

QUANTUM HIGHWAY

Written by  
Stu Webster

Contact: [stuwebster@me.com](mailto:stuwebster@me.com)

Website: [quantumhighway.com](http://quantumhighway.com)

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FADE IN:

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY

Endless blue. QUINNMAN (early 60s -- sun-weathered, relaxed, eccentric) lounges over the water, zucchini slices over his eyes. A small RADIO plays island strings.

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Unscheduled tourist helicopter  
approaching.

Quinnman's eyes snap open. He rips the slices off, already moving. A HELICOPTER skims low in the distance.

QUINNMAN  
How much time?

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Thirty seconds until visual  
contact.

He grabs the radio, turns -- the deck retracts as he runs -- closing the distance in one smooth motion. An opening forms ahead.

QUINNMAN  
Why didn't you wake me earlier?

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Your ocular stimulators were  
active.

QUINNMAN  
Fair enough.

The full structure comes into view -- a smooth, off-white spacecraft hovering just above the ocean. Seamless. Opaque. LUMMA. Quinnman reaches the opening -- it seals instantly behind him.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)  
Up or down?

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

QUINNMAN  
Go.

Lumma drops. The ocean compresses beneath her. A wave rises -- too clean, too perfect -- Lumma vanishes below.

The disturbance keeps moving, one clean swell rolling toward land.

EXT. OUTER LINEUP - LATE AFTERNOON (CONTINUOUS)

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) lowers onto his board and paddles 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. HANK and SHARLENE -- sunburned influencer types -- lounge aboard as a drone films them.

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

HANK  
 Honey, you got the livestream on?

SHARLENE  
 Rollin'.

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 from the distance. The rogue wave swells higher, curling. His WRISTBAND flashes. Through the spray, he spots the DOUBLE PINK FLAMINGO FLOAT -- two tiny 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. Sharlene surfaces, sputtering. Hank vanishes beneath the foam -- his uninflated vest limp. Tom dives.

INT. UNDERWATER

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

EXT. SURFACE - MOMENTS LATER

Two RESCUE JET SKIS arrive towing floating rescue mats.

JET SKI OPERATOR

Got him?

TOM

He's breathing. Get him straight to shore.

The second ski swings close. Hank 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.

HANK

What's up, fam -- we almost died!

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

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...

CAR (V.O.)

Voice command confirmed.

EXT. SUPERBUGGY - CONTINUOUS

The dashboard light steadies.

KIKI (V.O.)

Tom -- Teddy finished crunching a quantum anomaly we caught in the field. It matches your Signature Theory. Might not be from Earth.

PATCH (V.O.)

It's a coded event that shouldn't exist. We don't have the tech for this yet.

KIKI (V.O.)

Three clean pulses. Even spacing. Like someone's knocking at the door. It repeated twice. Source triangulates in the Nevada desert -- high desert, not far from a military storage facility.

Tom tightens his grip on the wheel.

TOM

I'm pulling in now.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - DUSK

A sleek, wood-paneled dome rises from the hillside. Tom's SuperBuggy pulls in as the GROUNDSKEEPER waves near the vegetable beds, envelope in hand.

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 eyes it, exhales. He slides the envelope under his arm and heads toward the dome.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Sleek wood walls. Surfboards. QUANTUM MONITORS. KIKI LEE (mid-30s -- sharp, unflappable) works the signal feed.

PATRICK "PATCH" JONES (early 40s -- inventive robotics savant) hunches over a garden bot, adjusting its sensor housing. Tom steps in briskly.

KIKI  
That's the funding decision, right?

TOM  
Yeah. Review notice. Apparently proof of concept is now a romantic fantasy.

PATCH  
Six weeks?

TOM  
Six weeks to show them something real. Then they pull the plug.

KIKI

Forget them for a second -- look at this. The signal's clean. It matches your Signature Theory. It's coming from inside the Highway.

PATCH

Inside the Highway --

KIKI

Hard. Facility-level output. Whatever's sending this just hit the door again.

PATCH

Shouldn't we flag this through the university advisory channel?

TOM

Not until we confirm it.

PATCH

Then let's find out who's knocking.

TOM

Teddy, call up the source coordinates on the main screen.

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

TEDDY (V.O.)

Zooming in now --

The map tightens over a pinprick stretch of Nevada desert. One property flickers at the grid edge: a lone GAS STATION with a massive generator-like unit behind it.

KIKI

It's a gas station.

PATCH

Yeah, but look out back. That's not a generator -- it's a starter rig. You only need one of those if you're kicking a power core awake.

Tom studies the image.

TOM

Teddy, book me the next flight toward the Nevada source.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Aisle seat. Already confirmed.

TOM  
Let's hope this buys us more than  
time.

INT. BLAINE COMMUNICATIONS HQ - GLASS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We slide into a grayscale corridor. MASON BLAINE (early 70s -- confident, calculating, theatrical) walks ahead of three INTERNS. One drops a RED NOTEBOOK. Everyone freezes. Mason doesn't.

MASON'S ASSISTANT  
No color in this workspace. Ever.  
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.

INT. BLAINE COMMUNICATIONS HQ - THE SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Gray mist hugs a corridor ending at massive BLAST DOORS. Signage pulses: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY - NO TAPPING GLASS - NO EYE CONTACT EVER.

HEAD KEEPER  
Welcome, Mr. Blaine.

INT. THE SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Color floods out as the doors open. The biome bursts to life. A pedestal stands spotlit: BOBO -- In Loving Memory. Mason stares.

Something shifts behind his eyes -- loss, resentment -- then he notices an employee watching. The mask returns.

MR. MOJO (CG) emerges from the underbrush -- a calm, focused, genetically modified CAPUCHIN MONKEY. His HANDLER trails behind at a respectful distance.

HANDLER

He's been restless all day.  
Wouldn't settle for anyone.

Mason extends his hand. Mr. Mojo climbs into his arms,  
immediately calm.

MASON

Good morning, Mr. Mojo.

Mr. Mojo places a hand gently against Mason's neck. They  
remain still. Connected. The Handler watches -- the  
difference is obvious.

MASON (CONT'D)

Ready for another day?

INT. HQ CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Mason strides past a monitor: Employees terminated yesterday:  
3. New hires today: 7. Projected firings: 45. He clocks it  
without slowing.

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. BLAINE COMMUNICATIONS HQ - SECURITY CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mason approaches the security checkpoint. A nervous SECURITY  
GUARD steps forward with a scanning wand.

MASON

This really necessary?

SECURITY GUARD

Protocol, sir. I have to --

MASON

By all means.

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

MASON (CONT'D)  
 (not turning)  
 Mojo.

Mr. Mojo releases the scanner at once.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 Enough.

A dim, high-tech command center. Banks of 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  
 Beautiful view. I could see myself living there. Have Blaine Development make an inquiry.

Mr. Mojo now sits on the console behind Mason, still and watchful.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 Keep watching the sky and the ground. First contact doesn't RSVP.

A beat. He turns to the room.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 Let's pay Dr. Calder a visit.

EXT. BLAINE COMMUNICATIONS HQ - EXECUTIVE MOTOR COURT - DAY

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

He moves fast, entourage scrambling to keep pace. His assistant works a tablet and a legal pad at the same time.

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.

Ahead, three immaculate ROLLS-ROYCES wait beneath the executive overhang.

BLAINE ONE -- deep matte black.

BLAINE TWO -- pearl white with a black roof.

BLAINE THREE -- slate gray.

Two attendants polish invisible imperfections from the chrome. One young attendant looks up. A senior attendant quietly lowers his gaze with two fingers.

Mason studies the lineup without slowing.

MASON

Three today.

DRIVER

Excellent choice, sir.

A second assistant steps forward with a black pack-sack stitched in silver: MR. MOJO.

SECOND ASSISTANT

Mr. Mojo's bag, sir.

Mason barely acknowledges it. He tosses the bag into the Rolls as the driver opens the rear door.

Mr. Mojo clings to Mason's shoulder, scanning the motor court, unsettled.

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 BLAINE (late 80s, 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. BLAINE 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. Observatory under review, no proof of concept, six weeks from termination. That is leverage, not prophecy.

MASON

You never liked prophecy.

MILDRED (V.O.)

I like quarterly returns.

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 rattle establishing the audio Signature that will return later as a rattlesnake.

Mason cuts a look to him.

MASON

No.

Without interrupting the call, Mason presses the window switch.

As the tinted glass lowers, full daylight COLOR slides down across Mason -- his hair, his eyes, his suit -- while traffic noise leaks inside.

For one brief moment, he exists in the normal world.

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

He lifts one finger. The window rises.

The COLOR drains upward off Mason's body as the glass seals shut -- hands, jacket, face, eyes -- until grayscale silence fully returns.

A beat. Through the line, Mildred exhales -- not anger, something softer.

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. Goodbye, Mason.

EXT. YACHT - CONTINUOUS

Mildred takes a measured sip.

MILDRED

And remember -- you took my last name.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - CONTINUOUS

Mason's phone flashes: SECOND LINE -- BLAINE OPS.

MASON

Hold.

MASON'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Blaine Ops scrubbed the Nevada 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 (CONT'D)

That's a landing.

MILDRED (V.O.)

Mason --

MASON

You said I was wasting money chasing aliens.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 Driver. Airport. Wheels up in  
 twenty-five.

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

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

MASON  
 A welcome mat.

Mr. Mojo perks up.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 Looks like we're taking a road  
 trip.

CLICK.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY

The Rolls glides across an endless stretch of desert highway.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

Soft fluorescent lighting. A TIKI-THEMED COUNTER glows with  
 fake torches. TOM waits behind a FAMOUS ASTROPHYSICIST TYPE  
 (CAMEO).

He's engrossed in a scientific journal. He grabs his boarding  
 pass and turns. Their eyes meet briefly.

FAMOUS ASTROPHYSICIST  
 Sir.

TOM  
 Sir.

The astrophysicist walks off. QUINNMAN steps forward,  
 smiling. From his blazer pocket, matte off-white Lumma nudges  
 out; Quinnman eases her back with one hand.

QUINNMAN  
 Checking in?

TOM  
 Flight 384 to Vegas, through L.A.

QUINNMAN

Ah -- 384. Just got canceled.

TOM

No, it --

Tom glances up. The DEPARTURES BOARD flickers. ON TIME changes to CANCELLED.

TOM (CONT'D)

Of course.

QUINNMAN

Can't trust an airline that cancels flights in its own lobby.

TOM

Don't you work for Pineapple Xpress?

QUINNMAN

Sometimes. On the call-in list.

He taps mid-air, scanning options, humming a few bars of something -- old, unplaceable, half-remembered.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)

Booked that ticket just now?

TOM

Couple hours ago.

QUINNMAN

There's the snag. Flight's packed. But I can probably get you on.

Tom lifts his wrist. A soft blue scan. Quinnman's collar shifts, flashing a HEAVY GOLD MEDALLION on a worn cord. He tucks it away.

A luggage tag's tiny e-ink screen blinks -- three glyphs with labels: ANCHOR. CONSENT. NON-DOMINATION -- then snaps back to an ordinary QR code. His phone BUZZES. A digital BOARDING PASS: SEAT 12A.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)

Best moon view in the fleet.

TOM

Thanks -- really.

As Tom hurries away, Lumma slips free, drops to the floor with a harmonic CHIME, splits into two halves, and bounces back up.

Quinnman snatches one piece in each hand, clicks them together, and tucks the rejoined Lumma into his pocket.

QUINNMAN  
Safe travels, Dr. Calder.

Tom disappears into the crowd.

INT. PINEAPPLE XPRESS AIRLINES JET - NIGHT

The plane rattles through turbulence -- pineapple decor everywhere. Tom sits by the window in his gray surfing hoodie, working on his iScroll.

The cabin shifts -- turbulence gone, light golden, impossibly still -- and his MOTHER (60s, kind eyes, same hoodie as his dashboard photo) now sits beside him.

She places a small GOLD PINEAPPLE PIN in his palm. Golden light thins. Tom slips it into his hoodie as a faint green shimmer pulses at his temple.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY (REALITY)

Tom stirs awake -- a real cabin now. Sleek, modern, no pineapple decor. The seat beside him is empty. He closes his eyes and drifts back under.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Dim monitor light. Kiki updates the observatory GoFundMe while Patch works. On screen: TOM CALDER PROVED CONNECTION MATTERS BEFORE ANYONE COULD MEASURE IT. She stares, then closes the laptop.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Temporal quantum spike registered.  
Possible incoming transmission from  
Orion sector. Energy amplitude  
rising --

A deep harmonic pulse rattles the glass as green mist blooms, vibrating in perfect sync before fading as the console lights dim and settle.

KIKI  
We should call Tom. Right now.

PATCH  
And tell him what? We've got a  
spike and a feeling.  
(MORE)

PATCH (CONT'D)

Let me run the numbers first. He's got enough on his plate.

KIKI

That sound usually means somebody heard us, Patch.

Patch looks at her -- wanting to agree, needing more data. The room darkens.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

One by one, the observatory lights go out. The dome fades into shadow.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Endless desert. Heat shimmer. No traffic. A lone rental SUV approaches a four-way intersection in the middle of nowhere. The traffic light turns RED.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

Tom slows and comes to a full stop. He looks left -- nothing. Right -- nothing. The light turns GREEN. Tom eases forward -- then stops.

Something's wrong.

He pats the dash. Empty. He searches his jacket pocket -- the console -- the seat -- He finds it. The bobblehead. A woman surfing, late 60s, gray hair pulled back.

EXT. CROSS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Far down the perpendicular highway, a semi-truck barrels toward the intersection. Not slowing.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

A faint green shimmer passes across the bobblehead's surface as Tom snaps it onto the dash -- then fades.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

The semi-truck BLASTS through the red light, tearing across the intersection at full speed. Dust erupts.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

The shockwave rocks the SUV. Tom grips the wheel, heart pounding. He looks at the bobblehead.

TOM

Thanks.

DRIVING MONTAGE:

The SUV rolls forward. The bobblehead wobbles. Tom taps the wheel in time. Heat shimmer ripples across the desert.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - NEVADA DESERT - DAY

A retrofitted desert garage -- solar panels, faded paint, a glowing sign: TRY OUR SYNTHETIC FUEL.

Tom pulls in.

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

FRANCIS "FRANNY" MERCER (early 60s -- desert-tough, blunt) aims a short gun-metal GRAVITY STICK at a pickup wheel.

A click, a soft blue pulse -- the tire lifts free, glides aside, then settles. A HONK echoes from outside.

