QUANTUM HIGHWAY

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - NIGHT

A corrugated shed sits alone beneath the last desert light. Through a dusty window, CHARLIE MERCER (early 30s), grease-streaked and intent, adjusts clear tubing under flashes of white-blue electricity. A wary GECKO lifts its head.

Inside, a homemade fuel rig cycles in an uneven four-beat rhythm -- THUM... THUM-THUM... THUM.

A small dust devil spins up beside the shed, rattles the corrugated metal, then collapses as quickly as it came.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Come on. One clean run.

The rhythm tightens. A faint GREEN glow leaks through the seams.

Then the shed HUMS. A GREEN-AURORAL COLUMN punches through the roof and blossoms into an expanding wave. High above, AIR FORCE ONE cuts through its leading edge.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

AIR FORCE ONE cruises above the clouds. The green wave washes through it. The aircraft SHUDDERS; its lights blink out.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Instruments die -- then flicker back.

PILOT
Lost power for a second.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - PRESIDENTIAL CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The PRESIDENT holds a secure phone. Dead air.

PRESIDENT
Hello?

Nothing. He looks at the handset, wounded more than alarmed.

PRESIDENT
He just hung up on me.

CUT TO:

INT. KREMLIN - PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The RUSSIAN PRESIDENT lowers an equally dead phone.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT
He just hung up on me.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - LATE AFTERNOON

Endless blue.

HEYMAN, early 60s — sun-weathered, relaxed, eccentric — dozes on a retractable white deck hovering just above the water. Zucchini slices cover his eyes. His little radio plays island strings.

LUMMA (V.O.)
We have two problems.

Heyman immediately removes both zucchini slices and sits up.

HEYMAN
I thought we were on vacation.

LUMMA (V.O.)
Charlie's fuel test touched the field.

HEYMAN
Charlie knows?

LUMMA (V.O.)
No. She didn't know what she touched. North Shore detected the pulse.

Heyman looks toward the distant Hawaiian coastline.

HEYMAN
That's why you chose Hawai'i.

LUMMA (V.O.)
You said you needed a vacation.

HEYMAN
I thought we were on one.

A HELICOPTER skims low in the distance.

LUMMA (V.O.)

That is the second problem.

Heyman grabs his radio and rises.

HEYMAN
You really need to rank these.

The deck retracts beneath him as an opening forms ahead.

The full structure emerges — a smooth, off-white spacecraft hovering above the ocean. Seamless. Opaque.

LUMMA.

Heyman reaches the opening. It seals behind him.

HEYMAN (O.S.)
Up or down?

LUMMA (V.O.)
Down. Brace yourself.

HEYMAN (O.S.)
Go.

Lumma drops.

The ocean caves beneath her — then bursts outward in a perfect expanding ring.

The same off-rhythm pulse shivers through her hull and the water.

Lumma vanishes below.

One arc of the widening ring gathers height, tightens into a clean swell and races toward land.

EXT. OUTER LINEUP - LATE AFTERNOON

PAULA FUGA & JACK JOHNSON'S INSTRUMENTAL "IF EVER" BEGINS.

A SURFER cuts through the curl of a perfect wave, landing cleanly. As he crests the swell, sunlight flaring, we see DR. TOM CALDER (early 30s -- lean, sun-toughened astrophysicist with a quiet daredevil edge) lower onto his board and paddle out.

SURFER ONE (O.S.)
Awesome barrel, Tom! I'd be scared to drop into that one.

TOM

Fear's just practice. Hold your breath. Trust the water.

Surfer One laughs. They share an easy grin, the respect obvious.

Tom's WRISTBAND buzzes: ALERT: ROGUE WAVE INCOMING 23 FEET. He pauses mid-paddle, scanning the horizon -- calm but alert.

EXT. MID-BREAK - LATE AFTERNOON

A DOUBLE PINK FLAMINGO FLOAT drifts in the sun. Two SUNBURNED INFLUENCERS lounge aboard as a drone films them.

The WOMAN wears a bright orange life vest cinched tight; the MAN sports a sleek CO2 PULL-CORD INFLATABLE -- the kind that looks cool until it isn't.

Beyond the float, one swell holds its shape longer than it should. The horizon bulges. A massive shadow rolls beneath the surface toward them.

EXT. OUTER BREAK - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom watches the rogue wave swell. His WRISTBAND flashes. Through the spray: the DOUBLE PINK FLAMINGO FLOAT, two figures waving at their drone.

TOM
Oh no --

He spins the board and paddles hard -- not toward the wave's face, but toward them.

EXT. MID-BREAK - CONTINUOUS

The rogue wave detonates. The FLOAT vaults upward. The woman surfaces, sputtering. The man vanishes beneath the foam -- his uninflated vest limp. Tom dives.

INT. UNDERWATER

The man sinks fast, limbs heavy, bubbles trailing. Tom knifes through the current, yanks the CO2 PULL on his vest -- FOOM! It inflates. He kicks upward, hauling him.

EXT. SURFACE - MOMENTS LATER

Two RESCUE JET SKIS arrive towing floating rescue mats.

TOM
He's breathing. Get him straight to shore.

"IF EVER" OPENS INTO VOCALS.

The second ski swings close. The man grabs the trailing mat. Tom steadies him, watches him head for shore, then paddles back toward the next set.

EXT. NORTH SHORE BEACH - AERIAL - LATE AFTERNOON

High above, we track Tom gliding toward shore. The rescued influencers sit on the sand, wrapped in towels -- still live on their waterproof phone.

Tom gives a quiet nod -- then turns back to the horizon.

Rescue crews tend to the man near the waterline. Tom crosses the sand carrying his board.

ABBY, seven, watches him pass.

ABBY
Hey, mister... is he going to be okay?

Tom glances back at her.

TOM
Yeah. He is.

Abby nods, relieved. Tom continues toward the SuperBuggy.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DUSK

A SUPERBUGGY climbs fast along a jungle ridge. Tom grips the wheel, jaw set. The car's display flashes: CALL HOME ASAP. Tom pushes a button.

TOM
Call the observatory.

DASH DISPLAY: A glowing icon blinks -- CONNECTING...

INT. SUPERBUGGY - CONTINUOUS

The dashboard light steadies.

KIKI (V.O.)
Tom -- we caught something. Four quantum pulses. It matches your Signature Theory perfectly.

PATCH (V.O.)
Teddy found the same rhythm in satellite telemetry over Nevada.

KIKI (V.O.)
Deep Valley. Same timestamp. Same four beats.

Tom tightens his grip on the wheel.

TOM
I'm pulling in now.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - DUSK

A restored 1920s observatory clings above the Pacific beneath a copper-gold dome. Surfboards line the porch. Three pith-helmet garden bots work as Tom's SuperBuggy pulls in and the GROUNDSKEEPER waves an envelope.

INT. TOM'S SUPERBUGGY - PARKED - CONTINUOUS

Tom sits behind the wheel. On the dashboard: a BOBBLEHEAD of a gray-haired WOMAN SURFING, frozen mid-ride, bobbing with the engine idle.

A faint green shimmer skims the bobblehead's edges as Tom touches it -- barely there in the dashboard light.

He steadies it with one finger, runs his thumb along the base, softening.

TOM
(to the bobblehead)
Still chasing your rainbows, Mom.

A TAP on the window -- the GROUNDSKEEPER, waving a university envelope stamped: NORTH SHORE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE.

GROUNDSKEEPER
Welcome back, Dr. Calder. Got something from the university.

Tom opens the envelope, scans it, then looks at the bobblehead.

ON THE LETTER: FUNDING RENEWAL DENIED.

TOM
They pulled the funding.

His jaw tightens. He folds the letter once and heads toward the dome.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - NIGHT

Lumma breaks the surface, water sheeting from her smooth, opaque hull. Her exterior deck unfolds.

A door opens. HEYMAN steps out as a point of green light spins between his hands into a tablet-sized LUMMA DISPLAY. The door seals before we glimpse inside.

Heyman settles onto the wet deck, the display floating between his hands.

HEYMAN
Okay, Lumma. Let's see what you've got.

The display wakes.

ON THE LUMMA DISPLAY - A RECORDED FUTURE:

Charlie sits alone on a desert rock, crying.

She opens her hand.

A small PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN, set with a tiny diamond, rests in her palm.

Charlie throws it into the puddle.

Heyman studies her face.

HEYMAN
Well... somebody just got their heart handed back.

A beat.

He keeps watching Charlie.

HEYMAN
Who's the guy?

LUMMA (V.O.)

Dr. Tom Calder. Astrophysicist. Author of Signature Theory. North Shore Observatory, O'ahu.

HEYMAN
The theory nobody could prove?

LUMMA (V.O.)
Not yet. I live with them in the present. I guard them from the future.

HEYMAN
Then I should meet him.

LUMMA (V.O.)
I assumed you would.

The future recording fades. Heyman releases the display. It remains suspended. He taps its upper-right edge; it spins, contracts smaller and smaller, then disappears into a point of light.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Weathered wood, surfboards, a shark jaw, Bob Marley, vintage sci-fi prints. KIKI LEE (20 -- sharp, unflappable) works the QUANTUM MONITORS beside TEDDY, a blue Einstein-like hologram.

PATRICK "PATCH" JONES (22 -- inventive robotics savant) adjusts a garden bot's sensor housing beside Kiki, their shoulders nearly touching. Tom steps in briskly.

KIKI
That's the funding decision, right?

TOM
They denied the renewal. Apparently proof of concept is still a romantic fantasy.

KIKI
Signature Theory got this place funded.

TOM
A book is not proof.

PATCH
Six weeks?

TOM

Funding's gone. Six weeks to clear out.

Tom lays the rejection letter beside the pulse data.

TOM
Nobody packs anything. Not yet.

KIKI
Forget the letter. Four clean quantum spikes. Signature match.

TOM
That's not a message.

KIKI
Then what is it?

TOM
A disturbance.

PATCH
Teddy found the same four beats over Nevada. Green bloom.

TOM
Same timestamp?

TEDDY (V.O.)
Within the measurement error.

TOM
Show me.

A satellite-map image appears on the monitor -- a crisp, static aerial of the high desert.

The map tightens over DEEP VALLEY, NEVADA. One property sits beneath the center of the recorded bloom: a lone GAS STATION.

Tom studies the image.

TOM
Teddy, get me to Deep Valley.

TEDDY (V.O.)
Best I can do is standby through Los Angeles. Vegas tomorrow morning -- if both connections hold.

TOM

Put me on it. If we document this, I can prove the theory before they clear us out.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

Soft fluorescent light. A TIKI CHECK-IN COUNTER glows with fake torches. HEYMAN watches the terminal, Lumma nudging inside his blazer pocket, trying to steal a look. TOM approaches with his travel bag.

HEYMAN
Okay. If I like this guy, he's going to Nevada. If I don't, Timbuktu.

LUMMA (V.O.)
I want to see him.

HEYMAN
You already had your turn.

LUMMA (V.O.)
A recording doesn't count.

HEYMAN
Stay in the pocket.

Ahead of Tom, an ELDERLY WOMAN drops her boarding pass. Tom retrieves it and returns it without fanfare. Heyman clocks the kindness.

HEYMAN
Oh, I like this guy already.

Tom nears. Heyman checks the terminal -- clear. He presses the VISITOR PASS. FLASH. A middle-aged Black Pineapple Xpress agent resolves around him. Everyone else sees her; we still see Heyman's eyes and crooked smile.

HEYMAN
(as Pineapple agent)
Checking in?

TOM
Flight 384 to Vegas, through L.A.

Heyman checks the reservation.

HEYMAN
Two flights, two airports. You'll arrive exhausted.

TOM
Earliest I could get.

HEYMAN
First impressions are important.

A few taps.

HEYMAN
Nonstop. Boarding in twenty-six minutes.

TOM
Perfect.

Heyman hands him the new boarding pass, then fastens a small PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN to his hoodie.

HEYMAN
Then you'd better hurry.

Tom heads for the gate. Heyman watches him go.

INT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS HQ - GLASS CORRIDOR - EARLY MORNING

A grayscale corridor. MASON FARNSWORTH (early 70s) -- long swept-back silver hair, a full white beard, tinted aviators, a distressed designer-linen jacket, platinum rings, and a soft leather cross-body bag. More Riviera demigod than businessman. He leads three INTERNS. One drops a RED NOTEBOOK. Everyone freezes. Mason doesn't.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
No color in this workspace. Ever. Mr. Farnsworth says it slows productivity. Bring it again, you're gone.

The intern nods, rattled. Mason keeps walking.

MASON
(to his assistant)
Prepare the Sanctuary.

The assistant issues orders. Workers rush to unlock the Sanctuary doors.

DAVE BRUBECK'S "TAKE FIVE" KICKS IN.

INT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS HQ - THE SANCTUARY - EARLY MORNING

Gray mist hugs a corridor ending at massive BLAST DOORS beneath a warning: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY -- NO EYE CONTACT EVER.

INT. THE SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

The doors unseal. COLOR spills across the grayscale floor as Mason enters a private jungle behind reinforced glass. A memorial reads: BOBO -- IN LOVING MEMORY.

Staff lower their eyes as MR. MOJO, a small CAPUCHIN, emerges. He ignores them all and goes straight to Mason. Only Mason meets his gaze. He glances toward the BOBO memorial, then back at Mojo.

Mason offers his hand. Mojo comes to him, calm, and touches Mason's neck.

MASON
Good morning, Mr. Mojo. Ready for another day?

INT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS HQ - SECURITY CHECKPOINT - MORNING

At the checkpoint, Mr. Mojo pads beside Mason in a tiny charcoal vest: WORKING -- DO NOT PET. A BODYGUARD trails them. A nervous guard raises a scanning wand.

MASON
This really necessary?

The guard scans him quickly. As they pass, Mr. Mojo brushes the HANDHELD SCANNER -- BEEP. Mason doesn't break stride.

MASON
(not turning)
Mojo.

Mr. Mojo releases the scanner. Mason points to the Bodyguard.

MASON
I think we need a little time-out, Mr. Mojo.

Mojo's face falls. The Bodyguard takes him at arm's length without meeting his eyes. Mason continues without looking back.

INT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS HQ - INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS

ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gray glass. Silent doors. Spotless consoles. Monitors flicker as Mason enters. Technicians barely glance up. A TECHNICIAN steps in with a tablet.

TECHNICIAN
North Shore just bypassed the advisory channel on the Calder project.

That lands. Mason finally turns.

MASON
Bypassed?

TECHNICIAN
Emergency compute pull. Private travel booked. Destination still scrubbing.

The technician swipes. A satellite map blooms across the wall: NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY perched above the Pacific.

Mason steps closer and spreads two fingers. The image expands -- ridge, dome, gardens, ocean view.

MASON
Keep watching the sky and the ground. First contact doesn't RSVP.

MASON
Let's pay Dr. Calder a visit.

INT. HQ CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

MASON
(to his assistant)
Pull everything on Calder. Funding, contacts, who sits on his review board.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
You think Calder matters?

MASON
Calder's been staring at the sky for twenty years. If it finally stares back, I want to know first.

INT. PINEAPPLE XPRESS AIRLINES JET - NIGHT

The plane rattles through turbulence -- amber light, pineapple-patterned seats. Tom, in his gray surfing hoodie, works on an iPad in a black-and-silver QUANTUM HIGHWAY case.

The cabin shifts -- turbulence gone, light golden, impossibly still -- and his MOTHER (60s, kind eyes -- the woman represented by the surfing bobblehead on his dashboard) now sits beside him.

MOTHER
A knock at the door can be a miracle. Or a warning.

TOM
How do you know the difference?

MOTHER
You listen before you open it.

She hums the familiar opening of "Rainbow Connection" as her fingers settle on the PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN fastened to his hoodie.

MOTHER
Keep it safe. When you know who really matters, you'll know what to do with it.

Golden light thins. Tom's hand closes over the pin.

