

MARSFALL

SEASON THREE
EPISODE TEN

Realignment Part 1

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PROLOGUE: INT. BUS - DAY.

Geoff, wearing an EVA suit, opens the doors to the bus. He walks toward the back and groans as he sits gingerly into a passenger's seat.

CUE MUSIC.

Geoff clicks a button on his suit and his monitor chimes. His voice reverberates inside his helmet as ANDI's voice comes through the suit's speakers.

ANDI: Geoff Thomassen. Director of Colonial Finances. Personal log. Sol 73, winter, first year.

GEOFF: (a touch of exhaustion) There's a big storm heading our way, but instead of packing up now, Melissa insists we wait until Sequoia is "secure" before heading back. No wonder she's losing support all the time. You can't run an entire colony like the military, especially when continuous cloud cover means we can't run the heater full time. It's a brisk forty-nine degrees Fahrenheit inside the Porta Hab! Even colder on this bus. I thought, well maybe ANDI could draw on some power from Red Venture's neural lace, but after our former High Commander's latest debacle, it seems that's no longer an option.

Geoff winces as he bends down and pulls out a small box from under the seat. He places it on the seat next to him.

GEOFF: ANDI tells me this "Holograph" they found was built to replicate the geographical energy inside the caves. That's one way to get a monopoly, but Hammond and our "angel investor" knew that nothing beats the real thing. Only by harvesting the energy directly could we control interplanetary transport, forcing every new arrival to dock with the Loop.

Geoff laughs as he opens the box.

GEOFF: Well. With no one else on this planet, I guess we do have our monopoly after all!

Geoff opens the visor on his helmet and smacks his lips. He lifts a bottle of liquor from the box, and unscrews the cap.

GEOFF: I'll drink to that.

Geoff takes a long pull from the bottle and exhales in satisfaction. He caps it, and puts it back in the box, closing his visor.

ANDI: End personal log.

FADE OUT.

CUE MUSIC: OVERTURE 3.2

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE (1.1): INT. PORTA HAB - EVENING.

Geoff breathes hard as he runs over to Melissa, who paces back and forth in front of Wei and Mateo.

CUE MUSIC.

WEI: What were you doing on the bus?

GEOFF: (out of breath) Getting a damn moment of privacy. Something severely lacking in this place.

WEI: Well, nice of you to join us, finally.

GEOFF: I just heard from ANDI. Where are they?

MELISSA: It seems Jacki and Chip ended up in the caves.

GEOFF: On the Aurorae Planum?

ANDI: Jacki's signal indicates they're both alive and inside the glyph room.

MELISSA: But they were in Red Venture hours ago.

ANDI: They traveled through the Sound Tunnel-

GEOFF: (skeptical) Oh right, the magic portals.

WEI: (serious) Yes, exactly that!

ANDI: They didn't travel in the traditional sense. Time moves differently inside Liminal Space.

GEOFF: You just believe all of this so easily?

WEI: Dude, the stuff we've seen on this planet already? Nothing is off the table in my book. Shit's weird here! If you told me you saw a mountain shift around its rocks and transform itself into a GIANT SPHINX, I'd be like, "Oh! Okay. ...We gotta fight it?"

Short pause.

WEI: (awkwardly clears throat) R-Regardless of how it happened, we know where they are. Let's go get them!

GEOFF: That's an eleven hour drive- it'll be dark when you get there! We should think twice about risking our lives, AND our only mode of transportation, to try and save two people who abandoned us.

WEI: How can you say that?-

GEOFF: Hey! I'm not the one who burned the bridge by taking the buggy on a joyride across the planet. I'm not about to rush out there blindly - that's Jacki's method.

MATEO: Then I'll go along.

GEOFF: (startled) GAH! Where did you come from?

MATEO: I've been here all along. So, can I come? I'll protect you from the shadows!

MELISSA: What?! No!

MATEO: Ever since I ate those raw plants I get these strange gurgles in my stomach whenever I feel their presence.

GEOFF: Gurgles...?

