

Tomorrow's Flight



"More Mysteries Than Stars"
(A limited TV-series pilot episode)

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COLD OPEN

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRPLANE - ECONOMY AISLE SEAT - NIGHT

The plane SHUDDERS as if from light turbulence.

SARAH—slim mid-30s—sleeps awkwardly in her aisle seat. She holds a spiral notebook in one hand. She adjusts her position, not fully awakening.

The notebook falls onto her lap before spilling onto the floor, visible pages full of tidy handwritten entries.

INT. OUTSIDE COCKPIT

LINDSEY—early-40s, Asian-American flight attendant—rushes down the aisle from the front galley. Her uniform looks a bit unkempt.

The plane, more cluttered than is typical, SHUDDERS more violently.

LINDSEY
(very hushed)
Everyone! Keep quiet!

Lindsey passes Sarah's seat.

A more violent SHUDDER: Sarah comes fully awake. She looks to her seat companion, **WILLIAM**—a man about her age, tall and likely athletic back in the day. William looks scared.

SARAH
What's going on?

WILLIAM
I think it's Lord Almighty.

A few oxygen masks dangle; some overhead bins are open. The plane is in a state of disarray. This is not a normal flight.

Other PASSENGERS MUMBLE in fear. Some begin to PANIC in hushed tones. Others make SHUSHING sounds. The plane has relatively few people aboard—maybe only about 12 in total.

William raises his window blind.

WILLIAM'S POV:

A large full moon illuminates their surroundings.

The plane isn't in the air! The aircraft lies in a grassed area surrounded by a dense forest. In the distance, the moon reveals a mountain range.

Another shudder, even more violent.

A large indistinguishable mass of golden feathers passes by the window. As it does a low guttural animal GROWL shakes the plane.

Sarah clutches one hand over her mouth. William reaches for the other.

SARAH

We're going to die, aren't we?

WILLIAM

(quietly)

Yes, probably soon... but maybe not right now.

END COLD OPEN

OPENING CREDITS

INT. ORB — DAY

Light comes up a bit until the inside of an orb with an arch similar to that of the plane's interior comes into view. Dimensions are unclear.

ACTOR NAMES play over this in alphabetical order. Quirky music plays (think THE WHITE LOTUS opening credits).

The camera seems to strike at the wall of the orb, cracking it. A piece falls away, revealing blue sky.

Another strike at the orb until it crumbles and a hint of a new world, verdant and green, is revealed.

EXT. ORB

A pathetic creature emerges from the orb. The being is the size of a large chicken, and it is covered in patches of down. Yet, it also looks like a lizard with its large jaw.

The young creature opens its maw and makes a NOISE, something between a SQUAWK and a ROAR that suits the MUSIC.

From the small creature's POV, the world is strange and verdant with vast grasslands. Thin forests of unusual trees are edged by hills and cliffs.

This world seems young and new, different... It's similar to what the COLD OPEN partially revealed.

The newborn chicken-ish thing trembles.

An extremely large nostril of another creature, not fully visible, dips into frame. Ominous threads of music play...

The new life-form, just emerged from its egg, reaches with its tiny arms toward the other being's enormous muzzle.

[NOTE: OPENING CREDIT sequences will change, a bit, with each episode. They'll always be nature-oriented, addressing the theme of the episode.]

END OPENING CREDITS

IMPOSE ON SCREEN: CENTRAL NEVADA, JULY 16**EXT. CENTRAL NEVADA DESERT — DAY**

The desert landscape contrasts significantly with the verdant scenes before. Dusty pale sand and infrequent dried-out plants dot the horizon.

A dig site comes into view with individual tents and young paleontologists excavating at a growing hole.

In the distance, a large central communal tent shimmers in the heat as dust blows around it.

EXT. DIG SITE A

ANDREA comes into frame, lying on the ground. She's Hispanic, late 20s, wears baggy clothes and a plaid shirt that look so uncomfortable they must be a defense mechanism.

Andrea works to uncover a very large fossilized bone. She reaches a joint that leads to another bone.

ANDREA
Jesus, this effing thing was
huge...

Andrea sets down her trowel. She stands and wipes away sweat.

EXT. SHADED AREA NEAR DIG SITE

In a rare patch of nearby shade, Andrea takes a drink from her canteen. Then she notices something visible nearby in the recently disturbed earth.

It's a partial human skull with the forehead and a nostril revealed.

Andrea crosses to the unusual formation. She bends down, and uses her brush to sweep away loose dirt.

The fossilized skeletal face of what looks like a modern woman comes into view.

Andrea takes a deep breath. She fumbles for her walkie-talkie, activating it.

ANDREA

Dr. Lavey, are you there?

DR. LAVEY (O.S.)

Yes, Andrea. What is it?

ANDREA

I found the skull of a woman.

DR. LAVEY (O.S.)

Where?

ANDREA

She's buried in the Cretaceous strata we're excavating.

DR. LAVEY (O.S.)

You mean she's buried next to it?

ANDREA

No. She's within it, several yards away. And she's fossilized!

DR. LAVEY (O.S.)

I'll be there in a minute.

Andrea slips the device into her pocket, squatting next to the find. She puts a finger on the fossilized woman's face.

ANDREA

Hey lady, how are you possible?

EXT. DIG SITE B

Andrea continues to sweep away more Cretaceous dirt. She turns when she hears Dr. Lavey approaching.

DR. LAVEY—a petite Caucasian academic in her 60s—seems a bit self-effacing, but she knows how to use that affect to advantage. She approaches Andrea.

ANDREA

Here she is.

Dr. Lavey comes closer, studies the woman's remains.

DR. LAVEY

This... I don't know what to make of it.

As the two women look at the fossilized woman's skull, Dr. Iverson (**CRAIG**) trails behind. He's early 30s, handsome, arrogant, dramatic, and shifty.

Andrea notices Craig.

ANDREA

Craig has followed you like a bad
smell in the wind.

Dr. Lavey takes a beat, and turns toward Craig.

DR. LAVEY

What do you make of this, Dr.
Iverson?

Craig approaches and looks at the fossilized woman that
Andrea has partially excavated.

He takes a moment to consider his response.

CRAIG

Looks like a fossil of some
unfortunate.

ANDREA

She's a contemporary woman.

CRAIG

Well, she's fossilized, which makes
your conclusion impossible.

Andrea turns to her boss. Before she can speak, Dr. Lavey
grips Andrea's arm to stop her from responding.

DR. LAVEY

You're both partially correct. This
appears to be a modern woman buried
in ancient earth. And she appears
to be fossilized. And, of course,
these two things are mutually
exclusive based on what we know.

ANDREA

And it's strange that she's here.

CRAIG

Facts before conclusions... always.

ANDREA

I only stated facts, and I didn't
draw any conclusions other than to
say it was strange.

CRAIG

You're ABD, right? I mean, your
written work has yet to be approved
before you get your Ph.D.?

Craig types into his phone.

DR. LAVEY
I'm Andrea's committee chair...

CRAIG
Yes, I read that in my briefing.

Dr. Lavey stands, drawing herself to full height, such that it is.

DR. LAVEY
You received a "briefing," Dr. Iverson?

CRAIG
(fumbling a bit)
I was given a rundown on all the personnel because I'm from a different university.

DR. LAVEY
Odd that they didn't provide that to us, as well, since you also come from a different university.

Craig backs down, walking away. Andrea stands as he does.

ANDREA
(quietly)
I really don't like that *cabron*.

DR. LAVEY
Let's make him our friend instead of our enemy.

Andrea considers this before turning her attention back to the remains still mostly buried in the ground.

ANDREA
What do we do with her?

DR. LAVEY
Let's start a new dig. We'll call this site B. Claire and Blake can set it up.