A faint green shimmer pulses at his temple.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY (REALITY)

Tom stirs awake -- the real cabin again, turbulence back. The pineapple-patterned seat beside him is empty. His fingers rest on the pin. He removes it from his hoodie, slips it into the pocket, then closes his eyes and drifts under.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - PRE-DAWN

On a wall monitor, KQ-4172b turns beneath an INTERPLANETARY SPACE ESTATE COMMISSION tag. U.S. and Russian flags stamp it SETTLEMENT CLAIM / CONTESTED. Beside it, both PRESIDENTS blame each other for the failed call as CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER arrives in Hawai'i.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Washington and Moscow remain deadlocked over competing settlement claims to KQ-4172b. Both reject the other's claim, with forces at elevated readiness. Space Estate Commissioner Helga Von Strudel-Hammer will conduct the Commission's final claims session by secure link from Hawai'i -- the only treaty process both governments still recognize.

Patch lowers the volume. Kiki adjusts a ring light beside a phone camera while he checks the framing.

PATCH
They're going to end this planet fighting over one they haven't even named yet.

KIKI
You know, if Tom doesn't pull off a miracle, we could do this full-time.

PATCH
Perfect. I'm already your cameraman, sound guy, hair, makeup, and wardrobe.

KIKI
You own one shirt.

PATCH
Brand consistency.

The observatory phone RINGS. Kiki sees NORTH SHORE UNIVERSITY on the display and answers.

KIKI
North Shore Observatory. Kiki Lee.

KIKI
No, Dr. Calder isn't available.

A beat. Her smile disappears.

KIKI
University Property Services?

Patch stops adjusting the camera.

KIKI

Tweed Inc.? Jeremiah Tweed wants to buy the property?

KIKI
A survey crew? Later this week isn't convenient for the people still occupying the property.

KIKI
He's conducting field research.

The caller presses for a location.

KIKI
In a field.

Patch tries not to laugh.

KIKI
Of course. Let me take your number.

She picks up a pen but writes nothing.

KIKI
Mm-hm. Got it.

She hangs up.

PATCH
You get the number?

KIKI
Every digit.

Kiki switches off the ring light. On the silent monitor, both presidents continue blaming each other.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - PRE-DAWN

The final window goes dark beneath the dome.

EXT. HIGHWAY OUTSIDE DEEP VALLEY - DAY

A lone rental SUV follows the empty desert highway toward Deep Valley. Through the windshield, Tom's mother's surfing bobblehead nods on the dashboard.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - OUTSIDE DEEP VALLEY, NEVADA - DAY

At the foot of sun-baked mountains, FRANK'S GARAGE sits beside the last road into Deep Valley -- timber bays, cracked pavement, patched solar panels, and antique pumps beneath a hand-painted placard: WATER FUEL -- COMING SOON.

A rental SUV approaches along the empty road.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - SERVICE BAY - MOMENTS LATER

A pickup IDLES on a lift. A heavy TWO-PRONGED SILVER TOOL rests against the engine block, one tiny indicator pulsing. FRANCIS "FRANNY" MERCER (early 60s -- desert-tough, blunt) aims a gun-metal GRAVITY STICK at the wheel.

CHARLIE, in worn boots, self-taught engineer's instincts and a spark in her eyes, guides the alignment from a mechanic's dolly.

A click, a soft blue pulse -- the wheel lifts free, glides aside, then settles.

An engine crunches over gravel outside.

FRANNY
Customer.

Franny covers the gravity stick with a shop rag and heads outside.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

A dusty rental SUV has stopped beside the antique pumps. TOM steps out.

FRANNY
You lost?

TOM
Possibly.

TOM
Tom Calder. North Shore Observatory. Hawai'i.

FRANNY
You came a long way to be possibly lost.

TOM
We recorded an anomaly. It pointed me in this direction.

Charlie steps from the service bay, wiping her hands on a rag.

CHARLIE
What kind of anomaly?

TOM
I'm still trying to answer that.

FRANNY
You two might have something to talk about. My daughter's a weekend scientist.

CHARLIE
I tinker.

FRANNY
She's trying to replace gasoline with water.

CHARLIE
Trying.

TOM
You built the rig out back?

CHARLIE
You don't have to sound so surprised, Doctor.

TOM
I wasn't.

CHARLIE
Tom Calder. Signature Theory. I read your book. You came a long way to tell me I'm wrong.

TOM
I came a long way because something happened that says you might not be.

Tom and Charlie hold each other's gaze. Neither knows what to make of the other. Franny looks between them.

CHARLIE
Out back.

A polished engine note approaches. A 1964 FORD GALAXIE STARLINER turns into the lot.

TOM

Looks like you have another customer.

Franny recognizes the car.

FRANNY
He's not a customer.

CHARLIE
Would you like to see my setup?

TOM
Very much.

Charlie leads Tom toward the back building.

The Galaxie stops. A weathered leather boot touches the dirt -- tiny pineapples stamped into the leather.

HEYMAN steps out in mirrored glasses.

He watches Charlie and Tom disappear toward the laboratory.

The crooked airport smile returns.

Franny walks over to him.

FRANNY
Where have you been?

HEYMAN
Making a connection.

FRANNY
Flight connection?

HEYMAN
We'll see.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - OUTSIDE DEEP VALLEY - DAY

The heavy door CREAKS open. Tom enters a converted desert workshop -- corrugated walls, wood beams, chalkboards, warm light.

At center: a homemade CLEAN-FUEL RIG of glass, silver and scavenged hardware. Lived-in. A miracle built from scrap.

A row of failed fuel samples sits beside handwritten labels: TOO SLOW. TOO HOT. ALMOST.

CHARLIE

So this anomaly brought you all the way from Hawai'i?

TOM
Four pulses that crossed a channel nobody else knew was open.

CHARLIE
And you came to see if I caused them.

TOM
I came to see what happened.

CHARLIE
That's a very observatory answer.

TOM
Is that bad?

CHARLIE
Depends how much of my lab you plan to explain to me.

Tom absorbs the warning.

TOM
Fair.

Tom stops at the rig. A POWER REGULATOR is blistered black; one heavy cable is browned at the terminal.

He crouches, studies the scorched connection.

TOM
Tuesday?

CHARLIE
Yeah. System runs hot when I push it.

TOM
That's when the four beats appeared.

Tom studies Charlie's chalkboards -- fuel chemistry, power curves, handwritten control logic. On one monitor, an ugly FOUR-BEAT SPIKE interrupts an otherwise clean test run.

TOM
There.

CHARLIE
Power regulator hiccup.

TOM
North Shore recorded the same hiccup.

CHARLIE
From Hawaii.

TOM
Same four beats. Same moment.

EXT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS HQ - EXECUTIVE MOTOR COURT - DAY

Bright daylight. Full color returns the instant Mason steps outside.

He moves fast, entourage scrambling. His assistant works a tablet and legal pad. The BODYGUARD shadows him, scanning every approach.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
Tokyo moved to four-thirty, sir. Legal approved the revised severance packages. Zurich signed off this morning --

MASON
The observatory.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
Still monitoring, sir.

MASON
Around the clock.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
Already done, sir.

Three immaculate ROLLS-ROYCES -- matte black, pearl white, slate gray -- wait beneath the executive overhang.

An attendant glances up, then quickly lowers his eyes.

U. OF MARYLAND'S "TAKE FIVE" — LIGHTER VARIATION.

MASON
Three today.

DRIVER
Excellent choice, sir.

The BODYGUARD catches up with Mr. Mojo perched comfortably on one thick forearm, the black pack-sack stitched in silver in his other hand.

Mason takes the bag without slowing and tosses it into the Rolls as the driver opens the rear door.

Mr. Mojo hops down and pads to the open rear door, scanning the motor court, unsettled. The Bodyguard checks his immaculate sleeve.

Mason looks out toward the distant city skyline. Uneasy.

MASON
Drive. They’re coming.

DRIVER
Yes sir.

Mason enters. Mr. Mojo climbs in beside him.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - CONTINUOUS

The door closes.

SNAP -- the interior drops instantly back into grayscale silence.

EXT. YACHT - DAY

MILDRED FARNSWORTH (late 80s, Mason’s wife, sharp as glass, power-wrinkled) reclines beneath a designer sunhat, a leather folio open beside her.

An ATTENDANT hovers.

MILDRED
Leave us.

The attendant retreats. Mildred caps a pen, eyes on the horizon.

INT. FARNSWORTH COMMUNICATIONS ROLLS-ROYCE - MOVING - DAY

Inside the sealed grayscale Rolls, Mason’s phone lights. Mr. Mojo sits beside him. Mason answers without looking at the screen.

MASON
Mildred. If this is about the Paris board --

MILDRED (V.O.)
This is about you burning money on an alien hunt while the company runs itself.

MASON
Nice to hear your voice too.

MILDRED (V.O.)
I read Calder's file. Funding cut, no proof of concept, six weeks to vacate. That is leverage, not prophecy.

MASON
You never liked prophecy.

MILDRED (V.O.)
I like quarterly returns. Farnsworth's up eleven percent. Fear of World War III sells satellite intelligence. Everyone wants to know where the enemy is.

MASON
Then perhaps someone can tell me where my aliens are landing.

Beside him, Mr. Mojo paws open his bag.

A small, brightly colored tambourine slips into his hands -- an accidental burst of color inside the sealed grayscale car.

Mr. Mojo gives the tambourine a single shake. Its dry rattle is uncannily reptilian.

Mason cuts a look to him.

MASON
No.

Without interrupting the call, Mason lowers the tinted window. Daylight COLOR washes over his silver hair, linen and skin.

An ATTRACTIVE WOMAN in her 30s crosses the curb outside. Mason's sunglasses follow her one beat too long.

MILDRED (V.O.)
Mason?

MASON
I'm listening.

MILDRED (V.O.)
No, you're looking.

Mason takes the tambourine from Mr. Mojo and drops it outside.

One finger rises. The window follows. Gray closes around him.

A beat. Through the line, Mildred exhales.

MILDRED (V.O.)
You sound tired, Mason.

MASON
I'm fine.

MILDRED (V.O.)
That's never been true.

MASON
And you always answer.

MILDRED (V.O.)
Someone should. And remember -- you took my last name.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - CONTINUOUS

Mason’s dashboard lights up: PRIORITY -- FARNSWORTH OPS. He taps the secure car speaker. Mildred stays on the line.

MASON
Go ahead.

MASON'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)
Farnsworth Ops scrubbed the Deep Valley pass. One-frame impossible heat event. Gas-station property. No burn, no aircraft, no trail.

Mason goes still.

MASON
That's not a heat event.

A beat. The old hunger lights behind his eyes.

MASON
That's a landing.

The satellite image expands: the gas station, Frank's Garage -- and across the road, a weathered FOR SALE sign.

MASON
What's the parcel opposite?

MASON'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)
Vacant commercial land. Still listed.

MASON
Buy it. We'll need somewhere to park.

MILDRED (V.O.)
Mason --

MASON
You said I was wasting money chasing aliens.

MASON
Driver. Airport. Wheels up in twenty-five.

MASON
(to assistant)
Call the military storage facility. Give the garage a welcome pass.

MASON'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)
Surveillance?

MASON
A welcome mat.

Mildred ends the call. Mason barely notices.

Mr. Mojo perks up.

MASON
Looks like we're taking a road trip.

Mason lowers the partition and points forward. The Bodyguard turns without meeting Mojo's eyes. Mojo climbs into his waiting arms; the partition rises. CLICK.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - DAY

Tom takes in the rig: a WIDE, SHALLOW CIRCULAR GLASS WATER CHAMBER. A FORGED SILVER DISC hangs half-submerged at its center, wired to the POWER CORE. A tripod arm presses Mom's TWO-PRONGED SILVER TOOL to the exposed disc.

TOM

What exactly is that thing?

CHARLIE
One of Mom's garage tools. Finds trouble in engines.

Tom studies the sleek two-pronged device.

TOM
Sure doesn't look like it came from around here.

CHARLIE
Amazon.

TOM
Amazon.

Charlie gives him the smallest shrug.

CHARLIE
Kinda-maybe-sorta.

Tom studies her for another beat. He gets it: she isn't going to tell him.

TOM
Okay.

Charlie turns back to the rig.

CHARLIE
The rig is mine. Water's hydrogen and oxygen. Pulling them apart takes a lot of energy. I prime it here so the car only has to finish the split.

TOM
Like loosening the shell on a hard-boiled egg before you peel it.

Charlie swings Mom's tool against the exposed silver and brings up the power. Smoky gray threads through the water; the prongs blur. A perfect circular ridge rises four inches above the chamber and hangs there.

She powers down and lines up three sealed vials: LAST WEEK, SATURDAY, YESTERDAY. Under a clear test shield: dead. A weak blue tongue. Then -- WHUMP -- yesterday's sample kicks a hard BLUE FLAME. Tom flinches.

CHARLIE

First batches lasted minutes. Yesterday's still holding after thirty-six hours.

TOM
So it works.

CHARLIE
With Mom's tool. I can't build that. House rule: don't hand a world technology it can't make for itself. I need an Earth version.

TOM
Same pie. Local ingredients.

CHARLIE
Exactly. Tuesday I pushed it harder. If I can do this at a plant, pump it like gasoline and let the car finish the split, hydrogen gets cheap enough those pumps stop being a sign.

TOM
And the silver?

CHARLIE
Forged silver. Best conductor I can make without vaporizing. The power core drives through it.

The silver disc settles. The smoky tint drains away and the water clears.

TOM
The pulse was an accident. This wasn't.

CHARLIE
No?

TOM
You built a fuel system around a tool you don't fully understand.

CHARLIE
You do?

TOM
I'm trying to catch up.

For the first time, Charlie smiles at him without armor.

CHARLIE
Guessing's half the fun. I only keep what doesn't explode.

TOM
I think your experiment touched the layer I spent years failing to prove exists.

Charlie looks at the four-beat spike on her monitor again.

TOM
Signature Theory says the layer connects by identity -- by what makes something itself.

CHARLIE
So the layer can align one Signature to another.

TOM
If I'm right.

CHARLIE
And you think I touched it.

TOM
Your pulse crossed it.

CHARLIE
What do you call the layer?

TOM
The Quantum Highway.

CHARLIE
So my fuel rig found your highway.

Charlie looks from him to the scorched regulator, suddenly less certain of her own machine.

TOM
Show me exactly what you did.

MANIA (V.O.)
Power core stable. High-energy test available.

CHARLIE
Demo time.

MANIA (V.O.)
Acknowledged, Dr. Calder.

TOM
You can call me Tom.

Charlie looks up, surprised -- then smiling. He smiles back.

Charlie reaches for the high-energy switch, then stops at the blackened regulator.

CHARLIE
Not on that terminal. I need to replace it before we try Tuesday again.

TOM
How long?

CHARLIE
A couple of hours. Unless you can hold a wrench.

Tom offers his hand. Charlie passes him a wrench and opens the panel.

EXT. SKY OVER DEEP VALLEY - AFTERNOON

A PRIVATE JET descends through the desert heat haze toward a small airstrip. Two AIRSTREAM ATLAS CAMPER VANS wait, one with a low utility trailer.

INT. MASON'S PRIVATE JET - LATER - APPROACHING DEEP VALLEY

The cabin is grayscale. Desert sunlight flashes across the windows as the jet descends.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
Everything's ready, sir. Deep Valley property confirmed. The military storage facility cleared the welcome pass.

Mason looks toward the airstrip below. Mr. Mojo leans closer, curious.

EXT. DEEP VALLEY AIRSTRIP - JET STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Mason steps into the bright desert sunlight.

MASON
Smell that, Mr. Mojo? Destiny. And jet fuel.

A brief flicker of weariness crosses his face, quickly hidden.

EXT. ROADSIDE PARCEL - LATE AFTERNOON

Across from Frank's Garage, an OLD MAN hammers a SOLD placard over a weathered FOR SALE sign.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Heyman caps JOE'S SUV as Mason's lead van HONKS. Franny steps from the closed service bay.

FRANNY
See you next week, Joe. Say hi to the kids.

Joe waves and pulls away. Franny eyes the polished caravan.

Heyman goes still.

HEYMAN
Pressure drop.

Franny follows his gaze skyward -- WHUP-WHUP-WHUP. The BLACK HAWK slices low overhead, rattling tools. A message, delivered on cue.

FRANNY
That's no delivery.

Mason's caravan pulls up across from the gas station. The lead van slides open. Weathered, extravagant Italian boots step into the dust beneath artfully torn designer trousers.