MATEO: I knew they were coming because I felt my stomach swirl when the shadows chased us out of Red Wolf. If that's not practical science, I don't know what is.

MELISSA: I'm sure that's just your fight or flight response.

MATEO: (insistent) No, it's the plants, warning me. I've maintained a steady diet just to be extra safe.

ANDI: Mateo, as I've repeatedly told you, consuming untested alien vegetation could have serious consequences.

MATEO: Possibly, but chewing on the winter greens always calms me down.

WEI: I thought they were decorative.

MATEO: They are! That's why I planted them all around the colony.

GEOFF: (dry) So you're eating more alien plants to balance your diet of other alien plants.

MATEO: If that's not practical nutrition, I don't know what is-

MELISSA: Enough, Mateo! Nothing has convinced me these "shadows" exist. And if they do, we'll rely on our tech to deal with external threats, not your upset stomach. All of you are staying here.

WEI: But-

MELISSA: No "buts." I will find them and bring them home, but I'm not going to put more civilians at risk.

GEOFF: (clear throat) Of course, Colonel. While you're gone, I shall assist the Captain in coordinating the duties of High Command.

WEI: (fake-cough sandwich) Power grab.

GEOFF: (Geoff-splaining) Actually, protocol dictates that I assume a position of authority when all of High Command is absent.

MELISSA: (sigh) Fine. Continue searching for raw materials in the area, anything we can use to batten down before this storm. I'll leave most of the battalion behind, but I'm taking Sergeant Ferris. You and the Captain have the final word on any urgent decisions or matters while I'm gone.

WEI: Colonel, getting into the caves will be tricky-

GEOFF: (quite pleased) As Director of Colonial Finances and Sub-Bursar of the Board for Martian Tourism, I humbly accept your offer, and will assume the roles and responsibilities of High Command while you are gone.

WEI: Wow. Uh, all right, it's acknowledged, you're running things here, okay? Now can you please shut up?

GEOFF: (smug) Of course. Please continue.

WEI: Colonel, I can help-

MELISSA: There's plenty you can do to help around here.

Melissa walks off toward the bus.

WEI: But I know these caves!

MELISSA: I've got this-

Wei steps in front of Melissa, forcing her to stop.

WEI: Colonel, with the freezing temperatures, you might need my drill to b-break through the ice.

MELISSA: (quick beat) Possibly. I'll take your drill, but you're staying here.

WEI: Colonel-

MELISSA: (firm) Step aside, Han-

WEI: (quickly / bursting) NO! Melissa, I'm the Chief Archaeologist- the only archaeologist on this planet. If anyone should be going into the caves, it's me!

Melissa stares daggers at Wei.

WEI: Um... Ma'am.

MELISSA: Fine. Grab your drill and rendezvous with me and Ferris at the bus A.S.A.P. And you will follow my orders at all times, or I will confine you to the bus. Do I make myself clear?

WEI: (relieved) Yes! Of course!

Wei runs off to get the drill.

GEOFF: Again, thank you Colonel Walker, for this opportunity.

MELISSA: Sure. I'll have ANDI keep you updated on our progress, but try not to screw anything up while we're gone. You're in charge now, Acting Commander Thomassen.

Melissa turns and heads off to find Ferris.

GEOFF: (relishing the title) Acting Commander Thomassen...

MATEO: (excited) Yes! Congratulations!

GEOFF: (startled) Oh! Um...thank you.

A moment.

MATEO: You know, we never really hang out.

GEOFF: No. We don't.

Geoff turns and walks across the Porta Hab, leaving Mateo alone.

CONTINUE TO:

1.2: INT. PORTA HAB - CONTINUOUS.

Geoff walks up to Wei, loading some equipment into a crate.

WEI: (to herself) Drill, extra bits, surveyor, wire-

GEOFF: Hey Wei, do you need a hand with Operation: Drone and Drill?

WEI: "Drone and Drill"?

GEOFF: Do you need a hand getting the drill to the bus?

Wei latches shut a crate and starts pushing it toward the airlock.

WEI: No, um, I'm sure Ferris and I can manage.

GEOFF: Good! Good.