NORM McCOY (60s -- tech-savvy, gentle, loyal) steps in from behind the truck.

NORM (O.S.)

I can take it from here.

Franny hands the gravity stick to Norm and heads for the door.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Franny steps out with her dog, a GOLDENDOODLE named NOVA, who trots beside her, tail wagging. She walks toward the pump as Tom gets out.

FRANNY

He must like you. Normally doesn't stir for customers. Fill 'er up?

FRANNY (CONT'D)

You lost?

TOM

Not exactly. Following a signal -- three pulses. It was like someone knocking at the door. Led me out here.

For half a second, Franny's hand stills on the pump handle -- like she felt the knock land somewhere deeper.

FRANNY

Knocking at the door? The only thing knocking around here is a bad piston.

CHARLIE MERCER (early 30s -- worn boots, self-taught engineer-poet, spark in her eyes) rises from a dolly, wiping sweat from her brow.

CHARLIE

Wait -- are you Dr. Tom Calder?

TOM

I am.

CHARLIE

You wrote that book on Signature Theory.

TOM

Didn't think anyone still read it. Looked good on paper until it didn't.

Franny leans on the pump handle. Charlie, without realizing, mirrors her pose -- same hip, same arm.

CHARLIE

It inspired me. I've been messing around with quantum -- built a lab behind the station.

TOM

Really?

CHARLIE

You should check it out. I'd be honored.

TOM

Lead the way.

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Franny waves them through the cramped office, fighting the ancient receipt printer.

Tom clocks a WOODSTOCK WALL: young Franny onstage, tambourine raised, a battered hat beside the photo with a tiny stuffed monkey clipped to the band.

TOM

You were at Woodstock?

FRANNY

Honey, Woodstock was at me.

CHARLIE

Sixties later. Lab now.

A low rumble builds. Franny glances to the road as three unmarked military transports roll past -- blacked-out windows, moving with purpose.

NORM

That's not local.

FRANNY

Nope.

NORM

Careful, Doc. Once she starts, you're here till moonrise.

FRANNY

Or till something explodes. Either way -- welcome to Frank's Garage.

EXT. SKY ABOVE GARAGE

A BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER knifes low over Frank's Garage, rattling the windows and kicking dust across the pumps -- not searching, not landing. A warning.

EXT. SKY OVER NEVADA - HIGH NOON

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 JET - MOMENTS LATER

The cabin is grayscale. On a pullout table, a white flower droops. Desert sunlight enters; the flower lifts, catching a faint wash of color.

ASSISTANT

Everything's ready, sir. Nevada property confirmed. The military storage facility cleared the welcome pass.

EXT. STAIRWELL

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.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NEVADA - DAY

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

At center, a worn worktable holds twin robotic arms over a glowing petri dish. Monitors hum beside a circular POWER CORE. Lived-in. A miracle built from scrap.

Tom's eyes drift to a worn photo taped beside a monitor -- an older, smiling couple.

CHARLIE

Imagine my surprise. Dr. Tom Calder in the actual flesh.

TOM

You built all this?

Tom steps closer to the worktable. Stops. One leg has bonded into the concrete floor -- metal and stone merged at the seam, edges blurred where two materials meet.

He crouches, runs a finger along the join.

TOM (CONT'D)

How long has this been like this?

CHARLIE

Couple days. Thought the heat warped it.

TOM

Heat doesn't do this.

Tom steps closer to the power core and chalkboards, fully absorbed. On the chalkboard: Charlie's working hypothesis, translating Tom's Signature Theory into mathematics.

Incomplete. Unsolved. But unmistakably his idea, pushed further than he ever did. Tom understands. Behind him, Charlie hesitates, then presses a bare wall panel.

A muted CLICK.

A hidden panel slides open: a silver drawstring bag, compact alien-tech components, and the microscope adapter box. She takes only the adapter. Closes it. The wall looks untouched.

Tom notices the adapter in her hand -- too smooth, too strange for anything off a parts shelf.

TOM (CONT'D)

What is that? It looks like it fell off the back of a spaceship.

CHARLIE

It's a family secret. My mom uses it in the garage to diagnose vehicles.

TOM

She must've ordered it from China.

CHARLIE

Something like that.

She locks the microscope attachment into the housing. A thin green seam wakes along its edge -- subtle, almost mechanical. A soft green pulse builds around a forged silver sample as a deep digital vibration rises.

TOM

Does it always do that?

CHARLIE

Only when it has power.

TOM

You're running a serious setup. Containment, shielding. You're not guessing -- you're building.

CHARLIE

Guessing's half the fun. I only know what doesn't explode. Like your theory: every object gets a Signature from where and when it becomes itself.

TOM

Yeah. That's my theory.

Tom glances back at the fused table leg.

TOM (CONT'D)

Signature doesn't just identify things. It's what keeps them distinct.

CHARLIE

You think that's what happened to my table?

TOM

I think we should be careful.

Tom studies the chalkboard. He picks up a piece of chalk. Circles a section of the equation -- the part that shouldn't be possible.

TOM (CONT'D)

I wrote this as a thought experiment.

CHARLIE

Right -- so Mania and I gave the rig enough kick to hold alignment.

MANIA (V.O.)

Power core stable. High-energy pulse available.

CHARLIE

We attach the message during alignment -- hitchhiker, on-ramp, hope for the best.

TOM

This is... remarkable.

MANIA (V.O.)

Your theory describes a nonlocal connection structure. Valid identities can be reached along the Quantum Highway -- including you, Dr. Calder.

Tom stiffens. Silence hangs.

TOM  
Knock-knock.

CHARLIE  
Who's there?

TOM  
North Shore.

CHARLIE  
North Shore who?

TOM  
North Shore University Observatory.

Charlie freezes.

TOM (CONT'D)  
We picked up your quantum message.

Charlie stares at him. Breath catching. Realization dawning.

CHARLIE  
The message worked?

TOM  
The source data led me here.

CHARLIE  
So how did you hear me?

TOM  
That's kind of my secret.

CHARLIE  
Convenient.

TOM  
Maybe you can read it in my next  
book.

She stares at him. The hum of distant equipment fades to  
silence.

CHARLIE  
I think I need to sit down.

TOM  
Want some water?

CHARLIE  
No. Maybe. Yeah. No. Still  
deciding.

TOM  
Charlie -- this is real.

CHARLIE  
Yeah. Definitely starting to feel  
that now.

TOM  
Demo time?

Charlie exhales -- half laugh, half disbelief.

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

TOM  
You can call me Tom.

Charlie looks up, surprised -- then smiling. He smiles back.  
The air blooms with green mist as Charlie's system powers up.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NEVADA

Two AIRSTREAM ATLAS CAMPER VANS cut through the desert heat.

INT. MASON'S CAMPER - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Inside -- grayscale except Mr. Mojo in vivid color. Mason  
drives in silence. Mr. Mojo lounges shotgun. The GLOVEBOX  
BUZZES.

MASON  
(to Mr. Mojo)  
Would you mind?

Mr. Mojo opens the glovebox, pulls out the phone, holds it  
out.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

He presses the phone to his ear.

MILDRED (V.O.)  
You sound congested. Sick -- or  
just failing?

MASON

Desert air. Does wonders.

MILDRED (V.O.)

I spoke to my lawyer. Prenup's still valid. You want to win this race? Own the landing site -- and find out who controls Calder.

MASON

Already in motion.

CLICK.

Mason lowers the phone.

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

The desert is still -- heat lines shimmering.

NORM

(quiet, alert)

Hey, Franny -- you feel that?

FRANNY

Like what?

NORM

Pressure drop. Right before a storm.

They glance skyward -- WHUP-WHUP-WHUP. The BLACK HAWK slices low overhead, rattling tools. A message, delivered twice.

FRANNY

That's no delivery.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Mason's caravan pulls up across from the gas station. The lead van slides open. \$3,000 ITALIAN SHOES step into the dust.

Mason straightens his tailored jacket, brushes his shoulder. Mr. Mojo perches there -- eyes scanning.

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

FRANNY

You lost?

MASON

(shouting back, smooth)  
Just passing through! Nice place  
you've got!

MASON (CONT'D)

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

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

MASON (CONT'D)

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.

MASON

Clever! But enough about you -- how  
about me?

FRANNY

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

MASON

We like to be prepared!

FRANNY

Prepared for what?

Mason's smile tightens. Mr. Mojo raises a finger, pointing toward 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  
(points at his feet)  
Public land, right?

FRANNY  
Mostly -- unless someone's hiding  
something!

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 (CONT'D)  
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  
Cut Calder's funding. All of it.

He drops his hand, keeps walking.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Touché.

Franny watches him go. Jaw tight.

NORM  
Easy, Franny. You're about to blow  
a gasket.

FRANNY  
You think I'm bad -- wait till you  
meet my mother.

Norm goes still. Franny heads back toward the garage, almost  
smiling.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The desert shed hums. Shafts of light cut through dust and steam. The circular rig stands ready, SILVER SAMPLE sealed beneath the CONVERTER LENS.

CHARLIE

Alright, Mania -- let's show the professor what we can do.

MANIA (V.O.)

Field alignment nominal. Power core standing by.

TOM

Not amateurs. Collaborators.

CHARLIE

That's generous. I'm the wrench, she's the brain.

MANIA (V.O.)

Clarification: she is also the reason I learned sarcasm. Power core online. Pulse sequence in three -- two -- one.

The air blooms with green mist across the chamber as the power core lights with a deep harmonic hum.

CHARLIE

Mania, call up that graphic we made for Mom. The one with the spinning triangles.

MANIA (V.O.)

Displaying.

A small HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION blossoms above the console -- glowing triangle labeled STORED SIGNATURE, HIGHWAY, RECREATED SIGNATURE.

CHARLIE

We're capturing the forged silver sample's Signature -- using it to stabilize an alignment into the Quantum Highway.

MANIA (V.O.)

Stabilization confirmed. 111.11 MHz coupling frequency locked. Core resonance amplifying.

TOM

Why did my observatory pick it up?  
Why not MIT? Or Shanghai?

MANIA (V.O.)

MIT built photon links between  
quantum processors. China launched  
Micius. Both relied on precision-  
built pieces -- a projector,  
channel, receiver -- fully man-  
made.

CHARLIE

That's the difference. They had to  
engineer the whole chain. We don't.  
We only build the ends. The  
Highway's already there.

MANIA (V.O.)

Signature verified. Standing-wave  
pairing established. Message  
loaded. Emission sequence  
beginning.

The hum deepens. The holographic triangle flickers -- its  
points merging into a single green beam that shoots upward  
through the lab. Harmonic light ripples through the mist.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE DESERT - SAME TIME

From above, the lab is a pinprick of light. Across the  
desert, the effect appears all at once -- brief, uncanny --  
then gone.

EXT. MASON'S DESERT CAMP - SAME TIME

A faint green shimmer settles through the air. The air  
tightens. Mason's hair ripples back slightly. A cup on the  
table trembles. The camper lights flicker once.

MASON

...huh.

He rubs the back of his neck, looking for the source. There  
isn't one.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The beam wavers.

The Quantum Highway glitches -- the image SLAMS sideways with a brutal static CRACK -- then snaps back. Alarms spike.

CHARLIE

Come on -- stay with --

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

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Mania, cut it!

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

On the microscope housing, the adapter gives one low green pulse.

TOM

You should disconnect it.

CHARLIE

It's in standby.

TOM

That's not standby. It's still reading.

CHARLIE

It always does that.

Tom looks from the adapter to the fused table leg. He does not like the answer.

EXT. MASON'S DESERT CAMP - SAME TIME

Mason yanks his folding chair free. Several rocks are embedded in the aluminum joints, metal and stone fused together.

MASON

What kind of chair does this?

He tosses it aside and grabs another. Mr. Mojo sniffs the fused joint, then backs away.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

A dusty 1964 FORD GALAXIE STARLINER rumbles to a stop. A pineapple-patterned boot hits dirt. Quinnman steps out, mirrored lenses flashing.

NOVA lies in the shade, tail thumping -- then perks up, recognizing an old friend.

QUINNMAN  
Hey there, boy. Miss me?

He looks up and down the road. Empty.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)  
Coast is clear. Wanna play?

He tosses Lumma up. She streaks across the highway, a pale blur. Nova BOLTS after her, barking.

EXT. MASON'S DESERT CAMP - SAME TIME

The shockwave SLAMS the camper. The whole rig SHUDDERS. Mason spins. Mr. Mojo freezes, does a sharp double take, then LEAPS onto Mason's shoulder.

MASON  
What the hell was that?

EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Lumma doubles back. Nova skids, sniffs, sees her -- BARKS -- and charges. She zips toward the garage.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Lumma decelerates and drops into Quinnman's waiting hand -- compresses into a walnut-sized matte sphere.

QUINNMAN  
Good work, Lumma.

He gives Nova a small cookie, 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 -- the same WOODSTOCK DISPLAY: photo, tambourine, ticket stub, the battered hat with BOBO clipped to the band. Franny half-asleeps by a flickering TV.

ON SCREEN -- a rapid collage: missile batteries, crowds sprinting, fighter jets, mothers pulling children into shelters.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

As world leaders gather in Hawaii for emergency peace talks, tensions remain high. German Chancellor Helga Von Strudel-Hammer arrived this morning, calling the summit humanity's last chance to avoid World War III.

Franny clicks the TV off.

FRANNY

Too depressing.

NORM

You think it actually gets there this time?

FRANNY

Already has. People just don't know it yet.

The bell over the door JINGLES.

QUINNMAN

Franny --

She stirs, blinking up, then grins.

FRANNY

Quinnman. Been a while.

QUINNMAN

Too long.

She swings her feet down. An easy silence.

FRANNY

What brings the legend?

QUINNMAN

Just checking the pulse. My niece's lab is heating up.

FRANNY

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

Quinnman's fingers check the cord at his collar. A faint green shimmer halos behind his eyes. Through the window, Tom and Charlie cross the lot, laughing.

FRANNY (CONT'D)  
 You always show before something happens.

QUINNMAN  
 Only when it matters.

He nods and turns for the door.

FRANNY  
 Don't be a stranger.

QUINNMAN  
 Wouldn't dream of it.

He hums a few bars of that same tune as he slips out. The bell JINGLES.

EXT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Tom and Charlie head for Franny's truck.

CHARLIE  
 Hey, Franny -- Tom and I are starving. You in?

FRANNY  
 Yeah. Grab Norm.

EXT. FRANK'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Golden light spills over the driveway. FRANNY'S TRUCK idles. Franny and Norm 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 Blaine. Convinced something  
landed at our gas station.

