

THE MAN IN THE WOODS

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FADE IN ON...

The night sky. Through the tree-tops, an infinity of stars.

One twinkling star appears to GROW. It TWISTS and EXPANDS, tearing a hole in space itself.

This RIP soon stretches across the Milky Way, its outline emitting an otherworldly glow, reflecting more colors than we've ever known in the universe. But within it: unrelenting BLACKNESS. Noticeably darker than the sky that surrounds it.

A dissonant SCORE builds...

From quiet...

To loud...

AND THEN LOUDER. It's disconcerting. It's uncomfortable. And then, with a violent crescendo, the music cuts out as we --

SMASH TO:

A NEWS VAN DOOR SLAMMING SHUT.

A CAMERA GUY, 50s, lugs a TV CAMERA away from the van and down a dirt road **AT THE EDGE OF A CORNFIELD** at night. An INTERN, early 20s, wrangles cable, scrambling to keep up.

SUPER: 13 YEARS LATER. PRESENT DAY

They pass CAR after CAR parked on the roadside, where GAWKERS stare up at the Rip. Many are in costume -- alien masks, tin foil hats, etc. A WOMAN dressed like a monk CHANTS as WORSHIPPERS raise their arms in prayer.

CAMERA GUY
(shaking his head)
Rippers. Buncha nut jobs.

INTERN
They come out here every year?

CAMERA GUY
Used to be a lot more of 'em.

They arrive at a temporary media village set up next to the cornfield. REPORTERS and CREW mill about.

INTERN
Tell you the truth, I was too young.
Don't remember what it was like.

CAMERA GUY
Felt like the end of the world.

CUT TO:

A REPORTER, 40S. MINUTES LATER.

We're looking at her through the **TV CAMERA** as she checks her perfect hair in a compact mirror. The Intern hands her a bottle of sparkling water, then steps out of frame.

CAMERA GUY (O.S.)
Half-step to your left.

She slides over and the Rip becomes visible, even larger now and ever present in the sky like a second moon. She puts the water down and nods. Ready.

CAMERA GUY (O.S.) (cont'd)
OK, you're on in 5...4...3...

Quickly affecting a practiced on-air posture and smile --

REPORTER
For thirteen years, the world's biggest mystery has remained unsolved. Yes, today marks another anniversary of the day the Rip first appeared in the sky.

We TRACK through the media village, first passing a BRITISH REPORTER, addressing the BBC audience...

BRITISH REPORTER
As the Rip grew larger, this cornfield in Mill Grove, Missouri, was struck by an unprecedented category 5 hurricane.

... then a CHINESE REPORTER (in Chinese, with subtitles)...

CHINESE REPORTER
It was the first hurricane in the history of this American state. And the first of many anomalies caused by the Rip.

... then a SPANISH REPORTER (in Spanish, with subtitles)...

SPANISH REPORTER
Scientists had no explanation for these anomalies, many of which violated known laws of physics.

... then a SOUTH AFRICAN REPORTER, speaking in English...

SOUTH AFRICAN REPORTER

And then, a few years after it
appeared, the Rip stopped growing and
the anomalies ceased at once.

... and finally we return to the original reporter...

REPORTER

For more than a decade, the world has
waited, wondering if these mysterious
events would ever resume.

... only now the image morphs into a **TV SCREEN**.

REPORTER (TV)

In the meantime, the post-Rip world
has tried to move on...

PULL BACK from the TV. We're in a cozy **LIVING ROOM**.

REPORTER (TV) (cont'd)

Except for once a year...

PULL BACK to reveal an OLD WOMAN, 70s, watching from her La-Z-Boy. We keep PULLING BACK, past her...

REPORTER (TV) (cont'd)

When onlookers flock to this spot to
mark the anniversary of our planet's
strangest visitor.

PULL BACK through the living room WINDOW as the Old Woman
turns off the TV and gets up. We're now **OUTSIDE**.

As we keep PULLING BACK, we see her **RUSTIC HOUSE** surrounded
by thick woods. Visible in the sky above: the Rip.

The front door opens. The Old Woman steps out.

REVERSE to reveal a pair of BINOCULARS, but it's too dark to
see who's holding them. From O.S., we hear a CAR drive off.

The glass is lowered, and we see a pair of EYES in the
darkness, reflecting the light from the Rip. One of the eyes
is BROWN, the other an eerie CRYSTAL BLUE.