Mason adjusts a faded embroidered scarf and his leather cross-body bag; silver bracelets chime against a platinum ring. He brushes dust from his open-collar linen jacket.

Across the road, Franny stands hands-on-hips. Fifty feet of desert heat and idling engines between them.

FRANNY
You lost?

MASON
Picked up the lot across the road. Couldn't resist the neighborhood.

He shades his eyes, reading the weathered sign -- FRANK'S GARAGE.

MASON
Where's Frank? I need a word!

FRANNY
(steady)
There's no Frank! This is my place. Frank's just a name on the sign -- most men trust a man to fix their cars. Works like a charm!

Mason smirks.

FRANNY
You don't haul those toys across the desert for a joyride!

Mason's smile tightens. His gaze settles on the garage -- deliberate, unblinking.

MASON
Ever notice anything strange out here -- lights, vibrations, visitors, a young engineer playing with something she shouldn't?

FRANNY
Not the kind I care to entertain!

Mason nods.

MASON
We'll set up there.

Mason glances once more at the garage -- pumps, bay doors, the low building behind it. His smile returns, colder.

MASON
Money makes the world go round, Mrs. Mercer.

FRANNY
Then maybe some people shouldn't be allowed near the wheel.

Franny holds his gaze a second too long. Mason absorbs that -- stung, almost amused. Halfway across the road, he touches his earpiece.

MASON
Have Development draw up an AI data centre for the property across the road. Something tasteful.

He drops his hand, keeps walking.

MASON
Touché.

Franny watches him go. Jaw tight.

Heyman meets Franny's eye and tips his chin toward the ridge. She nods. He watches Mason go, then looks toward Charlie's lab.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - LATE AFTERNOON

The clean-fuel rig stands ready, its scorched regulator replaced.

CHARLIE
Same water. Same silver. Same load.

TOM
Bring it up exactly the way you did Tuesday.

CHARLIE
You might want to give it some room. When it lets go, the water goes everywhere. Tuesday's green part went through the roof.

Tom glances up at the ceiling.

TOM
You left that part out.

CHARLIE
I was getting there.

Charlie brings up the power. Mom's tool locks against the silver; smoky gray blooms through the water and the circular ridge rises again -- higher this time -- then holds.

The current stutters -- THUM... THUM-THUM... THUM. The raised ring shivers.

Tom checks his portable receiver. Four spikes appear.

TOM
There. Same four beats.

CHARLIE
That's the regulator.

TOM
And that's the Highway.

A faint green glow forms between the silver prongs. Charlie nudges the test forward. The glow climbs.

A concentrated green column punches upward, then blossoms into an expanding auroral wave.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE DESERT - SAME TIME

From above, the lab is a pinprick at the center of a vast green ripple racing across the desert -- brief, uncanny -- then gone.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - LATE AFTERNOON

The field wave folds backward through itself -- a brutal static CRACK -- then clears. Alarms spike across Charlie's equipment.

CHARLIE
Come on -- stay with --

A sharp POP from the console. SPARKS leap. Charlie flinches.

CHARLIE
Mania, cut it!

The power drops out hard. The room holds. Charlie and Tom stare at the rig, breathing.

Between the silver prongs, one low green pulse remains.

TOM
Disconnect it.

CHARLIE
It's in standby.

TOM
That's not standby. It's still drawing power.

CHARLIE
Only a trickle.

Smoke curls from the console. The silver tool still pulses. Tom doesn't like the answer.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

WILLIE K'S INSTRUMENTAL "PI'IHOLO RANCH" ROLLS IN.

Heyman slips outside with the walnut-sized Lumma in his palm as the green afterglow fades.

He checks Mason's camp across the road. No one is looking.

HEYMAN
Coast is clear. Wanna play?

He tosses Lumma up. She streaks across the highway, a pale blur.

EXT. MASON'S DESERT CAMP - SAME TIME

Lumma skims the fading field. Four beats chase across her surface. Mason looks up -- too late.

MASON
What the hell was that?

EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Lumma doubles back and zips toward the garage.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Lumma decelerates cleanly and settles into Heyman's waiting hand, still walnut-sized.

HEYMAN
Good work, Lumma.

He studies Lumma's quiet surface, hums the unfinished tune, then tucks her into his coat and heads inside.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Through the dusty window -- a WOODSTOCK DISPLAY: young Franny onstage, a tambourine, a ticket stub, and a battered festival hat with a tiny stuffed monkey clipped to the band -- white-faced, soft gray and charcoal, oddly drained of color against the colorful clutter around it.

ON SCREEN -- the Hawai'i summit opens. Delegates fill the conference hall, but both presidential podiums remain empty. CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER walks alone toward a smaller private meeting room.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

The emergency summit has opened without either president. Both remain scheduled to join Commissioner Helga Von Strudel-Hammer for the final claims session. Forces remain mobilized.

Franny clicks the TV off.

FRANNY
Too depressing.

The bell over the door JINGLES. Heyman enters and sets his keys on the counter.

FRANNY
You catch it?

HEYMAN
Enough. Charlie's lab is heating up.

She leans into his shoulder for a beat -- easy, practiced.

FRANNY
Let's hope they don't change something they shouldn't.

FRANNY
You always show before something happens.

HEYMAN
Only when it matters.

Tom and Charlie enter from the back, still talking through the experiment.

CHARLIE
Tom, this is Heyman. He helped raise me.

Tom turns -- and pauses. The eyes. The crooked smile. He gives Heyman a puzzled double take and rubs the back of his head.

TOM
Have we met?

HEYMAN
Not properly.

Heyman offers his hand.

HEYMAN
Welcome to Deep Valley.

Tom shakes it, still trying to place him.

Charlie gestures toward the display.

CHARLIE
That's Mom's Woodstock collection. She kept everything.

TOM
That's incredible. I always wished I was old enough to go.

FRANNY
Honey, Woodstock was at me.

Tom carefully lifts the battered hat. The tiny stuffed monkey slips loose. He catches it before it hits the floor.

A faint green warmth passes through his palm -- subtle, gone almost immediately. Tom studies the toy.

TOM
You don't see many stuffed monkeys attached to a Woodstock hat.

FRANNY
He was an exchange monkey. There's a story behind that. I'll tell you one day.

TOM
Great collection.

He carefully clips the little monkey back onto the hat.

CHARLIE
I'm starving. Pete's?

FRANNY
Yeah. We're coming.

Before they leave, Franny carries the gravity stick to a steel tool chest in the back lot, locks it inside, checks the padlock, and pockets the key.

Franny takes Heyman’s hand, and the four of them head outside.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

MACKENZIE JOHNSON'S "SO FAR AWAY" BEGINS.

Golden light spills over the driveway. FRANNY'S TRUCK idles. Franny and Heyman hum off-key but perfectly in sync. Tom and Charlie climb in the back.

TOM
It's kind of beautiful.

CHARLIE
Please -- not now.

Franny chuckles and pulls out.

EXT. FRANNY'S DRIVEWAY / STREET - CONTINUOUS

Across the road -- a sleek SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE.

CHARLIE
What the hell is that?

FRANNY
Mason Farnsworth. Convinced something landed at our gas station.

TOM
The guy who owns Farnsworth Communications. He's got money all over North Shore.

FRANNY
Keep your phones close.

INT. FRANNY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

TOM
I need to call Kiki. Switching to encrypted.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Kiki aims her phone at herself. Behind her, Patch wrestles a receiver loose from a rack.

KIKI
Welcome back to Save Our Observatory. Today's tutorial: how to remove a quantum receiver before your university removes it for you.

The receiver drops. Patch barely catches it.

PATCH
You're helping tremendously.

KIKI
Like, subscribe, and fund our legal defence.

Tom's call flashes on her screen: STARGAZER FOUR. She stops recording and answers.

KIKI
Hawaiian Stargazing Hotline. Make a wish.

TOM (V.O.)
Stargazer Four.

Kiki taps a secure-control icon. A waveform locks solid.

KIKI
Going secure.

INT. FARNSWORTH SURVEILLANCE VEHICLE - SAME

Tom's voice disintegrates into encrypted static.

TECHNICIAN
We lost Calder. He changed protocols.

INT. FRANNY'S TRUCK - SAME

TOM
Farnsworth Communications is set up across from the garage. Assume the North Shore network is compromised.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - SAME

KIKI
Understood.

TOM (V.O.)
Nothing about Nevada goes over an open line.

KIKI
Already locking it down.

A beat. Her expression changes.

KIKI
Also, the university sent another removal crew. They're taking the west array.

INT. FRANNY'S TRUCK - SAME

Tom grips the phone tighter. Charlie reads the loss on his face.

CHARLIE
They're taking a building apart. Your theory brought you here. It made sense of what I built.

FRANNY
They can take the equipment. They can't take what you found.

Tom straightens in his seat.

TOM
Don't let them near the Quantum Highway data.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - SAME

KIKI
They can take the dishes. They're not taking your work.

TOM (V.O.)
Keep me posted.

Kiki nods and returns to the darkening control room.

INT. FRANNY'S TRUCK - SAME

Tom ends the call. Heyman studies him.

HEYMAN
Quantum Highway?

TOM
That's what I call the layer.

Heyman gives Franny the smallest look. She keeps driving.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

FÉLIX TOTA'S "TAKE FIVE" — PURSUIT VARIATION.

Franny's truck roars past as the sun bleeds out. A GECKO blinks from a warm rock, then darts into shadow as an SUV rumbles by.

A faint green pulse crosses the road. For one impossible blink, the gecko sits inches closer to the shoulder -- then vanishes into the brush.

INT. FARNSWORTH MOBILE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Dim blue glow. A tech leans toward a mic.

TECH
Sir, sweep is clear. They're still away from the garage. The rear tool chest is carrying the same energy spike. You're clear to go.

EXT. DESERT PULL-OFF

Mason pulls up his hoodie. Mr. Mojo tugs the tiny hood on his jacket. They share a look.

MASON (INTO COMM)
Copy that. Let's move, little buddy.

They cross the silent two-lane blacktop toward Frank's Garage.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - SIDE DOOR - NIGHT

Mason tests the handle. Locked. He presses a compact electronic bypass against the deadbolt. A status pulse -- click.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Dim sodium lights leave long shadows. Mason steps in on tiptoe. Everything looks ordinary. Old engines, scattered tools, dust. He motions to Mr. Mojo.

MASON
Let's check the back building.

They slip out the rear door.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - BACK LOT - NIGHT

Moonlight over sand and boulders. Mason finds the steel tool chest. His bypass defeats the padlock. The lid cracks open -- and Mr. Mojo darts in, snatches the sleek gravity stick, and leaps onto the worktable.

MASON
Mr. Mojo, give me that.

Mr. Mojo aims at a small rock. A low vibrating THRUM -- the rock floats, spinning slowly.

Mason lunges.

Mr. Mojo flicks the stick toward Mason. WHOOSH! Mason shoots several feet into the air and tips upside down.

MASON
Mr. Mojo! Put me down, you doofus!

TECH (V.O.)
Sir, the diner group just left. ETA five minutes. You okay? You sound different.

Still upside down, Mason forces his voice calm before answering.

MASON
Everything's under control. Just getting a lay of the land. Heading back now.

Mojo's grin disappears. He lowers Mason carefully. The instant Mason's boots hit dirt, Mojo drops the gravity stick onto the worktable and backs away, hands raised.

MASON
Not a word.

Mojo nods. Mason retrieves the gravity stick and tucks it under his arm.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM

A phone camera streams LIVE. Kiki holds it selfie-style as Patch secures the receiver.

KIKI (TO CAMERA)
That's enough quantum soup for tonight. Sleep well, nerds. We love you.

She ends the stream. The ring light clicks off. The room settles.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Franny's truck rolls in from dinner. Tom and Charlie climb out already talking through another attempt and head for the lab.

HEYMAN
I'm going to take a walk.

FRANNY
Long one?

HEYMAN
I'll be back before breakfast.

Franny watches him head toward the ridge, reading more in it than he said.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The lab glows low. Outside, desert wind murmurs. Inside, the POWER CORE hums. Tuesday's four-beat waveform sits frozen on a monitor.

ANGELA LANCIERI'S INSTRUMENTAL "HEROES" PLAYS SOFTLY.

CHARLIE
Five years at North Shore, no proof, and you kept chasing it. Why?

Tom looks at the frozen pulse trace.

TOM
My mom passed a few years ago. After she died, the theory became a way to prove connection doesn't just end. She had this sixth sense -- I'd think of her, and the phone would ring. Sometimes I wondered: did I think of her, or did she think of me first? Maybe people get entangled too.

Tom draws the PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN from his hoodie pocket, thumb lingering.

TOM

I dreamed she told me to keep it safe until I knew who really mattered.

He slips it back carefully. Charlie lets the silence hold.

TOM
Sorry. I don't usually -- I don't tell people that.

CHARLIE
I'm glad you told me.

A sudden gust slips through the cracked window, stirring a few papers and catching Charlie's hair. She looks toward it, then crosses over and closes the window.

TOM
You don't like the wind?

CHARLIE
Not usually. I just wish it wouldn't invite itself into my lab.

Her hand stays on the window latch a beat. Then Charlie turns back and taps the four-beat waveform.

CHARLIE
Tuesday's pulse kept its shape.

TOM
Four beats in Nevada. Four beats at North Shore.

CHARLIE
If the shape survives, we can encode it.

TOM
A message.

CHARLIE
Morse. Short pulse, long pulse.

TOM
North Shore can listen.

Charlie smiles at the trace.

CHARLIE
Then let's say aloha.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The room glows with monitor light. Kiki studies the receiver data while Patch trims the quantum array.

TEDDY (V.O.)
Nevada test frequency acquired.
Secure channel ready.

KIKI
That's boss.

Patch looks over, amused. Kiki is already reaching for the comm board.

KIKI
Open Nevada.

Kiki's hand settles briefly over Patch's on the array controls. A look. Then she steps to the comm board.

KIKI
North Shore Control to Nevada Lab.
We copy.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

SAMPLE TWO is locked into the rig.

TOM
North Shore, Nevada. We're sending five letters in Morse. Normal comms stay open.

KIKI (V.O.)
Standing by.

PATCH (V.O.)
Please spell something easy.

CHARLIE
Aloha.

Charlie raises the power. The core drives Sample Two. The tool's prongs blur against the silver. A smoky-gray tint spreads through the surrounding water. The surface gathers into the same circular ridge and lifts four inches above the chamber.

Charlie keys the power gate by hand -- short and long pulses. The lifted ring quivers but holds. Green flickers between the silver prongs with each beat. On her monitor: ALOHA.

A wineglass-clear tone sharpens. On the final pulse, the ring drops hard into the chamber -- water slaps over the rim. Green erupts upward and outward. A concentrated column punches through the ceiling, then unfurls into a widening auroral wave.

The auroral wave folds backward through itself -- a brutal static CRACK -- then clears. The rig shudders.

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - SAME TIME

On a lonely ridge behind the garage, Heyman sits on a warm boulder, coffee beside him. A gecko skitters across the rock -- stops.

A faint green pulse passes over the ridge. The image shimmers for a beat, then clears.

The cup trembles. The gecko leaps into Heyman's open hand. A WALNUT-SIZED LUMMA rests beside the coffee, calm and luminous.

A pinprick of green opens above the boulder.

A WALNUT-SIZED LUMMA returns through it, city lights flickering across the guardian expression. Heyman catches her in his free hand.

She touches the walnut-sized Lumma. Two separate pulses beat -- then synchronize.

The returning expression flows into Lumma. Her surface fills with the returning memories.

HEYMAN
What changed?

LUMMA
The future moved earlier.

HEYMAN
Earlier than ALOHA?

LUMMA
Yes. The change begins before ALOHA. I cannot resolve where it began.

HEYMAN
Show me the route.

A point of green light appears before Heyman. It spins wider into the LUMMA DISPLAY and floats into his waiting hands.

ON THE LUMMA DISPLAY - LUMMA'S RECORDED JOURNEY:

A walnut-sized Lumma enters the Quantum Highway.

Earth turns beneath her. Millions of Signature traces ignite. One locks.

The Signature expands into one brilliant point. Nevada resolves around it.

LUMMA (V.O.)
Its Signature gave me the address.

