It bonds to her skin, then dissolves. Scylla's eyes go SILVERY and her hair starts to drift and coil like it's UNDERWATER.

SCYLLA (CONT'D)
Come on... have some fun.

Raelle places the rectangle on her neck. We're in her POV as the night gets wavy and strange. She looks up at the stars, which are too distinct now, too pulsing, too close, close enough to touch, and there's Scylla who's laughing so hard and has a corona of moonlight behind her head. Raelle starts laughing too.

Raelle and Scylla float in the night sky, laughing, writhing, tethered by the ropes. It's the first time we've seen Raelle truly happy thus far, until--

ANACOSTIA
We're get into the contraband later..

Anacostia is standing there. Raelle and Scylla plummet to the ground.

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)
..we gotta go.

RAELLE

Why?

ANACOSTIA

Situation. We were looking
everywhere for you. *You need to go
right to the infirmary.*

*
*

Anacostia waits while Scylla and Raelle untie themselves.
They walk out.

37

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

37

Raelle boards the bus. All eyes are on her as she walks back
and sits next to Tally. Abigail looks mighty pissed, and
worse - embarrassed.

The bus starts moving. Nobody's talking, a stark contrast
from the bus-ride there. The general vibe is anxious,
forlorn--

RAELLE

Why so festive?

TALLY

Somebody saw a balloon.

*Raelle flops in an empty seat away from Abigail and Tally as
a deeper quiet descends on the bus--*

*

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

38

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLY MORNING

38

A NURSE checks Raelle's eyes with a light--

NURSE

Where'd you get the Salva?

RAELLE

Somebody else had it.

NURSE

Somebody huh? You could've died.
We need to keep you for a few days.
Don't want you drifting off. Did
you see the balloon?

RAELLE

No.

NURSE

There's all kinds of extra
security. Hear they're ramping up
training too. We need you well.

The nurse peeks under a bandage on Raelle's side - her
client's ANGRY RED BLISTERS are still hanging out on her
skin.

NURSE (CONT'D)

These just popped up, huh?

RAELLE

Out of nowhere. They hurt so bad I
can barely move. Seem like it's
spreading.

The nurse peers closer at the rash--

NURSE

I'll come check on you in a bit.

Raelle nods as she exits. She pulls out her MOM'S LETTERS
from a bag and starts looking through them, scanning each
page for something, getting drowsier as she goes--

Raelle looks up, out the window at a grand oak, leaves
fluttering in the late summer breeze. Her eyes catch on a
flicker of BRIGHTNESS, which gets lost again amid the leaves,
then reappears, as if hiding bashfully. Raelle finally gets
a clear eyeline - it looks like a BALLOON--

Raelle snaps awake, stunned to see Anacostia standing at her bedside, next to the nurse, looking pissed. *

ANACOSTIA

Are you sure?

NURSE

Positive. That civilian sick doesn't belong to her. You have quite a talent for lying, Raelle. *

The nurse exits to give them some space--

ANACOSTIA

This is probably it for your unit in terms of War College, given what you've racked up already. I'll tell them-- *

RAELLE

I'll tell them. *

ANACOSTIA

They want you to stay right where you are. *

39 INT. SUITE, BARRACKS - MORNING 39 *

We come in on the aftermath of Anacostia's news-- *

TALLY

Does that mean we're through? *

ANACOSTIA

Nearly. You may be able to correct your course, but I can't promise anything. *

Abigail is silent, glowering on her bed-- *

TALLY

You okay? *

Abigail walks out-- *

40 EXT. ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING - DAY 40 *

Abigail walks up the steps of an imposing building in the grand federal style. She speaks to a SECRETARY--

ABIGAIL

Hello, I'm here to see **General Alder**, if she has a few minutes.
Abigail Crozier is the name.

*
*

The secretary stiffens with Abigail's surname--

*

SECRETARY

Just a moment.

It's more than a moment and Abigail's pacing reveals how nervous she is. Eventually the secretary collects Abigail and leads her down a hallway lined with stunning WAR PHOTOGRAPHY.