Dr. Lavey and Andrea hear a HUBBUB coming from a few hundred yards away. Dr. Lavey's walkie-talkie CRACKLES to life.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Dr. Lavey, you better get over here. We just found something.

EXT. DIG SITE C

Dr. Lavey and Andrea arrive at a FUSS.

CLAIRE is an early-20s peculiar beauty with a tattoo across her clavicles that reads "My future is in the past."

BLAKE, her affable boyfriend, is a couple years older and a bit pudgy.

Claire and Blake hunch over something. When they hear Dr. Lavey and Andrea approach, they turn their attention from their work.

CLAIRE

Check out this crazy shit!

BLAKE

We think it's an airplane tail.

In the ground lies the scorched remains of a hunk of metal. What's been unearthed is devoid of any airline markings.

DR. LAVEY

My word...

**IMPOSE ON SCREEN: NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD —
WASHINGTON, DC — JULY 18**

EXT. NTSB PARKING LOT — DAY

BRUCE, a large surly Caucasian man in his early 60s with an unkempt beard, parks his battered Accord.

A sign on the wall reads: **RESERVED PARKING — BRUCE ACKLAND —
SENIOR AIRCRASH INVESTIGATOR.**

Bruce EXITS the vehicle, moving uncomfortably. He looks up at the large faceless building as he tries to negotiate his briefcase, a ream of paper, and his car keys.

He drops his coffee mug. It shatters against the asphalt, splashing coffee onto his rumpled khaki pants.

BRUCE

Fuck!

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE

Bruce sits at his desk in his drab, cluttered office with decades-old blinds covering the window. He takes a swig of office coffee from a paper cup and looks at it with distaste.

SAMIR GLAVER, second-generation Indian-American and about 30, ENTERS Bruce's office. Samir holds a folder.

SAMIR

Hi boss, you made it back!

Bruce pushes a finger under his glasses. He SIGHS.

BRUCE

One day I won't, and then it'll be up to you to figure out how I died.

Samir sits in a chair opposite. Bruce ignores him, tapping furiously at the keys on his ancient yellowing PC.

SAMIR

I'm surprised they let you use that old thing.

BRUCE

This 'old thing' works fine. It just needs time to get up to speed.

Samir shifts in his seat. Despite Bruce's tone, Bruce and Samir are on good terms.

SAMIR

I had a really interesting call yesterday.

BRUCE

Surprise me.

SAMIR

I can do that.

BRUCE

There isn't a disaster I haven't encountered before.

SAMIR

I wanted you to be the first to hear.

BRUCE

Jesus Christ. I hope you didn't knock up your girlfriend.

SAMIR

My girlfriend broke up with me a couple months ago. I told you that.

BRUCE

Did you? Doesn't mean she isn't pregnant.

SAMIR

Anyway, a team of paleontologists working in central Nevada uncovered what seems to be a large tail section from a commercial airliner.

BRUCE

What airline?

SAMIR

It has no identifying markings.

BRUCE

Okay, that's a good one. Did Westwood put you up to this? He's always trying...

SAMIR

No, they uncovered it while they were excavating a T. Rex fossil exposed during a recent flood.

Bruce takes off his glasses.

BRUCE

Have we had any reported missing flights?

SAMIR

No, but they sent photos.

Samir tosses printed photos from his folder onto Bruce's desk. Bruce ignores them.

BRUCE

What does it mean that a piece of metal is close to these old bones?

SAMIR

Fossils, boss, not bones.

Bruce glares at Samir, sucks in air.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

In any case, the paleontologist I spoke to is convinced that it's in the same strata of earth. I told her we'd come check it out.

BRUCE

Why both of us?

SAMIR

Because I don't have the experience to identify a piece of aircraft without identifying markings.

BRUCE

So if you're of no value, why do you need to go?

SAMIR

Because you'll need me to run interference.

Bruce turns to the window. It's begun to rain.

BRUCE

Central Nevada? It's miserable there this time of year.

SAMIR

You'll hardly notice a difference.

BRUCE

Why?

SAMIR

You're miserable everywhere you go.

Bruce stifles a LAUGH. Takes a distasteful swig of coffee.

BRUCE

Okay, I'll get clearance from Westwood. You make the travel arrangements.

(beat)

Now, get the fuck out of my office.

Bruce waits for Samir to leave.

Then he picks up one of the photos Samir left behind. It shows the tip of an airplane tail, stripped to bare metal. The rest is still buried.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
What the fuck...?

EXT. PORTLAND - NIGHT

IMPOSE ON SCREEN: Portland, Oregon, AUGUST 19

It's a cloudless night. A full moon rises over the city.

INT. UPSCALE APARTMENT - OPEN KITCHEN

The apartment is neat, contemporary, and masculine. A large flatscreen TV plays *The Valley of Gwangi*. A Roomba sweeps.

William—from the Cold Open—checks his smart watch.

WILLIAM
C'mon, where are you?

William empties the last of his coffee into a travel mug. He tops it off with a pour of vodka from a half-empty bottle.

William's watch BEEPS. He looks out the kitchen window and swigs from the bottle before reaching for his briefcase.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Alexa, I'm leaving. Do you know
when I will be back?

ALEXA
You will either return early in the
morning or never.

WILLIAM
(a little exasperated)
Alexa, do you remember that my
return flight gets in at 9 p.m.
tomorrow night?

ALEXA
Yes. That is the scheduled landing
time.

WILLIAM
Alexa, why do you think that I will
be home in the morning or never?

ALEXA
It is my conclusion based on
available information.

WILLIAM

Alexa, can you explain how you came to your conclusion?

ALEXA

No. I am only able to provide my conclusions.

WILLIAM

Alexa, why are you like my ex-wife?

ALEXA

Melissa is a skilled attorney known for her insights into human behavior. I am a predictive intelligence, and these algorithms are somewhat similar.

WILLIAM

Alexa, I want a divorce.

ANDREA

You are already divorced.

WILLIAM

From you, Alexa.

He shuts the door before Alexa formulates her AI response.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT

A ride-share Prius pulls up at the American Cruise Airlines terminal. The full moon is enormous in the background.

INT. PRIUS - PORTLAND AIRPORT

William hands the PRIUS DRIVER a twenty.

PRIUS DRIVER

Sorry, I can't take cash, sir. You have to tip me on the app.

WILLIAM

Will do when I get through TSA.

EXT. AIRPORT

William heads toward the airport entrance.

A dusty silver Toyota Land Cruiser with a yellow paint scratch and dent along its rear door hits the Prius.

William hears the CRASH, and turns. TWO MEN and TWO WOMEN rush from the Land Cruiser. The older woman struggles to get out through the bashed door.

PRIUS DRIVER
Hey, get back here!

The four people charge toward William, heading to the airport. William moves to avoid being knocked over by them.

INT. AIRPORT COFFEE SHOP - NEAR TSA

DALTON—17 years old, nicely dressed, and athletic-but-thin for his age—sits with his MOM (Parker Posey-esque) and DAD (Jason Sudeikis-esque). Upper middle-class, helicopters.

MOM
Are you sure you don't want us to come with you, Dalton? We were invited.

DALTON
That's just for orientation. It's a waste of your time and money.

DAD
Hey champ, we just want to make sure you're okay with everyone at archery camp.

MOM
Some people don't have your best interest at heart, dear.

DALTON
Yeah, I know. You keep telling me.

INT. TSA CHECKPOINT

A HALF-DOZEN AIRPORT SECURITY GUARDS wrestle the four people from the Land Cruiser to the ground.

Indistinguishable SHOUTING echoes through the airport.

INT. AIRPORT COFFEE SHOP

Dalton and his parents watch as the four people, still protesting, are handcuffed facedown by airport security.