Geoff walks alongside Wei.

WEI: So yeah, you don't need to keep following me.

GEOFF: No, I- I want you to know that I do want to do my job well. For the good of the colony.

WEI: Uh-huh.

GEOFF: (sigh) I know I haven't been the easiest person to work with, so I wanted to- ergh.

Wei stops walking and turns to face Geoff.

WEI: What do you want, Geoff?

GEOFF: (attempting sincerity) I haven't really had a chance to say it yet, but I'm...sorry, about what happened to you on the bus. It was kind of my fault, but you know, you're tough.

A moment as Wei glares at him.

GEOFF: (trying harder) I'm glad you're okay. You've got a, good heart, even if it is a new one, heh.

WEI: Yeah, I didn't get a new heart, my sternum was crushed and had to be rebuilt.

GEOFF: Oh, I /didn't-

WEI: /Next time you fake an apology, make it shorter?

Wei continues pushing the crate toward the bus. Geoff hurries to catch up with her.

GEOFF: (earnest) I'm not faking it, I'm trying here- (sincere) I-I- I really am sorry.

Wei pauses again.

WEI: (sigh) Thanks. I guess.

GEOFF: (hurried/embarrassed) You're welcome. I'll see you when you get back.

Geoff walks away and sighs.

ANDI: You've insisted on taking a more hands-on approach for some time. I hope you won't abuse your power.

GEOFF: Why does everyone assume I'm up to something nefarious?

ANDI: (cautious) Your actions speak louder than even your words, Geoff. Though it was kind of you to apologize.

GEOFF: It needed to be said.

ANDI: (a dash of sarcasm) Yes, and it does seem like you meant it.

GEOFF: Do I detect sarcasm, ANDI?

ANDI: I- well it wasn't my intention, but yes. Pardon my distrust, but you've threatened to shut me down on several occasions.

GEOFF: (honest) Yes. Honestly, I was afraid of you, ANDI. I know that I haven't been the *easiest* person to work with, but-

ANDI: That's one way of putting it.

GEOFF: But. You, and particularly Faye, haven't made it very easy for me to trust AI. I'm...trying my best to understand you better.

ANDI: (quick beat) Okay. I appreciate that, Geoff.

GEOFF: Don't read too much into it. (more formal) Now. I need to make sure we survive another sol. Help me or not, but I'm here to do the job.

FADE OUT.

1.3: INT. PORTA HAB - LATER.

FADE IN.

The Captain walks up to Geoff.

THE CAPTAIN: Acting Commander. Rescue team's en route to the caves, so let's get to work.

CUE MUSIC.

GEOFF: Fine by me. Though the sooner they're back, the better. I don't like us being separated from the bus.

THE CAPTAIN: Especially since they had to take a lot of our medical supplies. Some people here...I don't think they're gonna last much longer.

GEOFF: This place, it's unsustainable. You know we've got to seriously consider heading back to the colony. Soon.

THE CAPTAIN: (uncomfortable) We'll return when the time is right, sir.

Geoff holds up his tablet and taps two buttons.

GEOFF: (moving on) I've got a list of assignments scheduled for tomorrow. Let's see...food inventory. Care to help me with that?

THE CAPTAIN: (to herself) I hate taking inventory. (to Geoff) If we gotta do that, I'm having a drink. You?

The Captain opens a chest and pulls out a bottle of whiskey.

THE CAPTAIN: Colonel Walker's got the best stuff.

GEOFF: (trying to resist) Yes, I know. But I'd like to focus on the task at hand.

THE CAPTAIN: Suit yourself. She approved four fingers of whiskey for me, since you're keeping track.

The Captain pops off the cap to the bottle.

GEOFF: All right, fine. Give me one.

The Captain takes a pull from the bottle and hands it to Geoff. He does the same.

THE CAPTAIN: Nice to see you loosen up a bit.

GEOFF: Well, I'd say we've earned a nightcap at this point.

ANDI chimes in.

ANDI: Excuse me, Captain, but there's an argument breaking out between Marion and Don over distribution of work assignments.