41 INT. **GEN SARAH ALDER'S OFFICE - MORNING**

41 *

The secretary shows Abigail into a grand office. Seated behind the desk is **General Sarah Alder**, looking at an old map. **Sarah's Biddies**, seven wizened women in their 70's, perform mundane tasks around the office.

*
*
*

Abigail stands awkwardly. Alder eventually looks up--

*

SARAH

Abigail. What a pleasure. I just saw your mom in Prince Frederick. She drank all the milk punch as usual. How's it going, what's on your mind, so many questions, sit down...

*
*
*

ABIGAIL

Thank you for seeing me.

SARAH

You look troubled, talk child.

*

ABIGAIL

There's a girl in my unit--

SARAH

Uh oh. Here we go.

*

ABIGAIL

Attack of the shitbird.

SARAH

Ooof.

*

ABIGAIL

Just got caught trying to sick-out.

*

SARAH

What's her story?

ABIGAIL

Can't make the sounds, can't sing
the songs. **Disciplinaries racking
up.** To be candid, I begin to
wonder whether this girl has the
work in her at all. As you know,
we move up as Units. It's possible
that shitbird's attitude could keep
me from attending War College. I
can't risk that.

SARAH

I had one too, in **the early days...**
total shitbird. A big, fat shit-
turkey this one. No technique this
wretch, couldn't sing a storm to
save her life. Hardly call her a
witch really.

Abigail is visibly relieved and moves in for the kill -

ABIGAIL

I want to be re-assigned.

Sarah nods pensively, looking lost in a memory. **Her Biddies**
all turn to face Abigail in unison. It's highly intimidating--

SARAH

That shitbird I was telling you
about saved my life a dozen times.
Gibraltar, Tripoli, Solomon
Islands, Antarctica. That soldier
once dropped into the eye of a
class five hurricane - in an aerial
recon balloon because she was shit
at combat drops - to rescue a
couple kids trapped in a grain
silo.

Sarah gets up from her seat. **Her Biddies** close in around
Abigail, CLUCKING THEIR TONGUES in disapproval--

SARAH (CONT'D)

While lacking certain hereditary advantages that you and I are blessed with, while having the audacity to be born of an undistinguished line of combat medics, that shitbird happens to be the finest soldier I've ever known, selfless, brave, inventive, improvisational, loyal beyond measure. I was godmother to her kids. Your request is denied. This is on you Private. Bring that girl around 'til she's right, understood? You're lucky I don't call your mother about this.

Sarah and the Biddies speak as one--

SARAH AND BIDDIES

Get out of my sight.

A SHAKEN Abigail exits, trying to hide that she is crying.

42 INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

42

Raelle is sorting through her MOM'S LETTERS methodically, removing them carefully from onion skin envelopes, scanning them for something. Finally, she gets to the last one. On the lower corner of each page is a tiny glyph. Raelle traces it with her pinky, gasping as we--

FLASH TO:

43 INT./EXT. BUNKER, GREENVILLE, LIBERIA - DAWN

43

WILLA COLLAR, pale blonde, late 30's, stands in a doorway, surveying a savage sky divided by violent storms grinding against each other. Winding MUDSPOUTS dance on the horizon. BOULDERS OF HAIL hit an slice of windshear above the bunker, exploding into bits, thanks to a RING OF SOLDIERS forming a perimeter, all chanting--

--Willa walks back inside, checks on WOUNDED SOLDIERS lined up in cots, then returns to finishing a letter, as she writes--

WILLA (V.O.)

...can't believe I don't get to see you grow up. Are you strong and wiry like your dad? Are you salty like me, and surly at times. I hope so.

(MORE)

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

I miss you terribly, every day. We
 dropped into Greenville last under
 the cover of a monsoon. They knew
 we were coming. Their militia
 sings some evil song at us, day and
 night and now we can't get out. I
 blame our fearless leader. I pray
 this is not your experience when
 you are called. She has endangered
 us needlessly on numerous
 occasions, most critically, this
 last drop. I blame her high
 haughtiness, General Bell Crozier--

Raelle looks up from the letter, SUDDENLY BACK in the
 infirmary. OFF her rage--

44 INT. GYMNASIUM, FORT SALEM - LATER THAT DAY

44

PAN ALONG a trophy case filled with old pictures of women
 smiling arm in arm, sometimes with bloody teeth. There are
 trophies and ribbons dating back to the 1800's. STOMPS and
 GRUNTS fill the room, with the occasional whistle