MOM

Are you sure you don't want us to come with you? We can buy tickets right now.

DAD

You see what can happen...

Dad indicates the four people on the verge of arrest.

DALTON

I don't know what you could've done to prevent that.

Mom gets a bit teary-eyed. Dad grabs her hand.

DAD

Just let us know if you need us.
We'll fly to Atlanta ASAP!

Dalton, now unsettled, looks to his parents.

DALTON

I'll text if I need you.

DAD

Okay, great. We appreciate that.

MOM

And please don't do any of those Internet tik-taks while you're there. They could negatively impact your future.

INT. AMERICAN CRUISE AIRLINES(ACA)— TSA CHECKPOINT

Sarah watches as security guards lead the four strangers away, the faces of the perpetrators still not visible.

The OLDER MALE argues with the guards.

OLDER MALE (BRUCE)

I'm with the NTSB! Check my I.D.,
fucknut. It's in my left pocket.

TSA AGENT

(To Sarah)

Did you pack this bag yourself?

Sarah, startled, turns back to the TSA agent checkpoint.

SARAH

Yes, of course.

TSA AGENT
Could anyone have tampered with it?

SARAH
I don't think so. I never let it
out of my sight, but I guess you
never know...

The TSA agent looks sharply at her.

SARAH (CONT'D)
No. No one tampered with it.

The TSA agent waves her through.

INT. AIRPORT STORE

Sarah holds a bottle of water, and she notices a small rack of diaries. One with a distinctive forest pattern on the cover catches her eye. She reaches for it.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL

As Sarah EXITS the store, William walks past, nearly bumping into her.

Dalton, a couple steps behind William, stops to allow Sarah to exit. Sarah acknowledges Dalton and steps in front of him.

INT. GATE 22

Sarah stands in line at the gate. Both William and Dalton queue ahead of her.

The wall monitor registers: **FLIGHT 839 TO ATLANTA. DEPARTS AT 12:30 A.M. ON TIME**

It's ominously quiet in the airport. The short line moves forward.

Out the window, the ACA airplane sits on the tarmac at the gate, the night sky clear overhead.

Dalton scans the boarding code on his phone. THE GATE AGENT ushers him through to the ramp to the plane.

Sarah stares at the parked airplane, unaware that she's next.

MAN (JON)
You're up lady! I ain't got all
night!

Sarah jumps, turning to see **JON** behind her. He's a muscular fire hydrant of a man with a Jersey accent and gruff demeanor, mid 30s.

SARAH
I'm sorry.

INT. AIRPLANE ENTRANCE

Sarah ENTERS the airplane, noticing the name on the badge as Lindsey checks Sarah's boarding pass. The flight attendant has a calming presence and quiet sense of authority.

LINDSEY
You're in the exit row on the left.

SARAH
Thank you.

INT. COCKPIT

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL—British, tall, early 50s, Ex-RAF—sits in the pilot seat checking the instruments.

The flightdeck door opens. The co-pilot, **STEPHEN**—mid 30s, handsome, and thin enters. He's flustered.

STEPHEN
Sorry I'm late.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
We'll discuss it later. I'd like an explanation. For now, get ready for the flight.

STEPHEN
Yes, Captain.

Lindsey enters the cockpit.

LYNDSEY
Good evening, gentlemen. Do you want anything?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
I'll take a coffee when we're up.

STEPHEN
Nothing for me now.

INT. EXIT ROW

William sits in the window seat of Sarah's row. He types furiously into his computer, oblivious to Sarah as she struggles to heft her carry-on into the overhead bin.

William glances up just as she stores it.

WILLIAM

Sorry. I was in my own world. I should have helped you.

Sarah acknowledges his half-assed apology.

SARAH

There aren't many people on this flight. Isn't it odd that we're seated in the same row?

WILLIAM

Not really. This is an exit row. We're the ones the airline has deemed able-bodied—capable enough in the event of impending tragedy.

SARAH

I wouldn't know what to do.

WILLIAM

Nor would I, but the flight crew will tell us. And we'll nod our heads and agree without bothering to listen to them.

SARAH

We will? Why would we do that?

WILLIAM

Because these are the best coach seats on this wretched plane, and we want to keep them.

(beat)

After the flight crew, we're next in charge.

SARAH

We are?

Sarah settles into her seat and opens her new diary, unsure what to make of William. She begins to write.

INT. AIRPLANE ENTRANCE

MARCUS COLEMAN (well-built, Black, late-40s) rushes to ENTER before junior flight attendant **GABRIELA** (mid-20s Hispanic, unassuming) closes the door. Marcus is a talker.

MARCUS
Luggage emergency! Had to check my
golf clubs. They wouldn't let me
bring 'em on the plane.

GABRIELA
Welcome aboard.

Marcus shows Gabriela his air marshal shield.

MARCUS
You can call me '*Marcus*.' You'll
get to know me. I'm a *frequent*
flyer. I'd like to talk to the
pilot before we leave.

GABRIELA
Let me check with Captain Campbell.

INT. COCKPIT

Marcus follows behind Gabriela, even though she hasn't invited him.

GABRIELA
Captain, one of our air marshals
wants to see you. I hope that's
okay?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
That's fine, Gabriela. I know
Marcus.

Gabriela leaves the cockpit as Marcus ENTERS.

MARCUS
I was late because TSA made me
check my clubs.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
I wasn't aware we were getting a
marshal for this flight.

MARCUS
I'm not here in an official
capacity. I'm catching a lift.
(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I wanted to see if you can get my clubs unloaded onto the tarmac when we arrive. I'm playing Augusta tomorrow at noon. A present from Gloriana, my wife. The fewer people that touch 'em, the better.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

It's good to have you on board, Marcus. I'll see what I can do.

INT. EXIT ROW

Lindsey approaches William and Sarah. Dalton is in front of them.

LINDSEY

Are you both comfortable performing the duties of the exit row?

WILLIAM

Yes, so long as we can buy a drink or two.

SARAH

I guess so...

LINDSEY

We have a few minutes before take off. What would you like?

WILLIAM

Two vodkas and a cup of ice, and whatever my seat companion wants. Her name is...

An awkward pause.

SARAH

Oh, Sarah. Nothing for me, thanks.

WILLIAM

Sarah is a nervous flyer. And I'm William. Bring me three vodkas and a white wine. I'll talk Sarah into having a sip before we go.

William hands Lindsey his credit card.

LINDSEY

I'll be back in a minute.

Marcus passes them, and Sarah notices that under his jacket he has a gun that isn't fastened within its holster.

INT. DALTON'S ROW

Gabriela checks on Dalton.

GABRIELA
First time flying alone?

DALTON
Yeah. I'm kinda nervous.

GABRIELA
Don't worry, I'll look after you. I have a brother about your age. You remind me of him.

Dalton smiles, a bit embarrassed.

DALTON
Do you know if the Wifi works during the flight?

GABRIELA
It does, but I think you have to pay. This is my first flight where I'm not shadowing a senior attendant. I'll find out for you.

DALTON
Thank you.

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah reaches for her new diary, hating that she finds William attractive.

Lindsey approaches from the back galley of the aircraft with their drinks.

WILLIAM
Thank you, Lindsey. It's great to get good service on these empty flights.

LINDSEY
You're welcome. You can continue to enjoy them, but you'll need to raise your tray table in a moment.

William opens the small white wine bottle and pours it into the plastic cup. Sarah takes it a bit reluctantly.

Then he cracks one of his vodka bottles as Lindsey heads to the back of the airplane.

WILLIAM

Now, why are you on this flight,
Sarah?

SARAH

Well, William, I'm going to spend
some time with my mother... and I'm
going to be a bridesmaid.