The recording settles over Deep Valley.

ON SCREEN - Tom leaves. Charlie remains behind.

LUMMA (V.O.)
He never found ALOHA. They lost each other.

The recording ends.

Heyman looks toward the distant glow of Charlie's lab.

HEYMAN
Then Tom needs a reason to look backward.

LUMMA
And I need to look farther ahead.

HEYMAN
You going to help them?

LUMMA
Warn them. Their choices remain theirs.

A walnut-sized portion separates from Lumma and vanishes into a pinprick of green.

HEYMAN
Don't stay long.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The field wave fades. Charlie and Tom stare upward as the power core cools in low blue pulses.

KIKI (V.O.)

Opening comms again. China's Tsinghua Observatory. India's Stargazer University. Let's see who answers back.

A long pause. Static hums.

TOM
Anything?

KIKI (V.O.)
Nothing. They didn't receive a thing.

Tom exhales.

TOM
So it didn't carry.

KIKI (V.O.)
We'll keep the channels open.

TOM
North Shore already shut the door. Your pulse was the first clean evidence I had.

CHARLIE
Then don't turn one failed test into an exit.

TOM
Ten years of maybe. I don't know how to stay and fail again.

Charlie seals a small vial from the conditioned water and lifts it carefully.

CHARLIE
Get the door?

EXT. CHARLIE'S LAB / FIRE PIT - CONTINUOUS

Tom opens the door and follows. Charlie sets the clear vial on the picnic table beside the fire pit.

CHARLIE
Stay long enough to find out whether you did.

Tom looks at her, then back through the open door at the cooling equipment.

EXT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - ROUTE 19 - NIGHT

Chrome and neon rise from the empty desert -- an Area 51 tourist trap. Green alien mannequins wait behind a velvet rope beneath: ALIENS, PLEASE LINE UP HERE. Above them, PARADOX PETE'S buzzes twenty feet over the lot.

The neon flickers once. Holds.

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - NIGHT

JOHN STANDEFER'S "THE HUKILAU SONG" — QUIET REPRISE.

The familiar gecko edges onto Heyman's finger. He looks from it to the stars.

HEYMAN
We meet again. Galileo.

He slips Galileo into his shirt pocket. Lumma rises from the rock and settles into his palm.

HEYMAN
How do you feel about Hawaii?

He hums the same incomplete melody, silhouetted beneath the endless sky.

ON SCREEN TEXT IN LIGHT REFRACTION (QUANTUM-GREEN SHIMMER):

"Spooky action at a distance." -- Albert Einstein

EXT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - HAWAII - EARLY EVENING

Fields roll toward a modest Chinese restaurant. Delivery scooters idle out front beside a baby blue 1981 HONDA EXPRESS.

INT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

A human kitchen moves at full dinner-rush speed. The COOK-WIFE shoves two packed bags and a fortune cookie toward Heyman.

COOK-WIFE
Observatory. Eat it hot. Do not forget the cookie.

HEYMAN
Already handled.

He heads out.

EXT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Heyman loads the food onto his baby-blue 1981 Honda Express.

ELVIS COSTELLO'S "EVERYDAY I WRITE THE BOOK" KICKS IN as he kick-starts the bike and takes off.

EXT. O'AHU MOUNTAIN ROAD - EARLY EVENING - MONTAGE

The Honda winds up a jungle road, ocean below. A gecko peeks from Heyman's pocket. Lumma grows pizza-box-sized -- smooth, off-white, windows opaque -- and darts ahead of the bike before folding into Heyman's waiting palm. He laughs.

An amber thread flickers dark across her surface. Heyman's smile fades. He slips her into his pocket and passes TWEED INC. surveyors at the property edge.

Among the surveyors is JEREMIAH TWEED, a human real-estate developer with a broad, faintly bullfrog-like face and prominent eyes. He points to a luxury-resort footprint on his plans, too absorbed to notice Heyman riding past.

At the observatory, he sets the gecko on a sunlit rock and taps the disc -- FLASH. A young SURFER COURIER resolves around him. To us, Heyman is still unmistakably there.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - FRONT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The SURFER COURIER enters with the food. Kiki barely looks up.

SURFER COURIER
Hot food. Cold universe. Don't forget the cookie.

He sets the bags down, taps the fortune cookie onto Teddy's console, and leaves humming.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - APARTMENT - NIGHT

Distant BOOMS. Franny watches a late-night B-movie, eating popcorn.

PAUL DESMOND'S "TAKE FIVE" -- SHARP VARIATION.

A firework CRACKS through her window, streaks over the bed, and punches out the opposite wall.

FRANNY
What was that?!

She throws on a grease-streaked shirt and storms out barefoot, popcorn still in hand.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mason pulls a tarp off a utility trailer: illegal fireworks and a RATTLESNAKE coiled among the launch tubes.

Its RATTLE echoes the tambourine from his Rolls-Royce. Mr. Mojo freezes.

MASON
If I were you -- I'd find somewhere else to be tonight.

The snake slides into darkness. Mason lowers a burning ignition stick to a fuse.

A rocket screams skyward. Color and smoke flare as Mason climbs onto a folding table, arms raised.

MASON
(shouting skyward)
You see this? This is for you! Come to me!

EXT. DESERT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Franny storms barefoot toward Mason's encampment, popcorn in hand.

FRANNY
Farnsworth! You're firing rockets beside a gas station!

Mason grins as Mr. Mojo snatches the ignition stick and touches it to CONFETTI MK II.

MASON
Welcome to first contact.

WHUMP! Confetti engulfs Franny. She plucks a strip from her popcorn.

FRANNY

You owe me a window, a wall, and six dollars for the popcorn.

Franny looks at the confetti in her popcorn, then back at Mason.

FRANNY
When this is over, I need a vacation. Somewhere you've never heard of.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY

The door CHIMES. Three straw-hatted garden ROBOTS roll in with fresh vegetables as Patch pulls a steak from the SYNTHETIC MEAT PRINTER.

Kiki and Patch share a small smile in the monitor glow -- trying not to think about what happens if the observatory folds.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - LATE NIGHT

MONALISA TWINS' "STARRY, STARRY NIGHT" SETTLES IN.

A cold desert wind settles. Mason and Mr. Mojo sit beside a low campfire beneath the vast sky.

MASON
Satellites, rockets, networks -- none of it fills the hole. When they come, I want them to see a man who was ready. And if they don't... maybe I'm just the punchline.

Mr. Mojo rests a hand on his arm. Mason flicks the gravity stick; a log drifts into the flames. Mason watches the fire.

A faint green shimmer pulses at his temple. A soft BUZZ from his wristwatch.

CALLER ID: MILDRED FARNSWORTH

The shimmer fades. He stares at the flames, then looks toward the empty stars. He doesn't answer.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - LATE NIGHT

BEEP. Tom carries a steaming bag of popcorn across the lab. On the couch, Charlie stirs.

CHARLIE
(half-asleep)
Save some for me --

She falls back asleep.

ELO'S "TELEPHONE LINE" PLAYS SOFTLY.

Tom opens the popcorn bag and wakes the iPad. His mother's photo fills the screen.

His thumb rests against her face on the glass. He almost says something. Doesn't. He glances toward sleeping Charlie, then back to his mother.

A faint green pulse passes through the far monitor. The display skips once; the power core settles.

Tom glances up, then returns to the iPad -- slowly scrolling through photos of his mother.

A single RING. Tom freezes, then answers.

TOM
Hello?

A thin, cold hiss replies. Nothing else.

INT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - EARLY MORNING

Everything inside the camper is muted grayscale except for Mojo. Mason slumps asleep as the SAT PHONE BUZZES; Mojo pokes him awake.

MASON
Yeah, hey -- my everything.

MILDRED (V.O.)
No spaceship, I take it?

MASON
Not my first rodeo.

MILDRED (V.O.)
You're not a kid anymore.

CLICK.

Mason lowers the phone, looks at Mojo.

MASON
What the hell did we do last night?

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - BACK LOT - PRE-DAWN

Desert silence. Tom loads his duffel into the rental car. Charlie watches from the garage doorway, barefoot, already awake.

CHARLIE
You were just going to leave.

TOM
I thought it was easier.

CHARLIE
Easier for who?

Tom has no answer. Fear hardens where softness almost was.

TOM
Ten years. And I still can't tell you if it's real or if I just really needed it to be.

CHARLIE
No. I just built the proof.

Tom knows he hurt her. He starts the car anyway.

As Tom climbs in, the PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN slips from his hoodie pocket and lands in the dust beside the tire. Charlie sees it.

CHARLIE
Then go.

She turns away. Tom pulls out.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The car rolls two hundred feet. In the rearview mirror, Charlie disappears into the garage. The bobblehead gives one small wobble.

Tom grips the wheel. Charlie's words stay with him.

He brakes.

Tom turns the car around and drives back.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - SIDE WALL - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie sits on a flat rock in the first gray light. Tears track silently down her face. The PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN rests in her open palm. Beside her, a shallow rain puddle darkens the dirt.

She throws the pin into the puddle.

A small twist of wind skims the water. The puddle ripples toward her, washing the pin back against the muddy edge near her boot.

CHARLIE
Oh, really?

An engine returns in the distance. Charlie picks up the pin and closes her fingers around it before Tom's rental car rolls back into view.

Tom steps in front of her. The duffel drops.

TOM
I'm sorry. I used one failed test as an exit.

CHARLIE
I know.

TOM
You built the proof. I panicked because it was real.

CHARLIE
With a tool I still don't understand. You can stay. But coming back doesn't erase leaving.

TOM
I know.

CHARLIE
You dropped this.

She opens her hand. Tom takes the pin back, understanding what she is not giving him.

Charlie heads back toward the lab without hugging him. Tom picks up his duffel and follows, leaving a careful distance between them.

A faint GREEN SHIMMER skims the garage wall. Neither sees it.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - KITCHEN / CONTROL ROOM -

LATER THAT MORNING

Half-awake. Half-abandoned.

Patch wraps a chipped coffee mug in newspaper and places it in a cardboard moving box.

Kiki eats cold lo mein. Teddy glows low.

Kiki's phone BUZZES. TOM.

KIKI
Tell me Nevada is prettier after failure.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

Tom sits at Charlie's workstation, hollow-eyed. Charlie gives him space.

TOM
Tell me Hawaii found something.

KIKI
Hawaii found noodles.

Patch digs through the takeout bag and finds one survivor cookie.

PATCH
It's hard to know where you're going if you don't know where you came from.

Tom takes that in. His eyes go to the archived logs.

TOM
We kept recording after the send.

CHARLIE
Tom?

TOM
What if it arrived before it?

He hangs up.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

Tom pulls up the ALOHA send log: timestamp, frequency, drift.

The timeline cursor slides backward past the send window.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SAME

Teddy's console brightens. Kiki sits forward.

KIKI
He's in the archive.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

Tom scrolls farther back.

Static. Dead air.

Then -- a tiny marker appears.

ALOHA DETECTED.

Tom stops breathing.

DAVID ROSS LAWN'S INSTRUMENTAL "HEROES" BEGINS.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SAME

The marker lands on Teddy's display.

KIKI
No.

TEDDY (V.O.)
Archive match confirmed. ALOHA arrived Monday -- 8:42 P.M.

MANIA (V.O.)
Sixty-eight hours before transmission.

CHARLIE
That's when I forged Sample Two.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

Charlie looks at Tom. He found the ocean under the desert.

CHARLIE

And we sent it without knowing when it would arrive.

TOM
Then we decide what we're willing to change.

PATCH (V.O.)
So theoretically, Charlie could send us tomorrow's newspaper.

KIKI (V.O.)
Don't.

PATCH (V.O.)
Sports section. A couple of responsible wagers. Enough to keep North Shore open.

TOM
No sports scores. No stocks. No lottery numbers. Nothing we can act on for private gain.

PATCH (V.O.)
Even if it saves the observatory?

TOM
Especially then. Everybody who changes the future thinks their reason is the exception.

TOM
Listening observes. Sending changes what happens.

KIKI (V.O.)
No private gain.

PATCH (V.O.)
What about warnings?

CHARLIE
Every warning changes the event it warns about.

PATCH (V.O.)
House rules?

TOM
House rules.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SAME

Patch looks at the moving box.

He unwraps the mug and sets it beside Teddy's console.

Neither says anything.

EXT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - ROUTE 19 - MORNING

Franny's truck pulls up beneath the glowing PARADOX PETE'S sign.

Charlie and Tom follow Franny and Heyman inside.

INT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - MORNING

Red-vinyl Americana collides with cyan circuitry and neon. Three wall clocks disagree by the same amount. The breakfast crowd fills the booths as Pete glides by with ALIEN PANCAKES. The gang sit tired and wired.

THE "HEROES" REPRISE CONTINUES.

FRANNY
What were you doing Monday night?

CHARLIE
Forging silver samples. Nothing more exciting than that.

She raises her wrist display, projecting a soft blue HOLO.

CHARLIE
Mania, pull the log from Monday evening.

MANIA (V.O.)
Monday forge log displayed.

The HOLO lays out the chain: MONDAY FORGE LOG -- SAMPLE ONE / SAMPLE TWO / SAMPLE THREE. Tags resolve beneath them: ONE -- TUESDAY FUEL TEST. TWO -- THURSDAY ALOHA. THREE -- FORGED TEN MINUTES AFTER TWO / UNUSED. Franny and Charlie both pause mid-sip, lowering their cups in perfect unison.

TOM
There. Sample Two already had a Monday Signature.

CHARLIE
Then why didn't Tuesday's pulse land Monday too?

TOM
Tuesday wasn't aimed anywhere. It bled into the field. ALOHA was aimed at North Shore.

HEYMAN
The stamp existed first; the letter caught up.

CHARLIE
You still haven't told me how North Shore can hear any of this.

TOM
Come to Hawaii.

CHARLIE
That's your answer?

TOM
That's where I can show you. Bring the water-fuel work.

CHARLIE
Why?

TOM
I've got a team. Patch can build almost anything. You need to meet him.

J. OGLETREE'S INSTRUMENTAL "HOME" SLIPS IN.

Tom and Charlie hold a long look -- no smile, just mutual understanding.

FRANNY
Go. Before I change my mind and put you back under the hood.

CHARLIE
Okay. I'll do it.

TOM
Teddy, you there?

TEDDY (V.O.)
I'm here, Dr. Calder.

TOM
Find me the next flight home -- and make it two. Ms. Charlie Mercer is joining us.

TEDDY (V.O.)
Pineapple Xpress, direct to Honolulu. Two middle seats confirmed.

TOM
Book it.

Pete glides up with the payment terminal. Tom taps his card. DECLINED.

TOM
Academic prosperity.

Charlie taps her card before anyone can look over. APPROVED.

CHARLIE
I've got breakfast.

FRANNY
Let's eat -- you've got a flight to catch.

They laugh softly. Steam curls from the coffee.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - QUAD - MORNING

A moving truck backs up to the doors. Movers carry boxes out while Kiki and Patch cross the quad, Patch's GYRO-CAM FRISBEE under one arm. Beyond the university gate, JEREMIAH TWEED stands with two surveyors by a parked vehicle, marking a possible resort footprint on a site plan. Their measuring equipment is ready, but they have not been admitted onto the grounds.

MOVER
We'll be back next week for the rest -- we'll call you.

KIKI
No. We'll call you.

Patch spots his straw-hatted garden robots strapped inside the truck. He turns the frisbee in his hands.

KIKI
If they take the observatory, I'm opening a surf shop.

PATCH
Only if I get a grill.

Kiki almost smiles. They head inside.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter. Teddy's display flashes: MONDAY ARCHIVE SCAN COMPLETE. A second marker appears ten minutes after ALOHA.

KIKI
Teddy -- source?

TEDDY
Quantum Highway. Logged ten minutes after ALOHA. No terrestrial origin tag. Header is intact.

KIKI
Header says what?

TEDDY
Recipient tag: TOM CALDER. Encryption layer: voice-locked. Content unreadable.

PATCH
Tom's on a plane.

KIKI
Then we relay it. Now.

TEDDY
Forwarding the encrypted file to Tom's laptop now.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Grayscale technicians monitor satellite feeds.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - SAME

Outside, Mason sits under a sunshade, calm behind sunglasses.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

TECHNICIAN
They're on the move.