REVEAL Abigail, still raw from earlier, and Tally circling
 each other on the mat, side-facing, squatting low while
 spinning short ropes with ball-gags at the end in NASTY WHIRS
 beside them. They cross each other and lunge with precise,
 almost waltz-like moves. EIGHT PAIRS of recruits spar
 similarly. Abigail whips her rope around Tally's ankle,
 surprising her and pulling her off her feet as Anacostia
 drones on--

ANACOSTIA

...entirety of your vocal
 apparatus, from frontal sinus to
 larynx, must remain functional and
 sound producing at all times.
 Inability to vocalize can render a
 soldier powerless--

Abigail offers Tally a hand up as Raelle enters, grabs a rope
 from the wall and charges Abigail. Tally backs up, giving
 them space. Other recruits gather around to watch.

ABIGAIL

Shouldn't you be in bed, cousin?

RAELLE

I'm not your cousin.

ABIGAIL

Aren't we all cousins, cousin?

RAELLE

I'm no illustrious Crozier.

This comment visibly RATCHETS Abigail's anger--

ABIGAIL

What is that supposed to mean?!

Raelle whips her rope at Abigail's head - Abigail ducks but loses footing and falls on the mat.

RAELLE

..daughter of American greatness herself!

Raelle snickers but Abigail's up again, IMPOSSIBLY FAST, and whipping her rope around Raelle's ankle and dropping her to the ground. And they're up again, with Raelle advancing, slashing her rope at Abigail in WHIRRING ARCS, getting a feel for the spin and dance of it.

RAELLE (CONT'D)

..backbone of democracy..

Raelle launches her rope out of a tight spin, right at Abigail's face. It grazes her cheek.

RAELLE (CONT'D)

Your mom was the C.O. on my mom's last tour.

*

Raelle punches Abigail, knocking her back, then tackles her to the ground.

ABIGAIL

You're blaming my mom for that!?
Soldiers die all the time. That's the job.

*

As they grapple, their GRUNTING AND SHOUTING take on a STRANGE SONIC DIMENSION - their voices are too echoing.

RAELLE

Is she pompous like you?

Tally notices that the air in the upper part of the gym has started to THICKEN AND SWIRL like a slow motion hurricane.

ABIGAIL

Was your mom a useless shitbird like YOU!

A JAGGED CRACK begins to form in the floor. Other recruits start to panic when **Anacostia** runs **over**.

*

She opens her mouth as if to yell but SILENCE ITSELF emerges -
 in fact all sound in the room disappears **as she** pulls a *
 stunned Abigail and Raelle apart. **They** continue to scream *
 soundlessly--

45 INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 45 *

Raelle and Abigail are led down the hall as Tally and *
 Anacostia confer-- *

ANACOSTIA *
 Abigail went to Alder. To request *
 re-assignment. This is so bad. *

This lands hard on Tally-- *

TALLY *
 When? *

ANACOSTIA *
 Today. *

OFF Tally's hurt-- *

46 INT. SUITE, BARRACKS - LATER THAT NIGHT 46

Tally enters to find Abigail working on scales in the suite.
 The air in front of Abigail's mouth shimmers slightly. As
 Tally changes out of her uniform into PJ's and gets ready for
 bed, she joins in Abigail's vocal exercise, harmonizing
 perfectly, then stops suddenly, switching to her speaking
 voice--

TALLY *
 I **just** heard you tried to bail. *

Abigail stops vocalizing--

ABIGAIL
 It's not you.

TALLY
 I know. But you were still willing
 to throw me away.

ABIGAIL
 She's holding you back too.

TALLY
 I heard your request was denied.

ABIGAIL

Denied is an understatement.

*

TALLY

You're both weak. Raelle in her avoidance of responsibility, you in your contempt and superiority. I'm the one who should walk.

*

Tally turns off the light by her bed. Abigail hasn't **felt** this side of Tally yet... maybe Tally hasn't either.