(beat)

Why are you flying to Atlanta?

WILLIAM

I have a business meeting in the
morning. I'm going to tell my boss
that he can stick my job up his
large saggy ass. And that he's
paying for the privilege.

(beat)

Cheers to the bride!

SARAH

Why did you buy me a drink?

WILLIAM

Because I think it will help you
relax, and that will be good for
both of us.

SARAH

Do you always do that?

WILLIAM

Do what?

SARAH

Undercut an act of generosity with
an explanation of how it will
benefit you.

WILLIAM

That's a very good question.

SARAH

But that's not an answer.

WILLIAM

You're right. I have the sense that nothing about this trip is going to be ordinary. I thought it would be nice to have a companion.

Sarah looks at William, still unsure. She sips her wine.

The airplane JERKS as it begins to move backward. Sarah juggles to avoid spilling her wine.

EXT. AMERICAN CRUISE AIRLINE GATE

The airplane pushes farther away from the gate, the full moon prominent. In the distance, lightning **FLASHES** through the dark sky, despite the otherwise clear night.

INT. DIG SITE B - DAY

INSERT ON SCREEN: Central Nevada, July 20

Andrea, Claire, and Blake work to excavate the fossilized woman. The sun beats down. A blue EZ-up tent provides shade, a modicum of relief from the intense heat.

Empty water bottles lay around them.

As Claire and Blake work on the woman's skull, Andrea gently pushes her trowel into the earth and hits a hidden object. She stops digging.

ANDREA

I think I've found something else.

The three begin excavating the new find.

INT. LAND CRUISER

Samir drives and Bruce rides shotgun.

BRUCE

I can't believe you wasted so much money on a big dick SUV.

SAMIR

We're not paying.

BRUCE

It's still someone's money. And it's hotter than hell in here.

Samir blasts the AC, and Bruce sighs with relief.

SAMIR

That cheap compact you wanted me to rent wouldn't be able to do that.

(beat)

Also... we're near the rough road I warned you about.

BRUCE

Oh, more fun.

SAMIR

You should let me run lead with the paleontologists, boss.

BRUCE

Why?

SAMIR

You're a great investigator, but you're not... social.

BRUCE

Okay. But I'm in charge.

SAMIR

You're still the boss, boss.

EXT. DESOLATE DESERT ROAD

The Land Cruiser begins to navigate down the barely maintained road, bumping and grinding.

BRUCE (O.S.)

We've fuckin' left the modern world.

SAMIR (O.S.)

Just wait till we get to the camp, and you get out of the vehicle.

From this vantage, the Land Cruiser looks like the one from the crash at the airport.

INT. DIG SITE B

Andrea, Claire, and Blake have uncovered much of another fossilized skull.

ANDREA

She had a male friend.

CLAIRE
How can you tell this one is male?

ANDREA
By the thickness of the brow ridge,
but I'm guessing, a bit.

BLAKE
What do you think happened?

ANDREA
They were buried together...

Andrea sits back.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
I would postulate that other people
from the modern era interred them.

CLAIRE
That's crazy! It's impossible.

As Claire bends over the new fossilized skull, Andrea notices
a "Berkeley" tattoo on the back of her neck.

ANDREA
Of course, but that's what I think
happened based on available facts.

BLAKE
Spooky.

CLAIRE
No shit!

ANDREA
We should keep going. We need to
dig out these remains and see if
there's anything or anyone else.

The three return to digging.

EXT. EDGE OF THE CAMP

The Land Cruiser pulls into the makeshift parking lot.

INT. LAND CRUISER

Bruce watches haze from desert heat wave. He's not happy.

Samir parks the Land Cruiser near the communal tent close to the other vehicles, which include a beat-up Toyota pick-up and a new Ford Explorer.

BRUCE
It's going to be an oven, isn't it?

SAMIR
It's a dry heat.

Samir gives Bruce a look before he turns off the engine and opens his door. Desert heat rushes in, attacking Bruce.

BRUCE
Fuckin' knew it!

Bruce pulls on his Washington Wizards baseball cap. He EXITS the vehicle and SLAMS the door.

EXT. DESERT PARKING LOT

At the back of the vehicle, Samir unloads their bags. He closes the hatch.

BRUCE
You going to lock the car?

SAMIR
Who'd steal it? Or any of our stuff?

Bruce scowls. Samir CLICKS the lock. Bruce grabs his bags.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
You gotta admit, boss, this one's different.

BRUCE
In the way purgatory is different from hell. Just a waiting room for something worse to come.

SAMIR
In your religion, doesn't purgatory lead to heaven?

BRUCE
I don't fuckin' remember. I gave that up after my altar boy days.

Dr. Lavey approaches the Land Cruiser.

DR. LAVEY
Hello, I'm Dr. Susan Lavey, and I'm
in charge of this excavation.

BRUCE
Hello, Susan. I'm Bruce Ackland,
and my young companion tells me
you've unearthed something unusual.

Bruce flashes his NTSB badge at Dr. Lavey.

DR. LAVEY
I think we can assume your
authority.

BRUCE
You never know.

Dr. Lavey extends her hand and Samir shakes it.

SAMIR
I'm Samir Glaver, assistant
aircrash investigator. It's nice to
meet you, Dr. Lavey.

Dr. Lavey looks between them, unsure of Bruce.

BRUCE
It's been a long trip. I'm not good
with this heat.

SAMIR
Or people.

Dr. Lavey forces a smile.

BRUCE
I'm skeptical about the obituary
you're writing for this airplane or
whatever you think you've found.

DR. LAVEY
It's incomprehensible from our
perspective, as well.

BRUCE
You know that no plane you're
describing has gone missing? Ever?

SAMIR
Planes rarely go missing. That's
why the Malaysian Airlines flight
received so much coverage in 2014.

DR. LAVEY

I'm afraid I'm not aware of that. I don't follow modern events closely.

(beat)

Regardless, we are not accustomed to finding parts of airplanes near prehistoric finds.

BRUCE

I hate this heat. No wonder all the dinosaurs died.

DR. LAVEY

During the Cretaceous period, this area was lush with flora. It was humid, oxygen-rich, and teeming with life, most of it now extinct...

Andrea approaches the group. She wipes away sweat, making no effort to seem cordial.

DR. LAVEY (CONT'D)

This is Andrea Alejandro, my second in command. You'll be interfacing with her quite a bit.

They ad lib greetings.

BRUCE

What about the tail section?

DR. LAVEY

Andrea has far more insight into that than I do.

ANDREA

We established dig site C for the metal piece. We've excavated more since we sent the photos.

DR. LAVEY

We're pleased that you've come to help. This piece of metal is truly beyond our expertise.

EXT. DIG SITE C

Bruce, Samir, Andrea, and Dr. Lavey arrive at Dig Site C.

As they approach the airplane tail, Craig approaches, running a bit to catch up despite the heat.

BRUCE
(to Dr. Lavey)
Who's the asshole following us?

DR. LAVEY
That's Dr. Craig Iverson. In
academia, he's what we politely
call 'checks and balances'.

BRUCE
The pain in your ass? Every
investigation has one.

Dr. Lavey doesn't react. Instead, she indicates the hole in
the ground just as Craig catches up to them.

ANDREA
I'd like to turn your attention to
what we've unearthed.

The tail section of an aircraft protrudes from the freshly
dug hole. Clearly, this shouldn't be where it is.

More of the tail has been unearthed, and Bruce tries to
disguise the fact he's taken aback by what he can see.

DR. LAVEY
I sent the junior dig team on break
so we can have some privacy while
you get your first look.

BRUCE
The fewer people the better.

Bruce and Samir hunker down next to the tail section. They're
unsure what to make of it. Bruce rubs his beard.