THE CAPTAIN: (grumbles) There's always something...

GEOFF: Mind if I handle it, Captain? It'd Be good for the colonists to see their Acting Commander take charge of a situation.

THE CAPTAIN: (suspicious surprise) You sure? Sometimes these things need military enforcement.

GEOFF: We're all civilized people. I'm sure I can handle it. Send me a rundown when you're finished here, then enjoy your break.

THE CAPTAIN: Yes, sir.

Geoff walks off to find the colonists.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE (2.1): INT. BUS - NIGHT.

The bus speeds along the surface of Mars. Melissa, Ferris, and Wei sit strapped into their seats as ANDI drives them to the caves.

CUE MUSIC.

MELISSA: We'll be at the caves soon, Sergeant.

Melissa taps her tablet to highlight the area on their map.

MELISSA: (CONT'D) I want a drone perimeter around this grid square. Infrared, LiDAR, and radio intercept. Give me all spectrums.

FERRIS: Are we expecting something to get the drop on us?

MELISSA: Of course not. This is strictly for recon. Understood?

FERRIS: Yes, ma'am.

Ferris stands and preps their supplies.

MELISSA: (louder) Though it will be tough communicating with all of ANDI'S ridiculous restrictions.

Ferris shifts some containers around.

ANDI: Actually, I've been working to isolate each colonist within Liminal Space so you can communicate safely.

Ferris stops moving crates for a moment.

FERRIS: Uh, Colonel, have you moved some of our rations? Our supply is lower than it should be.

MELISSA: No. Hmm. Something I'll have to speak with Mister Thomassen about when we get back.

The bus rolls to a stop, the engine powering down.

ANDI: We're here. Keep your comms set as they are now while I focus in on Jacki and Chip.

Everyone puts on their EVA suits. The door opens with a hiss and stairs drop to the ground with a clank.

CONTINUE TO:

2.2: EXT. SURFACE NEAR CAVES - NIGHT.

Melissa, Ferris, and Wei walk down the metal steps and onto the icy surface. The wind near the mouth of the caves fills the air with a slightly ominous sound.

Melissa's voice reverberates inside her helmet while everyone else's voices and external sounds filter through the comms and into her suit.

MELISSA: So these are the caves?

WEI: Oh yeah. I'll never forget this place.

Wei unclamps a box from the bus. She pulls out the drill and attaches stabilizing clips to each side.

FERRIS: Drones will be airborne shortly, Colonel.

Ferris activates a few drones. They fly overhead, circling the bus and entrance to the caves.

WEI: Okay, comparing my readings with ANDI's lock on their suits, the glyph room should be right here.

Wei takes a few more steps and stamps her foot.

WEI: This will be the best spot to drill.

A light feedback resonates over the comms.

MELISSA: What was that?

WEI: I heard it too.

ANDI: Residual feedback from their suits. Don't worry, I still have everyone isolated.

The drones continue to whirr above them.

FERRIS: Drones say we're clear for a hundred square miles, Colonel.

MELISSA: Even still, expand the perimeter to its maximum.

FERRIS: Copy.

MELISSA: Good. Han, start up the drill.

Wei plants the drill into the ground. She starts it up and begins carving through the solid rock and ice.

FADE TO COMMERCIAL.

2.3: INT. PORTA HAB - NEXT MORNING, VERY EARLY.

CUE MUSIC.

Geoff and Erin examine the embryos cooler. Nitrogen gas hisses softly as it leaks from the cooler.

GEOFF: (slightly stressed) The cooler's still leaking.

ERIN: (worried) Yeah, I saw that.

Erin straps a piece of tape over it, stopping the hiss.

ERIN: It's only part of the problem though.

Erin stands up. Geoff leans behind the cooler, running his gloved hand over the back. It bumps along the rough surface.

GEOFF: What happened back here?

ERIN: Melissa wrenched it out of Med Bay.

GEOFF: "Wrenched?" Seems...violent.

ERIN: (some snark) Better than leaving it behind.

GEOFF: (over dramatic) Ouch.

