

3  
BODY  
PROBLEM

Episode 101

OVER BLACK, the FERVENT CHANT OF A THOUSAND VOICES  
crescendos:

揪出反革命小爬蟲，  
打倒一切牛鬼蛇神！

A CHYRON reads: **BEIJING. TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY 1966.**

**EXT. TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY EXERCISE GROUNDS - DAY**

CROWD  
(in Chinese)  
*Root out the bugs! Sweep away all  
monsters and demons!*

A THOUSAND RED GUARDS, young Chinese ages 12-20, are packed  
to the gills on the exercise grounds of this prestigious  
university. They are frothing with revolutionary fervor.

On a makeshift STAGE, a PROFESSOR (male, 50s, nameless  
because this is the last we'll ever see of him), collapses to  
his knees, mentally broken.

PROFESSOR  
(IN MANDARIN)  
*Yes! I am a counterrevolutionary!  
I beg you to rehabilitate me!*

The crowd JEERS. He is DRAGGED OFF the stage by three male  
Red Guards.

CROWD  
*Strike down the  
counterrevolutionary!*

BEHIND THE STAGE

Reveal another professor, YE ZHETAI (male, 48) - he's next.  
He is already heavily BRUISED. His hands are tied behind his  
back, with MALE RED GUARDS one-third his age on either side  
of him.

But unlike the previous professor, Ye Zhetai's face is  
impassive.

MALE RED GUARD  
*Bring on the next one.*

The Red Guards nearly lift him off the ground by the elbows  
and carry him in front of the rabid crowd.

BACK ON STAGE

Four FEMALE RED GUARDS (14-15) mount the stage to join in dragging Ye Zhetai to the front. One of them, TANG HONGJING, leads the crowd in a new wave of chants:

TANG HONGJING

*Rebellion is just! Revolution is  
righteous!*

CROWD

*Rebellion is just! Revolution is  
righteous!*

**EXT. TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY EXERCISE GROUNDS - FOOT OF THE STAGE  
- DAY**

Meanwhile, at the foot of the stage, we reveal Ye Zhetai's daughter, YOUNG YE WENJIE (20), surrounded by the crowd on three sides. She's frozen in fear, in a cold sweat, knowing what's to come. She cranes her neck upward to bear witness to her father's "struggle session".

YOUNG YE

(low whisper)

*Father...*

Two kindly UNIVERSITY JANITORS (male, 40s) huddle on either side of her, trying to keep her calm.

**EXT. TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY EXERCISE GROUNDS - DAY**

One of the male Red Guards addresses him in a voice loud enough to hush the crowd:

MALE RED GUARD

*Ye Zhetai, aren't you a professor  
of physics?*

YE ZHETAI

*You should know. You were my  
student.*

MALE RED GUARD

*Behave yourself.*

The students grow frenzied.

MALE RED GUARD

*Ye Zhetai! In your physics course  
did you teach the theory of  
relativity?*

YE ZHETAI

*Relativity is one of the  
fundamental theories of physics.  
How can a basic survey course not  
teach it?*

TANG HONGJING

*You lie! Einstein went to the  
American Imperialists and helped  
them build the atomic bomb!*

Ye Zhetai only returns a withering glare, refusing to even dignify her accusation. Enraged, Tang shouts just offstage:

TANG HONGJING

*Bring up his wife! She is a genuine  
physicist! She knows the truth!*

The male Red Guards bring Ye Zhetai's wife, SHAO LIN, onto the stage as a witness for the prosecution. She's teetering on the edge of madness, having capitulated to the mob.

YOUNG YE

*Mother!*

For a brief moment, Ye Wenjie's eyes give a glimmer of hope which turns to horror when she sees her mother's face.

Ye Zhetai's breath seizes, knowing his wife has been broken, and knowing what that likely means for him.

Shao Lin shouts:

SHAO LIN

*Ye Zhetai! With the help of the  
revolutionary youth, it has become  
clear to me. I want to stand on the  
side of the people!*

The crowd ROARS.

ON YE WENJIE: her heart breaks at her mother's betrayal. She nearly shouts at Shao Lin but the janitors restrain her.

MALE RED GUARD

*Bow your head, Ye Zhetai! Bow your  
head!*

But Ye Zhetai refuses to bow his head.

Irate, Tang Hongjing STRIKES him in the face with a BELT BUCKLE, drawing blood.

TANG HONGJING

*Bow!*

Yet Ye Zhetai still refuses to bow.

Shao Lin steps forward again, continuing her verbal assault:

SHAO LIN

*Ye Zhetai! You cannot deny, you lectured on the counterrevolutionary big bang theory.*

YE ZHETAI

*It is the most plausible explanation for the origin of the universe.*

SHAO LIN

*Lies! The theory claims to know when time began.*

TANG HONGJING

*Time began? What was there before time?*

SHAO LIN

*It leaves open a place to be filled by God.*

The crowd gasps. Tang Hongjing, terrified by this possibility, shouts in Ye Zhetai's face:

TANG HONGJING

*Are you suggesting God exists?*

YE ZHETAI

*Science has given no evidence either way.*

This sends the crowd past rage.

They CHANT their disapproval:

CROWD

*Down with Ye Zhetai! Down with academic authorities!*

The Red Guards fly into a frenzy. The teenage girls descend upon him, SWINGING their belts, the buckles SMASHING against his head with a barrage of wet, sickening thuds.

At the foot of the stage, Ye Wenjie SCREAMS in horror, but her voice is drowned out in the mayhem. It requires both janitors to restrain her from rushing the stage.

The girls continue to beat and kick Ye Zhetai, well past the point of obvious death. He lies motionless in a pulp.

Finally, mercifully, the Red Guards come to their senses. They turn around to find that the crowd has fallen silent, save for a few uncomfortable murmurs.

Ye Wenjie is devastated, still struggling against the janitors.

YOUNG YE

*Let me go! Let me go!*

Slowly, the Red Guards leave the stage.

After a few moments, the crowd dissipates, their bloodlust sated, tinged with a guilt no one will admit to. They leave Ye Zhetai's body behind.

#### **EXT. TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY EXERCISE GROUNDS - DAY**

An hour later. With the exercise ground now empty, Ye Wenjie sits beside her father's body, catatonic, all emotion wrung out of her. She slowly reaches into her pocket and places a MEERSCHAUM PIPE in her father's hand - her father's pipe.

TANG HONGJING (O.S.)

*Ye Wenjie...*

A LONG SHADOW looms over Ye. She looks over her shoulder to find...

The four teenage RED GUARD GIRLS who murdered her father staring down at her, rifles in hand, unsmiling.

#### **MAIN TITLES**

#### **EXT. LONDON - NIGHT**

We're staring down at the nighttime cityscape from far overhead. A creepy, ominous, disorienting view, made creepier and ominouser by Ramin's cue.

As we hurtle closer to a particular block, we see the blue lights of police cars. Quite a few of them, parked outside a house.

**INT. HOUSE - NIGHT**

We follow CLARENCE SHI, better known as DA SHI, down a dim corridor.

DA SHI  
Another suicide?

Da Shi approaches COLLINS, who nods as his boss approaches.

COLLINS  
Yeah, very unpleasant. Scotland  
Yard has been helpful, for a  
change. I told them we need to be  
involved.

They enter a dimly-lit room.