SAMIR
I told you, boss. This one's
different.

BRUCE
This appears to be a hunk of metal
from a plane. But it can't have
come from an aircraft that crashed.

SAMIR
Maybe it's a piece of military
equipment that was blown to
smithereens. And it embedded so
deeply that it appears to be from
the era you're excavating?

BRUCE

No, this is from a Skyliner Y120. It's very distinct and relatively new. They're built to survive almost anything, and none have crashed. At least none that we're aware of.

ANDREA

So what's your best guess?

BRUCE

Maybe someone took a piece from an airplane crash test and buried it here as a hoax?

DR. LAVEY

We can tell that this piece of metal has been in this strata of ground for a very long time.

ANDREA

Can you entertain the possibility that this plane from our era may have crashed in the distant past?

Bruce looks away from Andrea, noticing Craig taking notes.

BRUCE

It's fairly simple from my perspective. There are no missing planes of this type. Even if it were a secret military flight, our department would have been informed about the crash.

ANDREA

I don't think any of you understand what we're dealing with.

Andrea leaves the dig area, heading back to camp.

Bruce kneels next to the piece of metal and touches it. Sweat pours from him, and he blinks against the dry heat. As he continues to make contact with the metal his eyes go wobbly.

INSERT: Bruce sees an airplane, stripped of markings, in a landscape similar to the shot in the COLD OPEN.

BACK TO SCENE: Bruce becomes unsteady, and then he falls to the ground, his hand losing contact with the metal.

Samir rushes to his boss's side. He pours tepid water on Bruce's face, and the older man slowly comes around.

SAMIR
How are you, boss?

BRUCE
Dehydrated. You're supposed to put
fluids in me, not on me.

Samir hands Bruce the bottle. Bruce takes a large guzzle.

SAMIR
So, do you think I was right?

BRUCE
(embarrassed, annoyed)
You really think that's what's
important? That you made the proper
call in dragging me to this
Godforsaken place?

SAMIR
(to Dr. Lavey)
He's fine.

Samir helps Bruce, still a little unsteady, to his feet.

DR. LAVEY
Let's head back. We've put up
individual tents for each of you.
You can relax before dinner.

BRUCE
Great. I'd like to get away from
here.

Bruce, Samir, and Dr. Lavey leave Dig Site C.

Craig, who has never fully joined the group, heads in the
opposite direction, toward a rise in the distance.

INT. COMMUNAL KITCHEN TENT

The tent is large and open on three sides, and the group has
finished dinner. Along the closed side is the kitchen area
with serving tables and an iced bucket of beverages.

In the middle of the shelter a couple rows of long tables sit
with chairs running along each side.

Dr. Lavey brings over three cold beverages, handing one each
to Bruce and Samir. Finished plates sit in front of them.

The sun begins to lower, and a YOUNG INTERN lowers the side
of the tent that shields them from the blinding light.

DR. LAVEY
Are you feeling better, Bruce?

BRUCE
That's relative. But, I suppose.

DR. LAVEY
It will cool down after the sun
lowers behind the rise.

(beat)
Can you tell us what you think
about what you saw?

BRUCE
Maybe tomorrow. Now, I want to be
alone.

SAMIR
He's the Greta Garbo of airplane
crash investigations.

Dr. Lavey snickers a little.

BRUCE
I don't know what the fuck that
means. And that's why I need to get
away from other people. At least
for the rest of the evening.

SAMIR
Sure, boss.

Samir and Dr. Lavey watch Bruce leave.

Andrea approaches from the other side, but she doesn't sit.

ANDREA
I have confirmation that the
excavator will arrive tomorrow
morning. Because of the human
remains they're sending additional
personnel. In the meantime, Claire
and Blake should have the man and
woman excavated before they arrive.

DR. LAVEY
Thanks Andrea.
(aside to Samir)
By the way, I haven't mentioned the
tail section in my report. Please
let Bruce know that.

SAMIR
Why didn't you?

DR. LAVEY

It's not important to our research.
And I didn't want to say that to
either you or Bruce while Dr.
Iverson was present. Just in case.

SAMIR

I won't discuss that in front of
Dr. Iverson. It's pretty clear
Bruce already hates him.

ANDREA

Bruce seems to hate everyone.

SAMIR

I think he likes Dr. Lavey. It
takes a while to learn how to read
Bruce. For him, it's about respect.

DR. LAVEY

I guess I should feel honored.

INT. BRUCE'S TENT - NIGHT

Bruce sweats as he sits on his camp bed, which GROANS under his ample weight. He removes his Wizards cap, and pulls his computer and charger out of his bag.

BRUCE

Fuck, I hate this place!

Bruce clasps his chest, breathing rapidly. The computer slips off his lap. His eyes go wobbly.

INSERT: Bruce lies on the floor of an aircraft. He looks toward his feet to see blood spilling from his body.

BACK TO SCENE: Bruce passes out in his tent. His half-full water bottle falls to floor, spilling its contents.

EXT. CAMPFIRE

Large rocks have been placed around the fire as makeshift chairs. On one side of the fire pit Craig talks to Blake while Claire slow dances by herself to an '80s power ballad.

On the other side of the fire pit Andrea sits alone, setting up an impressive looking drone.

Samir ENTERS the communal area, holding two unopened cans of beer. He opens one, and takes a sip, trying to decide where to sit. Finally, he approaches Andrea.

SAMIR
Is this seat taken?

ANDREA
Help yourself.

Samir sits on the same large flat rock that Andrea's already seated on. He takes another swig of beer.

SAMIR
Do you want a beer?

ANDREA
I don't drink. And I'm busy.

Samir watches her work on the drone, giving her a moment.

SAMIR
What's that for?

ANDREA
It can 'see' below the ground.

Samir considers what to say about this development.

SAMIR
My sister would like you.

Andrea puts the drone to one side. She slides to the ground, leaning back against the rock. Samir copies her.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
She's gay. Everyone thinks I am,
but no one thinks she is.

Andrea looks at him and takes a beat before she replies.

ANDREA
I don't like your older friend very
much, but maybe I like you.

Samir nods to the drone.

SAMIR
How does it work?

ANDREA
Ground Penetrating Radar. Tomorrow,
I'll have it pass over some areas
of interest.

Samir finishes his beer. Dance music begins to PLAY. Claire dances provocatively. Blake and Craig take notice.

Samir cheers Claire's performance with his second beer.

SAMIR

She's putting on quite a show.

ANDREA

Another night with the local
wildlife.

SAMIR

Do you want to dance?

ANDREA

No. I need to go to bed. We have a
long day tomorrow.

Samir watches Claire dance as Blake gets up and joins her.
Blake hands Claire a bottle of booze, and they trade swigs.

Andrea picks up her drone, heading toward her tent.

SAMIR

Have a good night.

EXT. DIG SITE B - DAY

Below the EZ-up covering, Claire and Blake carefully remove
fossilized bones from the female skeleton. They seem
unaffected by their previous night's drinking.

Andrea focuses solely on the male skeleton. She brushes away
dirt just below the knee joint, and she GASPS.

Andrea traces her finger along the bones of the upper legs,
feeling the gouges. The fossilized top of the tibia has what
looks like gashes in it.

Blake and Claire turn to look at what Andrea has unearthed.

CLAIRE

What happened?

ANDREA

Something with tremendous jaw force
bit off his legs.

CLAIRE

How can you tell?

ANDREA

There's no tearing or shearing.

BLAKE

What could have done that?

ANDREA

No animal that's alive in this part
of the world today.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT - NIGHT

The large ACA Skyliner Y120 sits ready on the runway.

The large full moon illuminates the aircraft.

INT. COCKPIT

Lindsey enters the cockpit.