TOM

The guy who owns Blaine  
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 munches a PROTEIN BAR. Patch scrolls data.

KIKI

Hawaiian Stargazing Hotline. Make a  
wish.

TOM (V.O.)

It's me.

KIKI

Hey, boss. We've picked up a new  
signal. Origin's the Orion Nebula.

TOM (V.O.)

Get ready to go secure.

KIKI

Then before we do -- North Shore  
froze the grant. The review moved  
without warning. Someone pushed it.

TOM (V.O.)

Mason.

The truck goes quiet. Road hum fills the space. Tom grips the  
phone a little tighter.

CHARLIE

Tom?

TOM (V.O.)

That was the observatory.

CHARLIE

No. That was a building. Your theory brought me here. The lab works because of you.

FRANNY

Mason doesn't get to decide what the universe heard.

Tom lets that land. Hurt, but steadier.

TOM (V.O.)

Secure line. Stargazer Four.

KIKI

We're in.

TOM (V.O.)

Full encryption from now on. We've got ears we didn't invite.

PATCH

You alright?

TOM (V.O.)

I'm okay. What've you got?

KIKI

Teddy decoded it -- definitely structured. Sending now.

A burst of deep harmonic sound fills the truck -- immense and steady, vibrating through the seats and glass.

CHARLIE

That's not noise -- that's signal.

PATCH

Pattern resolves here -- this building.

TOM (V.O.)

Keep analyzing. Don't chase meaning yet.

KIKI

Got it.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

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.

The Quantum Highway glitches -- the image twitches sideways, snaps back. The gecko sits inches closer to the road than it should, then vanishes.

INT. BLAINE MOBILE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Dim blue glow. A tech leans toward a mic.

TECH

Sir, sweep is green. They're still away from the garage. 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. Click -- unlocked.

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. Mr. Mojo hops from Mason's shoulder to a worktable, spots the sleek gravity stick, and snatches it.

MASON

Mr. Mojo, give me that.

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

MASON (CONT'D)  
Seriously. Hand it over.

Mr. Mojo flicks the stick toward a larger stone -- WHOOM! The boulder lifts.

Mason lunges.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Now.

Mr. Mojo points the stick at Mason. WHOOSH! Mason jerks a foot off the ground -- startled -- coins slipping from one pocket.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Mojo. Enough.

Mr. Mojo flicks the stick again. Mason tilts awkwardly off-balance, catching himself before he falls.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Put it down.

Mr. Mojo tilts his head, studying him.

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

Mason steadies himself, jaw clenched. He smooths his collar and regains control before answering.

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

Mr. Mojo lowers Mason to the ground. Mason steadies himself.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Not a word.

Mr. Mojo hands the gravity stick back and climbs to Mason's shoulder. Mason tucks it under his arm, unsettled.

INT. O'AHU OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM

A phone camera streams LIVE. Kiki holds it selfie-style, ring light glowing.

KIKI (TO CAMERA)

Okay, #HakeemExplorer67 asks: If atoms are always moving, why doesn't everything just mash together?

KIKI (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)

Here's the trick -- contact isn't the same as collapse. Air touches the desk, the desk touches the floor, but each stays itself.

KIKI (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)

That's enough quantum soup for tonight. Sleep well, nerds. We love you.

She taps the phone. Stream ends. The ring light clicks off. The room settles.

PATCH

Wait -- did I forget my makeup again?

Kiki bursts out laughing.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHARLIE'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

The lab glows low. Outside, desert wind murmurs. Inside, the POWER CORE hums. Charlie and Tom enter from dinner.

Tom's eyes drift to a dusty monitor with a taped photo of a younger Charlie beaming beside her GRANDPARENTS. A radio plays softly in the background.

TOM

Are those your grandparents?

CHARLIE

Yeah. They passed about seven years ago. We used to talk every day. Now the phone just doesn't ring like that anymore.

TOM

I know that feeling. My mom passed a few years ago.

CHARLIE

Were you close?

TOM

Very. 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.

Tom draws the GOLD PINEAPPLE PIN from his hoodie pocket, one edge fused into the lining. He works it free, thumb lingering.

TOM (CONT'D)

She gave it to me the last time I saw her.

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

Charlie studies the photo, moved.

TOM (CONT'D)

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

CHARLIE

No, it's --

TOM

It's fine. Forget it.

CHARLIE

I'm glad you told me.

A beat. Neither sure where to look.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's what pulled me toward your work -- every object has a Signature. Something that persists across distance. I started wondering if people do too.

TOM

Like people?

CHARLIE

Thoughts. Grief. The stuff that keeps finding you.

She turns to the console.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Mania, run the short version.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Initializing: Entanglement Overview  
Simplified.

The monitor lights up. Colored waveforms pulse in sync, separating and then rejoining.

MANIA (V.O.)  
When systems originate together --  
or remain in sustained proximity --  
they imprint shared state  
information. Separation does not  
erase correlation.

Tom and Charlie share a look.

TOM  
Not guided. Persistent. Sometimes  
two people cross paths for a second  
and the air changes.

CHARLIE  
And they carry it afterward. Like a  
memory that hums.

MANIA (V.O.)  
The imprint can persist.  
Correlation requires no intent --  
only proximity.

TOM  
But what if it isn't just us  
reaching for them? What if  
sometimes we're registering  
something already in motion?

CHARLIE  
You mean the thought starts on  
their side -- and we just feel it.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Correlation is not directional. A  
pattern can be observed from either  
side.

TOM  
Then maybe when we think of someone  
we've lost -- it isn't memory. It's  
conversation.

CHARLIE

And if that's true -- then maybe  
nothing loved is ever truly gone.

A quiet moment. The lab hums around them.

TOM

We should try again.

CHARLIE

And find out who's listening.

INT. O'AHU OBSERVATORY - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The room glows with monitor light. Kiki reviews signal data.  
Patch adjusts the quantum receiver.

TEDDY (V.O.)

Orion transmission: layered,  
repeating, intelligent. It arrived  
almost with Charlie's Door Knock.  
The timing is not random.

PATCH

You think it's related?

KIKI

So it's not random noise.

TEDDY (V.O.)

Negative. Three frequencies cycling  
in a perfect loop -- deliberate,  
not natural.

KIKI

It's coming from Orion... and it's  
lining up with us.

She steps to the comm board.

KIKI (CONT'D)

Tsinghua Observatory, China --  
Stargazer University, India -- this  
is the North Shore University  
Observatory. Do you copy?

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The POWER CORE hums. Cool blue light pulses through the lab.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Link established. Secure channel  
confirmed.

TOM  
North Shore Control, Nevada Lab  
here. Message tag is ALOHA.

KIKI (V.O.)  
Couldn't think of a better word.

PATCH (V.O.)  
All stations green -- standing by  
on your mark.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Hey, Mania -- good to finally meet  
you.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Hello, Teddy. Connection open.  
Hello, Hawaii.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Clean handshake.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Try not to sound pleased on an open  
channel.

A charged stillness fills the room.

CHARLIE  
Alright. Let's try it again.

A soft green pulse blooms over the silver sample as Charlie  
flips the microscope switch. A deep harmonic hum swells.

MANIA (V.O.)  
Baseline resonance detected.

CHARLIE  
Come on. Hitch a ride.

A wineglass-clear tone sharpens. A pale beam fires from the  
microscope through the ceiling. The Quantum Highway glitches -  
- a brutal static CRACK -- then snaps back.

The rig shudders.

TOM  
It's resonating.

The air blooms with green mist within the beam, vibrating as it rises. The harmonic overtone tightens. The mist phases -- coherent, simultaneous.

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - SAME TIME

On a lonely ridge, Quinnman sits on his '64 GALAXIE. A gecko skitters across the hood -- stops. The Quantum Highway glitches, then snaps back.

The cup trembles. The gecko leaps into Quinnman's open hand. Quinnman looks down, surprised.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - NIGHT

The beam holds, then fades. Charlie and Tom stare upward, dust motes drifting like stars. The hum settles. Stillness.

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.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Confirming from North Shore -- no  
message received.

Tom exhales.

TOM  
So it didn't carry.

KIKI (V.O.)  
We'll keep trying. It's not over  
yet.

The comm line falls silent. The beam is gone now, but the lab is still warm with residual power. The power core cools in low blue pulses.

TOM

North Shore already shut the door.  
Mason made sure of it. Your signal  
was the first clean answer I had.

CHARLIE

So that's it? One bad night and  
you're gone?

TOM

It wasn't one bad night. It was the  
whole reason I came here.

CHARLIE

Then stay and try something  
different.

TOM

I am tired of betting what's left  
of my life on 'maybe.'

CHARLIE

And I'm tired of watching people  
leave the second this gets hard.

That lands. Tom has no answer he can hide behind.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You're the first person who looked  
at this place and didn't laugh.  
Don't do that and call it being  
realistic.

A beat. Tom looks at her, then at the cooling equipment.

TOM

I don't know how to stay here and  
fail again.

CHARLIE

There are things about this place I  
still haven't shown you.

(beat)

I need you here when I do.

(beat)

Then don't fail. But don't run.

EXT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - NIGHT

The neon sign buzzes twenty feet above the parking lot.  
PARADOX PETE'S -- spinning planets, fake asteroids, fizzing  
light.

A tremor. The metal pole softens and compresses like a candle left in sun. The sign descends, still lit, until it rests five feet off the ground.

The neon flickers once. Holds. PARADOX PETE'S glows at chest height in the empty parking lot.

EXT. DESERT RIDGE - NIGHT

The gecko clings to Quinnman's finger. They both look up. The sky stretches endless above them.

QUINNMAN  
Easy, little guy.

The gecko chirps.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)  
You stare at the stars like that...  
I'm gonna call you Galileo.

He smiles, still looking up.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)  
There's a whole world up there to  
discover.

He slips Galileo gently into his shirt pocket and hums a few bars -- the same melody, always incomplete. Wide static shot -  
- Quinnman silhouetted against the horizon.

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

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

INT. FRANK'S GARAGE - APARTMENT - NIGHT

Distant BOOMS. Franny sits up in bed, watching a late-night B-movie and eating popcorn. Another BOOM. The popcorn jumps.

A shrill whistle -- CRACK! -- a firework blasts through Franny's window, zips over her bed, and rockets out the opposite wall.

FRANNY  
What was that?!

Franny throws on a grease-streaked shirt and stomps out barefoot, grabbing her popcorn bag as she goes.

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Mojo hands Mason a long ignition stick, its tip burning softly.

Mason grabs a pull cord attached to a low utility trailer.

He YANKS it.

The heavy tarp whips away -- revealing rows of illegal fireworks.

And a RATTLESNAKE coiled silently among the launch tubes.

Its RATTLE fills the desert air -- eerily identical to the tambourine shake from inside the Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Mojo freezes.

Mason studies the snake. Completely calm.

MASON

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

Mason lowers the burning tip toward a fuse.

The rattlesnake uncoils and slides off into the darkness.

The fuse catches.

A rocket screams into the sky.

Mason's fireworks blaze -- color, smoke, chaos. The Airstream flashes. Mason stands on a folding table, arms raised, cigar in his mouth.

MASON (CONT'D)

(shouting skyward)

You see this? This is for you! Come  
to me!

A firework zips upward -- another BOOM. Mason pulls the cigar from his mouth, taps the ash, and drops it into a metal ashtray on the trailer.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Franny storms barefoot across the asphalt, popcorn in hand.

FRANNY

Blaine! What the hell is wrong with  
you?!

EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mason grins.

MASON

Franny! Welcome to first contact!

FRANNY

You're shooting rockets next to a gas station!

Mason laughs. Mr. Mojo spots Mason's glowing cigar, snatches it, and touches the ember to CONFETTI MK II's fuse --  
Szzzzzzzzt --

WHUMP!

A thirty-foot plume of confetti erupts, wind catching the glittering cloud and sweeping it across the highway.

EXT. FRANNY'S SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Franny stands as confetti drifts across the highway, into her hair, onto her shoulders, and straight into the popcorn.

Franny looks down at the popcorn. Picks out a piece of confetti. Eats the popcorn underneath it.

FRANNY

(calling back, flat)

Blaine! If one more thing lands on my property, I'm billing you for a new window, a new wall, and emotional damages!

She waits. No answer. Just the hiss of a dying sparkler.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

(quieter, to herself)

Unbelievable.

INT. O'AHU 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.

FADE OUT.

## EXT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - LATE NIGHT

A cold desert wind drifts through the camp. Floodlights dim. Silence settles. Mason and Mr. Mojo sit by a low campfire -- small and still beneath the vast desert sky.

MASON

You know, Bobo -- I mean, Mr. Mojo.  
I think I'm meant for more.  
Satellites, rockets, networks --  
none of it fills the hole.

He stares into the fire.

MASON (CONT'D)

I want it to matter. That when they  
come, they'll see a man who tried.  
And if they don't -- maybe I'm just  
the punchline.

Mr. Mojo rests a hand on Mason's arm. Mason flicks the gravity stick. A log drifts into the flames with a soft WHUMP.

His face glows with doubt. A faint green shimmer pulses at his temple. A soft BUZZ from his wristwatch.

CALLER ID: MILDRED BLAINE

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-BEEP-BEEP.

Tom opens the microwave and pulls out a steaming bag of popcorn.

TOM

Hot -- hot -- hot --

He juggles it as he crosses the lab. On the couch, Charlie stirs, half-opening an eye.

CHARLIE

(half-asleep)  
Save some for me --

She rolls over and falls back asleep.

Tom opens the popcorn bag and wakes the iScroll. His mother's photo fills the screen. A faint green shimmer twitches the bag across the tabletop.

Tom does a quick double take. Returns to the iScroll -- slowly scrolling through photos of his mother. Behind him, the far monitor dims as the power core pulses once, then settles.

A visible green shimmer gathers in the room, weightless as dust. It brushes past Charlie's face, responds to her breath, and drifts toward Tom.

Unaware, Tom stays focused on the photo. The shimmer tightens, narrows, funnels... and slips straight into the iScroll.

FLASH.

The screen jumps bright. The underlying room hum cuts out. Silence. A single clean RING breaks the stillness. Tom freezes. He stares at the glowing iScroll. He answers.

TOM

Hello?

A thin, cold hiss replies. Nothing else.

FADE OUT --  
HOLD.

EXT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - HAWAII - DAY

Graphic: 10:30 A.M.

We glide across fields toward a modest Chinese restaurant. Delivery scooters idle out front beside a baby blue 1971 HONDA EXPRESS.