POLICE OFFICERS and FORENSICS SPECIALISTS are tagging items and collecting specimens. A PHOTOGRAPHER takes pictures.

There is blood everywhere. Quite a lot of it. Almost hard to imagine that it came from one body, though it did.

Collins casts his flashlight over the room, revealing numbers hand-drawn on the wall in blood. Countdowns, dozens of them, starting with relatively high numbers and getting closer and closer to zero.

Da Shi looks over the bloody countdowns as Collins refers to his notes.

COLLINS  
Dr. Sadiq Mohammed. Born in  
Karachi. Studied cosmology and  
theoretical physics at MIT. Strange  
suicide note.

DA SHI  
Another countdown.

COLLINS  
One of the betting sites had him  
pegged as the favorite for the next  
Nobel Prize in Physics.

Da Shi's face is quite close to the bloody scrawl of  
00:00:00.

DA SHI  
You can bet on that?

COLLINS  
You can bet on anything, boss.

Da Shi crouches down to look at a smudged scrawl near ground level.

**I STILL SEE IT**

DA SHI

History of mental illness? Previous suicide attempts? Anything like that?

COLLINS

Nothing. Just like the others.

And now, finally, Da Shi turns to look at the corpse lying on the floor. SADIQ MOHAMMED was a young man, not even 40.

He lies in his own dried blood, which covers everything. An X-Acto knife is still in his hand.

He has gouged out his own eyes.

DA SHI

Christ.

Da Shi looks from the mutilated dead man to the smudged **I STILL SEE IT** on the wall.

**EXT. OXFORD ACCELERATOR PROJECT - DAY**

Drone shots of the Oxford Accelerator Project.

Chyron: **OXFORD UNIVERSITY PARTICLE ACCELERATOR**

**INT. OAP - ANTIMATTER DECELERATOR HALL - DAY**

VERA YE walks through the tunnel housing the beam pipes used to accelerate particles. She passes by the most sophisticated machinery humanity is capable of producing, but she doesn't look at any of it. It's all useless to her now.

No one else is present. We feel the emptiness.

**INT. OAP - COMPUTER ROOM - DAY**

Vera enters and sees SAUL DURAND, alone by a bank of monitors, staring at the data on the screens.

His workstation is a mess: an open bag of Jack's crisps, a bottle of Mountain Dew on some kind of plaque.

Around him are signs that he's mid-move: an empty bookshelf; framed posters leaning against walls; half-packed boxes with person items spilling out of them.

VERA

I knew you'd be the last one here.

SAUL

Here 'til the lights go out, boss.  
I keep thinking if I just stare at  
the screen long enough, *something*  
will come to me.

The lines of data are dense, incomprehensible to most people, but Saul studies them with keen interest.

VERA

They shut the project down.

SAUL

But the power's on until midnight,  
so...

He taps on the keyboard.

SAUL

You taught us it doesn't matter how  
beautiful your theory is, if it  
doesn't agree with experiment, it's  
wrong.

VERA

I think that was Feynman, but yeah.

SAUL

According to the experiments, all  
our theories are wrong. All of  
them. All of the physics of the  
past sixty years is wrong. Science  
is broken.

Vera looks in one of the moving boxes, which is filled with empty Jack's Snacks wrappers and crushed cans and Mountain Dew bottles.

She pulls out a photo of Saul as a young, bespectacled geek holding his Apker Award.

VERA

You were just a baby.

She puts aside the photo and picks up the actual Apker Award (a certificate in a fancy leather cover).

VERA

You're not throwing this away, are you? Oh, Saul. You mustn't.

She reads:

VERA

You still "demonstrate great potential for future scientific accomplishment."

SAUL

Missed my window. "A person who has not made his great contribution to science before the age of 30 will never do so."

VERA

How old are you?

VERA

31?

SAUL

32.

She wraps the award in a sweatshirt from the box to protect it.

VERA

Einstein wasn't right about everything. If anyone can figure this out, it's you.

Again, she seems preoccupied. As he goes back to his screens. She turns to go but then stops in the doorway.

VERA

Saul? Do you believe in God?

Saul is stunned by this question from his mentor.

SAUL

Is that what it's come to?

He waits for an answer but gets none.

SAUL

No. I don't.

He gestures at the screen.

SAUL

I accept that this... defies the known laws of physics. But I don't think that's an argument for God.

Vera stares at the screen.

VERA  
So what's left?

Saul wishes he had something helpful to say.

She looks as if she might say something else, but she doesn't. She smiles sadly and walks out the door, leaving Saul alone and perplexed.

**INT. OAP - NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY - DAY**

A giant cylindrical stainless-steel tank, 150 feet high. The walls of the tank are lined with thousands of photo-multiplier tubes. A strange and beautiful space, like nothing else on Earth.

Vera stands at the access door at the top of the tank, staring down at the water far below her, at the thousands of photo tubes mirrored there.

She lets herself fall. There isn't much splash. Soon the ultrapure water appears undisturbed again. We hold on the water long enough to know she won't be coming up.

**INT. BAR - NIGHT**

A regular bar with a karaoke setup in front.

A BLONDE TRYHARD, sexy if over-tanned, sings Katy Perry. She's good enough that it's not funny and bad enough that it's not pleasant.

BLONDE TRYHARD  
(singing karaoke)  
*I kissed a girl and I liked it  
The taste of her cherry ChapStick*

We find JIN CHENG and AGUSTINA "AUGGIE" SALAZAR seated on bar stools, trying their best to ignore the singer.

JIN  
Wow. Confidence.

A BARTENDER places shots glasses full of tequila in front of them.

JIN  
You know you're gonna be carrying me home, right?

AUGGIE

I've done it before.

They lift shot glasses full of tequila and clink.

AUGGIE

*Salud.*

JIN

*Salud.*

They slam their glasses down on the bar. Auggie calmly eyes the Tryhard; Jin looks like she might vomit.

AUGGIE

It's possible our bar has gone to shit.

JIN

Second Law of Thermodynamics:  
eventually, everything turns to  
shit.

(hiccups)

Physics is turning to shit. Bars  
can't be far behind.

AUGGIE

Explain to me what's going on.

JIN

Okay--

A hot guy (RUFUS) leans into the bar.

RUFUS

So are you ladies gonna sing a  
song?

JIN

(looks a little sick)

No.

RUFUS

No? What do you mean, "No"? Not  
singers? Alright. Alright. What do  
you do, then? Hold on, don't tell  
me. Let me guess. You probably are--

AUGGIE

I design self-assembling, synthetic  
polymer nanofibers. I started a  
company that manufactures them for  
a variety of potential medical,  
energy and materials applications.

Rufus looks like someone trying very hard to understand a foreign language. He looks to Jin, hoping for something he can get his head around.

JIN

I'm a Senior Researcher in the Theoretical Physics Group at Imperial College. I'm doing a metastudy analyzing the results of particle accelerator experiments around the world.

Rufus thinks about this.

RUFUS

Nice one.

KARAOKE MC (O.S.)

Next up is Rufus!

RUFUS

(relieved)

Alright. That's me! Enjoy it! Bye.

Exit Rufus. Auggie looks around.

AUGGIE

Okay. Why is everyone freaking out?

Jin organizes the words in her mind so she can take a sober run at them.

JIN

About a month ago, all the major accelerators started generating results that made no fucking sense--

RUFUS (O.S.)