*

*

47

INT. MEDEA BARRACKS, SCYLLA'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

47

Scylla is putting up her hair, watching a DARK and BROODING Raelle in the mirror. They both pretend like they don't hear the bells ringing outside.

SCYLLA

That was your big plan, then? Sick out, rot in some stinky VA. Waste all **that** youth and beauty... and fury.

*

*

RAELLE

Kinda like that, but faster.

*

SCYLLA

Never eat the food of your captor. You will always return to her.

RAELLE

What are you **even** talking about?

*

SCYLLA

Your plan **was** shit. You entered weak, under the curse of a lie that **was** bound to be discovered. Even if it worked, it's winning by losing. **I** need you strong.

*

*

*

*

RAELLE

What for?

SCYLLA

For freedom. For the biggggg reset. Return to Eden.

RAELLE

There's no way out, beautiful. Hate to break the news.

SCYLLA

I know a way...

Scylla kisses Raelle for a long time as the bells outside
ring even louder--

*
*

48

EXT. MEDEA BARRACKS - SAME

48

We're behind a SOLDIER riding **SIDE-SADDLE** on a bike with no
peddles, down the road in front of Scylla's barracks. The
sound of GONGING BELLS fills the air.

*

We're in front of her now... she's young and looks exhausted.
Her bike propels itself of its own accord. Her mouth is
open like she's singing... the BELL SOUNDS are coming from
her MOUTH.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

49 INT. VOCAL TRAINING FACILITY, FORT SALEM - MORNING 49

Abigail and Tally walk in surprised to see Raelle already there, uniform tidy, hair pulled back, practicing scales in the corner. **Anacostia** walks through, ringing a tiny bell-- *

ANACOSTIA *

Find your Units everyone. We'll pick up where we left off with choral sequences.

Raelle joins Tally and Abigail at a round table, like many in the room, one per unit. In the center of the table is a thick TUNING FORK, several feet high, made from stone so dark it radiates shadow.

Anacostia walks to our Unit's table-- *

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D) *

In the lower register of Seed Sound 32, the Seed of reversal, one at a time...

--and strikes the fork with a mallet. An ODD SOUND emerges... almost human, like a SUSTAINED WAIL. Abigail sings first, matching the tone immediately. Then Tally, also finding the tone quickly.

Finally Raelle sings, faltering for a moment before landing a RICH LOW NOTE that bends the light in the room, making everything prismatic and saturated, to the audible amazement of the class. The FORK dances with BLACK FLAMES as **Anacostia** looks on in amazement, then removes a tiny bell from her belt and rings it. *

Moments later, **OLDER OFFICERS** enter to observe, joining the other's amazement. *

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D) *

Very good Private Collar. That seed is a beast to master. Maintain it...

The tone deepens as rolling black flame bleeds from the fork to the table, spreading, gaining speed. **Anacostia and the Officers** sing a COMMUNAL NOTE that halts the spread, dulling all sound in the room for a moment-- *

Our Unit stops singing--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

Well done.

Anacostia and the officers confer in the corner, glancing over as Abigail, Raelle and Tally look at each other, surprised and STOKED - we just did that!

*

*

*

*

50 EXT. MESS HALL - MORNING 50

Abigail checks ranks on the way into breakfast - they're up by twelve points.

51 INT. MESS HALL - MORNING 51

Tally and Raelle are eating breakfast when Abigail walks up. Abigail signals for Tally to get lost for a minute.

TALLY

Need more tea. Anyone else?

Raelle shakes her head. Abigail sits down--

ABIGAIL

That was incredible in Vocal today.

(then, uneasily)

I'm very sorry about your mom.

Whether my mom had anything to do with it I can't say. I do know she cares about her company more than herself. She's a decorated--

RAELLE

I got it.

ABIGAIL

We got off to a bad start. Can't have helped. I'm sorry, really.

RAELLE

I accept your apology and look forward to continuing to find ways to be an efficient Unit, but we don't have to be friends and we will never, ever be cousins.

ABIGAIL

I'm good with that.

They finish eating in silence.

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

Quick cuts of preliminary vocal and physical training at various locations around base:

- BELLS ring out over an aerial shot of Fort Salem.