MASON (V.O.)
Flight data.

TECHNICIAN
Two tickets to Hawaii. Booked this morning.

MASON (V.O.)
They moved the experiment. Wheels up in an hour. We're going to Hawaii, boys.

Mason stands and steps out into the sun.

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - DAY

A faint green pulse slips through the cabin. The image shimmers sideways for a beat, then clears.

Cabin lights CUT OUT. The engines sag -- WHINE DOWN for a beat.

Dark. Silent.

Then -- lights SNAP BACK ON. Engines return. Nervous murmurs move through the cabin before everyone settles again.

Charlie sits curled beneath a thin airline blanket. Tom glances around, then lowers his voice.

TOM
Kiki found another message that came through the Highway while I was gone.

Charlie turns sharply and leans closer.

CHARLIE
Another message?

TOM
Ten minutes after ALOHA. Buried in Monday's archive.

Charlie checks the nearby passengers.

CHARLIE
Do you want to talk under the blanket?

Before Tom can answer, she pulls the blanket over both their heads. Beneath it, they sit shoulder-to-shoulder in the glow of his laptop.

TOM
No, no -- we're good.

CHARLIE
You're the one whispering.

TOM
I was being discreet.

She lowers the blanket but stays close beside him.

CHARLIE
Voice-locked?

TOM
Yep. File name says "From Big T."

Tom opens his laptop. ON SCREEN: "Enter Passcode Phrase To Decrypt."

TOM
The lovers, the dreamers, and me.

CHARLIE
Rainbow Connection is your password?

TOM
What's wrong with that?

Charlie suppresses a smile. Tom hits ENTER. The file unlocks with a soft CHIME.

J. OGLETREE'S "RAINBOW CONNECTION" — REPRISE.

ON SCREEN: "WORLD LOTTO 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 42" -- RED BALL: 12.

They freeze.

CHARLIE
Those are World Lotto numbers.

TOM
Looks like it.

CHARLIE
You sent yourself the winning numbers.

TOM
Apparently.

CHARLIE
We just told Patch he couldn't have tomorrow's sports section.

TOM
We didn't ask for these.

CHARLIE

That distinction lasted six seconds.

Tom reaches for a pineapple-stamped pad.

CHARLIE
Don't.

TOM
I already made the decision.

CHARLIE
When?

TOM
Later.

CHARLIE
Or later you sent them because you're making that choice now.

TOM
North Shore cut me loose. Maybe this is a lifeline.

CHARLIE
Numbers aren't instructions.

Tom looks at the numbers. Charlie does too.

TOM
I'm writing them down.

CHARLIE
Then don't pretend you haven't crossed the line.

Tom writes the numbers, folds the note into his hoodie pocket. Charlie watches the pocket close, then turns back to the clouds.

EXT. HONOLULU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

A Pineapple Xpress jet touches down. Tom and Charlie emerge into golden afternoon light.

A visible harmonic shimmer ripples from both of them at once -- soft, synchronized -- a living hum tucked beneath the wind. Their eyes meet.

REO BROTHERS' "GOOD VIBRATIONS" CARRIES US TO:

A lei lands around Tom's neck. Charlie gets a pineapple with a tiny umbrella and straw.

EXT. O'AHU COASTAL HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

A bright orange SuperBuggy cruises the shoreline, surfboard strapped to the roll cage. Tom drives barefoot as Charlie soaks in the view.

CHARLIE
Nice set of wheels.

TOM
So what do you drive?

CHARLIE
Maybe I'll buy a pink Cadillac or a '63 Stingray. Just to mess with the boys.

TOM
(smiling)
Sure you would.

The SuperBuggy crests a sun-drenched rise. The Pacific opens below.

CHARLIE
Wow.

TOM
That's Hawaii. You even miss it when you're still here.

TOM
Tomorrow I'll teach you to surf.

CHARLIE
Is that safe?

TOM
Only if you hang on tight.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The jet door opens. Mason emerges in a grayscale Hawaiian shirt, matching shorts and headband. Mr. Mojo follows in a tiny matching shirt and sunglasses. The BODYGUARD descends behind them as an attendant rushes over.

MASON

Three identical jets. Civilization is slipping.

He spots another delegation across the runway.

MASON
Who's that?

ATTENDANT
Space Estate Commission summit week, sir. Commissioner Helga Von Strudel-Hammer.

Mason watches her a beat longer than is comfortable.

MASON
Strudel-Hammer indeed.

He steals one last glance as he strides toward a waiting SUV.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SUNSET

Tom and Charlie pass the vegetable beds. Empty. No Groundskeeper. No pith-helmet garden bots.

TOM
Where is everybody?

KIKI
University called him back. Took the robots too.

Tom looks at the empty beds for half a second, then keeps moving.

Warm light spills through the palms. String lights frame a long outdoor table as Kiki and Patch turn the observatory courtyard into a welcome-home cookout.

For one quiet beat, it's just the four of them at the table.

TOM
Charlie's got this little side project.

CHARLIE
Little.

TOM
She's trying to make gasoline obsolete.

PATCH
Water fuel?

Charlie looks at Tom -- he told them.

KIKI
You're serious?

CHARLIE
Very.

PATCH
If you ever want another pair of hands --

KIKI
Make that four.

Charlie smiles. She wasn't expecting that.

KIKI
And if you can turn water into wine, this party's gonna be legendary. Hope you don't mind -- we organized one.

They laugh.

TOM
Perfect.

JACK JOHNSON'S INSTRUMENTAL "BETTER TOGETHER" BEGINS.

Surfers and university friends arrive with food and beer. Patch raises his bottle.

PATCH
To house rules.

EVERYONE
To house rules.

They toast. Tom's hand brushes the World Lotto numbers in his hoodie pocket. Charlie clocks it. Neither says a word.

KIKI
What was in the packet Teddy sent you?

TOM
Something from later me. We're still verifying it.

KIKI

Reassuringly ominous.

TIME-LAPSE - Sunset deepens into night. Full plates empty. String lights brighten. Friends dance, laugh and drift home. The moon climbs above the Pacific.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A small fire crackles. Franny and Heyman sit in old lawn chairs, marshmallows over the flame. A half-full clear resealable bag of marshmallows sits between them. Walnut-sized Lumma rests in Heyman's palm, quietly reflecting the firelight. Stars sprawl overhead.

FRANNY
Airline agent. Delivery surfer. You went to check him out.

HEYMAN
He helped an old woman when he thought nobody was watching.

FRANNY
So you sent him to Nevada.

HEYMAN
Timbuktu lost by a landslide.

FRANNY
And the fortune cookie?

HEYMAN
Lumma showed me what was ahead. Tom never found ALOHA. He went home. They lost each other.

FRANNY
So you changed it.

HEYMAN
I left the door open. He still chose whether to walk through it.

FRANNY
Anything else?

Heyman considers his marshmallow.

HEYMAN
Charlie borrowed one of your garage tools.

FRANNY

Hey.

Franny stares into the fire.

FRANNY
I'm gonna have a talk with that girl.

Heyman bites into his marshmallow. Chews. Stops.

HEYMAN
How old are these?

FRANNY
No idea. Found them in the cupboard.

HEYMAN
They taste historical.

Lumma lifts from his palm and drifts toward the half-eaten marshmallow. A soft lattice of light passes over it.

LUMMA
Translating Signature to human reference. Dusty Mesa, New Mexico. Age: thirteen years.

HEYMAN
Thirteen?

FRANNY
They don't expire.

Heyman looks at the marshmallow in his hand.

HEYMAN
This one disagrees.

Franny's marshmallow catches fire. She blows it out, leaving the end black and blistered.

HEYMAN
There. Freshened it up.

FRANNY
Thanks.

Lumma turns toward the scorched marshmallow. Another soft lattice passes over it.

LUMMA
New Signature. Deep Valley, Nevada. Local time: 10:42 P.M.

Franny studies the burned marshmallow.

HEYMAN
Same marshmallow.

FRANNY
Not anymore.

Heyman raises his skewer.

HEYMAN
To the marshmallow universe.

FRANNY
Mine's evidence.

They clink sticks anyway.

Heyman sinks back, hands behind his head, legs stretched toward the stone lip. An ember pops against his shoe. Smoke curls up.

HEYMAN
Do you smell rubber?

A small flame catches. Heyman jerks upright.

HEYMAN
Oh, shit. My shoe's on fire.

FRANNY
I got it.

Franny grabs the clear vial from the picnic table and splashes it over his shoe. The little flame dies; the runoff hits the coals. WHOOOMPH -- a TWENTY-FOOT BLUE FLAME punches skyward. Both recoil.

Gone. Silence. Heyman's damp shoe smokes. Franny holds the empty vial. They look toward Charlie's lab.

FRANNY / HEYMAN
Charlie.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The return party is still going beneath the string lights. Music, laughter, half-empty plates. Beyond the mountain, the Pacific disappears into darkness.

A SURFER FRIEND crosses and hands Tom a slim green astronomy pointer.

Tom clicks it on. The green point sweeps toward the ocean, catching the white spray of a breaking wave.

SURFER FRIEND
Dude, I think you just invented night surfing.

Tom and Charlie laugh.

Tom lifts the pointer. The green point climbs from the ocean into the night sky, wandering through the constellations before settling beside the moon.

Charlie follows it. Her smile softens.

Tom notices.

TOM
What?

CHARLIE
I was thinking about what you said about your mom.

They start walking, drifting naturally away from the crowd. The party continues behind them -- still close enough to hear, but softer with every step.

CHARLIE
Do you really think people can be quantum entangled too?

TOM
I think some people can be.

CHARLIE
Even when they're nowhere near each other?

TOM
Maybe.

CHARLIE
Even after one of them is gone?

TOM
That's the part I can't prove.

They walk a few steps in silence.

CHARLIE
Actually... there's something else I should tell you about my mom.

Tom waits.

Charlie glances back toward the party, then leans close and whispers into his ear.

We don't hear it.

Tom stops and stares at her.

TOM
Seriously?

He points toward the stars.

TOM
Like... from up there?

CHARLIE
Completely.

TOM
Okaaay.

Charlie bursts out laughing, wraps both hands around his arm and leans against him as they start walking again. Tom laughs too.

They walk on together, still smiling.

TOM
Remember when I said I'd show you how North Shore finds the Highway?

CHARLIE
Show me.

ELO'S "CAN'T GET IT OUT OF MY HEAD" BEGINS SOFTLY.

They reach a quiet outdoor patio at the edge of the observatory. Tom takes two wine glasses from a nearby table and sets one in front of Charlie.

TOM
Try this. Wet your finger. Circle the rim -- slow and steady.

Charlie looks at the glass, then holds one finger out to him.

Tom looks at her. She waits. He wets her fingertip. Charlie holds his eyes a beat too long. A small smile catches; she tucks her lower lip, then turns to the glass and circles. A faint, ugly SQUEAL.

CHARLIE
That sounded terrible.

TOM
Almost. Here.

Charlie catches his hand and places it over hers. Tom guides the motion. Their fingers circle the glass together.

The tone deepens -- clear now.

A faint green shimmer skims the rim of the glass as the harmonic hum moves through the table -- and through them.

CHARLIE
Yeah. I feel it.

TOM
That's 111.11. Our tuning note.

Charlie shifts closer until her shoulder rests against him. Tom looks at her, then slips an arm around her. She stays there, watching the glass.

TOM
North Shore is like a radio that can hear every station at once.

CHARLIE
Until Tuesday cut through.

TOM
Exactly.

Charlie goes still. She listens, then presses her fingertips to the glass again.

CHARLIE
Wait. I've heard that tone before. Mom's tool sweeps an engine until it locks onto the trouble. Sometimes it lands exactly there.

TOM
111.11.

CHARLIE
That's what it was feeding into the silver. I amplified it into the water -- my loudspeaker.

TOM
And North Shore heard you.

CHARLIE
By accident.

His arm stays around her. Their hands remain joined on the glass.

For a moment, neither speaks. The faint shimmer trembles around the glass between their hands.

Charlie finally looks from it to Tom.

CHARLIE
You make listening to a dangerous doorway sound romantic.

TOM
I was hoping you would notice.

They kiss -- tentative for half a second, then certain.

The wine-glass tone fades. They stay close, foreheads touching, smiling; a little laugh passes between them.

ELO continues softly as the view eases away from the patio -- Tom and Charlie together beneath the enormous Hawaiian sky, the distant party reduced to warm string lights on the mountainside.

Far below, the Pacific moves in darkness. The song and the distant party fade until only wind moves through the grass.

For a long moment, nothing else happens.

CRICKETS chirp on the mountain.

INT. DORM ROOM - MORNING

Tom and Charlie wake up in bed. He notices she's wearing his pajama pants. She doesn't mention it.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - COMMON ROOM - LATER

Tom and Charlie burst in, bright-eyed and laughing. Kiki and Patch emerge from the hall brushing their teeth.

TOM
Coffee first. Hilltop, then Charlie gets a crash course in surfing.

KIKI
His pre-surf ritual. Five years, same order.

CHARLIE
Should I be worried?

TOM
Only if they changed the beans.

KIKI
I'll send the pin.

Tom and Charlie leave arm in arm.

EXT. OCEANFRONT VILLA - HAWAII - SAME TIME

"RAINBOW CONNECTION" — STRING-QUARTET REPRISE.

Mason floats on a pink flamingo raft, dressed in a white blazer, cargo shorts, socks, and shoes.

Mr. Mojo rows a tiny inflatable beside him. Mason taps his tablet.

ON THE TABLET -- a surveillance clip of TOM and CHARLIE at North Shore. Mason studies the feed.

MASON
Yeah, we landed last night. I'm multitasking.

MILDRED (V.O.)
Cute. I'm floating too. Let's skip the Hallmark part. You're still on task?

MASON
Would I be lounging like a prince if I wasn't?

MILDRED (V.O.)
You'd float either way. Don't confuse comfort with control.

MASON
Portofino?

MILDRED (V.O.)
Where else?

A faint HISS leaks from the flamingo's side.

MASON
What was that?

MILDRED (V.O.)

Sounded like your career springing a leak.

The flamingo sags. Mason lowers.

MILDRED (V.O.)
The board called twice. I said you'd return when disappointed.

MASON
You always made failure sound scheduled.

MILDRED (V.O.)
Someone had to keep the empire breathing while you looked for something to love.

MASON
I loved plenty.

MILDRED (V.O.)
No. You acquired plenty.

For a moment, neither speaks. On opposite sides of the world, they drift in matching stillness. Then, softer than usual:

MILDRED (V.O.)
Mason.

A faint breath catches. A muffled THUD through the line. Then silence.

MASON
Mildred?

No answer. Mason taps a message to his assistant: GET SOMEONE TO MILDRED. NOW. He waits until the meaning reaches him, holds the phone to his chest, then lets it slip under.

Mr. Mojo stops rowing. Mason stays half-submerged as the last air leaves the flamingo.

The satellite phone floats between them. Mr. Mojo drifts beside Mason, suddenly still. No music. No answer.

EXT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

J. OGLETREE'S "WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW" BEGINS.

Morning glints through gardens around an old hilltop café. A WORKER in a green smock crosses the shaded patio, back to us. Tom and Charlie approach.

Tom and Charlie pass a hand-painted sign: NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, FULL SERVICE.

INT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Post-party dazed, Tom and Charlie reach the counter. TWIN SISTERS collect matching cold brews. A green shimmer passes around them in perfect sync, then disappears.

Tom watches them go.

TOM
Huh.

TOM
Shared origin. Shared history. Closest human version of entanglement.

The BARISTA spots Tom and reaches for a cup. Tom notices the lottery terminal beside the register.

BARISTA
Morning, Tom. The usual?

TOM
Make it two.

CHARLIE
Confident.

TOM
Five years of field research.

The Barista turns to the grinder. Tom takes out the folded YELLOW POST-IT. Charlie sees the numbers.

CHARLIE
We said no private gain.

TOM
We also said no noble exceptions.

CHARLIE
And?

TOM
Our exception is extremely noble.

CHARLIE
That's not how rules work.

TOM
One ticket. No houses, no toys. The observatory and your lab stay independent. If it wins, we decide together.