(singing karaoke)

It's nine o'clock on a Saturday,  
the regular crowd shuffles in...

Auggie turns to the source of the exasperation.

AUGGIE'S POV of Rufus singing, looking at the lyrics screen.

On the lyrics screen, some aggressive orange squiggles obscure the lyrics for a moment, but the singer doesn't seem to notice. And then they're gone.

Auggie notices, but doesn't think much of it.

AUGGIE

Come have a smoke with me.

JIN

That shit will kill you.

AUGGIE

So will this.

**EXT. SMOKING AREA - NIGHT**

Auggie is watching a video on Jin's phone. We see the same particle collision representations that we saw in the scene with Saul and Vera.

Even before she speaks, Auggie's face tells us that she knows what she is seeing is impossible.

JIN

Saul sent that one just last week,  
from Oxford.

AUGGIE

It's been a while since particle  
physics, but this can't...

JIN

No, it can't.

AUGGIE

Well then maybe it's a hack?

JIN

In every accelerator on the planet?  
I went through the CERN code, line  
by line. Nothing.

AUGGIE

The code? For the centralized  
software? How many lines is that?

JIN

It's a lot, Auggie. It's a lot of  
fucking lines.

AUGGIE

Okay, so it's a hardware issue.

Jin shakes her head.

JIN

Dipole magnets, muon chambers,  
calorimeters.

(MORE)

JIN (CONT'D)

Every component checked four times  
over in every collider from here to  
Beijing.

AUGGIE

Okay so what does Saul say?

JIN

He says it's impossible.

AUGGIE

What about you?

Jin takes her phone back and looks at the frozen image on the screen.

JIN

These experiments teach us how the  
universe works. And that... that's  
fucking *Alice in Wonderland*.

Auggie feels her phone vibrating in her purse. She pulls it out and sees that Saul is calling. [We see his picture on her phone.]

AUGGIE

Now he calls. I texted him to come  
three times and he wouldn't even  
text me back.

Auggie looks at the phone.

AUGGIE'S POV of Saul's picture on his phone. More, thicker orange squiggles appear over Saul's name, obscuring it.

Auggie looks away from the phone. The squiggles remain in the center of her field of vision for a beat. Her gaze returns to the phone, at which point the squiggles disappear.

The phenomenon has a more visible effect on Auggie this time.

She sends the call to voicemail. When she does so, the squiggles disappear.

AUGGIE

(putting phone away)  
See how you like it.

JIN

You guys are like 14-year-olds.

Jin's phone is ringing now. Saul.

Auggie shakes her head.

AUGGIE

Take it. He's probably high as  
fuck.

(beat)

It's fine. Take it.

Jin steps away from the other smokers to a quieter part of  
the smoking area and takes the call. We stay with Auggie.

JIN (O.S.)

Hey.

Auggie stares at the wall. She frowns, blinks, opens her  
eyes.

She turns her head, closes her eyes, turns back.

She grabs Rufus as he walks by.

AUGGIE

Hey.

RUFUS

Oh, hey. Hi!

AUGGIE

Do you see that?

RUFUS

See what?

AUGGIE

That.

She steps away from him and stares at the wall.

RUFUS

You all right, love?

Auggie's POV of: the countdown, fully manifested for the  
first time.

She's so distracted and disturbed by what she sees that she  
doesn't notice Jin approaching behind her, phone held by her  
side, face slack with shock.

JIN

Auggie.

Auggie turns to her.

JIN

Vera Ye just killed herself.

**INT. BLACK PALACE - CORK BOARD ROOM - DAY**

This room is dim, and our view of it is intentionally limited. We don't see Da Shi yet; we just see a picture of Vera Ye in the middle of a cork board.

Beneath the picture, a notecard on which her name is written above "OXFORD ACCELERATOR PROJECT."

A hand reaches into the frame and adds something over the top of Vera's photo in red pen: a red 'X'.

Da Shi steps back and looks at the board. We see him in reverse. A bunch of photos are arrayed around Vera, orbiting her like planets. All the people in her life, grouped according to association.

[Ye Wenjie is on the board amidst the others, though not featured: "DR. YE WENJIE. MOTHER. BORN BEIJING, 1950. MOVED TO LONDON, 1985. RETIRED.]

"DR. SAUL DURAND. PhD 2016, THEORETICAL PHYSICS. APKER AWARD. VERA'S LAB ASSISTANT, 2016-PRESENT."

We see Da Shi's face as he scrutinizes the board, like someone trying to put together a difficult puzzle.

"DR. JIN CHENG. PhD 2016, THEORETICAL PHYSICS. DIRAC MEDAL, EDDINGTON MEDAL. KLEIN INSTITUTE, QUANTUM GRAVITY PROJECT DIRECTOR."

"DR. AGUSTINA SALAZAR. PhD 2016, APPLIED PHYSICS. NANOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE, FOUNDER AND CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER."

"DR. WILL DOWNING. PhD 2016, THEORETICAL PHYSICS. 6TH FORM PHYSICS TEACHER, BROMLEY."

"JACK ROONEY. DROPPED OUT 2015. STARTED JACK'S SNACKS. VALUED AT £90 MILLION."

**INT. FUNERAL HOME LAVATORY - DAY**

Close on the order of service for Vera's funeral. Held by WILL DOWNING, who places it down and stares at himself in the mirror. He's not particularly happy with the Will he sees.

JACK ROONEY comes to the other sink, glancing at Will as he washes his hands.

JACK  
Excited to see Jin?

WILL

Well, it's not exactly ideal  
circumstances, is it?

JACK

How long's it been?

WILL

I don't know.

JACK

Bet you do. Bet you remember to the  
day.

WILL

(he does)

It's been a while.

(stares at his tired face)

Fuck. I did not sleep at all last  
night.

JACK

Why not?

WILL

I don't know Jack, maybe it's  
because Vera's killed herself?

Jack pulls out a golden flask (monogrammed with his initials,  
JR). Jack offers the flask to Will, who shakes his head. Jack  
shrugs, holds it up.

JACK

To Vera.

He takes a deep swig.

He takes out a bag of Jack's Snacks, a Chili Cheese variety,  
opens them and munches on a handful.

Will stares at him, horrified.

JACK

Hides the tequila smell.

He offers the bag to Will.

JACK

You want?

WILL

No.

JACK

Go on.

WILL

I don't want one.

JACK

It's my most popular flavor. Third highest-selling crisps in the UK, after Walker's Cheese and Onion and Monster Munch Beef.

WILL

Congratulations.

JACK

Suck a dick, Pringles.

They laugh.

JACK

Have you heard that Jin's got a new boyfriend. Don't worry. Bet he's a total squid.

CUT TO:

**EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY**

PRITHVIRAJ "RAJ" VARMA, a dreamboat in his Royal Navy uniform. He holds Jin close, comforting her: then she grins.

Saul rides into the parking lot on his bicycle.

JIN

Fucking Saul. Come and say hi.

He hops off and walks over to Jin and Raj.

She opens her arms for Saul and embraces him.

JIN

I'm so sorry.

SAUL

Yeah, me too.

JIN

Saul, this is Prithviraj--

RAJ

Just Raj, mate.

Saul and Raj shake hands.

SAUL  
Nice to meet you.

Jin points at the untied necktie around Saul's neck.

JIN  
What is going on here?