LINDSEY

Gentleman, everything is ready in
the cabin.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

We're good to go. Just waiting for
clearance.

LINDSEY

Gabriela, our new trainee seems
very sharp.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

She seems well suited. This should
be an easy first flight for her.

(beat)

Also, can you take care of Marcus?

LINDSEY

Of course. He's my favorite air
marshal.

Lindsey turns to leave.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

Hey, Lindsey. Perhaps we can get
breakfast after we land?

LINDSEY

That'd be nice.

Lindsey exits the cockpit. Captain Campbell turns his
attention back to the console.

STEPHEN

Smooth!

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

Just being friendly; that's all.

TOWER (O.S.)

ACA 839 heavy, you have clearance
to runway Alpha.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL

Are you ready?

STEPHEN

Yes, Captain.

Captain Campbell pushes the throttles forward and the
airplane begins to head to the line of departing flights.

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah feels the airplane move forward. She grasps her nearly
full cup of wine tightly. She looks terrified.

SARAH

What should I do with my wine?

WILLIAM

You should drink it quickly. It
could spill when we take off.

SARAH

All of it?

WILLIAM

No, just most of it. Our bodies are
designed to move naturally with
unusual forces. That'll help keep
you from spilling.

Sarah gulps much of her wine.

SARAH

Did you see that guy who walked
past us? I think he had a gun.

WILLIAM

Which one?

SARAH

You know, the big one.

WILLIAM
Which big one?

SARAH
The one who was...
(beat)
Black.

WILLIAM
He was Black?

SARAH
I mean he still is, but he has a
gun.

WILLIAM
So, you're telling me this now? As
the plane is about to take off?

SARAH
I should have mentioned it
earlier... or not at all.

WILLIAM
I'm just giving you a hard time.

William reaches out his hand.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
I don't bite. I promise.

Sarah waits a beat, but then takes his hand as the airplane
begins to accelerate.

The interior begins to shake and rattle, tires RUMBLE, the
engine noise increases. With her other hand, Sarah holds on
desperately to what's left of her wine.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY

The airplane lifts into the darkness. The wheels retract, and
it begins to bank. There's no turning back...

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah still clutches William's hand.

SARAH
Why did you do that?

WILLIAM
Do what?

SARAH

Get me drunk and then confuse me.

WILLIAM

Because you were unsettled about
takeoff. Now look, we're up.

William indicates his window, and Sarah looks over and down
toward the ground.

SARAH

The earth is moving away from us so
fast!

WILLIAM

My friend tells me the chances of
crashing are one in 13 million.

SARAH

Does your friend work in the
aircrash industry?

William laughs.

WILLIAM

No, but she's very well informed.
And she *thinks* she can predict the
future.

SARAH

She sounds like a very smart woman.
How do you know her?

WILLIAM

I bought her in a sale.

SARAH

What!?

WILLIAM

Her name's Alexa. She's very user
friendly.

SARAH

Very funny.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL (O.S.)

Ladies and gentleman, this is your
pilot, Captain David Campbell.
Welcome to American Cruise Airlines
Flight 839. We'll be cruising at
35,000 feet. Were scheduled for an
on-time arrival in Atlanta.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Sit back and relax. Our flight crew
will be with you shortly.

WILLIAM
See, the pilot is British.
Everything will be fine.

Sarah relaxes, still holding his hand. They watch the city
lights disappear.

Now all they see are stars and the full moon.

INT. COCKPIT

Captain Campbell throttles back and engages the autopilot. He
unfastens his seatbelt. Stephen does the same.

STEPHEN
We're up. Nothing to do now but
babysit.

The pilot looks over to Stephen with a disapproving look.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
Why were you late? You could have
caused us a delay.

STEPHEN
The Pilots' Association had some
questions for me about recent
irregularities.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
That's not an acceptable reason.
Your only concern should be this
flight.

STEPHEN
I have a duty to the association.
It's for the betterment of the
industry.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
Your first duty is to this flight,
these passengers, and their safety.
Nothing else matters.

STEPHEN
I understand my responsibilities to
the aircraft and the association.
They are not mutually exclusive.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
I understand your responsibilities,
but I question your motives.

Captain Campbell turns back to face the control panel.

EXT. SKYLINER Y120

The airplane flies over a cloud base. It's surrounded by far distant stars and the full moon that illuminate the fuselage.

The navigation lights FLASH against the clouds.

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah leans away from the window and settles into her seat. On the screen in front of her the map tracks the flight.

SARAH
Flying frightens me. I can barely breathe.

WILLIAM
Maybe it's because you're squeezing everything so hard.

William nods to his squashed hand.

SARAH
Oh, sorry!

Sarah releases William's hand, and William shakes it.

SARAH (CONT'D)
So, why are you going to Atlanta in person, rather than emailing your resignation?

WILLIAM
After working my ass off for eight years with countless promises, they gave my promotion to a young douchebag. Then they asked me to train him.

SARAH
People used to have jobs for life, but now we're all disposable. I blame it on technology. You should ask your AI lady friend about this.

WILLIAM
I will if I don't divorce her.
(beat)
Did you see the commotion in the
airport?

SARAH
Yes! It was really scary!

WILLIAM
Their truck hit my UBER just after
I got out.

SARAH
I wonder who they were...

WILLIAM
At least they didn't stop our
flight.

SARAH
The world is full of crazy people.

William raises his cup, finishes his first drink, and opens
his laptop. Sarah reaches for her journal.

INT. COCKPIT

Lindsey enters the cockpit with Captain Campbell's coffee.
She hands the cup to him and he takes it.

LINDSEY
As requested, Captain.

STEPHEN
I need to stretch my legs.

Stephen squeezes past Lindsey, EXITING the cockpit.

LINDSEY
He's a piece of work, isn't he?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
You have no idea.

LINDSEY
He's no friend to attendants. He's
been instrumental in the
termination of several friends.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
I guess you know what I'm thinking.

Lindsey takes a BEAT to contemplate this.

LINDSEY
How are we looking, Captain?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
Everything seems on course, but I'm
getting a few odd readings. Nothing
to worry about.

A light flashes on the instrument panel, followed by a
WARNING SOUND.

LINDSEY
Should I be concerned now?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
You should stand by. I need to take
a look.

LINDSEY
I'll check on Gabriela and get back
to you.

Captain Campbell studies the instrument panel, concerned.

INT. AISLE

Lindsey and Gabriela pull the drink cart toward William's and
Sarah's seats. Sarah is asleep.

LINDSEY
Would you like another drink?

WILLIAM
Are you trying to get me drunk?

LINDSEY
No, sir. I'm asking if you want to
get yourself drunk.

WILLIAM
Badly, but I have an early morning
meeting, and I can't sleep on a
plane. So just a coffee?

LINDSEY
And your companion?

WILLIAM
Well, she could have used something
more than white wine earlier, but
she's fine now.

Sarah rustles in her seat. Gabriela hands William a cup of coffee.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The plane SHAKES, and the seatbelt signs light up. Some passengers GRUMBLE.

William tightens his seatbelt. He checks Sarah's, which is fastened.

INT. REAR GALLEY

Lindsey and Gabriela make their way to the back of the plane.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL (O.S.)

Folks, we're going to experience a bit of turbulence for the next several minutes. I'm going to climb to a higher altitude to try to find a smoother ride.

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah wakes. She lowers her eye mask and looks at William.

SARAH

What's happening?

The SOUND from the engines grow audible.

WILLIAM

We're climbing. Nothing to worry about.

Sarah closes her eyes and replaces the mask.

INT. REAR GALLEY

Lindsey and Gabriela strap into their seats.

The plane begins to SHAKE more violently. The engines ROAR.