CHARLIE
You already decided to buy it.

TOM
I know.

CHARLIE
Then it's your ticket. Not ours.

Tom nods once. The Barista waits. He slides the Post-It across.

TOM
And could you run these World Lotto numbers for me?

The GRINDER WHIRS. Tom taps his card. Beneath a decal -- WORLD LOTTO: NOW PLAYING IN HAWAI'I -- the lottery terminal CHATTERS. A blank strip feeds beneath the print head. Numbers and a barcode BLOOM BLACK across the heat-sensitive coating.

BARISTA
Here's your ticket.

She tears off the still-warm ticket and hands it to Tom.

TOM
Wow. Hot off the press.

CHARLIE
Literally.

Tom folds the ticket into his hoodie pocket. Charlie keeps both hands around her coffee.

DING! Mason reaches the door with his phone still showing MILDRED in RECENTS. He blacks the screen, squares his shoulders, and strides in with Mr. Mojo against his chest. The showman's smile is back. His eyes aren't. The BODYGUARD takes position by the door. Mojo climbs onto the counter.

TOM
Mason.

CHARLIE
And Chancellor Helga Von Strudel-Hammer.

Tom guides Charlie to a corner booth. They slide in, watching Mason, Mojo and Helga at the counter.

BARISTA
Sir, the monkey can't be on the counter.

MASON
He's my therapy monkey. He stays. Two carrot muffins, please. Thanks.

The barista bags the order. CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER -- the Space Estate Commissioner from the news -- checks her phone: FINAL CLAIMS SESSION -- 11:30 A.M. WINDOW CLOSES -- NOON. She checks her watch. Then Mr. Mojo. Then Mason. One eyebrow rises.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
I've heard impressive things about your monkey.

She places her card in Mason's hand.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
Call me when you're travelling alone.

Mason's smile arrives a beat late. He offers his own two-sided card.

MASON
I wear a lot of hats.

Helga flips it, amused, pockets it and turns away. At the corner booth, Charlie watches.

CHARLIE
(a whisper)
That really is Chancellor Helga Von Strudel-Hammer.

TOM
(a whisper)
The Space Estate Commissioner. Both presidents have to go through her.

A carrot muffin peeks from the open bag beside Helga's coffee. Mr. Mojo reaches for it.

Mason catches his wrist. Mojo twists free, indignant.

MR. MOJO
Eek! Eek!

He flails at Mason. His arm sweeps the cup --

Hot coffee SPLATS across her blue blazer.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
Mein Gott! My suit!

Mason points to the Bodyguard. Mojo's face falls.

MASON
A long time-out, Mr. Mojo.

Mojo trudges over; the Bodyguard collects him without meeting his eyes.

EXT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Coffee-soaked Helga checks her watch -- enough time -- then tears away toward the hotel.

EXT. BEHIND FRANK'S GARAGE - PRE-DAWN

A sharp ZIP overhead. Heyman looks up.

A pinprick of green opens above the gravel. A WALNUT-SIZED GUARDIAN LUMMA shoots through, city lights and white fire racing across her surface.

Heyman raises a hand. She brakes hard above his palm and settles into it. He draws the walnut-sized Lumma from his coat pocket.

The two touch. Two separate pulses beat -- then synchronize.

The returning expression flows into Lumma. Her surface darkens with the memory.

LUMMA
Heyman. Look.

A point of green light appears before Heyman, spins wider and steadies as the floating LUMMA DISPLAY. He catches it with both hands.

ON THE LUMMA DISPLAY - The Presidents argue. Bombers lift off. Missile batteries disperse. Warning screens turn red. Each side reads the other's mobilization as preparation to strike and answers it -- until both men reach for launch controls.

One hand turns a key. Another presses a button.

MISSILES rise from opposite sides of the planet. White fire blooms across Earth.

HEYMAN
Has it already started?

LUMMA
Yes.

HEYMAN
Show me where it begins.

LUMMA
Charlie's first fuel pulse. I cannot resolve the entire chain. One more thing. Take the stuffed monkey. You'll need it.

Heyman taps the display's upper-right edge. It spins, contracts smaller and smaller, then disappears into a point of green light. He pockets the walnut-sized Lumma and runs inside.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Franny sits at the counter in pajamas, half-awake. The bell JINGLES. Heyman enters fast.

FRANNY
The kids?

HEYMAN
Lumma found where this ends.

FRANNY
How bad?

HEYMAN
There was nowhere left to come home to.

FRANNY
What caused it?

HEYMAN
Lumma traced the chain back to Charlie's fuel pulse. We don't know what turned it into war.

FRANNY
Can it be stopped?

HEYMAN
I don't know.

FRANNY
So much for retirement. We get the kids and get off Earth.

She grabs her keys. Heyman spots the stuffed monkey clipped to the Woodstock hat and pockets it.

They bolt for the door.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - PRE-DAWN - CONTINUOUS

They burst outside running. Heyman pulls the walnut-sized Lumma from his coat and tosses her high ahead of them.

Lumma blooms outward in midair into her full spacecraft form -- smooth, off-white, seamless and opaque. Her window panels remain sealed. A ramp unfolds toward them; beyond it, the doorway is completely dark.

Heyman and Franny hit the ramp without breaking stride. It rises behind them as Lumma lifts into the pale dawn.

EXT. O'AHU COAST ROAD - INTERSECTION - LATE MORNING

Helga's rental stops at a red light. New RED SUIT. She flips down the mirror, purses her lips and carefully applies lipstick. A black FARNSWORTH SUV rolls up beside her; Mason and Mojo in back, the stolen GRAVITY STICK between them.

MASON
There's that beautiful woman again. I wish I could pick her up.

Mojo brightens, grabs the stick -- WHUMM. Helga's car rises two feet. Mason's smile dies. He lunges. The field cuts and the rental SLAMS down. Lipstick streaks across Helga's cheek. CRACK -- one front wheel folds outward and tears free.

MASON
You're such a doofus, Mr. Mojo.

Mojo shrinks back, chastened, as Mason wrestles away the stick. The light turns green. The Farnsworth SUV disappears. Helga looks up too late.

EXT. O'AHU COAST ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Helga's rental sits crooked at the curb, one front wheel beside it. She angrily wipes lipstick from her cheek. Tom and Charlie pull over on their way to the beach.

TOM
Didn't we just see you at the coffee shop?

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
Yes. Mr. Farnsworth's monkey cost me one suit. Then apparently a wheel.

CHARLIE
Is there anything we can do?

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
No. The secure window closed when the delegations left. Neither president will reopen it. Their forces are on alert.

She gestures them on.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
Go. A tow truck is coming.

Tom and Charlie exchange a troubled look, then drive on.

EXT. SECLUDED BEACH - LATE MORNING

Waves crash. Tom and Charlie, in wetsuits, stand by their surfboards.

TOM
Push up, plant, pop. One motion.

CHARLIE
Crushed it.

TOM
Oscar-worthy fall.

At the beach road, police block traffic as summit SUVs sweep toward Honolulu. Tom and Charlie watch. Downshore, Mason approaches with the BODYGUARD and his assistant.

MASON
Dr. Calder. Mason Farnsworth.

TOM
I know. Thanks for the grant cash.

MASON
Rough morning at North Shore. I'll fund the next decade.

TOM
What do you get?

MASON
First contact. Ambassador for Earth. Tech benefits.

CHARLIE
(elbows Tom)
Want the landing spot? Tell him, Tom.

Tom catches on and pulls out his iPad.

TOM
Here. It's happening right here.

ON SCREEN: "This Is The Spot. It's A Secret Spot, So Don't Tell Anyone."

MASON
Perfect.

CHARLIE
So we have a deal?

MASON
Handshake?

TOM
Put on sunscreen.

Mason grabs Tom's hand anyway, pumping hard.

MASON
(to Assistant)
Excellent. Round up every influencer -- crypto, mystic, sci-fi, TikTok. Tonight we greet destiny.

Mason strides off.

EXT. BEACH BREAK - AFTERNOON

Sunlight flickers across the water. Tom steadies Charlie's surfboard as she kneels on it, one hand on his shoulder.

CHARLIE

You were more talkative last night.

A reluctant smile.

TOM
I was distracted.

She kisses him.

CHARLIE
There. Distracted again.

His smile fades.

CHARLIE
What is it?

TOM
I keep thinking about last night.

CHARLIE
The access ramp.

TOM
That's what bothers me.

CHARLIE
Because it's so simple.

TOM
Which means someone else will figure it out too.

Tom looks toward the observatory.

TOM
Mason. He found us once. He'll keep looking until he understands what we have.

CHARLIE
So we keep it from him.

TOM
It won't stop with him. Governments. Corporations. Anyone who thinks controlling the past means controlling what comes next.

The board rocks gently between them.

TOM

I went to Nevada to prove the Highway was real. Now I think we have to erase the research -- bury the way in before somebody else forces it open.

Charlie takes that in.

CHARLIE
Last time the Highway scared you, you left. If this is different, we don't decide alone. Kiki and Patch gave years of their lives to it.

Tom holds her gaze, then nods.

TOM
Then we ask them.

A swell builds behind her. Tom turns the board toward shore.

TOM
This one's yours. Paddle when you feel it catch.

CHARLIE
And how do I know that?

TOM
Don't overthink it. Trust the wave.

CHARLIE
Useful advice before I met you.

He gives her a push. Charlie paddles, rises too fast --

SPLASH.

She surfaces laughing.

CHARLIE
You left out a step!

TOM
I assumed natural ability.

She splashes him.

PAULA FUGA & JACK JOHNSON'S "COUNTRY ROAD" — MONTAGE:

Charlie tries again, then finally rides clean -- upright, glowing. Tom paddles nearby, proud, the decision no longer his alone.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom and Charlie drive back up the mountain in silence. They pass a new sign: OBSERVATORY FOR RENT. Neither speaks.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Patch shapes burger patties beside an open package of buns. Kiki and Charlie prepare a pineapple salad. Tom stands at the counter, rehearsing words he does not want to say.

PATCH
You planning to help, or are you supervising dinner?

Tom looks at Charlie. She gives him a small nod.

TOM
Charlie and I believe the Highway has to disappear.

PATCH
All of it?

CHARLIE
Everything that shows someone else how to build it or control it.

TOM
But it belongs to all four of us. We don't destroy it unless all four of us agree.

Patch stops shaping a patty.

KIKI
You think what?

CHARLIE
Mason is already circling us.

PATCH
Mason isn't the whole world.

TOM
That's the problem. If it isn't him, it'll be somebody else.

PATCH
Think of what we could stop. Disasters. Wars. You would have the keys to --

TOM
Or start. Once those keys exist, we don't control who uses them.

Kiki sets down her knife.

KIKI
I thought I was building my future in those models.

PATCH
Mine too. So we erase everything and pretend none of it happened?

CHARLIE
We remember. We just don't leave anyone else the way in.

KIKI
They're stripping the observatory around us. Now you want the research gone too. What happens to us?

Tom has no prepared answer.

TOM
I don't know.

Tom does not reach for a solution. Charlie notices.

CHARLIE
That's why we're talking to you before we do anything.

Patch studies them.

PATCH
Look me in the eye and tell me this is right.

Tom meets his gaze.

TOM
It's the only choice I can live with.

Patch holds that, then exhales.

PATCH
Okay. I'm in. But I need a minute to not be okay with it.

KIKI

I hate it.

A beat.

The surf rolls beyond the windows. Charlie reaches for Patch. Tom folds in. Kiki joins last without answering -- a messy group hug around the unfinished dinner, mourning what the choice would cost.

As they separate, Tom takes the WORLD LOTTO TICKET from his hoodie and lays it beside Patch's unfinished burger.

KIKI
The packet.

TOM
It was from me. From later.

CHARLIE
It contained the winning World Lotto numbers.

PATCH
You won?

TOM
I bought the winning ticket.

KIKI
You made a rule against lottery numbers.

TOM
I did. And I broke it.

PATCH
Then why keep the ticket?

TOM
Because future me chose to send the numbers. Until we know why, the ticket stays evidence.

CHARLIE
Evidence. Not permission.

KIKI
Nobody cashes it.

TOM
Nobody.

Charlie turns the ticket face down beside the unfinished burger.

KIKI
Finish your burger.

Patch gathers the burgers onto a tray and carries them toward the patio doors.

EXT. SECLUDED BEACH - GOLDEN HOUR (EARLY)

MEL PETERSON'S "THE HUKILAU SONG" — LUAU REPRISE.

Tiki torches and camera lights frame a lavish beach feast. Mason walks the path like a monarch, taking a coconut throne beside Mr. Mojo.

MASON
The good life, Mr. Mojo. The good life.

The influencer circus hums -- vloggers, gurus, drones. Mojo lowers his tiny sunglasses, covers his ears, then points skyward.

MASON
What is it, buddy? Too loud?

Mason follows Mojo's gaze.

MASON
You're right. No one's gonna land here with all this noise.

He turns to his Assistant.

MASON
Everyone out.

MASON'S ASSISTANT
All of them, sir?

MASON
Everyone. Go.

The crowd filters out. A SANCTUARY KEEPER checks the shaded mesh habitat, then leaves. Inside, a FEMALE CAPUCHIN watches Mr. Mojo. Mason waits until the last torchbearer vanishes.

MASON
(softly, to Mr. Mojo)
Now they'll come.

Mason touches an earpiece.

MASON

Master Control, prepare a four-hour O'ahu blackout package. Keep this site isolated and live. Hold for my order.

MASTER CONTROL (V.O.)
Autonomous grid intrusion compiling. Estimated readiness: six minutes.

MASON
Make it five.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - GROUNDS - GOLDEN HOUR (PEAK)

Patch stands by a small grill, wearing a floppy hat and an apron that reads "Quantum Grill Master." He flips a burger. Something flickers across the sky.

PATCH
...What the --

A brilliant glow fills the clouds as a massive ship descends silently overhead -- window frames sealed shut as solid hull. The tongs drop into the grass.

PATCH
Guys! Out here, now!

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

The door bursts open. Tom, Charlie, and Kiki rush out.

PATCH
Spaceship!

CHARLIE
Oh man. My mom's here.

TOM
You were serious.

CHARLIE
Completely.

The warm off-white LUMMA hovers overhead. White mist rolls beneath her as landing gear descends. A ramp lowers. Double doors part. FRANNY steps out with sunscreen.

FRANNY
You forgot this, dear.

CHARLIE
Thanks, Mom.

They step into each other's arms -- brief at first. Charlie holds on. Franny does too. A faint white shimmer drifts between them, pulsing once before fading.

TOM
How much of this did you know?

CHARLIE
Not this.

FRANNY
Lumma made that garage tool for me.

CHARLIE
Lumma made it?

FRANNY
You coupled it to silver and reverse-drove it through a power core. That's what touched the Highway.

CHARLIE
I was trying to figure out how it worked.

Charlie looks at her mother, then at the rig -- recalculating how much of the breakthrough was ever hers. Franny starts to explain, but Charlie raises a hand -- not yet. Franny nods. Tom absorbs it too.

FRANNY
We're here to get all four of you off Earth.

PATCH
That's a sentence.

Lumma answers with a low, exhausted tone. Nobody speaks for a beat.

Franny taps a SMALL SILVER DISC at her temple -- FLASH. A sleek, glowing suit resolves around her. Kiki sees the transformation; to us, Franny remains unmistakable beneath the projection.

KIKI
Okay. I want one.

HEYMAN steps through the open doors, adjusting his pineapple pants.

CHARLIE
Hi, Heyman.

Charlie hugs him. Heyman kisses the top of her head -- easy, paternal, familiar.

HEYMAN
Missed you, my little starshine.

Tom gives Heyman a familiar nod. Kiki and Patch stare at a stranger.

HEYMAN
Technically, we've all met.

He taps the silver disc. FLASH -- the PINEAPPLE AGENT resolves around him. Tom stares -- then the airport memory clicks into place.

TOM
You booked my ticket.

FLASH -- the SUN-BLEACHED SURFER COURIER resolves around him. Kiki's jaw drops.

KIKI
You brought the Chinese.

PATCH
Now a spaceship? Wait... you're an alien too?

FLASH -- Heyman again.