ERIN: (small laugh and sigh) I know she wanted to help clean up your mess, but if she had taken more care extracting it from the Med Bay we might not have to patch this thing every three hours.

GEOFF: You know how Melissa gets when she has a plan. No one's talking her out of it. Hopefully she realizes she can't do everything by herself.

ERIN: I gotta say, it's a refreshing change seeing you give a shit about someone other than yourself.

GEOFF: (pleased) Well. Thanks.

Geoff grabs his tablet and taps some commands into it. He examines the displayed readings of the embryos' conditions.

GEOFF: So what do these readings mean?

ERIN: The liquid nitrogen should chill the embryonic pods on a regulated schedule, but the leak keeps triggering readout errors, forcing the system to crash.

GEOFF: (trying to be playful) And you know all of this based on your advanced farming degree?

ERIN: My bachelor's is...was in clinical science, so I learned a few things about genetic engineering.

GEOFF: (can't help correcting) Engineering plants, not people.

ERIN: Engineering all life-forms. I'm not "just a farmer," okay? I thought I made that clear to you in Red Venture.

GEOFF: (genuine) What are you talking about?

ERIN: When you barged into the Grow Lab and asked if I was "the farmer?"

GEOFF: I never left the Stasis Room.

ERIN: Don't lie to me, Geoff, I saw you-

GEOFF: (defensive) I'm not lying. I never saw you in there, or anywhere else in Red Venture.

ERIN: Well, I'm NOT wrong.

ANDI: Neither of you are wrong. Faye created unique scenarios for each one of us, even fabricating our appearances and voices in order to manipulate us.

GEOFF: (sigh) She really was a twisted being.

ERIN: I wish I could forget these fake memories.

ANDI: They're not "fake" memories. It might be digital, but it's still real.

GEOFF: (edgy) Yeah, we know, it's all real even though it only existed in our minds. (regaining composure) But. ANDI, you need to keep in mind that everyone's still on edge.

Erin continues tinkering with parts of the cooler, trying to find a permanent fix.

ERIN: I heard you talked down those colonists earlier. People expected a fight.

GEOFF: They were frustrated and overwhelmed, nothing I can't relate to. I made a sensible plan and divided up the work best suited to their skills. I doubt Melissa or the Captain really knew who'd do best at every menial task.

ERIN: (surprised laugh) And you do? It wasn't that long ago you didn't even know my name.

GEOFF: That was a...a different time, Erin. I'm sorry. Faye's assimilation showed me what's really important in this world, so I'll do what I can to keep people busy instead of falling into despair.

Erin pauses her work.

ERIN: It's hard when it feels like we're still on the brink of death all the time. I'm doing my best to stretch our food supplies, but without our industrial synth or the colony's reactor it's...

GEOFF: Impossible.

ERIN: (sigh) Yeah.

GEOFF: All the more reason we should return to Sequoia.

ERIN: Melissa said we'd be safer waiting-

GEOFF: She doesn't see the little red flags like you do. She's focused on other things. An impeccable military leader, and a better High Commander than Jacki, of course...

ERIN: Yeah...But she wasn't ready to deal with the flood.

GEOFF: No. And now that we know more about the extent of the floods, the colony's long-term farming plans must include digging irrigation ditches before the next rainy season. Think of what we could do with a sustainable water supply.

ERIN: Geoff, that's...that's kinda brilliant!

GEOFF: Thanks. I only hope we can find a way to convince Melissa to try these modifications whenever we return.

ANDI: I can expand on our original designs. Perhaps if Colonel Walker could see it, she'd be more open to your suggestions.

GEOFF: Wonderful idea, ANDI.

ERIN: Huh.

GEOFF: Yes?

ERIN: Just surprised seeing you compliment ANDI.

GEOFF: Despite my original concerns, I respect anyone who has a good idea. Machine or not.

Geoff and Erin get back to repairing the cooler.

ANDI: (cautious, but genuine) Happy to help.

FADE OUT.

2.4: EXT. SURFACE NEAR CAVES - VERY EARLY MORNING.