Saul's a little embarrassed.

SAUL  
I was trying to figure it out on  
YouTube but...

Jin pushes aside his hands and ties the tie, quickly and expertly.

JIN  
Winner of the Apker Award, can't  
tie a tie.

SAUL  
Lord Kelvin thought that atoms were  
knotted vortices in the aether.

JIN  
Did he?

Saul's about to answer but Jin cinches the tie tight, interrupting him.

JIN  
Is Auggie here yet?

**INT. TRAIN - DAY**

SAUL (O.S.)  
She said she's running late.

Auggie sits on the Great Western train from London to Oxford. Her eyes are shut. She takes deep breaths, as if she were trying to calm herself.

A little BOY sits across the aisle from her, staring at her. The boy's MOTHER, tapping on her phone, ignores her son.

Auggie opens her eyes. She looks up at the roof of the train. She sees something there, something horrifying.

In her POV we see what she sees:

01:18:02:46

01:18:02:45

01:18:02:44

Days, hours, minutes, seconds, steadily shifting numbers plastered across her field of vision.

Auggie squeezes her eyes shut, then opens them, but the numbers stay with her wherever she looks, adjusting for light and dark and color to remain perfectly visible at all times.

**INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY**

Vera's body lies in an open casket at the front. The morticians have done a good job.

Wreaths of white irises on the wall bear the names of well-wishers.

Jin stops at the front of the reception room and bends down beside an older woman - Vera's MOTHER.

JIN

I'm so sorry for your loss. We all loved your daughter very much.

YE WENJIE

Thank you for coming.

Vera's mother pats Jin's hand and Jin walks back to sit beside Raj.

Will and Jack are already sitting near the back, watching this interaction.

JACK

Jin's looking good.

Will just stares. He's been in love with Jin since pretty much the moment he first saw her, and a long time has passed since they last met.

And then he sees Raj. Tall, handsome, in uniform.

Fuck.

JACK

Phwoar, he's looking good, as well.

Will gives Jack a dirty look.

JACK

What?

WILL

Fuck off.

Jin sees Will and Jack. She gives them a small, funeral-appropriate wave and smile.

Jack smiles and waves back. Will is too paralyzed at first to do anything. He finally raises his hand for a wave after Jin has already faced front again.

Auggie enters. Saul sees her and stands to make room.

They embrace. She studies him.

AUGGIE

Hey. How are you doing?

SAUL

Yeah, you know.

She kisses him on the cheek. It's not quite the kiss you give a friend and not quite the kiss you give a lover, but somewhere in between.

She sits between Saul and Jin.

Jin leans closer so she can whisper with Auggie without being overheard.

JIN

Did you see the neurologist?

AUGGIE

Yeah.

JIN

What'd he say?

AUGGIE

She.

JIN

She. Oof, Jesus.

AUGGIE

She has no clue why it's happening.

JIN

So it's still happening?

Auggie nods.

JIN

Like, right now?

AUGGIE

Like all the fucking time.

A newcomer walks into the room - a white American in his 70s, MIKE EVANS.

He approaches the casket and stares down at Vera's dead face, his expression unknowable.

Finally Evans turns away from the casket. He sees Vera's mother staring back at him.

They maintain eye contact for a beat, before Evans walks to the back of the room and takes a seat.

BACK IN AUGGIE'S POV: The countdown continues over a Buddhist monk at the front of the room, as he begins to chant.

**EXT. FUNERAL HOME - LATER**

The mourners have begun to exit the funeral home.

Across the street, unseen by all, Da Shi takes photographs from a nondescript car.

The doors of the funeral home open.

Da Shi takes several shots.

Evans walks over to a waiting black SUV. The SUV pulls out.

A moment after the SUV drives off, Da Shi follows.

**EXT. PRIVATE AIRFIELD - DAY**

The SUV has parked by a helicopter with a distinctive *EvEn* logo (Evans Energy). Evans steps out and climbs into the chopper.

Sitting in his car outside the airfield fence, Da Shi watches all this. He continues to take photographs.

**INT. OXFORD PUB - NIGHT**

All the young characters we've met are gathered here at this crowded University pub, sitting around a table, drinking.

We enter in the middle of their conversation.

JIN

What does that even mean?  
'Do you believe in God?' It's a  
strange question, don't you think?

SAUL

Yeah. Not as strange as jumping  
into a Cherenkov tank, but sure.

JIN

Was she acting weird or?

SAUL

I don't know. Yes? But everything  
has been weird lately.

JIN

That project was her baby. So when  
it shut down--

JACK

(to Saul)  
You shut down?

SAUL

Can't justify using enough  
electricity to power a small town  
when we're getting nonsense  
results.

JIN

Not just Oxford either. Every major  
accelerator on the planet.

Auggie, who has been distracted the entire time, now turns to  
look at Jin and Saul.

WILL

She must have been depressed about  
that.

SAUL

Yeah, but to kill yourself?

JACK

She was a bit of a killjoy, if  
we're being honest.

Everyone glares at him.

SAUL

Don't be a dick, Jack. Come on.

JACK

Listen to him. You were her favorite. She would have happily kept you on as her research assistant until the end of time. But the rest of us? Ha. Good luck.

JIN

That's fucking rich, considering you're the one who quit.

JACK

And trust me, all of you fucking noble academics, you'll be coming to me and Auggie for loans in a few years. Isn't that right, Auggie? When your company goes public?

He's looking at Auggie but Auggie is staring at something unseen.

JACK

Auggie!

She turns to look at him.

JACK

I was just saying - what'd you call your company?

AUGGIE

The Nanotechnology Research Centre.

JACK

That's... possibly the most boring name I've ever heard.

JIN

Oh, says the guy who named his company "Jack's Snacks".

Auggie turns from Jack to Will.

AUGGIE

Will how's teaching going?

WILL

I don't know, I have about one kid in every class who actually listens to what I'm saying, and the rest are just there for their mandatory science course.

SAUL

We were all that one kid.

AUGGIE

Yeah, that's true.

Jack, whose face is getting redder and redder the more he drinks, looks between Saul and Auggie.

JACK

Are you two fighting right now? Or fucking?

Auggie glares at Jack, who nods knowingly.

JACK

Ohhh. Fighting and fucking.

The group protests.

JACK

Oh shut your mouth. You want to know as well.

AUGGIE

Jack, I love you. But I swear to god, if you don't shut the fuck up I'm gonna punch a hole straight through your head.

She puts down her glass.

AUGGIE

I'm just gonna grab a cigarette.

She doesn't invite anyone to join her. She stands and heads outside.

**EXT. PUB/STREET - NIGHT**

Auggie walks away from the pub, toward a more empty street. Blinking hard, as if to scrub something from the surface of her eyes.

Certain she is losing her mind, Auggie breathes heavily and drops down onto the stairs, shutting her eyes and rubbing them with the palms of her hands in a futile effort to make the numbers stop.

As she takes out a cigarette and unsuccessfully tries to light with shaking hands, someone approaches behind her.

The flick of a lighter makes her look up to see an unassuming young woman (TATIANA) standing nearby with a lit lighter.

TATIANA  
Need a little help?

Tatiana lights Auggie's cigarette, then lights another one for herself.

AUGGIE  
Thank you.

Tatiana motions to the stairs.

TATIANA  
May I?

Auggie nods. Tatiana sits down next to her. They smoke in silence for a moment.

