

MOTHERLAND

"SAY THE WORDS"

Written by

Eliot Laurence

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TEASER

1 AERIAL OVER MEGAMALL - MORNING - WINTER

1

It's snowing, the dead of winter. Following a lone YELLOW BALLOON in the sky, rolling and careening, whipped this way and that by the blizzard, but making its way down to a MEGAMALL, festooned with snow-capped bunting and other patriotic decor.

It's Independence Day down there, in February. This is not our America...

2 INT. MEGAMALL - MORNING - WINTER

2

So consumed are PEOPLE inside with eating corndogs, sipping cocoa, and waving little American flags, that they don't notice the pale yellow BALLOON drifting down from high in the central atrium. There's something odd about the way it's falling... too slowly-

PEOPLE are gathered in the central food court, with four levels of balconies overhead. They're in small groups... except this one GIRL - about 18, tan, sporty, glossy brown pony tail, the image of a happy young woman with her whole life ahead of her, except there's some dark shit going on behind the eyes, which are locked on the balloon--

--which continues to fall as the girl crosses the food court to be right underneath it. It stops ten feet above her head, hovering for an unnatural moment. She nods, almost imperceptibly, and the balloon resumes its descent. Also, the girl is whispering something to herself...

At the last moment, the girl raises her hand as the balloon's string slips between her fingers and for a moment she's just a girl holding a balloon, pretty normal--

--until the balloon begins to swell grotesquely and pops with an unnaturally loud pop, an evil sound that ECHOES THROUGH THE MALL, somehow even stopping the patriotic musak. Balloon Girl begins to walk out, briskly----

MUSAK RESUMES. People are momentarily dazed but soon everything's back to normal until - SOMEONE JUMPS from an upper level, then another and another from the top floor, landing with sickening cracks. What's more terrible is the lack of reaction from the onlookers... the casual curiosity.

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...

As bodies continue to fall, Balloon Girl leaves the mall--

BALLOON GIRL
We are the Spree.

3 OMITTED 3

4 INT. CAR (MOVING) - MORNING - WINTER 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 - MORNING 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 black 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 BELLWEATHER, 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...

He 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, pale, 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 -- DAY

8 *

--surprised to see MELBA, 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 'til I'm old and grey, if I make it that long.

MELBA

I just want you to know we are grateful for what you do.. for the sacrifice you make. Truly--

Melba gets choked up. Raelle looks queasy--

RAELLE

Thanks.

MELBA

I mean it. Thank you for your service.

Raelle nods, forcing a smile--

RAELLE

Come on through.

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

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

9

INT. RAELE'S FIXING ROOM - DAY

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.

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 - DAY

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 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 Independence 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

Mom, I'm sorry. I've given this so much careful thought. I want to help. I want to do something good. The world needs it, or haven't you noticed?!

MAY

Oh I've noticed alright--

TALLY

Have you ever thought maybe I might want to get away from HERE?! And be around our own kind for a change?

MAY

I've given you a beautiful life--

TALLY

Your kind of beautiful life not mine--

Tally starts to walk away. May tries a new approach--

MAY

Will you imagine for two seconds what it was like for me to lose my sisters in the goriest ways you can imagine. FOUR beautiful, talented young women with their whole lives ahead of them... snuffed out--

TALLY

Mom I can't do this again--

MAY

I spoke to the attorney. When the call comes, just don't say the words. That's all we have to do right now--

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 - EVENING

12

The expansive apartment is furnished with IMPORTANT EARLY-AMERICAN FURNITURE. A fire ROARS in a large fireplace. A TV blares parade footage. Laughter from the kitchen--

--where Abigail and her mother, MAJOR GENERAL PETRA BELLWEATHER, 55 and happy to be on furlough, are assembling mini WITCH'S LADDERS.

PETRA

What did you tell him, the poor thing?

ABIGAIL

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

PETRA

You better save some oomph for the Army.

(then)

Did you tell him I'll be..

(cracking up)

...thinking of your face when I'm out there... on that battlefield--

Now they both crack up, then--

PETRA (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.

Petra takes her daughter by the shoulders, looks her up and down--

PETRA (CONT'D)

You're not gonna let me down, are you?

ABIGAIL

No ma'am.

PETRA

You're not gonna let this family down either, correct?

ABIGAIL

No ma'am.

PETRA

Because the first Bellweather to
serve in this Army was a slave.
She deserves better.

ABIGAIL

Yes ma'am.

PETRA

You are her wildest dream,
understood?

Abigail nods as the NEWS ON TV switches from benign parade
footage to a BREAKING STORY. Petra glances over on the way
to the table with a big salad--

PETRA (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.

PETRA

Another mall... the Spree.

Abigail rushes over, more excited than scared--

13 INT. RAELE'S HOME - NIGHT

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

MEREDITH

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

ANCHOR

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

MEREDITH

That's correct. The Spree are using sound here to carry and spread the curse--

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 herpes pizza. With extra herpes.