INT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen bustles with COOKING BOTS wearing rubber celebrity faceplates: GORDON RAMSAY, JULIA CHILD, ANTHONY BOURDAIN.

COOK-WIFE

Thank God I bought these robots --  
everybody wants the celebrity  
dishes now.

She SLAMS a big red button. The robots pivot in unison, plating meals with mechanical grace.

EXT. O'AHU CHINESE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Quinnman walks past the scooters to the vintage Honda Express. He opens the custom box and slides in the food.

COOK-WIFE (O.S.)

Tell them to eat it hot! And don't  
forget cookie!

Quinnman kicks the engine -- it coughs, then roars to life. He dons a worn helmet and takes off.

EXT. O'AHU MOUNTAIN ROAD - MONTAGE

The Honda Express winds up a jungle road. Ocean below. In Quinnman's pocket, a GECKO peeks out as Lumma streaks past like a walnut-sized blur.

She slows to match Quinnman, expanding into a basketball-sized, simplified ship form, matte off-white and seamless. She paces him perfectly, mirroring every swerve. Quinnman extends his hand.

Lumma folds inward, compressing back to a walnut-sized sphere as she settles into his palm. He slips her gently into his pocket.

At the property edge, BLAINE DEVELOPMENT surveyors work a tripod level. One looks up. Quinnman gives a tiny nod and keeps riding.

The Honda Express crests the hill. The Observatory gleams at the top of the ridge.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out the gecko, and sets it gently on a sunlit rock. The gecko blinks.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - FRONT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Quinnman enters with the food, winded.

QUINNMAN

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

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

KIKI

Thanks. You made good time.

QUINNMAN  
Transmission disagrees.

He grins, humming that tune, and goes.

FADE OUT.

INT. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - EARLY MORNING

Everything inside the camper is muted greyscale -- Mason's world drained of color, except for Mojo. Mason is slumped on the bench, dead asleep. Mr.

Mojo dangles toilet paper across Mason's face. The SAT PHONE BUZZES from a plate of nachos. Mason stirs.

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. MASON'S ENCAMPMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The camper door swings open. Mason squints into the blazing desert light.

FADE OUT.

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  
You built something remarkable. But you don't know what it costs to believe in something for ten years and still not know if it's real.

CHARLIE  
No. I just built the proof.

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

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Then go.

She turns away. Tom pulls out.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The car rolls two hundred feet, coughs, and dies. Tom tries the key. Nothing. Total desert silence.

On the dash, the BOBBLEHEAD turns clockwise. Stops. Turns back counter-clockwise.

TOM  
I gotta turn around, don't I?

The bobblehead slows, faces forward.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

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

Charlie sits on a flat rock, throwing pebbles into the dark, a tear in the first gray light. Tom steps in front of her; the duffel drops.

TOM  
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you.

CHARLIE  
I know.

TOM  
 You built the proof. That's  
 everything.

She stands and pulls him into a hug.

CHARLIE  
 You're an idiot. Don't do that  
 again.

TOM  
 I won't. It's not over. It's just  
 begun.

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

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - KITCHEN / CONTROL ROOM -  
 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 - MORNING

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 Chinese food bag.

PATCH  
 And one survivor cookie.

He cracks open the fortune cookie and reads the slip.

PATCH (CONT'D)

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

Tom goes still. Charlie notices.

KIKI

Lunch got deep.

TOM

Read it again.

PATCH

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

Tom eyes the dead logs.

TOM

I'll call you back.

He hangs up.

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SAME

Kiki looks at the phone.

KIKI

That was either a breakthrough or a  
nap.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

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

The timeline cursor slides backward past the send window.

CHARLIE

Tom?

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - SAME

Teddy's console brightens. Kiki sits forward.

KIKI

He's in the archive.

PATCH

Why's he going backward?

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Dr. Calder is not searching after  
transmission.

                  MANIA (V.O.)  
He's searching before it.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

Tom comes alive.

                  TOM  
                  We treated it like a failed send.  
  
He scrolls farther back.

                  TOM (CONT'D)  
                  What if it missed the order?

Static. Dead air.

Then -- a tiny marker appears.

ALOHA DETECTED.

Tom stops breathing.

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.)  
Two and a half days before  
transmission.

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

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

                  TOM  
                  It worked.

CHARLIE  
If ALOHA got there before we sent  
it...

TOM  
Then we don't know what else did.

On Charlie's bench, the powered reader gives another faint pulse. A washer ticks half an inch and bonds to the steel.

CHARLIE  
Sequence bleed?

TOM  
Signature bleed. Whatever we call  
it, it started when we sent.

CHARLIE  
Then we fix the send.

TOM  
No. We stop until we know what  
changed.

CHARLIE  
This is proof, Tom.

TOM  
It's also damage.

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.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - MORNING

Franny's truck pulls up. The PARADOX PETE'S sign now glows at waist height, pole slumped beneath it. Three LOCALS stare.

NORM  
When did that happen?

FRANNY  
Overnight, from the looks of it.

Charlie and Tom exchange a glance. Neither speaks. They head inside.

INT. PARADOX PETE'S DINER - MORNING

Coffee STEAMS. Plates CLINK. Pete, the server-bot, glides by balancing sizzling stacks of ALIEN PANCAKES. The gang sit in their familiar booth -- tired, wired.

FRANNY

You look deep in thought, Tom.  
What's up?

TOM

The Aloha signal got through -- but it arrived Monday night. Two days before we sent it.

NORM

Hold on. It arrived before you sent it?

CHARLIE

(shakes her head)  
That's the problem, Norm. The message works. But it showed up two days early. That's not how anything works.

A quiet moment. Steam curling from the mugs.

FRANNY

My daughter, the time traveler.  
What were you doing Monday night?

CHARLIE

Not transmitting. Just cleaning up, running a system check.

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

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Mania, pull the log from Monday evening.

MANIA (V.O.)

Monday evening: two forged silver samples. Tuesday's Door Knock used one. Wednesday's Aloha used the other.

Franny and Charlie both pause mid-sip, lowering their cups in perfect unison.

TOM

That's the link. Each sample has its own timestamp -- where and when it became itself. That's Signature Theory.

NORM

So the mail got postmarked before you wrote the letter. Because the stamp was already made.

TOM

That's... actually a perfect way to put it.

FRANNY

(to Norm)

Careful. He'll put you in the acknowledgments.

CHARLIE

(snickers)

Thanks, Mom.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You still haven't told me how you heard me.

TOM

Come to Hawaii.

CHARLIE

That's your answer?

TOM

That's where I can show you.

A long look -- no smile, just mutual understanding.

FRANNY

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

NORM

She means it. I've seen her do it.

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.)

Scanning -- Pineapple Xpress, direct to Honolulu. 12:20 departure, arrival 3:16. Economy only. Middle seats confirmed.

TOM

Book it.

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

TOM (CONT'D)

Funding freeze.

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

They high-five -- then the air tightens. A deep harmonic HUM rolls through the floor. The Quantum Highway glitches -- for a half-beat, the image SLAMS sideways and a brutal static CRACK rips through the air -- then it snaps back.

The room shudders.

TEDDY

Temporal quantum spike registered.

PATCH

What was that?

KIKI

Teddy -- source?

TEDDY

Quantum Highway anomaly. Incoming packet detected. No terrestrial origin tag. Header is intact.

KIKI  
Header says what?

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

PATCH  
Tom's on a plane.

KIKI  
Then we relay it. Now.

TEDDY  
Relaying encrypted packet via Q-  
Tether.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Grayscale tones. Monitors display 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.)  
That Orion Nebula signal from  
earlier... whatever it is, they  
just changed the landing spot. Get  
wheels up. We're going to Hawaii,  
boys.

Mason stands and steps out into the sun.

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - NIGHT

Five hours in economy. Charlie is wedged in the middle seat while a sleeping window passenger owns both armrests. A kid kicks Tom's seat. Tom returns from the bathroom and spots his WRIST DISPLAY glowing.

The Quantum Highway glitches -- for a half-beat, the image twitches sideways with a sharp static tick -- then it snaps back. The cabin lights CUT OUT. The engines sag -- WHINE DOWN for a brief beat.

Dark. Silent.

Then -- lights SNAP BACK ON. Engines return.

TOM

It came while I was gone.

CHARLIE

From who?

TOM

O'ahu. Teddy relayed it as a Highway packet -- no sender tag, just my name. Kiki bounced it to my Q-Tether.

CHARLIE

Voice-locked?

TOM

Yep. File name says "From Big T."

Tom taps his watch. ON SCREEN: "Enter Passcode Phrase To Decrypt."

TOM (CONT'D)

The lovers, the dreamers, and me.

He hits ENTER. The file unlocks with a soft CHIME.

ON SCREEN: "FEEL THE POWER 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 12 - 42 - C"

They freeze.

CHARLIE

Those are numbers.

TOM

Powerball numbers.

CHARLIE

No way.

Tom pulls a yellow writing pad from the seat pocket -- PINEAPPLE STAMP at the top. He jots the numbers down, tears the note from the pad, sets it beside an empty plastic glass.

TOM

I mean -- technically, it's not fraud unless we actually win, right? Nobody's even drawn the numbers yet.

CHARLIE

So -- why did we send ourselves lottery numbers?

TOM

Guess we were scared. My grant was gone, and you were keeping a lab alive with oil changes.

CHARLIE

So we gave ourselves a future.

TOM

Or at least a shot at one.

The flight attendant approaches, collecting trash. She reaches for the glass -- almost taking the yellow note.

TOM (CONT'D)

(lifting the paper just in time)

No -- not done with that.

He folds the note and slips it into his hoodie pocket.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Everything alright?

TOM

It's work.

CHARLIE

We're good. Sorry if we got loud.

The flight attendant rolls on.

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. Something clicks.

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

They head toward the terminal.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

A bright orange SuperBuggy cruises the shoreline, surfboard  
 strapped to the roll cage.

INT. SUPERBUGGY - CONTINUOUS

Tom drives barefoot. Charlie soaks in the view.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - LOOKOUT - MOMENTS LATER

The SuperBuggy crests a sun-drenched rise and pulls into a  
 faded lookout. Ocean stretches wide below.

INT. SUPERBUGGY - CONTINUOUS

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.

They look out at the surf.

CHARLIE  
 Wow. That's beautiful.

TOM  
 They're like dancers -- riding the  
 rhythm.

CHARLIE  
Feels like time slows down here.

TOM  
I can take you out tomorrow.  
Surfboard lesson. You'll see it up  
close.

CHARLIE  
(chuckling)  
Is that safe?

TOM  
Only if you hang on tight.

They ride in silence -- sun low, surf beside them.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The jet door opens. Heat shimmers. Mason steps out in a gaudy Hawaiian shirt and matching shorts, ponytail bobbing beneath a headband. Mr. Mojo follows in a tiny matching shirt and sunglasses. An attendant hurries to meet them.

MASON  
How's a guy supposed to tell whose  
jet is whose?

He spots another delegation across the runway.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Who's that?

ATTENDANT  
Peace summit week, sir. That's  
Chancellor Helga Von Strudel-  
Hammer.

MASON  
Strudel-Hammer indeed.

He steals a glance as he strides toward a waiting SUV. Mr. Mojo notices -- and tries to cover Mason's eyes with his small hands.

MASON (CONT'D)  
(gently pushing Mojo's  
hands away)  
Easy, buddy. Just looking.

EXT. O'AHU OBSERVATORY - SUNSET

Tom and Charlie pass the vegetable beds. Empty. No Groundskeeper. No straw-hatted robots.

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 drape over a long picnic table. Plates, beers, half-eaten burgers.

Patch flips the last burger on the smart grill; holographic readouts hover in the smoke.

TOM

We didn't break it -- we just found some really cool doors.

CHARLIE

Every object carries its own Signature from the moment it's formed. When we hitchhike a message onto that Signature, we're using its original timestamp as the address.

PATCH

That lines up with entanglement. Weird as hell. But useful.

KIKI

"Useful" is a dangerous word for something that bends time.

They all pause, letting that sink in.

PATCH

Wait -- Tom, think about it. North Shore froze us out. What if a little future intel kept the lights on?

Tom's hand touches his hoodie pocket -- the Powerball numbers. Charlie clocks it. A tiny wordless: not yet.

KIKI

Patch --

PATCH

Just enough to stay afloat -- not  
rewrite the planet.

CHARLIE

I just met you guys, but maybe it's  
a little early to start planning  
how to take over the world.

TOM

Agree. We'll need some house rules.

A quiet beat. Surf rolls below. Sunset fades to gold.

EVERYONE

To house rules.

They toast. A BUZZ builds -- engines and distant voices.

PATCH

Uh-oh.

KIKI

The party. Totally forgot.

TOM

Perfect.

Laughter and distant music drift in.

EXT. O'AHU OBSERVATORY ROAD - NIGHT

Moonlight glints off a PRIVATE PROPERTY sign. Beyond it, a  
matte-black SUV idles under trees. Mason leans against the  
hood, Mr. Mojo on his shoulder.

ON SCREEN (BLAINE OPS): O'AHU OBSERVATORY / PUBLIC EVENT  
TRAFFIC.

Engines rumble. Headlights slice through the trees. A  
FUTURISTIC VW-STYLE CAMPER VAN drifts to a stop, glowsticks  
bouncing inside.

MASON

That's my ticket.

A side window slides open.

SURFER FRIEND ONE

Party run, brah. You know Tom?

MASON  
Do I know Dr. Tom Calder,  
astrophysicist extraordinaire?  
Absolutely.

The SLIDING DOOR KICKS OPEN.

SURFER FRIEND TWO  
Dude. You can ride with us.

Mason grins, pats Mr. Mojo.

MASON  
(to Mr. Mojo)  
Guard the realm, little buddy.

Hands yank Mason inside. The door SLAMS. The van peels out.

MONTAGE - MASON'S CONVOY - NIGHT

The camper winds up the mountain road. Mason pops up through the sunroof, arms spread, hair whipping, laughing. The convoy SCREECHES TO A STOP beside the observatory. Mason steps out, grin sharper than ever.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - COURTYARD - NIGHT

TOM  
Oh. My. God. Mason Blaine.

CHARLIE  
How the hell did he get here?

SURFER FRIEND ONE  
Mason's awesome! We picked him up  
roadside.

TOM  
What are you doing here?

MASON  
Same as you, Doctor. Waiting for  
the guests of honor.

Mason looks up at the sky, delighted.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Beautiful night. Look at that sky.  
You can see every star.