TATIANA  
It's a clear night. You can see stars. Where I grew up, you could see stars every night.

If she's waiting for Auggie to ask where she grew up, she is disappointed.

TATIANA  
It's not easy, is it. Being a person in this fucked world. I understand what you're going through.

Unlike her earlier smile, Auggie's grim laugh is genuine.

AUGGIE  
I doubt it.

TATIANA  
It's not hopeless though. Really. The Lord has a better way.

Shit. A God person.

AUGGIE  
Listen, you seem like a very nice person. I'm just not interested okay?

Tatiana is unfazed. She continues with warm concern:

TATIANA  
How far has it got?

Auggie is confused, so the woman elaborates:

TATIANA  
Your countdown.

Tatiana's expression doesn't change, but Auggie's face goes slack.

TATIANA  
How much time do you have left?  
Less than two days, yeah? It's not  
much.

Her speechlessness makes the young woman smile.

TATIANA  
It's easy to make it stop. You put  
an end to your work. No more  
nanofibers. You shut down the lab.  
Simple.

AUGGIE  
Who are you?

TATIANA  
I'd be suspicious as well. Tell you  
what: tomorrow at midnight, at  
exactly midnight, go outside and  
look up at the sky.  
(beat)  
Has the universe ever winked at  
you?

Tatiana places the rest of her cigarette pack on the stone  
stair next to her and taps it: for you.

TATIANA  
Tomorrow at midnight.

She stands.

TATIANA  
You don't want it to get to zero.  
Nothing good ever happens at zero.

She walks away, leaving Auggie alone.

AUGGIE  
Hey!

Auggie picks up the cigarette pack. Something is inside the  
box, next to the remaining three cigarettes. Auggie pulls it  
out.

It is a plastic decoder medallion from a box of Toasty-O-Sters: a defunct brand of English breakfast cereal from the 1950s.

She stares up at the night sky, at the brilliant stars above.

And sees the countdown pulsing against the heavens:

01:15:35:28

01:15:35:27

01:15:35:26

**EXT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - LOGGING AREA - DAY**

A CHYRON reads: **INNER MONGOLIA. 1967.**

It's now autumn. Ye Wenjie's hair is chopped to a much shorter, utilitarian length. Her skin is darkened by the unyielding sun. From her uniform, we can infer that she is in a work camp of some kind. Those who can read Chinese can see that she is now part of the Inner Mongolia Production and Construction Corps.

She and several hundred other "RE-EDUCATED" YOUTH, mostly city kids unequipped for harsh rural life, are tasked with clearing an endless forest with nothing but axes and saws.

They work in the shadow of a GIANT ANTENNA DISH perched atop a nearby mountain.

Ye drops her saw for a moment and watches, crestfallen, as the workers haul trees off indiscriminately, heedless of the destruction left behind. She runs her fingers along the stump she just exposed, counting the rings as if speed-reading in braille.

A young man named BAI MULIN approaches her. Bai is handsome, less beaten down by years of manual labor like the others. The fact that he wears glasses suggests he's not like the others.

BAI MULIN

*How old?*

YOUNG YE

*Between three and four hundred, I assume.*

BAI MULIN

*That tree saw the Ming emperors.  
(off Ye's non-committal  
shrug)  
You must have considered the  
consequences of all this  
destruction.*

YOUNG YE

*These thoughts are dangerous. I  
have nothing to say to the Great  
Production News.*

BAI MULIN

*I'm not asking on behalf of the  
paper. I'm just Bai Mulin, fellow  
comrade.*

A sound in the distance draws Ye's eyes to the radar dish.

BAI MULIN

*I've climbed up there. No one knows  
what goes on behind those gates.  
Things get odder the closer you  
get. The soldiers working there  
have lost their hair. Clear weather  
turns stormy. The animals make  
strange sounds.  
(beat)  
You read English, don't you?*

Young Ye returns a glance that suggests she does read English, but it's a bit dangerous to say so out loud.

Bai Mulin reaches into his bag and pulls out a copy of SILENT SPRING by Rachel Carson.

BAI MULIN

*(in English)  
Silent Spring.  
(beat)  
This book was very influential in  
the West. It's about how people are  
poisoning the world.*

Bai offers Ye the book. Ye is hesitant to take it but eventually she does.

BAI MULIN

*It's like reading into the future  
if we persist with this  
destruction.*

As Ye Wenjie leafs through it, fascinated, Bai Mulin points to a passage on a dog-eared page:

YOUNG YE  
(in English)  
"Here again we are reminded that in nature, nothing exists alone."

BAI MULIN  
*Keep it for now if you want to read it. But be careful. Don't let anyone see.*

Ye accepts the book gratefully. They exchange a smile - a promise of a friendship to come. And maybe more.

**INT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - DORMITORY - NIGHT**

By flashlight, Ye Wenjie reads *Silent Spring*, deeply moved. Ye Wenjie's hands tremble as she turns the page...

**EXT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - LOGGING AREA - DAY**

Ye Wenjie and Bai Mulin watch helplessly as the men and women of the Construction Corps pillage the land, more automaton than human.

**EXT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - WOODS - DUSK**

Ye Wenjie and Bai Mulin walk together through the wintry forest at night. Hesitantly, he takes her hand. She lets him. It's the first time for both of them.

**EXT./INT. CAMP - BAI MULIN'S TENT - NIGHT**

Bai Mulin invites Ye Wenjie into his tent. Two ARMED PLA GUARDS patrol the deep BG, but Bai and Ye avoid their gaze.

From Ye and Bai's body language, we can tell that an after-hours visit such as this is clearly forbidden. We can also tell that they can't help themselves. It's a risk worth taking.

They sit together on his bed for brief moment. Hesitantly, their hands meet, and they come together and kiss.

Soon, they fall into bed together.

**EXT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - CAMP - DAY**

Winter has bloomed into spring.

Flush with the hope of new love, Ye plants a few SEEDS she's smuggled in her pocket - her tiny act of rebellion against the destruction all around her.

We then track Ye Wenjie back to...

**INT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - DORMITORY - DAY**

Ye reaches under her bed. To her alarm, her copy of Silent Spring is gone. She searches the dormitory in a panic. Still nothing. She rushes toward the exit...

... and nearly collides with COMPANY COMMANDER SONG and POLITICAL INSTRUCTOR WEI.

Bai Mulin stands beside the two men, mortified.

YOUNG YE

*Commander Song. Forgive me. I didn't see where I was going.*

COMMANDER SONG

*Have you lost this?*

Commander Song holds Bai Mulin's copy of SILENT SPRING. Ye immediately seizes up.

COMMANDER SONG

*How did you get this toxic propaganda?*

YOUNG YE

*It isn't mine.*

INSTRUCTOR WEI

*It's in English. You speak English. Who else's could it be?*

Ye exchanges the briefest of glances at Bai, who cannot bear to meet her gaze.

INSTRUCTOR WEI

*A truthful response is in your best interest.*

YOUNG YE

*I forget.*

## COMMANDER SONG

*You will pay the price if you are  
protecting someone. Someone must  
have given it to you!*

But Ye won't give Bai up. She holds her tongue, refusing to say any more.

Commander Song sighs, resigned.

## COMMANDER SONG

*Take her to Division Headquarters.*

Wei leads Ye away by the arm. She averts her eyes from Bai.