TITLE: THE MAN IN THE WOODS

EXT. RUSTIC HOUSE. BACKDOOR. A MINUTE LATER.

Note: through the following sequence, we will never get a good look at the Man, only seeing him in shadow.

THE MAN uses a homemade tension wrench (paper clip, bobby pin + a pair of pliers) to unlock the door.

SUPER: EAST MILLINOCKET, MAINE

He accidentally chips the door frame. Unzips his bag, opens a small BOX to reveal tiny homemade canisters of PAINT, each with a corresponding ADDRESS. He picks one and, using a fine brush, paints over the wood. Blows it dry. A perfect match.

Satisfied, he pushes on the door, and it creaks open.

INT. ENTRY HALL. RUSTIC HOUSE. LATER.

As the Man walks, we hear a soft WHOOSH with each step.

CAMERA LOWERS to reveal that he's tied PLASTIC BAGS around his shoes. Not leaving any tracks.

He opens a cabinet, pulls out a pack of BATTERIES, but only removes ONE before returning the pack. Reaches for a PILE of PAPER CLIPS, counts out FOUR.

INT. LIVING ROOM. RUSTIC HOUSE. LATER.

The Man scans the books, running his fingers past the bible and other literary classics before settling on a Danielle Steele bodice ripper: *Matters of the Heart*. He grabs it.

Next, the Man rummages through a discarded pile of newspapers, skimming headlines.

IN THE PANTRY

The Man scoops a small handful of cereal (high fiber) and puts it in a Ziploc baggie. Then he sees:

A FIVE-POUND JAR OF PEANUT BUTTER

Stares at it like it's the Holy Grail. Checks the lid -- it's been opened. Pulls out a Swiss-army-knife, digs out a clump. Takes a bite, closing his eyes in absolute bliss.

EXT. WOODS. NIGHT.

The hemlock, maple and elm trees are so dense it's almost jungle-like, but the Man navigates the forest with the ease that can only come from years of experience.

He steps on rocks whenever possible, covering his tracks as he goes, gliding like a ghost. A dance with nature.

Finally, he slows when he comes upon a blueberry bush. He pulls his knife, cuts down vines. Completely silent except for the sound of CICADAS.

But then, through the trees, the Man sees a **RURAL HOUSE** -- a proud old two-story in need of renovation. Serene. Isolated.

And in the backyard --

-- a YOUNG GIRL, 12, sets up a TELESCOPE aimed at the Rip.

CLANK! The Man drops his knife, smacking against a ROCK.

IN THE BACKYARD

As the girl turns toward the sound, we get a better look at her -- this is HENRIETTA THORNE. Worn t-shirt, cargo pants, she's the kind of kid who'll spend hours in the dirt staring up through a prosumer telescope.

Curious, she approaches the dark woods, reaches out into the thick brush and...

Her finger CLIPS a thorny bush, drawing blood --

HENRIETTA

Ow!

Henrietta puts a finger to her mouth, when all the sudden --

-- a curtain-like ARC OF LIGHT swirls above and around her.

Parallel rays of differing colors: green, blue, violet. Like magic. She stands frozen, not breathing, afraid to move. After a beat, the aurora fades away, and Henrietta exhales.

Then she BOLTS past a MOVING VAN in the driveway and into --

INT. KITCHEN. THORNE HOME. SAME.

Where Henrietta almost runs into her mother, SHEILA, 30s, weary from unpacking MOVING BOXES, wearier from holding a family together on her own.

HENRIETTA

I think I just saw an aurora!

Sheila pulls an old POCKET WATCH from a moving box.

SHEILA

Dammit. My watch broke.

HENRIETTA

I was out looking at the Rip --

SHEILA

Movers must've jostled it too much.

HENRIETTA

But there's so many trees out here I could barely see anything --

SHEILA

Used to be your grandpa's.

HENRIETTA

I thought I heard something and then it was like... light. All around me.

SHEILA

(not listening)

Sounds fun, sweetie.

HENRIETTA

Hello?! I was in the middle of an aurora thousands of miles from the North Pole.

Sheila doesn't respond, just shakes the watch. Henrietta rolls her eyes and grabs it, futzes with a dial.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

(handing it back)

You just have to wind it.

SHEILA

Huh. How bout that?

HENRIETTA

When's our wifi gonna be up? I need access to an online database --

SHEILA

Henry, this is a really small town.
Everything takes a while.