He squints.

MASON (CONT'D)  
No, wait. Those are my satellites.

He laughs, too pleased with himself.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Funny thing about owning half the  
sky. You start noticing what's  
worth owning on the ground.

His gaze drifts toward the observatory.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Beautiful ridge.

From a Jeep, a long black OPTICS CASE appears.

TOM  
Where'd that come from?

SURFER FRIEND TWO  
Borrowed it. Got the physics-lab  
key.

MASON  
Nice. I've got the keys to the  
universe. Well -- my wife does.

Surfers laugh and clap him on the back.

SURFER FRIEND ONE  
Fire pit's calling, Mason!

They sweep him off. Mason raises his arms like a rock star.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - RIDGE

Charlie and Tom walk barefoot up the ridge, wine in hand.  
Stars spilling above.

TOM  
These are my friends. My whole  
world's a little crazy -- but it's  
mine.

CHARLIE  
Yeah. But you're the one holding up  
the Signature Theory.

Tom shrugs.

TOM  
How about I teach you to surf  
tomorrow?

CHARLIE  
(eyes meeting his)  
I'd really love that.

They pause. Eyes locked. A faint green shimmer ripples briefly around them -- an audible hum tucked beneath the night air.

TOM  
(quietly)  
You feel that?

CHARLIE  
(softly)  
Yeah.

Tom slips his jacket around her shoulders. As they start back down the ridge:

TOM  
This is where I fly.

CHARLIE  
My seatbelt's fastened. I'm not  
getting off this ride.

They head back down. Below, Mason looks up from the fire and catches the last line. Not the science -- the devotion. His smile thins as they pass.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY COURTYARD - SAME

The surfers haul the black OPTICS CASE onto a table. Mason runs a hand along it.

MASON  
Let me hold that a second.

He pops the latches, pulls out a sleek LASER RIG, and lifts it high. The crowd whoops.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Now this -- feels like destiny.

He flips the switch.

WHHMMM.

A piercing beam of emerald light slices across the ocean -- sharp, controlled.

SURFER FRIEND ONE  
Dude, the whole wave lights up!

SURFER FRIEND THREE  
Mason, you just invented night surfing! Legend!

CROWD  
Mason! Mason! Mason!

MASON  
Love you guys!

He fires the laser upward. A beam of green light spears the night, flaring against the moon. Tom and Charlie watch from the ridge. A faint green shimmer ripples around them -- then fades.

CHARLIE  
You feel that?

TOM  
Yes.

He taps his WRIST WATCH.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Teddy, you there?

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Always.

TOM  
Patch in Sydney.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Already dialing.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

A small fire crackles. Franny and Norm sit in old lawn chairs, marshmallows on coat hangers. Nova lies beside a bag of marshmallows. Stars sprawl overhead.

NORM  
You ever wonder where all this ends up?

FRANNY

Right now? Ends with the perfect  
marshmallow. Golden brown -- zero  
burn.

They tap skewers like glasses.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

First one's yours.

Norm takes it. Franny bites her own -- then her phone BUZZES.  
A faint green shimmer pulses briefly around Franny -- blink-  
and-miss.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Yeah?

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Mom -- I need a fresh silver  
sample, fast. We're running a live  
reverse experiment.

FRANNY

Alright. I'm coming. And I'm not  
touching that thing you built --  
you just need something molecularly  
transformed, right?

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Exactly. Sharp change leaves the  
cleanest lock.

Franny eyes the marshmallow, then the fire.

FRANNY

(laughing)

Guess who's about to make history  
with a marshmallow.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

You're serious?

FRANNY

Dead serious.

NORM

(toasting)

To the marshmallow universe.

They clink sticks. Nova snorts and settles.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Tom stands off to the side, iScroll glowing.

TOM  
Mania, Teddy -- are we synced?

MANIA (V.O.)  
Online.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Lasers locked.

TOM  
Teddy, bring Sydney and Antarctica  
online. Night at both -- tell them  
to step outside, phones ready.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
Both observatories on standby --  
live visual capture confirmed.

KIKI (V.O.)  
So what exactly are we doing here?

TOM  
Nevada sent the first signal; now  
Hawaii sends it back. If both ends  
fire in real time, we complete the  
quantum circuit -- proof the  
Highway's alive.

PATCH (V.O.)  
And if it's not?

TOM  
Then we just burn a marshmallow in  
two time zones.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Teddy, get ready -- we're sending  
in three -- two -- one --

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - SAME

The lab door swings open. Franny and Norm step in. Franny  
flips the wall switch. LIGHTS SNAP ON. The lab hums to life.  
On the microscope rig: her diagnostic reader.

It twitches.

Franny lowers the phone.

FRANNY  
 ...Charlie.

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: FRANNY - NEVADA LAB

RIGHT: CHARLIE - NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY

CHARLIE  
 Yeah?

FRANNY  
 What are you doing with my reader?

CHARLIE  
 I borrowed it.

FRANNY  
 You didn't borrow it. You aimed it  
 at a door it was never built to  
 open.

CHARLIE  
 I thought I was stabilizing it.  
 Maybe I was feeding it.

A beat. Franny's voice drops -- not softer, heavier.

FRANNY  
 It listens. Your rig's been making  
 it shout. No address. No exit  
 coordinates.

CHARLIE  
 Mom...

FRANNY  
 I didn't say don't use it. I said  
 don't shove a message through it  
 without an address.

END SPLIT SCREEN.

Norm steps in.

NORM  
 So if we run these tests -- are we  
 causing more ripples?

FRANNY  
 No. What you felt before was a  
 broadcast -- open pulse, no  
 address.

NORM

Like shouting into a canyon.

FRANNY

Every time you shout, the canyon walls thin. You've been forcing signals through a system that wasn't built for brute entry. The source starts losing its edges.

NORM

That's what's been happening --

FRANNY

Closed loop fixes it. Stored Signature, recreated Signature. Clean handshake. Nothing bleeds. Once the noise clears, you'll see what the Highway looks like when you stop fighting it.

Franny turns a hidden collar on the reader. The twitching stops. Its glow narrows to a steady seam.

She glances at the phone.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Charlie -- stay with me.

She produces a lighter and a marshmallow. Holds it over the flame -- turning it. The tip catches. Sugar caramelizes, then smokes.

NORM

It's burning!

FRANNY

Something's shifting.

Norm blows the flame out. Franny sets the marshmallow under the reader.

MANIA (V.O.)

System stable. Capture sequence ready.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Capturing Signature pattern -- moment locked.

FRANNY

North Shore link open. Hawaii is live.

TEDDY (V.O.)  
 Nevada feed confirmed. Sample  
 uploaded -- laser sync established.  
 Ready to complete the circuit.

FRANNY  
 Alright. Let's do it right.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Patch lifts the portable Laser Unit to his shoulder.

TOM  
 Point it at the sky -- safer that  
 way.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
 Tom -- if this works, we crack it  
 open.

TOM  
 Then let's do it.

He steadies the device. A soft green pulse hums at the beam's  
 tip.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 Firing in three -- two -- one --

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

A digital pulse of green light fires up through the  
 microscope, venting through the roof into the night sky.

NORM  
 Look at that --

FRANNY  
 Holy smokes.

EXT. SPACE

A powerful harmonic hum fills the void as the beam expands --  
 rippling across the upper atmosphere. The sky unfurls with  
 quantum-green aurora around the entire planet, a living halo  
 wrapping Earth as the Quantum Highway becomes visible at  
 planetary scale.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

The sky unfurls with quantum-green aurora across the night sky above the Hawaiian mountains, refracting along the waterline. Charlie stands at the observatory rail, eyes lifted. She turns to Tom. Tom meets her gaze. They step closer, embrace, and share their first kiss.

EXT. SYDNEY OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Three surfer-scientists stand on a coastal bluff, phones raised.

SURFER-SCIENTIST ONE  
Mate -- you seeing this?

EXT. ANTARCTICA OBSERVATORY - POLAR NIGHT

Two scientists step out, tethered by safety lines, parkas rimed with frost, each holding up a phone. A strained emerald light dances across the black sky.

ARCTIC TECH  
It's everywhere...

INT. CHARLIE'S LAB - LATER

Franny and Norm stand beneath the roof vent. Emerald light rolls over them as the power core winds down.

FRANNY  
Charlie, Tom -- you did it. You've shown the doorway is real.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Thanks, Mom. Love you.

Patch and Kiki stand together, hands clasped. They point upward, sharing the moment. A distant view of the observatory -- lights glowing as the coherent emerald glow moves across the sky.

Charlie stands at the rail as Tom wraps his arms around her from behind. They look up together, eyes wet, breathing steady.

EXT. O'AHU OBSERVATORY - FIRE PIT

Mason snores in a chair, leis askew. Flames and monitor-light play across his face.

The Quantum Highway glitches -- for a half-beat, the image twitches sideways with a sharp static tick -- then it snaps back. The side table JOLTS. Drinks SKITTER and CLATTER to the ground.

Mason SNORTS awake.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The party glows behind them. Tom and Charlie drift away together toward the quiet picnic table.

TOM

Charlie... you look like you're in deep thought.

She exhales.

CHARLIE

My granddad. Out of nowhere. I'm standing on a mountain in Hawaii and he just -- shows up.

Tom slips his denim jacket around her shoulders.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You ever wonder if the thought starts on their side?

They arrive at the picnic table and sit. Two wine glasses wait.

TOM

Yeah. Me too. We both want to believe that.

Charlie looks out into the dark a beat longer than she means to.

CHARLIE

My granddad used to tap the workbench three times before he started anything. He said broken things still talk if you listen long enough. Some mornings I still wait for it.

Charlie pours him a little wine.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You were going to tell me your  
secret -- how you found the door to  
the Quantum Highway.

Tom smiles.

TOM

Right. The big secret.

He leans in slightly.

TOM (CONT'D)

It was all about frequency.  
Everything has resonance --  
objects, light, sound -- even the  
Highway. When I fired that tone, it  
held. And I heard it answer back. A  
knock. Then -- "aloha."

CHARLIE

You used sound to reach the Quantum  
Highway.

TOM

Exactly. And I think that's how  
your mom's little gizmo works too --  
tuned to frequency.

A quiet beat.

TOM (CONT'D)

Want to feel it?

CHARLIE

Feel what?

TOM

Same principle. Wet your finger.

She does.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now circle the rim. Slow and  
steady.

A faint squeal.

CHARLIE

That sounded terrible.

TOM

No -- almost. Here --

He gently guides her hand. Their fingers overlap. Both notice. Neither pulls away. The tone deepens -- pure, haunting. A soft green mist rises from the rim in living coils as the vibration builds. A low harmonic hum moves through the table -- and through them.

CHARLIE  
(soft, amazed)  
Yeah -- I feel it.

TOM  
That vibration -- that's the door.

They lift their glasses.

CHARLIE  
To the door.

TOM  
To the Highway.

They clink.

The tone fades as the last wisp of mist drifts into the starlight.

EXT. 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.

TOM  
You two hold the fort. Charlie's getting a crash course in surfing.

KIKI  
I know the perfect spot -- calm surf, mostly locals. I'll send the pin.

TOM  
Perfect. Plans for the day?

KIKI  
Cleanup, hydration, maybe find my left sock.

CHARLIE  
Anyone got blackout shades?

Tom nudges her, grinning. They exit arm in arm.

INT. DORM BATHROOM

Kiki and Patch resume brushing. The door clicks shut behind the lovers.

PATCH  
Did they --?

KIKI  
Obviously.

PATCH  
Good for them. Honestly, kind of inspiring.

KIKI  
Don't get ideas. You have toothpaste on your chin.

They smile faintly at the mirror.

EXT. OCEANFRONT VILLA - HAWAII - SAME TIME

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.

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.

A pause. Then, softer than usual:

MILDRED (V.O.)  
Mason.

The line dies. Mason holds the phone against his chest, sinks into the water in his suit, then lets the phone slip under.

EXT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Morning sunlight glints off wet leaves. A rustic COFFEE SHOP perches on a hilltop. PATRONS sip coffee. A WORKER in a green bistro smock moves between tables -- seen only from behind. TOM and CHARLIE approach.

Near the entrance, two island PEACE VOLUNTEERS strum a soft protest tune beside a hand-painted sign: MAKE ALOHA, NOT WAR.

PEACE VOLUNTEER  
Spare anything for peace?

Tom drops a dollar in the jar without breaking stride.

CHARLIE  
Generous.

TOM  
Seemed easier than explaining the  
plan.

At a patio table sits HANK -- the same man Tom saved earlier -  
- beside his wife, SHARLENE. A faint plastic HOSPITAL  
WRISTBAND still circles Hank's wrist. HANK lights a CIGAR  
with a MATCH -- then drops it into a wet ashtray.

A HAND slides in with a napkin, swaps the ashtray, and takes  
the wet one away.

HANK  
Thanks.

Hank's eyes catch Tom.

HANK (CONT'D)  
Hey... do I know you from  
somewhere?

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

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Post-party dazed, Tom and Charlie step to the counter. Two  
synchronized TWIN SISTERS collect matching cold brews from  
the BARISTA. A faint green shimmer passes briefly through the  
space around them in perfect sync, then dissipates.

Tom watches them go.

TOM  
Huh.

CHARLIE  
What?

TOM  
Nothing. Just... perfect timing.

Tom slides the barista a folded YELLOW POST-IT, numbers  
scribbled across it.

TOM (CONT'D)

Two iced lattes -- and can you run these Powerball numbers for us?

CHARLIE

We need grant money, not a gift card.

TOM

Not a hobby anymore. If we win, we keep the lights on -- and we keep the science safe.

The GRINDER WHIRS. Tom taps his card.

BARISTA

Here's your ticket.

DING! The cafe door swings open. MASON strides in, heading straight to the counter. Mr. Mojo climbs onto the counter beside him.

TOM

Oh great. Our sponsor just walked in.

CHARLIE

Maybe he's here for a banana-smoothie relapse.

Mason at the counter.

MASON

...and two carrot muffins, please. Thanks.

The barista bags the order. HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER, already at the counter, notices Mason.

HELGA

You're the gentleman from the runway.

Mason smiles, smoothing his hair.

MASON

Guilty.

She hands him a business card.

HELGA

If you ever lose the monkey... call me.

She turns away. Across the cafe, the iScroll lights up --  
BBBZZZZ.

TOM  
Oh -- this is the surf spot Kiki  
promised. Cool.

Mr. Mojo freezes mid-sniff, ears twitching. Recognition hits.

MR. MOJO  
Eek! Eek!