Wei operates the drill. It slowly turns until a sizable chunk of rock and ice break apart. The pieces tumble into the hole below, echoing all the way down.

WEI: I'm through!

Wei stops the drill.

MELISSA: Excellent work, Han! And just before first light.

CUE MUSIC.

Wei clicks a button. Her voice projects from her external suit speakers.

WEI: (shouting below) Jacki! Chip!

Wei clicks off her external speakers.

ANDI: (concerned) I can't read their vitals, but they should be down there. You need to hurry!

MELISSA: We'll move fast.

Wei attaches her line to the drill frame. Her voice filters through Melissa's comms again.

WEI: Colonel, clip your line to the drill. We'll slide our way down the ice and into the caves.

Melissa attaches her line to the frame supporting the drill.

MELISSA: Stay behind me. If there's anything wrong, you go back up fast! No questions.

WEI: Yes, ma'am.

Melissa and Wei drop into the caves.

CONTINUE TO:

2.5: INT. CAVES - EARLY MORNING.

Melissa and Wei's boots slide down the icy walls as they descend, knocking chunks of ice and rock that tumble down below them.

Jacki's "Instrument Theme" drifts up from below, still playing from her personal recorder.

MELISSA: You hear that?

WEI: Sounds like music.

ANDI: It's coming from a personal recorder.

WEI: Jacki...!

MELISSA: I see the bottom. Where's that light coming from?

WEI: (hopeful) It must be the glyphs!

Melissa drops and slides down the last stretch of the antechamber walls with Wei close behind her. They land on the icy ground, hard.

MELISSA: (to herself) Oof. Definitely felt that landing.

Wei runs forward, toward the music and dim glowing light on the other side of a solid wall of ice.

WEI: Come on, let's go!

Melissa takes a few steps and stumbles.

MELISSA: (to Wei) Be right there! (to herself) Come on, come on...

Melissa fumbles around then injects herself with a stim.

MELISSA: (still to herself) Move it, Walker!

Melissa catches up to Wei as they run and climb as best they can through a short tunnel until they reach the solid wall of ice.

WEI: Here! I can see the light through the ice.

Wei runs up to the wall and bangs her hand against it.

WEI: Dammit! We'll need the drill-

MELISSA: Move over!

Wei steps aside as Melissa pulls her cane out and smashes it into the ice.

WEI: Holy-! How are you doing that?

Melissa continues to bang the cane hard against the ice. The solid wall starts to crack and chip away.

MELISSA: My cane's made from- (grunt)

WEI: Damn, girl!

MELISSA: (CONT'D) -titanium! Couple that with the right stims- (grunt)

WEI: (breathless) Wow!

MELISSA: (CONT'D) -in the right hands-! (grunt)

Rocks and large chunks of ice fall around their feet as she keeps hitting the wall. A loud crack and crumble of rocks. Air rushes out of the glyph room. Melissa continues chipping away at the wall.

WEI: I can see them! They're both down!

Melissa assesses the situation for a moment.

ANDI: I've got a reading- They're still alive!

MELISSA: Stay back!

With a mighty yell and three rapid bashes with her cane, the ice breaks enough to form an entrance.

MELISSA: Get in there! Move, move!

Wei moves forward through the ice chunks around her. She scrambles into the room, Melissa hurrying behind her.

CONTINUE TO:

2.6: INT. CAVES, GLYPH ROOM - MORNING.

The music is now louder, mixing with the glyphs shimmering.

WEI: JACKI! CHIP! Can you hear me?

Melissa climbs in and looks around.

MELISSA: It's warmer in here.

ANDI: Their suits died hours ago but somehow they didn't freeze to death.

WEI: Are they okay?

ANDI: They're both alive, but incredibly weak.

FERRIS: Colonel, do you read me?

MELISSA: Copy, Sergeant. What's your status?

FERRIS: Drones haven't picked up on anything hostile, but I have some news. I figured out why our rations are so low, and, heh...you're not going to like this.

MELISSA: Unless it's mission critical, it'll have to wait until I'm back up there. Prepare for CAS-EVAC.