Exasperated, Henrietta stomps her way into --

THE LIVING ROOM

-- where she almost trips over the ARMY ACTION FIGURES her brother BEN (9) has lined up on the floor. Despite deafness and thick-lens glasses, Ben is intent on being all he can be. And he always wears his camo to prove it.

Henrietta taps his shoulder as he rummages through a BOX, indiscriminately tossing aside TOYS (most military-themed).

They use SIGN LANGUAGE (all signing will be denoted in dialogue by *ITALICS* and subtitled on screen) --

HENRIETTA

I think I just --

BEN

Have you seen my BB-gun?

HENRIETTA

Ben, I saw an aurora. Right outside!

Ben shrugs, nonplussed.

BEN

I can't find my BB-gun.

HENRIETTA

(sighs)

Why don't you check your butt hole?

BEN

No room cuz your mom lives there.

He can apparently read lips.

HENRIETTA

She's your mom too, nimrod.

Chagrined, Ben turns away, effectively shutting her out. He reaches for an UNMARKED BOX, one that's completely covered in tape. As if it's not meant to ever be opened.

But Ben is undeterred. He starts to tear into it when --

SHEILA (O.S.)

No!

From out of nowhere, Sheila swoops in, snatching the box.

HENRIETTA

What's... in there?

SHEILA

Mom's allowed private things too, OK?

Sheila backs away and trips over an action figure. YELPS.

SHEILA (cont'd)

I would appreciate a little help from
you two. I'm doing everything here!

And with that she angrily heads upstairs with the box.

HENRIETTA

*Like it's our fault she moved us to
the forest moon of Endor.*

BEN

*I like Endor. Ewoks are great
tactical fighters.*

HENRIETTA

They're stone age teddy bears. Don't
embarrass yourself.

Ben lights up as he finds his BB-GUN under the coffee table.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON HENRIETTA'S FACE.

Her mind in overdrive. Her mouth barely keeping up.

HENRIETTA

Charged particles from the sun can't
just randomly wind up anywhere on the
planet, right? They're supposed to
deflect to the poles cuz that's where
the magnetic field is weakest.

(no response, then)

So how does an aurora show up all the
way down here? Is the magnetic field
damaged? But even that wouldn't
explain why it was so localized...

Finally, REVERSE to reveal that she's talking to a stuffed "Albert Einstein" DOLL propped up on her desk.

She's in her and Ben's **BEDROOM** (two twin beds amid more moving boxes, hamster cage with requisite HAMSTER).

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
(to the Einstein doll)
You think I should ask the forum? You
think I should ask the forum...

She plops down at her desk and pulls out her phone. ON HER SCREEN: an app, "Science Forums." She types a post...

AnnusMirabilis1905: Aurora spotted in Millinocket Maine

We see her side of the room, littered with science gear:

-- a CHEMISTRY SET, with test tubes and a Bunsen burner.
-- a MOBILE, with the planets of the solar system.
-- a MICROSCOPE, a BREADBOARD, stacks of SCIENCE BOOKS, and
a framed NEWSPAPER with the headline: "A RIP IN THE SKY."

Henrietta looks up at Einstein. His black eyes taunt her.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You know if you already figured it
out, you could just tell me.

She glances at her phone. Someone's already responded.

Newt0nslaws123: northern lights visible? so what?

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
(sighs, then to Einstein)
They're never gonna believe it was in
my backyard.

Behind her, Ben army crawls in, quietly, "armed" with his BB-Gun. To his fatigues, he's added camouflage face paint.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Unless I can get a picture and then --

Sensing her brother's presence, Henrietta quickly hides the Einstein doll under her pillow when --

A KOOSH BALL flies at her. She catches it.

Ben stands, disappointed.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Some ambush.

BEN
(re: the hamster)
Were you talking to Bazooka?

HENRIETTA
Why would I talk to a hamster. Don't
be ridiculous.

Henrietta grabs her backpack and picks up a CAMERA...

BEN
Where're you going?

HENRIETTA
I need a photo.

BEN
Can I come?

HENRIETTA
You'll just get scared.

BEN
No I won't.

HENRIETTA
Ben, you always get --

SHEILA (O.S.)
Henrietta! Trash!

Henrietta pauses. An idea.

HENRIETTA
Mom wants you to take out the trash.

BEN
Nice try.

HENRIETTA
Hey - you wanna come or not?

EXT. THORNE HOME. NIGHT.