He flails to get Mason's attention -- his arm sweeps through  
the air just as Helga steps up to retrieve her coffee. The  
cup tips --

SPLAT!

Hot coffee splashes across her blue blazer.

HELGA  
Mein Gott! My suit!

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.

Up at the beach access road, a police motorcycle blocks  
traffic as black summit SUVs sweep toward Honolulu, flags  
snapping: HAWAI'I PEACE SUMMIT. Tom and Charlie watch in  
silence. Then, farther down the beach, MASON approaches with  
his entourage: SECURITY GUARD, ASSISTANT, and Mr. Mojo,  
rocking sunglasses and a lei.

MASON  
Dr. Calder! Wild party last night.  
Mason Blaine -- Blaine  
Communications, Satellites, and the  
Blaine Foundation.

TOM  
Right. Thanks for the grant cash  
over the years.

MASON

Rough morning at North Shore, I hear.

TOM

How do you know about that?

MASON

Money hears things before people do. Vision without proof gets expensive.

MASON (CONT'D)

North Shore has a beautiful view. My real estate division made an inquiry.

CHARLIE

Yeah, being a billionaire must be rough.

MASON

Anyway. Here's the deal. I'll bankroll your research for the next decade. Full funding. No questions.

TOM

And what do you get?

MASON

In exchange, I want to be the first to greet our special guests. An ambassador for Earth -- with tech benefits.

TOM

That's quite the offer, Mr. Blaine.

MASON

Please. Mason. We're friends now. So what do you say?

CHARLIE

(elbows Tom)

You want to know the spot? The landing spot. Tell him, Tom.

Tom blinks, remembers Kiki's message, then plays along. He pulls out his iScroll.

TOM

Right, the landing site. Well then, Mason, you win. It's here.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

It's actually going to happen right here.

He tilts the iScroll toward Mason.

ON SCREEN:

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

MASON

(thrilled)

This is the spot! Exactly! Perfect!

CHARLIE

Cool. So we have a deal?

MASON

Handshake?

TOM

Just put on sunscreen.

MASON

Then a verbal one it is.

Mason grabs Tom's hand anyway, pumping hard.

MASON (CONT'D)

(to Assistant)

Excellent. Round up every influencer -- crypto, mystic, sci-fi, TikTok. Tonight we greet destiny.

Mason strides off. Mr. Mojo salutes with his tiny sword.

INT. FRANK'S GAS STATION - EARLY MORNING

Dim light slants through dusty windows. Franny and Norm sit at the counter in PAJAMAS. The screen door CREAKS as Quinnman steps in, boots dusty, a folded NEWSPAPER under his arm. He drops the paper on the counter. A banner headline: PACIFIC ON EDGE -- WORLD LEADERS RUSH TO HAWAII FOR LAST-CHANCE TALKS.

QUINNMAN

Morning, sunshine. We've got a hiccup.

FRANNY

The kids?

QUINNMAN

They cracked the timeline. Planet's  
about to tie itself in knots.

FRANNY

With what?

Franny exhales.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

So much for retirement.

Quinnman taps his TAMBOURINE once -- a quiet metronome -- and hums those same few bars.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

You've been humming that since  
1969. You ever gonna finish it?

QUINNMAN

When I remember how it ends. Ship's  
outside, humming.

FRANNY

Yeah. Okay.

She rises, grabbing her keys. Quinnman notices BOBO clipped to the Woodstock hat. He unpins the tiny stuffed monkey and slips it into his coat pocket before Franny reaches the door.

QUINNMAN

Let's go unfry time.

EXT. FRANK'S GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

They step into a pale dawn. The wind stirs. A faint green shimmer bends the air as a faint harmonic hum rides the dawn. The ship isn't visible.

QUINNMAN

Could get messy, Franny.

FRANNY

When doesn't it?

They head toward the shimmer.

EXT. BEACH BREAK - AFTERNOON

Sunlight shimmers. Tom stands waist-deep, steadying Charlie's board as she balances on her knees, trying not to laugh and not to fall.

CHARLIE

If you dump me on purpose, I get custody of the Powerball ticket.

TOM

That was not dumping. That was wave simulation.

He bumps the board with one hand. She wobbles, grabs his shoulder, and splashes him with her free hand.

CHARLIE

That was sabotage with dimples.

TOM

The ocean has dimples.

A beat of laughter. Then Charlie looks past him, toward the observatory on the hill.

CHARLIE

Maybe it's time we stop. Pack it up and throw away the key.

The board rocks softly beneath her. Tom keeps one hand on it.

TOM

Charlie --

CHARLIE

We have the ticket. Money isn't the reason anymore.

TOM

It was never just money. It's Kiki. Patch. My mother. Everyone who stayed when the room got quiet.

CHARLIE

I know. That's why I'm asking before the miracle starts owning us too.

That lands harder than the wave. He looks away. No answer comes fast enough.

TOM

We bring them in. Dinner. Everybody gets a say.

CHARLIE

Fine.

TOM

Fine.

A swell lifts behind her. Tom gives the board a push -- maybe a little too clean, maybe a little too hard.

TOM (CONT'D)

Here comes your wave.

She catches it, wobbles, drops to one knee, then pops back up laughing despite herself.

CHARLIE

You did that on purpose!

TOM

That was the ocean.

MONTAGE - LEARNING TO SURF

Tom watches her wipe out, pop up laughing, then finally ride clean -- fully upright, glowing. Tom paddles nearby, proud, still thinking about what she said.

EXT. SECLUDED BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Twilight settles. Tiki torches line a sand path toward a glittering luau -- dancers in silhouette, tables draped in floral cloth. Mason walks the path like a monarch on opening night, his ASSISTANT beside him with a clipboard.

MASON'S ASSISTANT

Over here, sir -- banquet dinner, traditional dancers, full Hawaiian flair.

Mr. Mojo sits on a table nearby, nibbling pineapple.

MASON'S ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Your YouTube influencers will be set up here to stream the moment you make first contact.

MASON

What a wonderful moment it will be.

They reach the centerpiece -- a throne made of pineapple husks. Mason sits. Mr. Mojo hops onto a stool beside him.

MASON (CONT'D)

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

EXT. O'AHU 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

Dinner prep everywhere. Bowls, buns, chopped pineapple. Tom, Charlie, Kiki, and Patch orbit the kitchen table with too much to do and too much unsaid.

Patch clocks Tom and Charlie avoiding the same side of the counter.

PATCH

Did surfing go badly, or did one of you break paradise?

KIKI

Please say paradise. I had money on paradise.

Charlie almost smiles. Tom does not.

CHARLIE

I asked if maybe we should stop.

PATCH

Stop what?

TOM

Our work. The tests, the data, everything that shows how we stabilize access.

KIKI

You're serious.

TOM

Observatory access is gone. Mason is circling. We have a winning lottery ticket in our pocket, and I still wanted to keep pushing. So Charlie asked the right question.

CHARLIE

Not because I want to bury it. Because I need to know it does not bury us.

PATCH

Tom -- think of what you could stop. Disasters. Wars. You'd have the keys to --

TOM

Or start. That's the problem. Once it's out, it's out.

PATCH

So we just throw it away? Three years of my life is in those models. Kiki's too.

KIKI

And for the record, I did not stay here because the retirement plan was awesome.

She looks at Tom, softer beneath the bite.

KIKI (CONT'D)

I stayed because you were right before anybody else could see it.

PATCH

And because you let me build garden robots with hats.

KIKI

Also that.

Patch looks to Charlie.

PATCH

And you built a universe-door in a garage. Which is annoying, because now my meat printer feels underachieving.

Charlie laughs once, relieved despite herself. Tom finally looks at her.

CHARLIE

I do not want to disappear back into that garage.

TOM

You won't.

CHARLIE

Then promise me we decide what kind of people we are before the universe decides for us.

Tom reaches across the table. Charlie meets him halfway.  
Their hands lock.

TOM

No sale. No ownership. No public  
release. If the safest thing is  
burying it, we bury it together.

PATCH

That is the worst Kumbaya I have  
ever heard.

KIKI

Still counts.

Patch puts his hand over theirs. Kiki rolls her eyes, then  
adds hers too.

TEDDY (V.O.)

Permission to initiate purge --  
group approval required.

TOM

Approved.

CHARLIE

I knew before you said it. I'm in.

PATCH

(quiet)  
Yeah.

KIKI

I hate this.  
(beat)  
Yes.

TEDDY (V.O.)

Confirmed. All documents, data, and  
research will now be erased.

The monitors go dark. One by one. The hum drops out. The room  
feels suddenly empty.

Nobody speaks. The surf outside is the only sound.

Tom stares at the dead screens. Not grief exactly. The  
specific weight of a choice you can't take back.

Charlie sits beside him. Just there. Kiki turns away. One  
hand covers her mouth, then lowers.

Patch sets his camera down carefully. Like it deserves that.  
The surf outside is the only sound in the world.

Tom reaches for Charlie's hand. She takes it. Not victory.  
Choice.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SECLUDED BEACH - GOLDEN HOUR (EARLY)

Tiki torches flicker. Mason squints up at the sky.

MASON

Holy... wow.

Around him, the influencer circus hums -- vloggers, gurus,  
drones. Mr. Mojo lowers his tiny sunglasses, covers his ears,  
then points skyward.

MASON (CONT'D)

What is it, buddy? Too loud?

Mr. Mojo keeps his ears covered. Mason follows his gaze.

MASON (CONT'D)

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

He turns to his Assistant.

MASON (CONT'D)

Tell everyone to clear out. We're  
scaring them off.

ASSISTANT

All of them, sir?

MASON

Everyone. Go.

The crowd filters out. Mason waits until the last torchbearer  
vanishes. Only surf and crackling torches.

MASON (CONT'D)

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

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 (CONT'D)  
Guys! Out here, now!

INT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

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

PATCH  
Spaceship!

CHARLIE  
Oh man. My mom's here.

TOM  
Your mom's what?

CHARLIE  
Yeah... this probably isn't good.  
It's kind of a long story.

TOM  
Your mom's an alien?

CHARLIE  
Family secret. Not exactly first-  
date material.

The warm off-white LUMMA hovers overhead -- sleek and elegant. Soft white mist rolls beneath her as landing gear descends. A ramp folds down. Double doors part. The doorway remains dark. FRANNY steps out, holding a bottle of sunscreen.

FRANNY  
You forgot this, dear.

CHARLIE  
Thanks, Mom.

They step into each other's arms -- brief, real. A faint white shimmer drifts between them, pulsing once before fading.

TOM  
You weren't surprised.

CHARLIE  
Family secrets. She's not exactly  
from here.

FRANNY

Close enough. Something's gone wrong. Quinnman and I are here to help you stabilize it.

Lumma answers with a low, whale-deep tone. Nobody speaks for a beat.

She taps a small silver chip on her forehead -- her pajamas dissolve into a sleek, glowing suit that catches the ship's light.

KIKI

That's a cool trick.

QUINNMAN steps out through the open doors, adjusting his pineapple pants, a crumpled newspaper under his arm.

CHARLIE

Hi, Uncle Quinnman.

QUINNMAN

Hi, everyone.  
(to Charlie)  
Missed you, my little starshine.

TOM

You were at the airport.

KIKI

You delivered Chinese.

PATCH

Now a spaceship?  
(beat)  
Wait... you're an alien too?

QUINNMAN

Let's just call me a total freak of nature, but without the attitude.

FRANNY

Aside from sunscreen, we're here because you tangled a few timelines. Accidentally kicked off World War III. It started at a coffee shop earlier today.

Quinnman goes still.

QUINNMAN

We watched it happen. Our timeline. The one where nobody came back.

That lands. Charlie looks at Tom. He already understands.

CHARLIE  
(to Tom, realizing)  
The lottery ticket.

TOM  
We stopped there to buy it.

KIKI  
(confused)  
What lottery ticket?

FRANNY  
It's more about what happened in  
the coffee shop.

QUINNMAN  
There was that monkey who freaked  
out once he recognized you guys and  
ended up spilling coffee all over a  
woman in a blue suit.

That lady? Chancellor Helga Von Strudel-Hammer. Peace-talks  
leader. She missed the meeting. Talks collapsed.

Kiki looks out toward the darkening water, trying to picture  
a war starting from a coffee stain.

PATCH  
From that?

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - GOLDEN HOUR (PEAK)

Lumma sits quietly on her struts, hull matte off-white under  
tropical light. She inhales -- a deep, slow breath -- and  
exhales with a soft, resonant sigh. A faint white shimmer  
stirs beneath her -- then gone.

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

FRANNY  
Alien? No. Earth doesn't own human  
DNA. Our planet's been around a  
little longer, and as a result, we  
know what not to touch.

TOM  
So if you're from another planet...  
how did you end up here?

FRANNY

Long story. I was traveling with Charlie's uncle Quinnman, and we took a detour. We came for the music.

Quinnman smirks.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A thunder of sound and color -- hundreds of thousands in mud and sunlight. Flags wave. Smoke drifts.

QUINNMAN (V.O.)

Woodstock '69. We weren't the only ones who came for the music.

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

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

A quiet field beyond the festival grounds. Tall wheat ripples in morning mist. THREE SHIPS DESCEND, luminous and organic, landing in soft bursts of color. They shrink, caught by waiting hands.

As the travelers walk, we glimpse them mid-shift -- a furred giant, an upright octopus-form, an ant-form with faceted eyes -- then they MORPH INTO HUMAN. Scales to skin, light to denim.

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

Quinnman gestures them up the ramp. Patch approaches Lumma's entrance. The doors open to complete darkness. A semi-translucent wall of liquid light ripples across the doorway -- thin as water, soft as breath.

PATCH

What is that -- some kind of force field?

FRANNY

Only one way to find out.

Patch presses his hand against it. The surface dents inward like water under pressure, then flows around his arm without moisture.

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

He pulls back -- perfectly dry, faintly luminous.

QUINNMAN  
Lumma's stabilizing you.

FRANNY  
Easy.

PATCH  
Still sounds bad.

He takes a breath and steps through the open doorway. The membrane -- clear as warm glass, thick as still water -- ripples over him without sticking. More like being accepted than entering.

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

Charlie, Tom, and Kiki reach for their phones and pass them through the doorway.

INT. LUMMA - MAIN FLOOR - DARK

Three hands shove phones through the membrane, flashlights blazing. The liquid wall ripples around each wrist.

Patch grabs one.

PATCH  
Well... that was fast.