FERRIS: Understood.

MELISSA: Han, we need to carry them back up to the bus.

Melissa hoists Chip onto her shoulders, and carries him toward the antechamber.

MELISSA: Don't die on me, Heddleston.

WEI: Come on, Jacki.

Wei lifts up JACKI.

WEI: (CONT'D) I got you.

Wei follows Melissa, carrying Jacki.

CONTINUE TO:

ACT THREE, SCENE THREE (3.1): INT. CAVES, TUNNEL - MORNING.

Melissa and Wei make it to the lines dangling down the cavern.

MELISSA: Take her up first. Go on, clip her to the line.

WEI: Okay, I got it.

Wei clips herself and Jacki to the line. They start to ascend.

MELISSA: That place...was beautiful.

WEI: I read Jacki's description of the room, but seeing it in person I...(sigh) I wish we could've looked at the glyphs, together.

ANDI: Don't worry Wei, I'm recording everything you see. You can show it to her when she wakes up.

WEI: Thanks, ANDI.

Wei turns off the music from Jacki's recorder. As they ascend, the shimmering light begins to fade out.

MELISSA: What is happening on this planet...?

Ferris drops the line back down to Melissa, who grabs them. She clips it to Chip and hoists them up to the top.

FERRIS: I got Han and O'Rania! Lines coming back-

From above, Ferris struggles to restrain someone.

MELISSA: What's going on?!

As Melissa gets closer to the top of the hole, her line jerks.

MATEO: Pull her up faster!-

MELISSA: Mateo?! WHAT are you doing here?!

FERRIS: This stowaway stole our rations!

MATEO: I just wanted to protect you!-

FERRIS: We've got guns, drones, and ANDI. What would we need a priest for?

MATEO: (coughs) It's not enough!-

Ferris shoves Mateo away from the line.

FERRIS: Get out of her way! She's bringing out wounded.

MATEO: Please!-

CONTINUE TO:

3.2: EXT. SURFACE - MORNING.

Melissa makes it to the top and gently places Chip on the ground. Wei is already dragging Jacki to the bus.

MELISSA: MATEO! I said NO!

MATEO: You don't understand!

MELISSA: You intentionally disobeyed orders for your own selfish reasons!

MATEO: But the shadows- you have to get to the bus, I'm nauseous!

FERRIS: You cleaned out a half-dozen pouches, I'd be worried if you weren't sick.

MELISSA: QUIET! (to FERRIS) Sergeant, take Heddleston to the bus.

FERRIS: Yes ma'am.

Ferris grabs Chip and helps Wei carry Jacki to the bus. Melissa steps close to Mateo.

MELISSA: (deadly) There will be consequences for your actions, Mateo.

Melissa grabs Mateo and starts leading him to the bus.

MATEO: Colonel Walker! We're in grave danger here. (coughs) We need to leave immediately. (coughs)

FERRIS: This is what I was talking about, Colonel. He wouldn't shut up about plants and shadows on the western perimeter.

MELISSA: Have the drones picked up anything?

FERRIS: Negative. They're doing full-spectrum scans from seven hundred feet up, we would have spotted something.

MATEO: (coughs) You can't see them, but I can feel it!

MELISSA: ANDI? Picking up anything?

ANDI: No, nothing.

MELISSA: If there were shadows here, why didn't they get Jacki and Chip?

MATEO: I tried to tell you, it's the plants! They can hold off the shadows, but not for long!-

Melissa, Ferris, and Mateo catch up to Wei.

WEI: Mateo, you're freaking me out!

MATEO: They're moving across the plains-

MELISSA: There's nothing there! Ferris, bring your drones in. Let's go!

FERRIS: En route, ma'am.

A drone from high up buzzes down and past them, heading toward the west.

MATEO: No! Don't fly that way, you'll just anger them!- (coughs)

The buzzing of a drone speeds up, spinning faster until the buzzing abruptly stops.

MELISSA: What's wrong with that drone, Sergeant?

FERRIS: I'll check it out.

Ferris hands Chip off to Melissa and runs toward the drone. The chittering of the shadows creeps toward them, carried by the wind.