Ben tosses a trash bag into the can, looks back through the kitchen window where Sheila washes dishes.

On the side of the house, Henrietta shimmies down the drain pipe. Lands quietly, gives Ben a thumbs-up.

When Sheila steps away from the window, they run to the edge of **THE WOODS**. Henrietta FLICKS on a flashlight and they step into the trees.

Almost immediately, though, they come upon a SHED.

CUT TO:

THE MILKY WAY GALAXY.

Actually, a KEYCHAIN of the Milky Way. We PULL BACK to reveal that it's attached to a pocketknife Henrietta is using to jimmy open the shed door. She waves Ben over.

He stays back, scared. She shakes her head as she enters --

THE SHED.

A beam of moonlight cuts across the space, which looks like it hasn't been touched in years. Old, rusted, falling apart.

In the center, a work table. Replete with rusted TOOLS. Henrietta zeroes in on an OLD RAFT, propped up against the wall. Traces her finger along it, wipes off the dust.

She looks back to find Ben in the doorway.

HENRIETTA

Don't tell anybody about this place.
It's ours.

EXT. DEEP WOODS. NIGHT.

The dark forest has an ominous feel. Ben, frightened, taps Henrietta's shoulder. He wants to go home.

HENRIETTA

Just a few more minutes. Maybe we --

Henrietta cuts herself off when she faintly hears... WATER. She heads toward the sound, Ben following.

They round a bend to find a RAVINE of jagged rocks. Down below, a RIVER. Maybe 30 to 40 feet wide, moderate depth.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Whoa.

They look downstream -- the river winds through the trees.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Hiking along the edge of the ravine, they follow the slope downhill. Henrietta picks up the pace as she sees, up ahead, a spot where the river becomes accessible.

They arrive. Henrietta glances up -- an unobstructed view of the Rip and the star-filled sky.

She sets her bag down to unpack her camera. Turns to Ben, who's faced away. She nudges him but Ben doesn't budge. Henrietta follows his confused gaze and lands on: THE MAN, a ways down river.

As the Man hauls an OLD WHEELBARROW (cobbled together from chopped wood) up to the river's edge, we finally get a good look at him: 60s, trim and fit with a long, unkempt beard, wild hair, and ragged clothes.

He's a frightening sight.

Henrietta grabs Ben and pulls him to the ground. They crawl behind a boulder and watch the Man fasten a rope around a HEAVY LOG in the wheelbarrow.

Henrietta leans forward: the Man pulls the rope, maneuvering the log into the river via an elaborate PULLEY SYSTEM.

The log drops in place, surrounded by HUNDREDS of other logs and rocks that stretch across the width of the river. Packed with dirt, branches, leaves.

HENRIETTA

Did he build a dam?

She stands for a better look, but Ben grabs her. Henrietta tries to wrest herself free from her brother's grasp --

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

(yells to the Man)

Hey!

The Man sees her and freezes. Stunned.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

(to Ben)

Let me go, you goon!

Quickly recovering, the Man DARTS off into the forest.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Wait! I just wanted to...

Henrietta breaks free and goes after him, but he's gone.

On the riverbank, she finds a WORN NOTEBOOK left behind. Picks it up and thumbs through the pages. It's a log, with dates, times and categorizations. Elaborate tables dating back years and filled with things she doesn't understand.

A few words stand out: "hypothesis," "trial 1," "trial 2."

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

I think he's a scientist...

Henrietta looks into the woods with interest, then stuffs the notebook into her jacket pocket and turns back to Ben.

EXT./INT. EAST MILLINOCKET SCHOOL. DAY.

Establish: A quaint, red-brick K-8 nestled among tall pine trees in the shadow of a mountain.

In a **SCIENCE CLASSROOM**, Henrietta sits still amid puberty-inspired chaos. She looks around, noting MANY EMPTY SEATS.

In front stands MS. GAGNON (pronounced Gag-None), 60s, armed with thirty years experience and the exasperation to match.

MS. GAGNON

All right everyone, settle. Banks - settle. OK, before we get started, we have a new student joining us today. Stand up and introduce yourself.

All eyes turn to Henrietta, who doesn't move. Nearby, DUSTIN, 12, scruffy red hair + freckles, encourages her.

DUSTIN

(whispers)

Go ahead.

Henrietta sighs, pops up.

HENRIETTA

Henrietta.

She sits down just as quickly. A few SNICKERS.