He pans the flashlight. Warm amber light begins to rise from the curved greige walls. Above them, a central staircase leads upward. One by one everyone passes through -- 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 FLOOR / LOFT / MAIN DECK - CONTINUOUS

Light blooms throughout the interior. Patch drops onto a leather couch, stunned. Kiki grabs a space cookie from a nearby tray.

PATCH  
Damn -- that view. And this  
leather.

Tom climbs to the loft, scanning the stations.

LUMMA  
I see you've found our science lab.

TOM  
Lab, lounge, view -- everything one  
could ask for.

CHARLIE  
This lab's insane.

She clocks something.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Quinnman -- why don't you come up  
here. We need your expertise.

Franny presses a red button on the wall. The ceiling opens. A circular lift lowers with pilot seats attached.

Quinnman hops on.

QUINNMAN  
Watch your fingers and toes.

INT. LUMMA - FLYBRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tom settles into the left pilot chair. Quinnman slides into the right. Franny stands just behind, braced between the seats.

QUINNMAN

Lumma flies kind of like a flight simulator -- except she's real. Small moves.

FRANNY

Straight to Mason. Quiet and low down the ridge.

LUMMA

Destination locked -- Mason's luau.

Franny leans to the intercom.

FRANNY (INTO INTERCOM)

Everyone -- sit down and hold on. Tom's driving.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

A visible white shimmer rolls across Lumma's hull as she lifts off the ground. Lumma creeps forward off the ridge -- branches brush and SNAP along her underside.

INT. LUMMA - FLYBRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tom winces, feathering the controls.

FRANNY

Up. Gently. Don't chase it.

Tom loosens his grip. Lumma rises. The snapping stops.

QUINNMAN

There. Let her settle.

Tom exhales, locked in.

EXT. SKY OVER O'AHU - NIGHT

Lumma glides down the mountain -- silent and impossible. Ahead, firelight flickers along the coast.

EXT. SKY ABOVE MASON'S LUAU - NIGHT

Lumma steadies about five hundred feet up. Below: drums, torches, pineapple husks. She eases lower, slipping behind palms and smoke.

EXT. MASON'S LUAU - SAME TIME

Mason slouches on his throne. Mr. Mojo perches beside him. Mason squints upward. A shape moves across the torch haze -- there, then gone.

MASON

What the --

INT. LUMMA - SECOND FLOOR LAB - TWILIGHT

Kiki freezes at a console.

KIKI

Lumma -- can you translate that signal from --

LUMMA (V.O.)

Processing.

BOB (V.O.)

Hello. This is Bob. How are you?

The crew goes still. Nobody breathes.

KIKI

Did that just --

PATCH

That was a voice. That was a voice from space.

TOM

Everyone quiet.

A long beat. The translation hums faintly in the air.

CHARLIE

That's... that's first contact. That's actual first contact.

FRANNY

Not exactly. More like a neighbor you haven't met yet.

QUINNMAN

That's Bob. Oversized bark snail. Big on deep-space chatter.

KIKI

A snail.

QUINNMAN

Radio operator with a shell.

PATCH

We're standing on an alien ship,  
receiving a message from a snail in  
another galaxy, and nobody's  
writing this down?

KIKI

I don't think anyone would believe  
us.

EXT. BOB'S PLANET - DEEP SPACE

A luminous forest world. Bioluminescent growths pulse softly.  
Bob munches broccoli.

BACK TO:

INT. LUMMA - NIGHT

CHARLIE

So when I transmitted the knock  
from my lab --

FRANNY

Charlie said hello. Bob said hello  
back.

TOM

What sends a signal like that?

FRANNY

Bob's brain. No tech required.

Tom leans against the console. Processing.

TOM

An organism that transmits across  
the Quantum Highway using thought  
alone.

CHARLIE

So he's proof. He's proof the  
Highway isn't just physics. It's  
biology. It's consciousness.

A beat. The weight of it settling.

KIKI

Do we answer?

TOM  
We have to.

QUINNMAN  
Absolutely.

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Replying now.

EXT. ORBIT ABOVE EARTH - NIGHT

A soft green pulse rolls outward from Lumma's hull.

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Message delivered. Bob received.

EXT. BEACH - FULL NIGHT

The luau lies in ruins. Torches sputter. Mason slumps on the throne, gravity stick pulsing at his belt. Mr. Mojo perches beside him, munching a banana.

MASON  
What now?

Mr. Mojo points skyward. Mason squints.

MASON (CONT'D)  
Hold her there.

He lifts the gravity stick, aiming high. A cone of emerald light shoots upward, wrapping the ship.

INT. SPACESHIP - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE  
What the heck is that?

LUMMA (V.O.)  
External unauthorized gravity device engaged. Franny, I believe that's your gravity stick.

FRANNY  
That's what happened to it! Mason must have stolen it in Nevada!

TOM  
Unbelievable.

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Ship is now stable. Lock slipped.

EXT. BEACH - FULL NIGHT

Mason lowers the gravity stick, annoyed.

MASON  
Must've been nothing.

Mason slouches in the throne. Mr. Mojo asleep on his shoulder.

MASON (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Master Control, prep blackout protocol. O'ahu first, full standby.

MASTER CONTROL (V.O.)  
Confirmed. Nodes armed.

He presses the trigger. A thin emerald beam streaks skyward.

MASON  
Stay on her.

The gravity stick vibrates. The lock shivers -- slips skyward. Overhead, a satellite jerks, then begins to descend -- slow, then screaming-fast.

A blinding flash.

The satellite SLAMS into the beach -- BOOM! -- sand and green-lit debris blasting outward. Mason and Mr. Mojo are thrown hard into the sand. Mason lifts his head. Stares at the smoking crater. Debris still falling.

A long beat.

MASON (CONT'D)  
That was... that came from up there.

He looks at the gravity stick in his hand. Then at the sky. Then at the crater.

Another beat. His face drains.

MASON (CONT'D)  
That was one of my satellites. That was a four-hundred-million-dollar satellite.

Mr. Mojo pats Mason's arm. Mason doesn't move.

MASON (CONT'D)

I just pulled my own satellite out  
of orbit.

He stares at the smoking crater, hair hanging loose and tangled. The reality lands slow, in waves.

He can't look away.

Mason blinks hard, grabs his phone with a shaking hand.

MASON (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Master Control. Stand down. Kill  
the blackout. Kill the stream. Send  
everybody home.

MASTER CONTROL (V.O.)

Confirmed.

Mason looks at the gravity stick, then lets it fall from his hand into the sand.

INT. LUMMA COCKPIT - NIGHT

O'ahu's power grid collapses. Only Mason's luau glows against the black sea.

TOM

That's him.

On Lumma's display, a satellite trajectory collapses into the coast. Emergency bands flare.

PATCH

He pulled something out of orbit.

TOM

Then this stops being research.

CHARLIE

We shut it down. All of it.

Franny steps forward, but Tom is still staring at Mason on Lumma's display.

TOM

Wait.

Quinnman slips a tiny stuffed monkey into Tom's palm. BOBO.

QUINNMAN

You'll know when it matters.

Tom stares at the toy. Recognition hits.

TOM

I saw this in your office.  
Woodstock.

FRANNY

Bobo?

TOM

Mason isn't listening for facts.  
He's listening for the story he's  
been telling himself since he was a  
kid.

CHARLIE

You want to give him first contact.

TOM

I want to give him a way to stop.

Franny takes that in. Then she produces a SMALL SILVER DISC, smooth, unmarked, humming faintly.

FRANNY

Visitor Pass.

She presses the disc -- FLASH -- cycles three impossible looks, then returns to herself.

TOM

Not costumes. Just enough for him  
to believe the story can answer  
back.

The disc hums, splitting into two. Franny hands one to Tom and one to Charlie.

FRANNY

Think it. Touch your temple.

QUINNMAN

Approaching the landing site. Get  
ready.

Tom and Charlie touch the discs to their temples -- FLASH. Lumma-grown suits form around them, future-sleek and strange. Their features shift just enough: deeper brow, reflective eyes, a faint primate echo under elegant alien symmetry. Not monkey costumes. Something Mason can believe.

CHARLIE  
Elegant nightmare monkey angels?

TOM  
Close enough.

LUMMA (V.O.)  
Descent sequence armed.

The ship tilts toward the island.

EXT. SPACESHIP - DESCENT - NIGHT

The hull catches moonlight -- matte off-white against the dark.

EXT. BEACH - FULL NIGHT

A wave rolls in -- silver-white in the ship's wash. Drifting smoke and twisted satellite panels. Mason's debris scattered.

Lumma lifts off the ground and pulses in mid-air, like a heartbeat wanting to be heard. Through the fog, THREE FIGURES emerge, walking slowly. We HOLD them in silhouette -- faces obscured by mist.

A faint cascade of stardust drifts from one figure's hand -- tiny galaxies dissolving before they hit the sand.

They navigate around the smoking debris. The shot holds for a long, suspenseful beat --

Complete silence. Waves break. Distant birds call. Five seconds of living stillness.

TOM (O.S.)  
Mason Blaine.

TOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
We are here on behalf of the  
Interdimensional Awards Committee.

MASON  
No... it can't be. I won a prize?

He stares upward, trembling.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)  
Humanity has called --

CHARLIE (COSMIC SHAMAN FORM)

To honor the one who believes he's  
chosen.

MASON

Yes! That's me -- Mr. Mojo and I  
stopped eight wars, you know!

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)

And of all beings, one stands  
worthy. Noble. Wise. And worth a  
prize.

Tom reaches to his own neck -- lifts a MEDALLION on a ribbon.  
It catches the moonlight.

MASON

The prophecy!

Tom pivots, shakes Mr. Mojo's tiny hand, then drapes the  
MEDALLION around his neck. Mojo's eyes light up -- a soft  
glow of bliss.

MASON (CONT'D)

No -- I'm the chosen one!

Mr. Mojo leans over and plants a tiny, sympathetic kiss on  
Mason's cheek. Only wind and waves answer.

TOM (CEREMONIAL FORM)

Mason -- if you weren't so busy  
trying to be chosen, you might've  
heard the universe when it knocked.

MASON

I wasn't always like this! I didn't  
ask for it. Childhood was a wreck!

FLASHBACK - EXT. WOODSTOCK - DAY (1969)

A muddy field under sunlight. Young Franny, laughing, plucks  
a flower from her hair. Young Mason's brother, panicking,  
looks for something to give back. His eyes fall on YOUNG  
MASON'S STUFFED MONKEY. Before Young Mason can protest, his  
brother grabs it and holds it up to Young Franny.

Young Franny grins, reaches down, accepts the monkey, and  
plants a kiss on Young Mason's brother's cheek.

MASON (V.O.)

He gave her my monkey. And I never  
got it back.

Onstage, Young Quinnman gives Young Franny a wink as they bow to the roaring crowd -- her hand clutching the little toy.

EXT. BEACH - FULL NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

TOM (ALIEN FORM)  
Franny. Woodstock. This was there  
before it was his.

Franny sees BOBO in Tom's hand. The memory lands.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)  
Oh, Mason...

MASON  
Bobo?

Tom steps closer, holding out the tiny monkey.

Mason doesn't reach. For a breath, he is a child again.

MASON (CONT'D)  
My brother gave him away.

He swallows, eyes fixed on Bobo.

MASON (CONT'D)  
I told myself it didn't matter.

TOM (ALIEN FORM)  
This isn't first contact. It's old  
contact, finally coming home.

Mason trembles, taking BOBO.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)  
Mason -- sometimes the universe  
knocks on the door long before  
we're ready to hear it.

She thumps her fist against her chest -- three heavy, rhythmic pulses. The Door Knock.

FRANNY (CONT'D)  
Find a little harmony in here --  
and you'll be surprised what starts  
answering back.

Mason absorbs it -- shaken, humbled.

MASON  
 (soft, raw)  
 I hear it. I... I think I finally  
 hear it.

Tom steps forward, kneels, and touches Mr. Mojo's finger. A soft spark arcs between them. Mr. Mojo chirps, then looks toward the tree line.

FRANNY (WOODSTOCK FORM)  
 Be free, little friend.

A FEMALE CAPUCHIN appears at the edge of the trees. Mr. Mojo looks at Mason. A long beat. Mason kneels. Mojo places one small hand against Mason's neck -- the same gesture from the Sanctuary. They hold there.

MASON  
 (barely audible)  
 Go on, buddy.

Mojo pulls away and bolts to the female. A faint green shimmer coils between their heads as they vanish into the darkness. Mason stays kneeling. His hand drifts to the empty space on his shoulder. The trio turn toward the ramp, silver sashes glinting.

They ascend into light. The ramp seals. The ship lifts -- leaving a soft green shimmer trailing upward.

MASON (CONT'D)  
 (quietly, to no one)  
 Wait --

The ship lifts higher. Mason stands alone, holding Bobo, watching it go. He doesn't move until the light disappears.

INT. SPACESHIP - COMMAND CORE - CONTINUOUS

Franny, Tom, and Charlie step through the membrane. Their costumes dissolve. They peel the discs from their temples. Lumma hums softly. Patch backs up without looking.

BEEP.

A recessed panel lights up.

PATCH  
 Did I just --

A low harmonic tone rolls through the room. A PEDESTAL RISES. Deck lights ripple.

A complete SIGNATURE STATION -- sleek, futuristic, fully integrated. The BOOK OF SIGNATURES is mounted on top. Beside it: a recessed PETRI CUP.

Above: a hovering SAMPLE READER lens. Behind the Book: a slim METAL BOX holding thin silver tea-light pucks.

The Book unfolds -- pages alive with motion and depth. A GLADIATOR raises his spear in the ROMAN COLOSSEUM. The GREAT PYRAMIDS, brand new. PLANET YU'MOCHA -- turquoise oceans under twin suns. A world of endless surf, gravity twenty percent lighter.

NORM

All of them?

FRANNY

Every journey.

PATCH

Wait -- the Pyramids? When they were new?

QUINNMAN

Yes.

FRANNY

Pick one.

The Book slowly CLOSES. Quinnman slides open the metal box and lifts one thin silver tea-light puck.

QUINNMAN

Way home first.

He holds up the puck.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)

Same rule.

NORM

A bookmark.

QUINNMAN

One trip.

He returns the puck to its slot.

TOM

And the coffee shop?

Quinnman pulls out a DAMP, CHARRED MATCHSTICK.

QUINNMAN

Outside the shop -- guy with a  
cigar. He struck this match just  
before you two walked in.

TOM

You were there. Why didn't you fix  
it then?

QUINNMAN

Because you both are entangled to  
what happened in that coffee shop.  
We're not. And frankly -- we don't  
know how you fix this.