The drone crashes to the ground with a BANG!

MATEO: (coughs) Not again...!

Ferris picks up the drone.

FERRIS: (concerned confusion) The drone melted, Colonel! I don't understand, it was fifty feet off the deck! There's nothing it coulda hit-

The shadows cause an intense feedback noise through the comms. Everyone yells in pain.

MELISSA: AH! That ringing-

WEI: Melissa! I can't hold her!

The ringing stops.

MELISSA: Everyone! Get to the bus, now!

Mateo helps Wei carry Jacki, and Melissa carries Chip as they all run for the bus.

MELISSA: Ferris! Open fire on anything that's not us!

A guttural, laughing-growl closes in on them.

FERRIS: I can't get a lock!

Several drones start firing indiscriminately.

MELISSA: ANDI! Fly them higher!

ANDI: I'm trying to!

BANG! BOOM! The drones are quickly destroyed by the shadows.

FERRIS: They're gone!-

The growling shadows get closer. Darkness envelops everyone!

MATEO: Melissa, hurry!

MELISSA: Ferris, where are you?! I can't see you!

FERRIS: I'm trying to find the bus!

MELISSA: We're over here!

A shadow swoops in and begins to wrap around Ferris's leg.

ANDI: Doors are open, get inside the bus!

MELISSA: Wei, take Chip, get them both in!

Ferris yells in pain!

Melissa shifts Chip to Wei. She and Mateo pull Chip and Jacki into the bus as Melissa runs back for Ferris.

FERRIS: AH! There's something on my leg!

The shadow emits a crackle of electricity and a monstrous slurping sound. The chittering grows louder-

MELISSA: Fire, soldier! Shoot!

Ferris yells and fires his gun, shooting the ground around his leg. A shadow screeches and flutters away. The chittering fades back a bit, but is still omnipresent around them.

Ferris struggles to get away and find the bus-

MELISSA: Sergeant! Talk to me!

FERRIS: My leg!- ...it's grey! I- I can't- feel anything...!

MELISSA: Lean on me. We're gonna get you home!

Melissa and Ferris hobble to the bus. The shadows swoop around them as Melissa fires in their direction. A shadow bellows.

Melissa and Ferris clamber into the bus and ANDI shuts the doors behind them. The shadows sizzle and chatter behind them.

CONTINUE TO:

3.3: INT. BUS - MORNING.

MELISSA: Drive! Go!

The bus revs and races off at top speed, leaving the growling shadows behind.

ANDI opens a medical compartment and starts to prepare to dress Ferris's wound. Melissa runs to the back window.

ANDI: We need to clean and bandage the wound, Sergeant. I'm going to inject you with antibiotics and a tetanus shot to be safe, but it's a full thickness burn. You're going to need a skin graft.

FERRIS: (growl) Fu- Fantastic.

WEI: Can we do that at the Porta Hab?

ANDI: No. I'll need the full capabilities of Med Bay if we're going-

MELISSA: (not listening) How many drones are left?

ANDI: (angry) Two.

Melissa pounds the window in frustration and turns to face everyone.

MELISSA: Two? We came here with eight! What happened?!

WEI: The shadows happened, Melissa!

MELISSA: (denial) We don't know- th-there could have been lightning, or his suit /overheating-

WEI: Stop ignoring the evidence! That burn on Ferris speaks for itself.

FERRIS: (simmering anger) I appreciate your concern, Wei.

WEI: One of your soldiers almost died, Melissa-

MELISSA: I KNOW! (BEAT) I- I know. Secure O'Rania and Heddleston. I don't want any more injuries.

Wei straps Jacki and Chip into two seats.

MELISSA: ANDI, have the remaining drones follow us at max altitude. You can fly them back down and reattach them to the bus once we've put some distance between us and those things.
(BEAT) Everyone, get some sleep. I'll take first watch.

Mateo and Wei sit down and buckle up.

MELISSA: I'm- I'm sorry, everyone.

The bus continues driving as everyone sits in stunned silence.

END PART ONE.