Bai watches her go, heartbroken, but unable to muster the same courage Ye has shown.

**EXT. GREATER KHINGHAN MOUNTAINS - DORMITORY - DAY**

Wei walks Ye out toward a transport truck, past the stares of dozens of other workers.

**EXT. DIVISION HEADQUARTERS - DAY**

Establish a cold concrete building in an industrial city hundreds of miles from the work camp.

**INT. DIVISION HEADQUARTERS - PRISON - DAY**

Ye Wenjie shivers in the damp cold of her prison cell, the COAL-BURNING STOVE in the corner having long since extinguished.

A female cadre, TENG LIHUA, sits opposite Ye, her face is kind and genuinely sympathetic...

## TENG LIHUA

*I am Teng Lihua of the Intermediate  
People's Court. How long have they  
made you wait?*

Teng Lihua turns her attention to the stove in the corner. She scolds the prison guard:

## TENG LIHUA

*Boy. How long has this stove been  
out? Little Wenjie will freeze to  
death! Fetch some coal.*

The chastened guard rushes out to fetch more coal.

TENG LIHUA

*I asked to see you. Do you know why? Because not only are you the daughter of the disgraced Ye Zhetai, but his star pupil as well. In the eyes of many in the party, this makes you irredeemable.*

*(then)*

*But I don't see it that way. I know of your own accomplishments as a scholar. I don't want your talent to go to waste.*

Teng opens a briefcase and produces a SINGLE-PAGE DOCUMENT.

TENG LIHUA

*All you need to do is sign this paper, take a political class, and you'll be approved to rejoin the Construction Corps.*

YOUNG YE

*I'd like to read it, please.*

Teng clocks the request as unusual, but she acquiesces and hands Ye the paper.

TENG LIHUA

*You can trust me on this. This document has nothing to do with the Imperialist book.*

Ye continues to read. She nods at the first few sentences. But soon, her eyes narrow. She looks up coldly at Teng Lihua:

YOUNG YE

*My father is dead.*

TENG LIHUA

*But there are others in his field still spreading dangerous ideas. We lack evidence against them.*

YOUNG YE

*I've never seen my father with any of these people.*

TENG LIHUA

*The statements are all true. Even your mother has signed.*

*(pointing to the paper)*

*See?*

YOUNG YE

*I cannot sign this. I cannot testify.*

Teng's face stiffens.

TENG LIHUA

*If you fail to sign, the Military Control Commission will prosecute you. At that stage, I will be powerless to help.*

Ye drops the papers.

YOUNG YE

*I cannot sign this. I cannot testify.*

Teng nods, in reluctant acceptance of Ye's decision. She gets up and gestures for a fellow cadre to open the cell door.

Teng then goes to the corner and picks up the washing bucket. In a single, merciless gesture, she DUMPS the near-frozen water onto Ye and all over the blanket.

TENG LIHUA

*Stubborn little bitch.*

Teng and her fellow cadre exit, locking the cell behind them.

Ye's lips turn blue as she trembles from the bitter cold...

#### **INT. TRANSPORT TRUCK - NIGHT**

OVER DARKNESS, we hear the deafening, repetitive SOUND OF TIRE CHAINS thudding against gravel. It feels like it's drilling into our brain...

Ye Wenjie's eyes finally flutter open. She sees a dim pattern of rivets in the ceiling, covered by some sort of protective netting.

A BLURRY FACE in PLA military uniform fades into view. We'll soon introduce him as YANG WEINING (late 20s). In the BG are four other indistinct PLA GUARDS.

Before Ye can question the oddness of that, she falls out of consciousness again.

#### **EXT. RED COAST BASE - MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAWN**

The truck carrying Ye Wenjie heads up the mountain.

**EXT. RED COAST BASE - FRONT GATES - MORNING**

At daybreak, the truck carrying Ye Wenjie arrives upon a mountaintop. YANG escorts a wobbly Ye from the rear of the truck.

To Ye's surprise, she finds herself atop Radar Peak. Down below is the army of re-educated youth with whom she toiled for the past two years.

TWO ARMED PLA UNIFORMED SOLDIERS (early 20s) and a PLA MILITARY OFFICER (late 20s) stand in front of the iron gates to greet Ye.

LEI ZHICHENG

*Ye Wenjie. I am Lei Zhicheng,  
Political Commissar of Red Coast  
Base. This is Yang Weining, Chief  
Engineer of Red Coast Base.*

Yang produces an ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCIENCE JOURNAL.

YANG WEINING

*Ye Wenjie, you are credited as the  
author of this article.*

YOUNG YE

*Yes.*

YANG WEINING

*(in English)  
... "The Possible Extent...  
Extenses... of..."*

YOUNG YE

*"The Possible Existence of Phase  
Boundaries Within the Solar  
Radiation Zone and Their Reflective  
Characteristics." Yes. I wrote it.*

LEI ZHICHENG

*We have a need for your specific  
talents. The Commission has decided  
to give you a chance. Rehabilitate  
yourself here, rather than in  
prison.*

Ye hesitates, thrown by the sudden change in fate.

YANG WEINING

*This is a military base. The  
research here is of the highest  
security classification.*

(MORE)

YANG WEINING (CONT'D)

*And given your status, if you stay,  
you will never leave.*

But Ye has already made up her mind.

YOUNG YE

*I want to go in.*

*(with finality)*

*I will stay here for the rest of my  
life.*

She locks eyes with Lei and Yang, who exchange a glance. Yang gives a small nod. Lei gestures to the armed sentries, who open the iron gate.

Ye Wenjie passes through into Red Coast Base.

The gate closes behind her.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - DAY**

Establish the Black Palace, an ominous, windowless building that doesn't currently exist.

Chyron:

**"THE BLACK PALACE"**

**HEADQUARTERS OF THE STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

**LONDON**

**INT. BLACK PALACE - CORK BOARD ROOM - DAY**

A lot of information has been added to the Vera cork board around each of the Oxford Five and Vera herself.

Off to the side: a picture of Evans, as-yet unadorned.

Another pic joins it, of Evans getting into the Evans Energy helicopter.

Da Shi puts a name card beneath it: "MIKE EVANS."

He stares at Evans.

What does this guy have to do with Vera? Unsure.

His phone rings. The ID of the incoming caller: WADE.

Da Shi sighs, and answers on speaker.

DA SHI

Yeah.

WADE (V.O.)

Any progress?

DA SHI

More than you think. Less than you want.

WADE (V.O.)

Anything happening with the Oxford Five?

DA SHI

Maybe. Some strange CCTV footage on Salazar the night of Vera Ye's funeral.

Da Shi walks as he talks.

WADE (V.O.)

What about Evans?

Da Shi turns to look at his laptop, on the table behind him. On the screen, an article from a *Wall Street Journal* dated April 23, 1982 appears, amidst articles about Reagan: "MICHAEL EVANS SUCCEEDS FATHER AS CEO OF EVANS ENERGY."

DA SHI

Rarely seen in public since 1984. Next to nothing written about him for forty two years, since he took over Daddy's oil company.

Da Shi walks as he talks. He passes another corkboard, a photo of another scientist at its center: "DR. RUSS SINGER. AI SCIENTIST, BOSTON DYNAMICS." Red 'X' over his face.

WADE (V.O.)

Where'd he go in that helicopter?