A long tense beat. Edwin looks at the clock. 11:54 PM--

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Any minute now huh?

RAELLE

Pretty much.

Edwin retrieves a cigar box from his bedroom, opens it, hands Raelle an odd looking charm - a BIRDS FOOT grasping a tiny turquoise bead, tiny bow tied around it with dusty old ribbon.

EDWIN

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 is about to say something but stops herself, then--

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Please wear it.

RAELLE

I will.

EDWIN

And come back.

Edwin pulls her into a hug. He's gripped by emotion but trying not to be a blubbering mess--

RAELLE

I will.

EDWIN

I can't lose you too.

He kisses her forehead and heads off to bed. Raelle puts the pictures of her mom away then sits in the center of the rug. She glances at a clock with dread in her heart - 11:56.

14 INT. TALLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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.

Just like that, May gets frantic again, grabbing Tally by the shoulders--

MAY

Please do not say the words--

Tally starts to walk May out--

MAY (CONT'D)

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 BLACK GROSGRAIN RIBBON, lustrous and silky, which begins to unfurl--

15 INT. ABIGAIL'S HOME - NIGHT

15

Abigail kneels before the same manifestation that visits Tally. Petra 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 - NIGHT

16

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

RAELLE
...of the United States, 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.

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 - LATE DAY

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.

18 INT. AUDITORIUM, FORT SALEM - LATE DAY

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 looks resentful.

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. You are the daughters of ancient lines. You are called to greatness.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

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 exiting, looking like she's going to puke. She--

18A EXT. AERIAL OVER FORT SALEM, WOODED WALKWAY - EVENING 18A *

--follows the general drift of WOMEN along a wooded path
dense with ancient trees, finding herself eventually...

19 EXT. CIRCE BARRACKS - SUNSET 19 *

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

20 INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, COMMON ROOM - SUNSET 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...

That gets everyone's attention. Now Anacostia moves in for the kill--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

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 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 - SUNSET

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 Craven and this is Abigail Bellweather. Sounds like we're going all the way together.

ABIGAIL

Onward to glory, soldiers.

RAELLE

Well, rah, rah, rah. Sounds like a poster.

ABIGAIL

I assure you, the sentiment is sincere.

Abigail shakes Raelle's hand, briskly--

RAELLE

Raelle Collar. Bellweather, huh...
that name sounds familiar...

ABIGAIL

Army's crawling with Bellweathers.

Sensing tension, Tally jumps in regarding the bunk beds--

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

Lookin' pretty pale for Chippewa Cession.

RAELLE

My family was there before it was the Cession. 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 another 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. No other witches except my
mom... 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 IRIDESCENT
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 belly
button - a mauve-y patch, like an 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:

22 INT. SUITE, CIRCE BARRACKS - NIGHT

22

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!

RAELLE

Came when you didn't have to. That's some heroic stuff.

ABIGAIL

(ignoring Raelle)

You did the right thing. This was the smallest draft in years. We need everybody.

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.

(then)

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...

(MORE)

RAELLE (CONT'D)
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 - EARLY MORNING 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 black 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 rainclouds water the lawns.

24 AERIAL - HIGH OVER FORT SALEM - DAY 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... and Tally and Abigail--

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

24A - BELLS ring out over an aerial of the Base. 24A

24B - Recruits spar in the gymnasium. Abigail is naturally athletic, enthusiastic, focused. Tally tries so hard it looks like she's gonna have an aneurism. Raelle is clumsy, lethargic, phoning it in, clearly not trying... 24B

24C - Recruits run in formation, carrying logs through ALTERNATING WEATHER - desert sun followed by blizzards. 24C

End TRAINING MONTAGE

25 INT. CHORAL CHAMBER - DAY 25 *

Abigail, Raelle and Tally are SINGING ALONG with hundreds of other girls in a high ceilinged 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, 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 like a roiling sea, tiny waves crashing into each other violently. They make notations in books...

...we gather that the motion of the water corresponds
specific positions in the room, hinting at the vocal potency
of the soldiers singing there.

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

26 AERIAL OVER FORT SALEM - DAY

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 - DAY

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 OFFICER in fatigues squats nearby making quick, repetitive gestures with her hands.

Raelle watches from the fence. 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
like my mom. Didn't work out too
well for her. Shouldn't you be in
training?

Scylla smiles at Raelle. The chemistry is instant--

SCYLLA

Shouldn't you?

RAELLE
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 - THREE OFFICERS
are now behind them, looking smug--

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Hand over your medals.

Raelle and Scylla comply, fumblingly. 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
You two have 7 minutes to find your
Drill Sergeants to discuss your
demerits. They already know.

The Officer backs off from Raelle and walks off. The others
do as well.