Franny gives Quinnman the slightest elbow. Quinnman turns the  
matchstick between his fingers.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)

Same burn. Way back -- if it holds.

TOM

Right.

FRANNY

If it holds.

CHARLIE

So we're good?

FRANNY

No. It's compromised.

She takes the matchstick.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Ashtray. Rainwater. Coffee dregs.  
It's biodegrading.

TOM

Weakening.

FRANNY

And the wave won't hold.

INT. SPACESHIP - BOARDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A wide display ignites. A GREEN STANDING WAVE forms --  
strong, fast, unstable.

LUMMA (V.O.)

Standing wave initiated. Simulation  
advancing.

The wave SURGES. A RIDER ICON enters -- then the wave FOLDS OVER IT, crashing down.

FRANNY

That's where it crushes you.

She points to the fold point.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

The Signature's weak right there.  
That's the collapse.

NORM

So the window's closing. But it's not closed.

PATCH

Can we widen it? Boost the signal somehow?

KIKI

With a wet matchstick? Not a chance. We ride what's left or we don't ride at all.

The simulation loops again. The rider icon gets swallowed. The fold goes black.

No one speaks. For one full beat, there is no clever answer, no backup window, no clean way home.

Quinnman stays quiet, watching Tom.

QUINNMAN

Show me you can read it.

Tom studies the wave. It repeats -- beautiful, lethal. He points high -- at the steep vertical FACE.

TOM

The face won't hold us. With a degrading Signature, the fold collapses. It crushes you.

The simulation loops: the rider gets pinned and swallowed.

CHARLIE

So don't fight the face.

TOM

No.

He points lower, inside the curve -- under the lip -- into the darker POCKET.

TOM (CONT'D)

The Signature can still take us back -- if we're in the right place when it breaks. Don't ride the face. Drop under it. Into the pocket.

CHARLIE

Enter lower.

TOM

Lower and later. Match the phase. Let the curl carry us. That's where it holds.

Quinnman gives nothing away -- just a small nod.

QUINNMAN

You're sure?

TOM

Yeah. I've seen this before. We can beat it.

EXT. QUANTUM HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The air blooms with green mist -- coiling around Lumma's hull as a deepening hum resonates from within. The ship aligns... then subtly angles lower -- toward the wave's curl.

INT. SPACESHIP - COMMAND CORE - CONTINUOUS

Quinnman sets the tea-light puck into the PETRI CUP. A wordless wish. The SAMPLE READER emits a tight ignition pulse. SIZZLE. A millisecond GREEN PUFF snaps out and gets pulled inward.

The puck softens... collapses... melting into a free-form SILVER MOLT. Quinnman gives a clean THUMBS UP to the bridge camera.

LUMMA (V.O.)

Return anchor recorded.

Quinnman slots the DAMP MATCHSTICK into the reader. CLICK -- LOCKED.

LUMMA (V.O.)

Signature confirmed. Degradation ongoing. Standing wave available.

INT. SPACESHIP - FLYBRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Tom and Charlie are seated. Franny stands behind, braced.

TOM

Proceed with caution. Drop under  
the lip.

CHARLIE

Matching speed... matching phase.  
Entering low. Into the pocket.

MONTAGE - RIDING THE QUANTUM WAVE

The air blooms with green mist. The ship locks into the standing wave, green light rolling over the hull. Tom and Charlie exchange a nod. The ship carves along the wave -- perfectly balanced, deliberately low inside the curl.

Readouts stabilize. Franny and Norm hug. Kiki braces against a console, eyes locked on a readout.

KIKI

Phase holding -- you're in the  
sweet spot!

Patch grips a structural beam, watching the wave through the viewport.

PATCH

That curl is ten feet above us. If  
we drift --

KIKI

We won't. Stay with it, Tom.

The wave barrels outward, curling around the ship -- violent above them, smooth where they are. Quinnman plants his feet wide, pretending to surf, grinning. Tom makes a tiny adjustment. Charlie mirrors him. They HIGH-FIVE.

Wide -- Lumma surfing the wave, suspended between motion and stillness.

The wave narrows. Tom and Charlie steady themselves. Focused. The wave releases in a bloom of green light.

EXT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER (FUTURE LOOP)

Hank sits at a patio table beside Sharlene. FUTURE TOM and FUTURE CHARLIE approach in hoodies and sunglasses.

FUTURE TOM

Low profile. They shouldn't see us.

HANK

I know where I know you from -- you saved my life.

FUTURE TOM

Next time.

They hit the door.

FUTURE TOM (CONT'D)

Strudel-Hammer's in the powder room. Coffee's still beside Mr. Mojo.

FUTURE CHARLIE

Twenty seconds till Kiki's ping. I'll push the cup out of reach.

FUTURE TOM

I'll menu-block Mojo's view of us. Go.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Future Charlie slips in first, snatches two laminated MENUS. She steps in front of Mr. Mojo, back turned, menus flanking her face. Kiki's device PINGS -- Mojo turns. From Mojo's POV: menus, counter, barista -- no view of the table.

Mason chats with the Barista. On the counter, a cup slides smoothly into view -- guided by Charlie's free hand. It stops midway. Mr. Mojo's ears twitch. He leans sideways, trying to see around the menus.

One small hand reaches out and tugs the bottom corner of a menu. Future Charlie freezes. The menu starts to slip.

FUTURE TOM (O.S.)

(from across the room,  
loud)

Excuse me -- is this decaf? I specifically asked for decaf.

Mr. Mojo's head snaps toward the noise. Future Charlie steadies the menu, pushes the cup the final inch out of reach, and retreats her hand. A blue-suited sleeve reaches in from the opposite side, taking the cup away.

Charlie holds position, menus masking her face. Mr. Mojo settles, blocked. The moment passes clean. No spill.

MS. STRUDEL-HAMMER (O.S.)  
 Oh, my coffee's here. Perfect --  
 Bitte schon.

EXT. HILLTOP COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Future Tom holds the door for Ms. Strudel-Hammer.

FUTURE TOM  
 Great day to save the world.

MS. STRUDEL-HAMMER  
 Always is.

Future Charlie rejoins him. She exhales hard -- hands shaking slightly.

FUTURE CHARLIE  
 That monkey almost blew it.

FUTURE TOM  
 The decaf thing was all I had.

FUTURE CHARLIE  
 It worked.

FUTURE TOM  
 Timeline intact.

They move past Hank.

HANK  
 We run a YouTube channel. Can we  
 feature you guys?

SHARLENE  
 Hank.

FUTURE TOM  
 Ask me next time you see me.

They head down the path. Hank lifts his coffee. The cafe door swings open again -- ORIGINAL TOM and ORIGINAL CHARLIE step out into the same sunlight. Hank freezes mid-sip.

HANK  
 ...What. Didn't you guys just walk  
 out of here?

He rubs his eyes.

HANK (CONT'D)  
 I'm losing my mind.

SHARLENE  
(not looking up)  
Just now?

Original Tom glances ahead -- TWO HOODED FIGURES vanish around a bend. He squints, unsettled... then shakes it off.

EXT. NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - DAY

A shallow puddle glistens in the sun. A gecko studies it, hops onto a fallen leaf. The leaf glides across the puddle. The gecko rides it, balanced, and hops off on the other side.

Charlie, Tom, Franny, and Quinnman stand in a semicircle. Birds chirp. Ocean surf pounds in the background.

QUINNMAN  
(to Lumma)  
You did good.

Lumma buzzes, nudging his hand.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)  
Okay, okay -- calm down.

He flicks her into the air. Lumma hovers, expands mid-flight, then settles back into his hand -- basketball-sized. He offers her to Tom.

FRANNY  
Go on, Tom.

Tom takes Lumma. The orb warms against his hands, pressing gently toward his chest.

TOM  
Thank you, Lumma.

He holds her close. A faint white shimmer coils around his hands. He passes her to Charlie. She holds Lumma close. The shimmer brightens, pulsing against her sternum. Her eyes glisten.

CHARLIE  
Goodbye, Lumma.

Franny rests a hand on Charlie's shoulder. Quinnman moves toward the open clearing. In the background, Kiki, Patch, and Norm toss a frisbee.

FRANNY  
Kid, there's still something we  
need to talk about.

Quinnman gives Lumma a gentle spin. She floats away, expanding. Her full ship form blossoms open. The ramp lowers.

QUINNMAN

Lumma -- a little gift for the road. Humans can experience it. Machines can stabilize it. Objects obey it.

He steps up the ramp and presses his hand to her hull. The surface ripples like watered silk. A small portion loosens and flows into his palm -- off-white and alive.

He walks back.

QUINNMAN (CONT'D)

A gift for Charlie and Tom.

Franny cups her hands. The living mass divides into two perfect halves. She opens them to reveal two Q-LINK BRACELETS -- soft, round-centered bands with a quiet inner pulse.

FRANNY

(to Tom and Charlie)

These aren't research, and they aren't property. They're a living trust. They'll open a world of opportunity when you're ready to travel. You'll know when.

She slides one over Tom's wrist, then Charlie's. The Q-Links self-lock -- a faint hum connecting them.

Norm steps beside Franny.

NORM

I'd like to finally meet your mother.

Franny looks at him. A beat.

FRANNY

She's going to love you.

She takes his hand. Neither of them looks entirely sure about that.

Charlie looks at the bracelet, then at Franny -- the hidden panel, the adapter, the impossible pieces finally lining up.

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.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

You two should tear up that lottery ticket. Money like that doesn't solve chaos -- it amplifies it. You've already found something better. Don't trade harmony for noise.

Kiki, Patch, and Norm jog back over, breathless from the frisbee.

CHARLIE

That was our only clean funding backup plan.

PATCH

So the bots don't go into storage. Good start.

TOM

Didn't Mason promise ten years for first contact?

FRANNY

Technically, he met the Interdimensional Awards Committee.

CHARLIE

The universe really does keep its promises.

FRANNY

Alright then. First study subject?

KIKI

Surfing.

They all laugh.

EXT. SKY ABOVE NORTH SHORE OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Lumma ascends, catching the last light, climbing higher until she disappears into the bright sky. A fading white mist behind. Quinman hums those same few bars -- and this time, quietly, finds the end.

INT. O'AHU BARBERSHOP - MORNING

A shop caught between eras. Laser clippers hiss. A SMALL TV plays above the mirror. ON THE TV -- Mason steps off a private jet, composed. HELGA VON STRUDEL-HAMMER appears at the top of the staircase, descends to him, kisses him. They turn and wave as flashbulbs explode.

CUSTOMER

Hey -- isn't that that peace-talks lady?

BARBER

With the satellite guy? Hell of a turnaround.

ON THE TV -- missile batteries lowering, crowds waving NO WAR signs. A news ticker scrolls: RECORD POWERBALL WINNING TICKET SOLD IN HAWAII. The Barber glances at the ticker.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

With emergency alerts downgraded and power restored across the islands, tourists are already returning to Hawai'i -- hotels filling again from Waikiki to Maui as visitors settle in for another impossible sunset.

ON THE TV -- HANK and SHARLENE, back on their double pink flamingo float, livestream against a ridiculous Maui sunset.

SHARLENE (ON TV)

Day three in paradise. Still no aliens. Still excellent lighting.

BARBER

Lucky bastard. Probably doesn't even know he's holding it.

The voices fade beneath soft jazz. Outside, sunlight flares across the barbershop pole.

EXT. O'AHU BEACH - DAY

Farther out, Kiki and Patch float with their boards, laughing in the shallows. Beyond them, Charlie wades in from the water -- board under her arm. Tom sits cross-legged on a beach blanket -- gray surf hoodie zipped to the chin. Working on his iScroll, linked to Mania.

ON SCREEN: All systems green.

MANIA (V.O.)  
 Resonator active. Sending lotto  
 numbers now. Shutting down systems.

Tom exhales. Down the beach, a faint shimmer passes through the air. A seven-year-old girl passes with a GOLDENDOODLE PUPPY.

TOM  
 Morning. That your pup?

ABBY  
 Yep. My mom gave her to me.

TOM  
 Aren't moms the best?

Abby pauses -- a tiny head-tilt. She glances at the beach, then back to Tom.

ABBY  
 Knock-knock.

TOM  
 Who's there?

ABBY  
 She's a --

TOM  
 She's a who?

ABBY  
 She's a -- always with you.

She beams, then darts off with the puppy. Tom watches, shaken. The iScroll gives a faint cold hiss. Charlie approaches from the surf.

CHARLIE  
 You know, Tom -- I could get used  
 to this place.

TOM  
 It kind of grows on you.

Charlie sits.

Out in the shallows, Kiki pulls Patch's board close and kisses him -- quick, saltwater, real.

Tom reaches into his hoodie pocket. A LOTTERY TICKET -- and the small GOLD PINEAPPLE PIN -- slip into his hand.

TOM (CONT'D)

Here. It'll bring you good luck.

He pins it to Charlie's wetsuit -- careful, reverent.

CHARLIE

Cool -- does that mean we're going steady?

TOM

Ever ripped up a hundred-twenty-six-million-dollar ticket before?

CHARLIE

Technically, no.

Tom holds the ticket between them. Neither moves.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's a lot of zeros, Tom.

TOM

Yeah.

A beat. The ocean rolls.

CHARLIE

Tom... that's my mom's garage. My whole life fits inside that place.

TOM

I know.

CHARLIE

Part of me wants to be stupid for one minute and keep it.

They hold the ticket between them a beat too long.

TOM

On three?

CHARLIE

On three.

They tear it together. Scraps scatter. One torn edge lands at Patch's feet -- winning numbers exposed.

PATCH

That was the winner.

KIKI

Okay. That one hurt.

Tom's watch gives a soft two-note pulse.

                  TEDDY (V.O.)  
Continuity check complete. No  
active paradox markers.

                  MANIA (V.O.)  
Translation: we made it.

                  MANIA (V.O.)  
Safe and sound. Teddy sends his  
regards. Three -- two -- one --

A faint white pulse crosses both Q-Link bracelets. The Nevada feed dies; their bracelets touch, shaping BABY LUMMA above the blanket.

                  TOM  
Lumma would be proud.

                  CHARLIE  
Aurelia Blue?

                  TOM  
Twenty percent less gravity.  
Perfect for surfing.

                  CHARLIE  
You'd never come down.

                  TOM  
That's the point.

                  CHARLIE  
When do we leave?

They laugh as sand becomes island, Pacific, then Earth --  
GREEN MIST curling into the QUANTUM HIGHWAY.

FADE OUT.