Da Shi passes another cork board: "DR. MARIANNE SAID. CYBERNETICS PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, NEW DELHI." Red 'X' over her face.

DA SHI

We lost him over the Atlantic. Satellite malfunction.

WADE (V.O.)

My satellites don't malfunction. Alright. What about the thing in Tehran? The shiny bicycle helmet?

Da Shi stops in front of the corkboard for: "DR. ARASH ILKHANI. COMPUTER SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN. X."

Not much on this board. The predominating element is a surveillance photo, taken through a window, of Dr. Ilkhani sitting in a chair with a mirrored headset on his head.

DA SHI

Whatever it is, we can't get our hands on it.

**INT. BLACK PALACE - WADE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

From behind Wade's chair, we see Wade looking at the same photo on an iPad (we do not see his face). He absently tugs on the cuff of his tailored suit. We see the elevator door in the b.g.

WADE

We're sure he was a suicide?

DA SHI (V.O.)

I wouldn't say "sure." The Iranians have been... less than completely helpful.

WADE

Clarence, you've been fired from Scotland Yard, MI5 and OSCT.

**INT. BLACK PALACE - CORK BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

WADE (V.O.)

That must be some kind of record.

DA SHI

Got a knack for failing upwards.

As Wade talks, We get a good look at the room around Da Shi. Corkboards surround him, each representing a scientist somewhere in the world. X, X, X, X.

WADE (V.O.)

You don't fail any higher than this, Clarence. This is your last chance saloon. Don't fuck it up.

Da Shi sighs. He gets it. He pulls out a cigarette.

WADE (V.O.)

No smoking in here.

Da Shi freezes, looking around. No cameras in sight.

*Click.*

**INT. YE WENJIE'S HOUSE - LIVING/DINING AREA - DAY**

In front of a tiered home altar, Ye sets a ceremonial meal between two incense burners.

Jin and Ye bow their heads as the steam from the food joins the tendrils of incense smoke.

The smoke rises upwards past the flowers, toward the black and white photo of Vera at the top of the altar. The smell of a favorite meal that she will never eat.

**INT. YE WENJIE'S HOUSE - VERA'S ROOM - DAY**

An Einstein bust sits on the bookshelf. Jin's hand reaches into frame to pick it up and examine it.

YE WENJIE

Take it. She'd want you to have it.

Jin looks to Ye, who is sitting on the bed.

JIN

I don't understand it. I've tried, but I just can't wrap my head around it, why she would do that. That wasn't Vera.

YE WENJIE

Her work... things weren't going well.

JIN

I know, it's the same for all of us. I'm sorry to ask but... did she leave a note? Any explanation?

YE WENJIE

Nothing.

JIN

She asked Saul about God.

Ye is confused by this.

JIN

Did she ever ask you?

YE WENJIE

About God?

(shakes her head)

We're not believers in this house.  
We're scientists.

JIN

Did she say anything strange to  
you? Did she do anything strange?

Ye shakes her head. She can't think of anything. Until:

YE WENJIE

Videogames. She was playing a  
videogame.

JIN

Vera?

YE WENJIE

Yes. Quite a lot. Hold on... where  
is it...

Ye looks around, and from under the bed she pulls out a shiny  
headset and hands it to Jin.

JIN

That's a videogame?

Ye shrugs: guess so.

JIN

Where's the rest of it?

YE

That's it.

Jin examines it, looking for a jack or a button.

JIN

What kind of game is it?

YE WENJIE

I don't know. I played Pong.

It's the closest thing Jin has to a clue.

JIN

Can I have it?

YE WENJIE

Of course.

Jin stares at her own reflection in the headset's mirrored surface.

**INT. YE WENJIE'S HOUSE - LIVING/DINING AREA - CONTINUOUS**

Jin stops in front of a photo we do not see yet.

JIN  
Is that you?

Ye nods.

YE WENJIE  
In another life. My first job.

JIN  
You were beautiful.

YE WENJIE  
I was. Time is a motherfucker.

Ye takes a final look, and steps away from the picture and out of frame. Jin follows.

When both women are gone, we push in on the picture.

It is a picture of Ye, standing in front of the Red Coast radio dish. Vera's Mother is the young woman from the flashbacks.

**FLASHBACK - INT. RED COAST BASE - MAIN CONTROL ROOM - DUSK**

A spacious room filled with instruments and equipment: signal lights, oscilloscope displays, control panels.

A dozen operators in military uniforms are entombed in the rows of instruments as if in battlefield trenches.

At the doorway to the room, Ye stands between Chief Engineer Yang and Political Commissar Lei. Several armed PLA soldiers stand to either side of them.

LEI ZHICHENG  
*Only three months, and you get to see your first test. You're very lucky. Most people have to wait longer.*

YOUNG YE  
*What are we testing? Missiles?*

Lei is dismissive.

LEI ZHICHENG  
*Everybody has missiles.*

**EXT. RED COAST BASE - UNDER THE DISH - DUSK**

Ye, Lei and Yang emerge onto the platform. The operator's voice sounds over the PA:

LEAD OPERATOR (V.O.)  
*Target Coordinates BN20197F.  
Checked and confirmed. 10, 9, 8, 7,  
6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Begin  
transmission.*

An ultra-low frequency hum begins, growing louder.

Ye gazes in the direction the antenna is pointing.

A cloud in the darkening sky begins to glow with a dim blue light.

A fluttering sound surrounds them all, layered over the hum of the dish.

Through the mists, shadows rise from the woods below the peak and spiral into the sky:

Birds, tens of thousands of them, maybe more. More than Ye would have ever imagined were in these woods.

One flock veers off and flies over the antenna. Against the backdrop of the glowing cloud, they all fall to earth like stones.

The hum stops. Regular business resumes.

LEAD OPERATOR (V.O.)  
*Transmission complete.*

Ye looks up at the sky.

YOUNG YE  
*BN20197F.*

Yang looks at her quizzically, so she reminds him:

YOUNG YE  
*Those were the coordinates for the  
target.*

YANG WEINING  
*Ah, yes. You have a good memory.*

Ye is still looking at the sky. Beyond the wisps of clouds, all she can see are the stars in the cold night.

YOUNG YE

*What is the target?*

Yang and Lei look at each other.

**INT. JIN'S FLAT - DAY**

A hand picks up a blister pack of prescription pills, amidst a bunch of prescription blister packs:

*Sertraline*

And picks up another:

*Alprazolam*

Jin swallows the Alprazolam and looks around the room aimlessly for a moment. She doesn't know what to do with herself.

She pulls the gaming headset from the box.

She sits down and examines the headset. What is this thing? Is this what the kids are doing now? Is this the last thing Vera did before she decided to kill herself?

She puts the headset on her head.

**EXT. GAME - PYRAMID - DESERT - TWILIGHT**

We see things from Jin's POV at first, not unlike the first person POV in a videogame: a wide, primitive road in the middle of a vast rocky plain.

The landscape and lighting are alien, but appear utterly real. This is not any videogame experience we have ever seen.

We return to a regular perspective of Jin as she takes in her new surroundings. A cold wind passes over her, and she feels it. All of her senses are telling her she is really here.

Rock formations and the twisted remnants of strange trees crop up here and there, providing scale reference, but the central feature of the scene is impossible to miss:

A massive pyramid in the Chinese style, stretching thousands of feet into the sky at the end of the road.