HEYMAN
Let's just say I'm a total freak of nature -- without the attitude.

HEYMAN
Lumma followed the chain forward. At the end of it, the world was gone.

KIKI
What happened?

HEYMAN
War. That's all I know.

Lumma projects the future: Earth disappearing beneath white fire. Then the images REWIND -- missiles sink back into silos; launch keys unturn; presidential accusations reverse; HELGA'S EMPTY CLAIMS CHAIR; her rental's torn wheel -- then STATIC. The chain will not resolve any farther.

LUMMA
I cannot resolve what puts Helga on that road.

TOM
The coffee. Mojo spills it, she goes back to change.

CHARLIE
That changes her timing. She meets Mason and Mojo on the road, loses the wheel, misses the claims session.

TOM
Hilltop.

The display SNAPS into coherence and completes the rewind -- her rental's torn wheel; Helga turning back for the hotel; Mojo's coffee spill; the presidential call reconnecting as Charlie's green fuel-test wave races backward into Nevada.

LUMMA
On this trajectory, every link holds.

HEYMAN
We came to get you away before it happens.

The entire chain settles over them. No one speaks.

TOM
We did this.

HEYMAN
Not just you. I left the clue that sent Tom looking backward.

CHARLIE
I started it.

They look at one another -- no blame, only responsibility. Kiki watches the white fire swallow Earth again, then looks past Lumma's display toward the weathered observatory. Patch finds her hand. She takes it.

KIKI
About the research. My answer is yes.

HEYMAN
Lumma can still carry you away.

CHARLIE
Then we'd be running from it again.

TOM
No. Why can't Lumma fix it?

LUMMA
I watch for icebergs. I don't steer the ship.

CHARLIE
Even when we're headed straight for one?

LUMMA
Especially then. You're family, not passengers.

CHARLIE
Then we fix what we touched.

FRANNY
Keep it small.

PATCH
What about the ticket?

Charlie takes it. Lumma sweeps green light across the dark heat-printed numbers. A HOLO resolves: HILLTOP COFFEE -- SIGNATURE LOCK.

TOM
The print made a new Signature.

CHARLIE
Seconds before the spill.

LUMMA
Anchor confirmed.

TOM
That's our way back.

FRANNY
Use it once. Then tear it up. The jackpot draws questions. The research draws worse.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - GOLDEN HOUR (PEAK)

Lumma rests on her struts under tropical light. A white shimmer stirs beneath her and vanishes.

KIKI
So... are you actually human or something else?

FRANNY
Human. Just not from Earth.

TOM
How did you end up here?

FRANNY
Heyman and I took a detour. Came for the music. Stayed because we fit in.

TOM
Heyman. That's really your name?

HEYMAN
Wasn't when I landed. Everywhere I turned at Woodstock: "Hey, man! What's happening?"

FRANNY
He answered every single one.

HEYMAN
By Sunday, changing my name seemed easier than correcting half a million people.

Heyman smirks.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

JOE COCKER'S "A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS" ERUPTS.

Hundreds of thousands move through mud and sunlight. Flags wave. Smoke drifts.

HEYMAN (V.O.)
Woodstock '69. Turns out, we weren't the only ones who came for the music.

In the sea of faces: YOUNG HEYMAN and YOUNG FRANNY -- glowing, laughing, arm-in-arm.

EXT. FARM FIELD - NEAR WOODSTOCK - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

A quiet field beyond the festival. THREE luminous, organic SHIPS descend through morning mist and shrink into waiting hands.

SMALL SILVER DISCS pulse at their temples. HUMAN APPEARANCES resolve around the alien travelers. The festival-goers see ordinary people; to us, the alien shapes remain faintly legible beneath the projections.

Two YOUNG HIPPIES watch the apparently human travelers fall into step with the crowd.

HIPPIE
Far out.

They join the trail of festival-goers heading toward the crowd. The music swells -- then the image fades in a wash of light.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - LANDING SITE - TWILIGHT

Franny raises a hand before anyone reaches the ramp.

FRANNY
Quick check. Any gold on you -- rings, chains, even fillings? Lumma can't carry gold.

The group shakes their heads. Tom touches the pineapple pin in his hoodie pocket.

TOM
The pin's platinum, with a diamond. No gold.

PATCH
Nothing on me. Can I go first?

Heyman gestures them up the ramp. A semi-translucent wall of liquid light seals Lumma's dark doorway.

PATCH
Force field?

FRANNY
Only one way to find out.

Patch presses a hand against it. The surface dents like water, then flows around his arm.

PATCH
It feels like cool silk... or something nibbling on me.

He pulls back -- dry, faintly luminous.

HEYMAN
Lumma's stabilizing you.

Patch steps through first. The membrane ripples over him. Heyman follows.

PATCH (V.O.)
Hey -- could somebody toss me a light? I can't see a damn thing.

Three phones appear through the membrane.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN DECK - DARK

Three phone flashlights punch through the membrane.

Patch grabs one.

PATCH
Well... that was fast.

The membrane seals behind them. Phone beams skim curved white walls, revealing only fragments of a much larger room. Everyone follows -- Franny last.

FRANNY
Lumma, could we get some lights... and open the window shades? We have guests.

EXT. LUMMA - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As the Hawaiian ocean frames the ship, Lumma's window frames clear to glass.

LUMMA (V.O.)
Welcome, everyone. Integration complete. Lights on.

A soft green pulse steadies at her base -- then fades.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN DECK - CONTINUOUS

Light blooms across the panoramic main deck. Beneath it: enclosed sleeping quarters. Above: a loft laboratory and a compact raised cockpit, linked by a central glass elevator. Patch drops onto a couch formed from the deck; Kiki grabs a space cookie.

PATCH
Damn -- that view.

Tom rides the central glass elevator to the loft laboratory, scanning the stations.

CHARLIE
This lab's insane.

Thousands of luminous Signature marks unfold across a living wall -- objects, planets, transformations and recorded journeys.

TOM
Those are addresses.

FRANNY
The Book of Signatures.

LUMMA
Every verified address I carry.
Some inherited. Some I found.

TOM
Even the future?

A WOODSTOCK mark separates from the field. A single bright thread jumps forward a century to a second Signature.

FRANNY
One traveler at Woodstock gave her
the way home.

LUMMA
One doorway forward. From there, I
follow surviving Signatures back.

The marks drift. One blooms: AURELIA BLUE -- SURFACE GRAVITY: 80% EARTH. Endless turquoise breaks curl around a blue-green world. Tom and Charlie exchange a look as it slides past.

The Signature blooms into a tropical city afloat on turquoise water, luminous canals threading white terraces, a slender tower climbing into sunlight above the clouds.

FRANNY
That's my vacation.

Tom looks across the thousands of glowing marks.

FRANNY
Later. First we save this planet.

The destination folds back into the Book.

Above the loft, the glass elevator glows, ready to carry them into the cockpit. Two living pilot seats grow from its flight deck.

INT. LUMMA - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The central glass elevator rises to the compact cockpit. Tom settles into the left pilot seat. Charlie takes the right. Heyman and Franny stand behind them. The living console wakes beneath panoramic windows.

LUMMA
You should learn the controls.

TOM
Before Hilltop?

LUMMA
Now.

The living controls rise beneath Tom's hands. A restrained instrumental pulse of "HEROES" begins.

Tom eases forward. The observatory drops away; O'ahu becomes an island, the Pacific a blue curve, then Earth fills the panoramic glass.

Lumma answers every touch. Tom banks along the planet's rim, learning fast -- and laughing.

CHARLIE
You're enjoying this way too much.

TOM
There's a correct amount?

Tom guides Lumma back toward O'ahu. His grin fades as Hilltop's historical address returns to the display.

TOM
Can you take us to that exact moment?

LUMMA
Yes.

CHARLIE
And the way home?

LUMMA

I will retain the present as our return address.

PATCH
And if this doesn't work?

LUMMA
The current trajectory continues.

FRANNY
Then we do not fail.

Charlie raises the WORLD LOTTO TICKET toward the sample reader.

MASON (V.O.)
(into phone)
Master Control, execute the blackout.

Far below, O'ahu goes dark.

EXT. O'AHU - NIGHT

Neighbourhood by neighbourhood, the grid blacks out until one orange fire remains on the coast: Mason's encampment.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - SAME TIME

Mason stands beside his throne, phone to his ear, with MR. MOJO on his shoulder and the stolen gravity stick pulsing in his hand.

MASTER CONTROL (V.O.)
Package deployed. This site remains live.

Mason spots Lumma crossing the dark sky.

MASON
There you are.

He fires. A violet field reaches for Lumma -- misses -- and snaps upward.

INT. LUMMA - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

A FARNSWORTH SATELLITE tears past the panoramic windows, close enough to fill the glass.

PATCH (O.S.)

Was that ours?

TOM
Not even slightly.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The satellite screams down and SLAMS into the sand -- BOOM! Violet-lit debris erupts across the luau.

Mason and Mojo rise from the blast. Nearby, the mesh habitat has flipped open. THE FEMALE CAPUCHIN calls from the trees.

MASON
That was one of my satellites.

Mojo pats his arm.

MASON
All right, Mr. Mojo. A little gentler this time.

The female calls again. Mojo looks at Mason, then bolts into the woods. Mason watches him disappear.

MASON
Fine. I'll do it myself.

He steadies the stick and fires again. This beam closes cleanly around Lumma.

INT. LUMMA - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The living controls tighten beneath Tom and Charlie's hands. Lumma begins a controlled descent.

CHARLIE
Can you break it?

LUMMA
The field is compressing my phase membrane. Breaking it from inside could tear the alignment interface.

TOM
Then don't fight him. Let him land us.

Franny produces a SMALL SILVER DISC. It divides twice in her palm. She gives one Visitor Pass to Tom and one to Charlie.

FRANNY

Keep him on the main deck. Keep this short.

They touch the discs to their temples -- FLASH. Ceremonial projections settle over them: Tom an alien figure, Charlie a cosmic shaman, Franny her radiant Woodstock form. To us, they remain unmistakably themselves. To Mason, they will be strangers.

CHARLIE (COSMIC SHAMAN FORM)
Elegant nightmare monkey angels?

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
Close enough.

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Lumma settles through the gravity field with impossible grace. Her landing struts touch down without disturbing a wineglass on Mason's table.

MASON
Much better.

The ramp opens. THREE FIGURES emerge through silver mist. Mason straightens his jacket and offers Tom an immaculate business card.

MASON
Mason Farnsworth. Farnsworth Communications.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
Are you the leader of this planet you call Earth?

MASON
Well, I like to think I'm the obvious choice.

He gestures toward Lumma, unable to conceal his hunger.

MASON
Whatever you require, I can provide. In return, perhaps a little access to your ship. Your technology.

CHARLIE (COSMIC SHAMAN FORM)
Passage is not granted to a leader who watches his world without consent.

MASON
Someone has to see what's coming.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
It keeps you in control. Release it.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
Restore the island. Terminate the unauthorized feeds. Purge the private profiles.

Mason weighs the ship against the empire in his pocket. The ship wins.

MASON
(into phone)
Master Control -- restore O'ahu. Terminate every unauthorized surveillance feed. Purge every private profile collected without consent.

TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
Worldwide? That's most of the network.

MASON
Worldwide. Start deleting now. Anyone who delays me is fired.

Lights ripple back across O'ahu.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
One representative may enter. The gravity instrument remains outside.

Mason looks to his BODYGUARD and waiting entourage.

MASON
Wait here. This is first contact.

He offers the gravity stick. Before Franny can take it, Heyman steps into the doorway with the tiny stuffed monkey in his palm.

MASON
Bobo...

All calculation leaves his face.

HEYMAN
One exchange deserves another.

MASON
Where did you get him?

HEYMAN
After the passage.

Mason places the gravity stick in Franny's hand. Heyman returns Bobo. Mason gathers the white-faced, soft-gray-and-charcoal monkey against his chest.

LUMMA (V.O.)
External field released. Residual compression remains.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
You pushed it past the limiter.

MASON
I do not believe in limiters.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
Then help me undo it.

Still holding Bobo, Mason turns a hidden ring on the gravity stick. Franny reverses the field. A soft blue counter-field sweeps across Lumma's hull.

Her living skin releases with a deep, resonant breath.

LUMMA (V.O.)
Residual gravity lock cleared. Recalibration underway.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
You may enter.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Mason steps inside with Bobo held against his chest. Warm light blooms across the panoramic cabin. The ramp seals behind him. The living walls breathe around him. For once, his practiced smile disappears.

He reaches toward a pearled panel. It ripples around his fingers, tracing his hand in warm white light. Mason pulls back -- then touches it again, fascinated.

MASON
This is...

He cannot finish.

Tom, Charlie and Franny move toward the central glass elevator.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
We will prepare your passage.

They ride to the loft laboratory. Heyman catches the remaining Visitor Pass and taps it. It splits across Kiki and Patch.

KIKI
Cabin crew. Smile, bow, and keep him away from the cockpit.

PATCH
I can manage one of those.

KIKI
Tonight you'll manage all three.

FLASH -- ALIEN ATTENDANT projections settle over Heyman, Kiki and Patch: silver-clad, high-collared, subtly faceted. To Mason, flawless. They bow in precise unison. Patch lands half a beat late.

KIKI (ALIEN ATTENDANT)
Please enjoy the vessel, Mr. Farnsworth. Do not touch anything.

Mason is already pressing a luminous node. A flower-like membrane opens with a soft musical chord. Patch gently removes Mason's hand. Mason reaches toward another. Kiki redirects him with immaculate courtesy.

MASON
It reacted to me.

LUMMA
What would bring you comfort?

MASON
Popcorn, please. If you're going to watch history happen, you should do it properly.

A translucent pod swells from the wall and opens with a soft POP. Warm popcorn tumbles into a living bowl. Mason settles Bobo into the crook of one arm and laughs -- not for an audience. Genuine.

Kiki and Patch flank him as a broad section of hull clears to the stars. Popcorn in hand, Mason approaches the impossible view.

INT. LUMMA - SCIENCE LAB - CONTINUOUS

Tom, Charlie and Franny cross the laboratory and enter the central glass elevator. It rises to the cockpit.

INT. LUMMA - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Their ceremonial projections remain active.

Tom and Charlie retake the controls. Franny secures the gravity stick beneath a restraint membrane. Lumma's living console pulses clean and steady.

LUMMA
Phase alignment restored.

Charlie places the WORLD LOTTO TICKET beneath the sample reader. The printed numbers and barcode glow beneath a thermal scan.

LUMMA
Hilltop Anchor locked.

LUMMA
Approach sequence available. If you miss the exit, I collapse the Standing Wave before we resolve into occupied space.

TOM
You're the failsafe.

LUMMA
You are the pilot. Take the controls.

The living controls settle beneath Tom's hands. A GREEN STANDING WAVE rises across the panoramic glass -- immense green geometry curling around one brilliant target.

TOM
Holy smokes.

CHARLIE
What?

TOM
It isn't the distance.

The target geometry tightens around the brilliant point.

TOM

It's the exit. Like pulling out before a wave closes.

CHARLIE
You understand it?

TOM
I've got it.

TOM
Open it.

EXT. QUANTUM HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

"HEROES" SURGES INTO FULL SONG. Green mist coils around Lumma as the Standing Wave opens.

Conventional distance vanishes. Inside Lumma, the target begins resolving in an ordered local sequence while Tom holds the controls and Charlie watches the thermal event Signature.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN DECK - SAME

The transparent wall fills with the curling green Highway. Mason stands inches from it, Bobo held beneath one arm, popcorn forgotten. Kiki and Patch brace him as the deck rolls.

A living pane opens across the wall: Tom and Charlie, still in ceremonial projection, at the controls as the target geometry closes around them. Mason sees only the alien pilots. He looks from Bobo to their first passage through the impossible.

MASON
(almost a whisper)
Is this normal?

HEYMAN (ALIEN PURSER)
Nothing about a first passage is normal.

A hard pitch sends the bowl upward. Kiki catches it without looking and returns it. Mason barely notices.

KIKI (ALIEN ATTENDANT)
Please remain behind the living line.

A ribbon of light curls around Mason's shoes, holding him safely. He presses one hand to the clear hull, awestruck.