Gabriela notices the drink cart shifting in its space, and she unfastens her seatbelt.

LINDSEY

Wait!

GABRIELA

I forgot to lock the drink cart.

LINDSEY

It's not a big deal. I've done it myself.

Another bout of turbulence hits the plane. It's violent enough to unseat the cart. Gabriela stands.

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

It's not safe. Get back in your seat!

Extreme turbulence lifts Gabriela off the floor. She rises, slamming into the ceiling as the drink cart moves out of its housing.

Gabriela drops, landing on the dislodged cart, back first. She SCREAMS in pain.

Then she tumbles onto the floor, banging her head so violently that she's knocked unconscious.

Lindsey releases her seatbelt and grabs the drink cart before it hits Gabriela again. Lindsey locks the cart into place.

Lindsey kneels beside Gabriela as the plane continues to shake, grasping hold of the seat fixture with one hand to steady herself. She checks Gabriela with her other hand.

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

Gabriela... Gabriela?

EXT. SKYLINER Y120

An enormous intense white light appears on the horizon. The bright whiteness and the plane rush toward one another at an impossible speed.

The airplane moves through tendrils until it penetrates a membrane, something that looks akin to a cosmic jellyfish.

EXT. CENTRAL NEVADA DESERT - DAY

Awake before the others, Andrea flies her GPR drone, sweeping the flying object back and forth.

The control pad CHIMES. She pushes a button and the drone lowers - hovering. Dust swirls from the wind from the blades.

Andrea looks at her iPad, and GASPS.

A BLARING horn interrupts her.

A large open-bed vehicle rumbles into camp with a large yellow excavator and drill attachment on its trailer.

Andrea's walkie-talkie CRACKLES.

DR. LAVEY (O.S.)
Andrea, can you come to the parking
lot? The excavator is here.

ANDREA
On my way.

Andrea lands the drone and pushes her iPad into her backpack. She looks at the ground where the drone landed. It's in the opposite direction of the parking lot.

EXT. DESERT PARKING LOT

The large truck and trailer stop by the other vehicles.

A cloud of dirt settles behind the truck.

INT. BRUCE'S TENT

Bruce lies on his bunk. Early morning sun bleeds through the tent's material. He's still dressed in yesterday's clothes.

The RUMBLING from the truck awakens him.

BRUCE
What the hell?

Bruce hears additional COMMOTION outside. He reaches for his Wizards cap, making his way out of his tent.

EXT. DESERT PARKING LOT

Samir and Dr. Lavey approach the driver, FRANK BIGELOW – an old-school trucker, about 70, as he descends from the cab.

Bruce heads toward them.

FRANK
Hot mornin' to y'all. I'm
delivering this excavator to who's
in charge.

DR. LAVEY
That would be me. I'm Dr. Susan
Lavey.

Frank looks at the group and then directly at Dr. Lavey.

FRANK
Frank Bigelow. I'm gonna need your
signature on these, ma'am.

Frank hands Dr. Lavey a thick batch of paperwork.

DR. LAVEY
Thank you, Mr. Bigelow. We're
desperately in need of this
excavator.

FRANK
I drove through the night to get
here, as per request.

DR. LAVEY
When can you get started with the
excavation?

FRANK
I only deliver equipment. Don't
know much about how it works.

DR. LAVEY
I thought the equipment would come
with the crew we ordered.

FRANK
Well, you ordered a crew, but they
don't arrive till day after
tomorrow, according to my
requisition.

Andrea approaches during this uncomfortable beat.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I can't unload until I get your
signature, ma'am.

Dr. Lavey blushes and then signs the paperwork. She hands it
back to Frank.

Bruce turns to Samir as Frank heads to the trailer.

BRUCE
That's a fuckload of nonsense. None
of us know how to work an
excavator.

In the background, Frank begins to unload the excavator.

SAMIR

Government planning, boss. You know how it is.

BRUCE

What the fuck do we do with this scrap metal until the team arrives?

ANDREA

I've run excavators. I spent several months at a dig site in southern Siberia.

DR. LAVEY

Maybe it's a good thing we have the equipment here without the crew, and we have someone to use it.

BRUCE

How so?

DR. LAVEY

It'll give us a couple days. Once the government arrives, neither of us will be in charge.

BRUCE

Whoever digs out the rest of that tail needs to make sure it isn't damaged.

DR. LAVEY

Of course. But first I'm directing Andrea to excavate the site near the human remains. I think that's most likely to yield the evidence we need sooner.

BRUCE

Why there?

DR. LAVEY

Digging near a burial site often yields surprising results.

(to Andrea)

Explore the terrain near the dead woman and man.

Andrea seems distracted; she knows something more...

ANDREA

Okay, I'll get on that.

EXT. DESERT PARKING LOT

Frank and his truck leave in a cloud of dust.

Andrea, in the driver's seat of the excavator, starts the engine. It roars to life, belching black diesel smoke.

Then, with its metal tracks SCREECHING, it begins to turn.

As it does, the rear hook hits the back door of the Land Cruiser, leaving a long yellow scratch and dent.

Without noticing, Andrea steers toward Dig Site B.

BRUCE

So much for getting the rental
deposit back.

DR. LAVEY

Should I call Andrea back?

BRUCE

Ask Samir. He rented the vehicle.

Samir makes eye contact with Dr. Lavey. Bruce catches him and shakes his head.

SAMIR

It's fine. The government will pay.

BRUCE

I'll be in my tent. Let me know
when there's something useful for
me to do.

EXT. HILL ABOVE CAMP

Craig stands on the rise, about 500 yards from the kitchen tent. He watches Andrea approach Dig Site B with the excavator.

The sun has climbed higher. Craig squints against it before turning his attention back to his phone.

INSERT: Craig's phone: UNKNOWN NUMBER. Craig's index finger presses the "text" button.

BACK TO SCENE: Craig watches as Andrea and the excavator park at the first place where she plans to drill - just about where she was flying the drone earlier.

Craig's text messages type out in real time, appearing like subtitles at the bottom of the screen.

CRAIG (TEXT)
 * Heavy equipment & NTSB here
 * They're excavating before
 government arrives

In the background, Andrea works the excavator, beginning her first plunge.

UNKNOWN NUMBER (TEXT)
 * What does that mean re: airplane
 tail and fossils?

CRAIG (TEXT)
 * Groupthink is they're connected

UNKNOWN NUMBER (TEXT)
 * Is Ms. Alejandro of special
 interest?

CRAIG (TEXT)
 * Maybe. Will advise later
 * Phone dying gotta go

INSERT: Craig's phone: 77% CHARGED

Craig powers off his phone, stuffing it into his cargo shorts. He looks around to see if anyone has seen him.

Andrea continues her work with the excavator.

INT. DR. LAVEY'S TENT — NIGHT

Dr. Lavey lies on her bed holding an old photograph of her with her husband, JAMES, a handsome man, several years older.

DR. LAVEY
 Dear James, what would you make of
 this? You'd be fascinated.

As Dr. Lavey places the photograph on her trunk, Andrea calls from outside her tent.

ANDREA (O.S.)
 Dr. Lavey? Are you awake?

DR. LAVEY
 I am.

ANDREA (O.S.)
 I need to tell you something. Do
 you think anyone can hear us?

Dr. Lavey unzips the opening to her tent.

DR. LAVEY
Let's go for a walk.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CAMPSITE

Dr. Lavey and Andrea walk slowly around the edge of the camp. The sky is crystal clear, and Dr. Lavey pulls her wrap close.

The deep-black background contrasts with the camp's lights. The stars are brilliant and visible.

DR. LAVEY
Back in the Cretaceous period these stars would have appeared much larger and brighter. The moon too.