SCYLLA

They were loads of fun.

RAELLE

I hear they do birthday parties.

Scylla cracks up--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

Walk you back?

SCYLLA

I'm Scylla.

RAELLE

Who else could you be?

OFF Raelle's tentative smile--

28

INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, COMMON ROOM - DAY

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.

(MORE)

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

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 Bellweather in your Unit. I'm gonna guess that Abigail is a lot. The gifted ones always are.

RAELLE

I got it. There's more 4-stars in her line than any other. Ride it all the way to War College.

ANACOSTIA

You'll live longer. Trust me on that.

Anacostia hands her a bulky envelope--

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

This came for you today. Stop blowing it.

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

CLOSE ON CONTENTS - lots of old letters with military postmarks--

29 OMITTED

29

30 EXT. MESS HALL - SUNSET

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 - SUNSET

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.

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

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

32 INT. TENT, FORT SALEM - DAWN

32 *

Abigail, Tally, Raelle 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.

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.. indiscriminately...?

ABIGAIL

Like Alder said. With storm and fury.

ANACOSTIA

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

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

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

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 - SAME MORNING

33

Raelle and Tally are hanging uniforms, getting suite ready for inspection. Abigail's area is already immaculate--

RAELLE

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

TALLY

How could you ask that after this week? Malls, cruise ships, where does it end?

RAELLE

Maybe they have a point.

TALLY

Who? The Spree?!

RAELLE

Conscription is slavery by another name.

TALLY

Come on! You get to travel the world, do something great, protect the innocent.

RAELLE

None of that is real. It's a grind out there. That's all it is. I plan to deploy early, get blown to bits, end of story.

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--

Raelle removes the quilt curtain from her bunk and folds the quilt neatly--

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 daffodils? And can I have some?

Raelle hugs Tally--

TALLY

Anytime. Am I annoying?

RAELLE

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

Abigail walks in, giving her bed a final once over--

ABIGAIL

Weepy, weepy in here. Perk up
soldiers. The future of the free
world is in our hands.
(looks them up and down)
Goddess help.

Anacostia commences inspecting.

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

- | | | |
|----------------------|--|------|
| 33A | - Tally and LIZ CHAUSABLE 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. | 33A* |
| 33B | - Recruits run in formation through FLASH FLOOD conditions carrying logs while vocalizing. An Officer blows a whistle, signaling the end of the exercise. Some recruits start to amble back towards barracks. Abigail, Tally and Raelle, looking muddy and exhausted, find a dry patch of ground and-- | 33B |
| 33C | OMITTED | 33C |
| End TRAINING MONTAGE | | |
| 34 | OMITTED | 34 |
| 35 | OMITTED | 35 |
| 36 | OMITTED | 36 |
| 36A | OMITTED | 36A |
| 36B | EXT. FORT SALEM, TRAINING FIELD - TWILIGHT/NIGHT

--collapse, breathing hard-- | 36B* |

TALLY

How is it even possible that I got
mud in my butt?

ABIGAIL
My blisters have blisters.

RAELLE
I think I'm gonna puke.

ABIGAIL
Again.

The Unit laughs wearily...

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
(still getting her breath)
Feels like there's not enough air
in the air.

TALLY
Is the ground spinning?

RAELLE
Technically, yes.

More weary laughter from the Unit--

ABIGAIL
I think that might have been a
joke.

RAELLE
What, I'm funny.

ABIGAIL
Like a puppy funeral.

Abigail gets up and starts to straighten out her trashed
uniform, then gives up. She then helps Tally up--

TALLY
We're gonna head back.

Raelle sits up and catches sight of Scylla watching her from
under a tree nearby--

RAELLE
I'll be there in a few.

Abigail and Tally stagger off. Once they're gone, Raelle
makes her way over to the tree--

RAELLE (CONT'D)
How come you get to skip out on all
the fun?

SCYLLA

I'm necro. We work with the dead.
They keep us away from the general
populace.

RAELLE

Lucky you.

SCYLLA

You look like you could use some
fun. Come with me.

RAELLE

I'm all gross.

SCYLLA

No you're not.

Raelle follows Scylla through the woods--

RAELLE

Where are you taking me?

SCYLLA

Come on. Live a little...

They happen upon a clearing where four trees form a canopy.
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 know--

SCYLLA

Shhh--

Raelle complies, smiling. 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'll get into the contraband
later..

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

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

..we were looking everywhere for
you.

RAELLE

Why?

ANACOSTIA

Situation. Somebody saw a balloon.

Raelle and Scylla look at each other, then the sky, seriously spooked.

ANACOSTIA (CONT'D)

We need to get you both to the
infirmary.

Anacostia waits while Scylla and Raelle hurry to untie themselves--

ACT FIVE

38 INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

38*

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

NURSE
Where'd you get the Salva?