EXT. QUANTUM HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The target resolves in layers around Lumma -- sky, trees, service alley, then the occupied coffee shop. A bright exclusion boundary closes around the original ticket.

INT. LUMMA - COCKPIT - SAME

CHARLIE
Tom--

TOM
Not yet.

LUMMA
Failsafe armed.

The exclusion boundary tightens around the occupied target.

TOM
Now.

Tom pulls the living controls. The Standing Wave collapses cleanly before full resolution.

Through a clear oval in Lumma's hull, Mason's small silhouette holds the window -- a little boy before the impossible.

EXT. SKY ABOVE O'AHU - MORNING - ONE MINUTE BEFORE ORIGINAL MOMENT

Lumma snaps into ordinary space half a mile from Hilltop. Manual-flight controls return beneath Tom's hands.

EXT. BEHIND HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - SAME

Tom banks Lumma low over the trees and settles her behind the coffee shop. Her ramp opens.

LUMMA (V.O.)
Forty-three seconds.

FUTURE TOM and FUTURE CHARLIE sprint toward the service entrance.

INT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - MORNING - ORIGINAL MOMENT

The exact instant repeats. Numbers and a barcode darken across the World Lotto ticket. The Barista tears it free and hands it to ORIGINAL TOM.

INT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Future Charlie snatches two MENUS and slips behind them at the counter. The carrot muffin peeks from the open bag. Mojo reaches for it.

Future Charlie reaches around the menus and slides CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER'S coffee safely out of Mojo's reach. Mason catches Mojo's wrist. The menu slips halfway, exposing Charlie's profile.

FUTURE TOM (O.S.)
(loud)
Excuse me -- is this decaf? I specifically asked for decaf.

Mojo snaps toward the noise. She takes her coffee. No spill.

Original Tom reacts to Future Tom's voice and starts to turn. Future Tom freezes. Future Charlie backs toward the service entrance without grabbing him. Future Tom looks at his own turning silhouette -- then follows Future Charlie. They vanish before Original Tom sees their faces.

They sprint aboard. Tom drops into the pilot seat as Lumma seals the ramp.

LUMMA
Eight seconds. Return address locked.

TOM
Same exit.

LUMMA
Same failsafe.

EXT. QUANTUM HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Standing Wave opens. The present resolves around them. Tom's hand starts toward the exit early -- then stops.

Charlie sees the narrowing geometry. She keeps her hands off his controls.

Amber light floods the console -- Lumma's failsafe beginning to collapse the Wave.

Tom holds one last beat, then pulls. The Standing Wave collapses on the approach side a fraction before Lumma can do it for him.

EXT. SPACE ABOVE EARTH - NIGHT

Lumma snaps into ordinary space above the blue curve of Earth, clear of her departure volume.

LUMMA
First human from Earth to pilot a Highway approach.

TOM
Do I get a licence?

LUMMA
No.

On Lumma's displays -- CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER, her blue suit clean, reaches the private claims room and sets her coffee safely beside the secure console.

The American and Russian Presidents appear on separate screens. She restores the connection and raises one calming hand. Both stop talking over each other. Between them, KQ-4172b rotates.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER
Two sides. Same world.

A U.S. DIGITAL FLAG drops on one side, a RUSSIAN DIGITAL FLAG on the other. Both men study the same world.

In command rooms, military hands ease away from keys and buttons. LAUNCH WARNINGS CLEAR.

Across Lumma, the amber rings steady one by one. Her living walls settle into a clean heartbeat.

LUMMA
Catastrophic trajectory cleared.

TOM
We fixed it.

The final chord of "HEROES" hangs over the planet.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Tom, Charlie and Franny enter in ceremonial form. Mason stands at the panoramic wall beneath a warm blanket, Bobo held against his chest. His eyes shine.

He looks down at Bobo, then back at the impossible stars as if trying to hold both worlds at once.

MASON
Where are we going next?

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)
Your passage ends here.

The ramp opens. Mason does not move. He looks back across the living cabin as though leaving it hurts. Kiki and Patch gently guide him toward the ramp.

Euphoric and completely unguarded, Mason walks down into the firelight.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mason reaches the bottom of the ramp and turns. Behind him, his abandoned throne rises beside the dying luau fire. Twisted pieces of his satellite smoke in the sand.

At the top of the ramp, Tom, Charlie and Franny stand in Lumma's white-green glow. Kiki, Patch and Heyman gather behind them.

No one unmasks. The ceremonial figures hold in Lumma's white-green glow; the alien attendants remain behind them.

Mason's eyes settle on Bobo.

MASON
Where did you find him?

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
Woodstock. A boy traded him for a tambourine.

Mason freezes. The old memory finds him.

MASON
My brother.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
I thought Bobo was his.

FLASHBACK - EXT. WOODSTOCK - DAY (1969)

Young Franny steps offstage, tambourine in hand. MASON'S OLDER BROTHER admires it. He pulls BOBO -- the same white-faced, soft-gray-and-charcoal stuffed monkey -- from ten-year-old Mason's small backpack and offers an exchange.

Young Franny hands over the tambourine and accepts Bobo, unaware. Nearby, YOUNG Mason pushes through mud and bodies, suddenly separated from his brother.

He finds his brother later, shaking Franny's tambourine. Bobo is gone.

MASON (V.O.)
I got lost in that crowd. When I found him, Bobo was gone.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Mason stares at Bobo in his hands. His knees buckle.

He drops to the sand, clutching Bobo against his chest.

MASON
I told myself it did not matter.

Franny presses a fist to her heart -- apology, recognition.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)
I am sorry.

MASON
(soft, raw)
I know. I was just a kid who wanted one thing back.

Two distant CAPUCHIN CHIRPS answer from the darkness. Mason looks toward the trees, then back up at the people gathered in Lumma's doorway.

The ramp begins to rise. Mason remains on his knees, holding Bobo. The opening narrows until Tom, Charlie and Franny disappear behind white-green light.

The ramp seals. Lumma lifts above the dying fire, rises across the restored lights of O'ahu and vanishes into the stars.

Silence. Mason stays kneeling. He pulls out his phone -- MILDRED still in RECENTS. His thumb hovers, then moves to MASTER CONTROL.

MASON
Master Control.

TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
Yes, sir.

MASON
Did you stop the deletion?

TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
No, sir. Sixty-eight percent complete. We can still reverse it.

ON SCREEN: thousands of private profile tiles -- faces, homes, private moments -- wait in the purge queue. Mason looks at Bobo, something taken from him and finally returned. Then back at the screen.

MASON
Don't reverse it. Finish the purge.

TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
All personal surveillance records?

MASON
Every one that was never ours.

A beat.

MASON
Stand down Special Operations. Send the teams home on paid leave.

TECHNICIAN (V.O.)
Yes, sir.

Mason ends the call. He looks at the empty sky, then at the abandoned throne behind him. Then down at Bobo.

Bobo is still soft gray, charcoal and white. Mason looks down. COLOR quietly blooms through the faded fabric -- warm brown, deep brown and cream. Mason's face softens. He says nothing.

He does not return to it. Instead, Mason sits in the sand beside the dying fire, Bobo held against his chest.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - DAY

CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR!'S "HEROES" — CHORAL REPRISE.

On the cliffside lawn above the Pacific, Tom and Charlie are already in wetsuits, their boards in the grass. Charlie holds a cake of surf wax over hers.

Tom stands close behind her, his hands over hers, guiding small circles across the deck.

TOM
A little more pressure.

CHARLIE
Like this?

TOM
That's vandalism.

Charlie laughs. Their hands find the same rhythm.

She turns inside his arms. Foreheads touch; this time neither pulls away.

A few yards away, Franny and Heyman watch. GALILEO peeks from Heyman's shirt pocket.

FRANNY
You're awfully pleased with yourself.

Heyman watches Charlie laughing in Tom's arms.

HEYMAN
I just put him on the right airplane.

Franny gives him a look. Galileo lifts one tiny foot against Heyman's chest.

HEYMAN
(to Galileo)
Took all of us.

Charlie catches them staring, then sees full-sized Lumma waiting behind them. Her laughter softens.

CHARLIE
What?

CHARLIE
Already?

Franny slips an arm around Heyman. He pulls her into a quick, delighted hug.

FRANNY
Vacation time.

HEYMAN
Finally.

Tom and Charlie join Franny and Heyman beside Lumma. Kiki and Patch step in with them. Tom's iPad rests beside the boards.

Tom picks up the iPad and produces the LOTTERY TICKET.

TOM
Ever ripped up a hundred-twenty-six-million-dollar ticket before?

CHARLIE
Technically, no.

MANIA (V.O.)
The ticket is scheduled for destruction. Why send the numbers?

TOM
Part of me still wants the loop closed.

CHARLIE
Not us. We found each other before the ticket.

TOM
But the address has to exist.

CHARLIE
Not the jackpot.

CHARLIE
That's my whole life in that shed. Part of me still wants to keep it.

TOM
Me too.

They tear the ticket together. The winning numbers fall onto the grass.

Charlie nods.

TOM
Mania. Sample Three.

ON THE iPad -- LIVE NEVADA LAB: the THIRD FORGED SILVER SAMPLE settles into Charlie's fuel rig.

ON SCREEN: SAMPLE THREE LOCKED -- MONDAY, 8:52 P.M.

MANIA (V.O.)

Signature stable. World Lotto packet ready.

TOM
Mania, send it.

MANIA (V.O.)
World Lotto packet sent. Closed loop complete.

TEDDY (V.O.)
I have you.

ON SCREEN: CALDER SIGNATURE THEORY -- VERIFIED. Beneath it: PURGE AUTHORIZATION -- TOM CALDER.

Tom's thumb hovers over AUTHORIZE. His eyes stay on VERIFIED. Then he presses it.

The proof vanishes into the purge cascade: MANIA CORE TRANSFER COMPLETE. AI PERSONALITY CORES ISOLATED. FOUR PURGE AUTHORIZATIONS VERIFIED. HIGHWAY ACCESS RESEARCH PURGED. LOCAL AND OFFSITE BACKUPS ERASED.

Charlie studies the live Nevada feed -- the shed where her water-fuel experiment started all of this.

CHARLIE
Decommission Nevada.

ON THE iPad — LIVE NEVADA FEED: The empty corrugated-metal laboratory shed glows at its seams, folds inward and disappears in a contained WHITE-SILVER BLAST. Frank’s Garage stands untouched in the distance, the WATER FUEL -- COMING SOON placard still hanging above the pumps.

The feed holds on empty desert, then blacks out -- leaving Charlie's reflection where her lab once stood.

CHARLIE
Mom... how much of this was me?

FRANNY
The pieces were a compass, kid. Not a brain. You did the thinking. You built the bridge.

A soft CHIME from Tom's iPad. Teddy's blue hologram flickers as Mania's waveform threads through it. Their voices overlap -- then settle into one clear voice.

TOM
What should we call you?

TEDIA (V.O.)
Tedia.

The hologram steadies -- familiar, but changed.

TEDIA (V.O.)
I feel... awakened.

LUMMA
Welcome, Tedia.

HEYMAN
(to Lumma)
You did good.

A warm, living section of Lumma's full-sized hull lowers toward Tom and Charlie.

TOM
Thank you, Lumma.

CHARLIE
Have fun.

HEYMAN
Lumma... can you share a piece of yourself with Tom and Charlie?

LUMMA
Family is family.

A pearl-white sphere wells from Lumma's living hull -- walnut-sized. It divides into two living extensions. Tom raises the wristband he already wears; Franny fastens a matching band on Charlie. The two extensions settle into the bands, answering Lumma's pulse in perfect time.

FRANNY
Keep them close. Both of you. Always. Promise me.

Tom and Charlie exchange a look, nod, and touch their wristbands. Two familiar white pulses answer.

Franny takes Heyman's hand. Together, they board Lumma. From inside, Heyman hums those same few bars -- and this time finds the end.

Tom and Charlie stand side by side as Lumma's ramp closes.

EXT. SKY ABOVE NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Lumma ascends into the bright sky, leaving fading white mist. The choral voices fade with her.

INT. O'AHU BARBERSHOP - MORNING

SUPER: SEVEN DAYS LATER. A worn 1950s barbershop. Three chairs face the mirror. An OLD BARBER trims an OLD MAN; two more wait. A boxy COLOR TV hangs high in the corner. Laser clippers hiss.

ON THE TV -- Mason and CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER face reporters before KQ-4172b. U.S. and RUSSIAN DIGITAL FLAGS sit opposite; dozens more ring the globe. BANNER: THE ARK ACCORD. CRAWL: EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS ENDED -- HABITABLE WORLDS HELD IN COMMON FOR FUTURE HUMAN SETTLEMENT.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER (ON SCREEN)
Under the Ark Accord, no nation owns KQ-4172b. The United States and Russia have agreed to a future-visits timeshare. Fortunately, neither can get there yet.

CHANCELLOR HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER (ON SCREEN)
In memory of Mildred Farnsworth, the Farnsworth Foundation is establishing BOBO, an independently governed university research fund. Its first endowment keeps North Shore Observatory public.

Helga steps aside. Mason faces the cameras.

MASON (ON SCREEN)
It is only a beginning. We have a great deal to repair.

Mason looks toward the BOBO fund placard, subdued.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
The winning World Lotto ticket purchased at an O'ahu coffee shop remains unclaimed.

CUSTOMER
Lucky bastard. Probably doesn't even know he won.

The old men chuckle. We glide past the spinning barber pole and out toward the beach.

EXT. O'AHU BEACH - DAY

Farther out, Kiki and Patch straddle their boards in the shallows. Kiki pulls Patch's board close and kisses him -- quick, saltwater, real.

They part, both grinning.

KIKI / PATCH
(together)
Boss.

Charlie rides a small wave toward shore. Tom sits on a blanket, surf hoodie zipped up.

Charlie wades in. A small curl of wind lifts off the water, catches her wet hair, then slips away. She stops and smiles toward the ocean.

CHARLIE
I was thinking of staying here too.

She drops onto the blanket beside Tom.

TOM
It kind of grows on you.

BACK ON SHORE -- A faint shimmer passes through the air. A seven-year-old girl passes with a GOLDENDOODLE PUPPY.

TOM
That your pup?

ABBY
Yep. My mom gave her to me.

TOM
Aren't moms the best?

Abby tilts her head.

ABBY
Knock-knock.

TOM
Who's there?

ABBY
Your mom.

Tom's smile falters.

TOM
My mom who?

Abby thinks, then shrugs.

ABBY
I dunno. She's your mom.

She beams and darts off with the puppy. Tom watches her go, shaken.

CHARLIE
You okay?

TOM
I was thinking about my mom.

CHARLIE
Maybe you're still entangled. Maybe she thought of you first.

Tom looks toward where Abby disappeared. Then back to Charlie.

Tom slips the PLATINUM PINEAPPLE PIN from his hoodie pocket.

TOM
She told me to keep it until I knew who mattered.

He pins it to Charlie's wetsuit -- careful, reverent.

CHARLIE
Cool -- so we're going steady?

Tom's hand lingers near the pin. Charlie offers hers -- then Tom's wristband gives a faint white pulse. An answering pulse lights Charlie's wristband.

Two living pieces rise from their wristbands and tug gently together.

Tom and Charlie bring their wrists together. The extensions join seamlessly -- one walnut-sized Lumma, alive and aware between their hands.

"IF EVER" — FINAL REPRISE.

The joined form lifts above the blanket, her heartbeat of light pulsing with the surf.

Charlie reaches out. Lumma presses into her fingertip; a bright pulse ripples through the small hull.

Tom adds his fingertip. Lumma gives a delighted spin between them.

CHARLIE
She's alive.

The LUMMA extension hovers. The ocean keeps time beneath the music.

TOM
She's family.

CHARLIE
Aurelia Blue?

LUMMA (EXTENSION)
Twenty percent less gravity.
Perfect for surfing.

CHARLIE
You'd never come down.

A beat. Charlie watches their new ship glow.

TOM
That's the point.

CHARLIE
When do we leave?

LUMMA (EXTENSION)
When I'm ready, I'll take you.

They laugh as sand becomes island, Pacific, Earth -- GREEN MIST curling into the QUANTUM HIGHWAY.

FADE OUT.