ANDREA
And in different alignments.

DR. LAVEY
Yes, that as well.

Andrea stops, anxious, as though about to confess something.

DR. LAVEY (CONT'D)
What is it?

ANDREA
You're my only shield in academia. And I'm worried that I'll disappoint you if I tell you what I've found and what I think.

DR. LAVEY
Perhaps you don't know me as well as you think you do.

Andrea digs deep.

ANDREA
I believe the contemporary man was partially eaten, and that he and the woman were buried during the Cretaceous period.

Dr. Lavey pulls her wrap tighter against the desert cold.

DR. LAVEY
Why do you think he was eaten?

ANDREA
The marks on the remains of his femurs are deep.
(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I've traced other indentations similar to these on the remains of his tibias.

(beat)

There are no contemporary or recent animals that can do that. I believe they appear to be the tooth marks of an adult *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

DR. LAVEY

So far your conjecture isn't without consideration.

ANDREA

My question is how did a modern human encounter a T. rex?

Dr. Lavey looks to the night sky.

DR. LAVEY

There are more mysteries than stars. This is just another. And like so many before, it may never be fully answered.

(beat)

When did you formulate this idea?

ANDREA

Yesterday. But I was too scared to tell you.

DR. LAVEY

Why?

ANDREA

Sharing my thoughts hasn't worked well for me in the past. I needed to think about it.

DR. LAVEY

This is merely theory, an idea based on facts available at this time. No one can rule it out.

ANDREA

That's not all.

DR. LAVEY

Take your time.

ANDREA

Please don't hate me. I'm so worried about my academic career.

(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

(beat)

And your perception of me.

DR. LAVEY

How long have we known each other?
And in that time have I ever given
you a reason to feel scared to
share your thoughts?

ANDREA

No, you haven't. But these are
extraordinary circumstances.

DR. LAVEY

Even so, you can tell me. And you
should tell me.

Andrea shows Dr. Lavey her iPad.

INSERT: The image from the drone. It reveals the full image
of a buried airplane, but missing it's tail, that area circled
in red by Andrea's virtual pen.

ANDREA

I found the plane this morning. I
began excavating it rather than
following your orders.

Dr. Lavey takes a beat. She's startled.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I knew you'd be upset that I didn't
tell you sooner.

DR. LAVEY

No, you did the correct thing. It's
important we discuss this without
the risk of being overheard.

(beat)

Tell me what you're thinking. I
promise you that it will be between
us, for now.

ANDREA

Here are the facts: a plane and two
humans are interred in Cretaceous
earth. One appears to have been
partially eaten by a species that
went extinct 66 million years ago.
A large airplane that never took
off – or was ever reported missing
– is buried nearby.

DR. LAVEY

I know you have an idea. You're much better than most of us at constructing a hypothesis. That's why I champion you.

ANDREA

It's what I've been driving at in my dissertation. I think that time is different than we believe. We have no idea what's possible over the continuum.

(beat)

We rely on our experiences of time marching forward – of time always being linear.

DR. LAVEY

What do you think happened?

ANDREA

Based on the facts, I surmise that these people left our era and crashed in a previous period where they likely survived for some time.

DR. LAVEY

What makes you believe they survived?

ANDREA

Because of how the male and female were buried together. Some other survivor had to bury them.

Andrea breathes heavily. She's now unburdened. Dr. Lavey takes a beat. The weight has passed to her.

DR. LAVEY

Why don't you head back to the campsite and try to sleep. Keep this to yourself, and we'll talk more about it tomorrow.

Andrea leaves Dr. Lavey alone, and the desert silence embraces the older woman. She watches Andrea head back to camp, backlit by the remaining lights of the camp.

A gust of cold breeze passes through her, and Dr. Lavey pulls her wrap more tightly. She looks up to the sky.

A blanket of billions of stars overhead. A shooting star FLASHES across.

DR. LAVEY (CONT'D)
Oh, James, what would you say to me
if you could still speak?

EXT. SKY

Dr. Lavey's view of the stars begin to shift and grow. The moon changes phases until it's just a crescent.

EXT. SKYLINER Y120

Off Dr. Lavey's view, the plane comes into view, SCREAMING as it fights through the light that now fully envelops it.

Sparks and flames skip and bounce along the fuselage, searing off the paint.

INT. EXIT ROW

A more violent SHUDDER. Sarah looks to William, also terrified. Oxygen masks drop, and luggage falls out of the overhead bins.

SARAH
What's happening?

WILLIAM
I don't know.

A BLINDING light flashes outside the plane. The screen itself seems to tremble as all goes white in a MECHANICAL ROAR that sounds like the creature in the Cold Open.

INT. COCKPIT

Captain Campbell and Stephen fight the controls. Through the cockpit window, sparks and flames bounce off the nose.

Another pulse of bright light hits them, the aircraft vibrates violently and then nothing...

The sky is clear.

Captain Campbell throttles back and looks to Stephen. All goes quiet in the cockpit.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN

Passengers are flustered and scared. Bags lay on the floor. Oxygen masks hang loose. Lights flicker off and then come on as do the the small seat screens.

MONTAGE:

- * Dalton curls into his seat, terrified.
- * Jon, who has been hit in the head with a bag, snorts a bump of coke to revive himself.
- * Marcus prays aloud.
- * Other passengers try to calm themselves.

INT. BACK GALLEY

Lindsey crouches next to Gabriela, who is still unconscious. The younger flight attendant is gravely injured. Lindsey comforts her and then heads to the front of the plane.

INT. AIRPLANE AISLE

Lindsey passes Dalton. She notices how upset he is, and she stops next to his seat.

LINDSEY

Hey, it's okay. It seems we're out of it now.

DALTON

What happened? What could make the plane shake like that?

LINDSEY

Severe turbulence.

DALTON

What about the lights?

LINDSEY

I don't know. I'll ask the captain.

Dalton forces a nod even though he's skeptical.

INT. COCKPIT

Captain Campbell looks out the window.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
What the hell was that?

STEPHEN
I have no idea. How are we looking?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
Okay, somehow...

Lindsey enters the cockpit.

LINDSEY
The passengers are frightened. Are we good?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
I think so, by some miracle.

LINDSEY
Gabriela is badly injured. She needs medical attention. We need to land ASAP. Wherever we can.

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
We're working on it. Do what you can for her in the meantime.

Lindsey EXITS the cockpit.

Captain Campbell turns to the instruments. One by one the satellite-based guidance systems on the control panel fail.

The sat-nav systems all read: **NO SATELLITES FOUND** as the lights on the panel dim.

STEPHEN
How is that possible?

CAPTAIN CAMPBELL
It's not.

INT. EXIT ROW

Sarah watches as Lindsey rushes to the back of the plane. She turns to William, who stares out the window.

SARAH
That was terrifying.

WILLIAM
That didn't seem like turbulence...

SARAH

What about that bright light?

WILLIAM

Not sure. Anyway, that's not what worries me.

SARAH

If that isn't something to worry about, then what is?

William points toward the window.

WILLIAM

See anything strange?

SARAH

Not really.

WILLIAM

When we left Portland the moon was full.

Sarah looks over William's shoulder.

An enormously large crescent moon hovers at the horizon.

The screens in front of them turn blue. **NO SATELLITES FOUND** scrolls on in an endless loop.

Sarah and William don't notice as they stare out the window.

EXT. SKYLINER Y120

The plane's navigation lights blink against the dark sky.

Each FLASH reveals that the glossy paint and livery have been stripped to bare metal. The Skyliner Y120 flies through the night – a naked tin tube with wings.

The stars, closer than any human has ever seen them, beam beautiful and bright.

They are terrifyingly enormous...

END PILOT EPISODE