- Raelle's in what looks like a greenhouse, surrounded by potted herbs, odd mushrooms. She digging underneath a plant, eventually finding the roots, which are shaped like a TINY PERSON-- *
*
*
*

- Recruits spar in the gymnasium. Abigail, Tally and Raelle move through precise, lethal looking combat choreography under the supervision of a trainer. Unlike before, Raelle is not only trying, but thriving.

- Recruits jog around a track at TWILIGHT, while singing scales that sound like opera. *

End TRAINING MONTAGE

52 EXT. CIRCE BARRACKS ROOFTOP - TWILIGHT 52 *

Tally finds Raelle on the roof, rereading her mom's letters--

TALLY
So this is the roost.

RAELLE
Caught me.

TALLY
Had a talk with Queen Bee.

RAELLE
Lucky you.

TALLY
She tried to ditch us.

RAELLE
Are you surprised?

TALLY
Bravery, check. Duty, check. What happened to loyalty? I wanted to choke her. *
*
(off Raelle's look)
I am so much less nice than I appear.

A beat--

RAELLE
I don't buy it.

Tally laughs, notices something pinned to Raelle's chest--

TALLY
What's that?

Raelle looks down - her MOM'S CHARM--

RAELLE
My mom's combat charm. My dad just sent it.

She takes it off and hands it to Tally, who examines it CLOSELY - the bird's foot grasping the blue bead---

RAELLE (CONT'D)
It's a Bower bird's foot. They love anything blue. Been in her family for generations. Passed from mother to daughter. Supposed to keep you safe in war.

Raelle's eyes are getting wet--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
I wanted to ask him... was she wearing it? How come it didn't work for her? But I didn't. Because I try to be nice, sometimes.

Tally, crying now too, pulls Raelle into a tight hug, then--

TALLY
Look at us...
(wiping her face)
You think there's any hope for this unit?

RAELLE
Doomed, I tell you.

They laugh--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
I met someone. She's amazing, beautiful. Best of all, she has a plan.

TALLY
I knew something was up. You're glowing.

RAELLE

Ew.

TALLY

It's a compliment.

RAELLE

I don't glow, I emanate.

Tally laughs. Raelle gets up to go--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

Gotta go meet Scylla. That's her name...

TALLY

Do everything I wouldn't do.

53 EXT. AERIAL ABOVE MAIN SERVICE ROAD, FORT SALEM - TWILIGHT 53 *

...once again, Raelle is being surveilled by something from above, hovering just outside the glow of the lamplights.

54 INT. SCYLLA'S SUITE, MEDEA BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER 54 *

There's a girl we've seen before standing in Scylla's room, regarding herself in the mirror... the DISHWATER BLONDE we met driving away from a mall, in a blizzard. She poses this way and that, checking out her face and body, watching how the lamplight catches her features as we--

--PAN AROUND to see her reflection in the mirror - IT'S A PALE BLUE BALOON, tilting this way and that just like she did, admiring itself, finding its best angle--

--ON A QUARTER, balanced on it's edge on Scylla's windowsill. Through the window we see Raelle approaching below. The quarter falls on it's side--

--dishwater blonde whips her head around, scrambling for a lighter.

She finds one and hold the long flame to her chin, which catches fire like onionskin, spreading around her in a rolling wave, leaving Scylla in her place. A KNOCK--

Scylla answers. Raelle grabs her and pushes her against a wall, kissing her neck. Scylla laughs as Raelle puts her hand down the front of Scylla's pants...

Scylla gasps in pleasure--

RAELLE
I thought about what you said.

SCYLLA
You did huh?

RAELLE
Uh huh. You're right... the way
out is in...

Scylla gasps again--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
The way over is under.

Scylla moans again, but this time we see how dead her face is
when she does--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
The way out--

SCYLLA
--is in.

As Scylla moans in orgasm, we--

CUT TO:

55	EXT. AERIAL OVER BARRACKS - NIGHT	55	*
	--Raelle walks back to her barracks--		*
56	INT. SUITE - NIGHT	56	*
	--Raelle enters quietly, undressing in the dark and getting into her bunk. On Abigail, snoring lightly. On Tally, wide awake, looking relieved now that Raelle's back.		*
	ON Tally's eyes closing--		*

END OF PILOT