The sun is rising behind the pyramid. Quickly. Too quickly.

Shielding her eyes from the brightness, Jin looks down, and sees something at her feet. It takes her a moment to see it for what it is:

A dehydrated human body.

She screams and reaches for her head.

**INT. JIN'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS**

Back in her room, she pulls the gaming headset off, cutting her own scream short.

Breathing heavily, sweating, Jin looks like she just got shot out of a cannon. She looks at the headset in her hands.

JIN  
What the fuck?

**INT. BLACK PALACE - CORK BOARD ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY**

Da Shi and OFFICER COLLINS look at the photo of the headset on the cork board.

DA SHI  
Wade really wants one of these helmets. Thinks they're "highly relevant."

COLLINS  
We ever seen one over here?

DA SHI  
No, not yet.

The two men head down the hall, toward the elevator.

COLLINS  
What else is relevant?

DA SHI  
Mike Evans. That bicycle helmet looks expensive. Evans is rich.

COLLINS  
What about the countdowns?

DA SHI  
Yes, if they happen to scientists.  
Suicides, if they happen to scientists.

(MORE)

DA SHI (CONT'D)

Anything strange happening to scientists is relevant. Anyone connected to anything strange happening to scientists is relevant.

COLLINS

Who decides what's relevant?

DA SHI

Wade.

COLLINS

Who decided he decides?

DA SHI

Governments.

COLLINS

Which ones?

Da Shi approaches a retinal scanner next to the elevator doors and allows it to scan him.

DA SHI

Most of them. They're not too keen on the notion of science being broken.

COLLINS

I don't really understand the science that's broken, to be honest.

DA SHI

I don't understand it either. But it's not good.

The elevator doors open and Da Shi enters.

DA SHI

Just be happy you're not a scientist. Shit time to be a scientist.

**EXT. CHRIST CHURCH - NIGHT**

Auggie and Saul walk in Christ Church College on a moonless night. Saul is smoking a joint.

AUGGIE

You're smoking a lot of weed.

SAUL

Yup. Is that why we're here? Is this an intervention?

AUGGIE

No.

SAUL

Then what are we doing here?

AUGGIE

Not what you're thinking.

SAUL

I don't think anything.

AUGGIE

Yeah you are and it's not that.

SAUL

You asked me to come, here I am. On a moonless night. In this beautiful place.

He puts his arm around her.

SAUL

*Tú con tantas curvas y yo sin frenos.*

She elbows him in the side, pretty hard. Probably leaves a mark.

They find a spot to sit and wait for midnight.

SAUL

What did the weird chick say to you again?

AUGGIE

"Has the universe ever winked at you?" She said it would happen at midnight and gave me this.

Auggie pulls out the decoder medallion. Saul takes a final hit off the joint, tosses it and takes the medallion.

AUGGIE

It came out of a breakfast cereal... I looked it up. They haven't made it since 1963.

SAUL

What's going on with you though?

She wants to tell him. It would be a relief to tell him.

AUGGIE

I don't want you to know. No confirmation bias. Just watch, and let me know what you observe. If you observe anything. Science, dude. *That's* why you're here.

SAUL

I understand my role.

AUGGIE

Thank you for being here.

He nods, and opens his hand to fiddle with the decoder medallion, turning the rings, aligning the combinations of dashes and dots to make different letters and numbers appear in the little decoder window.

SAUL

It looks like Morse code, but it's not.

AUGGIE

You know Morse code?

SAUL

I know all kinds of shit.

He is silent for a long beat. Then he reads the name of the cereal off the medallion:

SAUL

Toasty O-Sters. It's not a very good name. I could think of a better name. I mean I would have to taste it first. The name should reflect and support what it feels like to eat the cereal. It's toasted, we know that much.

AUGGIE

Shut up and observe.

They look up at the sky. The stars seem unusually bright.

AUGGIE

Two minutes 'til midnight.

**INT. RED COAST BASE - MAIN CONTROL ROOM**

Young Ye enters the control room to find a retinue of PLA OFFICERS waiting for her. No programmers in sight. Yang and Lei are front and center.

LEI ZHICHENG

*Sit.*

She sits in front of them.

LEI ZHICHENG

*Not everyone here agrees with what is about to be done. Given your political status.*

The stony faces of the military men support this assertion.

LEI ZHICHENG

*On Chief Engineer Yang's recommendation, we have decided to inform you of the true nature of the Red Coast Project.*

**EXT. CHRIST CHURCH - NIGHT**

Saul and Auggie continue to watch the sky.

SAUL

The stars are so bright tonight.

AUGGIE

You're so high.

SAUL

Yeah, but still. They're pretty bright.

Auggie's watch ticks over to midnight. She looks up at the sky.

AUGGIE

Saul...

Their bewildered expressions are bathed in a faintly flickering light. They stand, never taking their eyes off the sky.

AUGGIE

Oh my God.

**INT. RED COAST BASE - MAIN CONTROL ROOM**

YOUNG YE

*Red Coast is not an experimental  
weapons program.*

Yang and Lei are both taken aback.

YANG WEINING

*Go on.*

YOUNG YE

*The emissions from the system are  
modulated. Frequency modulation is  
not necessary for weapons systems.*

Yang looks at her for one last moment before imposing this information upon her.

YANG WEINING

*You are correct. It is not  
necessary for weaponization. But it  
is necessary for communication.*

**EXT. CHRIST CHURCH - NIGHT**

The stars are flickering. All of them, in unison.

SAUL

*I observe the universe winking.*

AUGGIE

*How can it be happening?*

SAUL

*It can't.*

They stare at the sky, in shock.

**INT. BLACK PALACE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT**

Da Shi runs up the stairwell as fast as he can and throws the door open.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS**

Catching his breath, Da Shi looks up to the blinking stars as he walks toward a man looking at the same: THOMAS WADE.

He steps in next to Wade, and for a moment the two men watch the sky together.

**EXT. CHRIST CHURCH - NIGHT**

Saul remembers the decoder medallion in his hand.

SAUL  
Shit, it's a code.

He looks at the flickering stars, grabs a pen from his pocket and starts scribbling dots and dashes on his palm, and checking it against the decoder medallion.

Auggie sees him doing it.

AUGGIE  
What does it say? What does it say?

**INT. RED COAST BASE - MAIN CONTROL ROOM**

YOUNG YE  
*Communication with whom?*

LEI ZHICHENG  
*With whomever is out there.*

Lei's unflinching gaze tells her he is serious.

Ye's eyes widen as she understands the true nature of the Red Coast project.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS**

DA SHI  
What is that?

Wade turns to Da Shi.

WADE  
That, Clarence, is our enemy.

**EXT. CHRIST CHURCH - NIGHT**

SAUL  
It's not letters. Just numbers.

With dread, Auggie asks:

AUGGIE  
Which numbers?

As Auggie looks back to the sky, Saul starts to read off the numbers he wrote down.

SAUL  
Ten, thirty four, zero six, five,  
four...

As we hear him read, we go to

Auggie's POV of the sky, with the countdown superimposed over it.

The numbers Saul is reading are the numbers Auggie is seeing, as she is seeing them:

**00:10:34:03**

SAUL (O.S.)  
Three.

**00:10:34:02**

SAUL (O.S.)  
Two.

**00:10:34:01**

SAUL (O.S.)  
One.

END OF EPISODE.