RAELLE
Someone else had it.

NURSE
That someone we're keeping you
apart from during your stay here?

RAELLE
Maybe...

NURSE
Do you have any idea how dangerous
that was? How many years you have
to train to take a quarter of the
dose you took? How deeply and
aggressively stupid that was?

RAELLE
I'm starting to get a sense of it
now.

NURSE
I'm surprised you're not dead. 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)
Nice work. You drew that mess off
a civilian?

RAELLE

Yes, ma'am. My mom showed me how.

The nurse peers closer at the rash--

NURSE

You might be a great medic someday.
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--

ANACOSTIA

I tried to tell you. Why didn't you listen to me? I'm not sure you're gonna make it. That's above my paygrade, but for now I'm gonna go tell your unit you've essentially doomed them--

39 INT. SUITE, BARRACKS - DAY

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, nuclear--

TALLY

You okay?

Abigail walks out--

40 INT. ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING - DAY

40 *

A visibly upset Abigail tries to collect herself. She approaches a SECRETARY'S desk--

ABIGAIL

Hello, I'm here to see General Alder, if she has a few minutes. Abigail Bellweather 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 - DAY

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

Disciplinaries racking up already. She got ahold of some Salva last night...

SARAH

Is she okay?

Abigail nods...

SARAH (CONT'D)

What's her story?

ABIGAIL

Just lost her mom. Seems to have some kind of front-lines blaze of glory death-wish nonsense knocking around her head. She can't make the sounds, can't sing the songs. 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 her attitude could keep me from attending War College. I can't risk that.

SARAH

I had one too, in the early days...
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 soldier 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 useless 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, late 30's, in full battle dress, 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, also in battle dress, 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. 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 Petra Bellweather--

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

44

INT. GYMNASIUM, FORT SALEM - 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 Bellweather.

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!

The glass in the room's window starts to blister and ooze.
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-

TIME JUMP TO:

45

INT. GYM - MOMENTS LATER

45

Raelle and Abigail are led out 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 - TWILIGHT

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 - TWILIGHT

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?
Spoil your chance for War College,
get deployed too soon, get blown up
on the front lines because you
suck so bad. Die young... waste
all that youth and beauty... and
fury.

RAELLE

Kinda like that, but faster.

SCYLLA

Your plan was hot garbage. 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. 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

Tell me.

SCYLLA

Let them train you. Let them make
you powerful. Then turn their
weapons against them.

RAELLE

Oh yeah...

SCYLLA

You see, the way over is under.

RAELLE

Okay...

Scylla moans again--

SCYLLA

And the way out--

RAELLE

--is in.

As Scylla moans in orgasm, we--

48 EXT. MEDEA BARRACKS - TWILIGHT

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 - DAY

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 OMITTED 50

51 INT. MESS HALL - DAY 51

Tally and Raelle are eating lunch when Abigail walks up. *

TALLY

Did you see how the older Officers were clucking about us? "We haven't witnessed harmonics like that in decades..." We're special, you guys!

Abigail signals for Tally to get lost for a minute.

TALLY (CONT'D)

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.

Abigail and Raelle shake hands and finish eating in silence.

Begin TRAINING MONTAGE

51A - BELLS ring out over an aerial shot of Fort Salem.

51A

51B - Recruits spar in the gymnasium. Abigail, Tally and Raelle 51B
move through precise, lethal looking combat choreography
under the supervision of a trainer. Unlike before, Raelle is
not only trying, but thriving. She's also being a team
player for the first time, helping Abigail and Tally up off
the mat--

51C DUSK - Recruits jog around a track, while singing scales that 51C
sound like opera.

End TRAINING MONTAGE

52 INT. CIRCE BARRACKS, SUITE - DUSK

52 *

Tally finds Raelle in the bottom bunk, behind the quilt--

 TALLY
Abigail's taking a shower. We have
seven minutes.

 RAELLE
Lucky us.

 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 gave
it to me.

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, then--

TALLY

You may want to rethink that.

RAELLE

Why?

TALLY

We need to make this work. That's where we are now. We have a chance to right the course. A chance...

RAELLE

I'll get behind that.

Raelle gets up to leave, brightening--

RAELLE (CONT'D)

I met someone. She's amazing, beautiful.

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 - DUSK 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 - NIGHT 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 BALLOON, tilting this way and that just like she did, admiring itself, finding its best angle--

--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. A KNOCK--

CUT TO:

55 EXT. SCYLLA'S SUITE, MEDEA BARRACKS - NIGHT 55

--Raelle has just finished knocking. The door opens, it's Scylla, who kisses Raelle--

56 INT. UNIT'S SUITE, CIRCE BARRACKS - NIGHT 56

--On Abigail, snoring lightly. On Raelle's empty bed. On Tally, wide awake--

END OF PILOT