MS. GAGNON

Welcome, Henrietta. Why don't you tell us something about yourself?

(beat, no response)

What brought you to Millinocket?

Dad get a new job?

This angers Henrietta, who leans in, emboldened.

HENRIETTA
Mothers can support families, too.

Stifled TITTERS from the class.

MS. GAGNON
Of course, yes, I didn't mean to --

HENRIETTA
Mine has, since my dad died.

MS. GAGNON
Well good! I mean no, not good. I'm
very sorry to hear that your, uh...

HENRIETTA
Single mother households are the
second most common family arrangement
in developed economies.

MS. GAGNON
Well. There you have it.
(awkward beat)
OK, let's get class started, shall
we? Today we're going to --

Henrietta's hand shoots up. Ms. Gagnon stops talking, but
Henrietta waits for Ms. Gagnon to nod at her before --

HENRIETTA
How come there's nobody here? All my
other classes are full.

MS. GAGNON
Ah. Well I don't know what the policy
was at your old school, but science is
an elective course here, so many of
our students choose not to take it.

Someone makes a FARTING noise with their armpit. LAUGHTER.

MS. GAGNON (cont'd)
Banks, no. Just... no.

BANKS (12, braces, Lacrosse t-shirt) high fives a FRIEND.

HENRIETTA
You're not serious. An elective?

MS. GAGNON

Post-Rip it's become quite common,
sadly. Welcome to backwards-ville.

HENRIETTA

That's insane.

MS. GAGNON

You're telling me.

(beat)

Then again, it would be helpful if
scientists could come up with a
decent explanation for at least some
of it.

HENRIETTA

Just because there's no explanation
yet doesn't mean there won't be.

MS. GAGNON

Right, absolutely... Still, how can
something be visible 24/7 in the same
spot from anywhere on the planet? It
violates so many basic principles,
it's even made me question if --

HENRIETTA

Aren't you supposed to be the science
teacher? No wonder no one's here.

More SNICKERS directed at Ms. Gagnon, who's exasperated.

MS. GAGNON

(to the class)

Settle down.

HENRIETTA

The whole point of science is to try
to figure it out. Maybe it's a black
hole. Or maybe --

DUSTIN

(trying to be helpful)

Maybe it's aliens.

MS. GAGNON

But how should I explain hurricanes
in the middle of a continent or
earthquakes where there are no fault
lines? Our textbook doesn't account
for sudden mass extinctions or
auroras. It doesn't mention increased
UV radiation without any --

HENRIETTA

Wait - auroras?

MS. GAGNON

Yeah. They happened all over the world
after the Rip first appeared. Which
shouldn't be possible because --

PUSH IN on Henrietta, who cuts her off with --

HENRIETTA

I saw one.

MS. GAGNON

You saw one what?

HENRIETTA

An aurora. Last night by my house.

MS. GAGNON

That's not funny, Henrietta. Please
don't make a mockery of my --

ANOTHER armpit fart sound, and the students BREAK OUT in
laughter. Ms. Gagnon leans against her desk. Defeated.

Henrietta abruptly grabs her stuff and heads for the door.

MS. GAGNON (cont'd)

Where do you think you're going?

HENRIETTA

This is an elective, right? I elect
to do something better with my time.

Ms. Gagnon doesn't object as Henrietta scoots out.

INT. CAFETERIA. EAST MILLINOCKET SCHOOL. LATER.

Henrietta types an update into her phone on her Science
Forum post:

AnnusMirabilis1905: "Guys what if this aurora = the Rip???"

Henrietta considers the implications as she sits alone at a
table, her tray untouched. Dustin plops down opposite her.

DUSTIN

Henrietta, right? A pleasure. I'm
Dustin.

She nods but doesn't disengage from her phone. Awkward beat.

DUSTIN (cont'd)
Sorry to hear about your dad.

HENRIETTA
It happened when I was four. It's OK.

DUSTIN
I see. Do you happen to have a copy
of his obit?

HENRIETTA
His what?

DUSTIN
His obituary.

She finally looks up at him. A bit bewildered.

HENRIETTA
No.

DUSTIN
Too bad.

THREE KIDS sit down at the other end of the table, giggling and pointing across the room at a JANITOR, 50s. Disheveled, with big HEADPHONES and slumped shoulders, the Janitor gives off a 'stay away from me' vibe.

Meanwhile, Dustin shows Henrietta the SCHOOL NEWSPAPER.

DUSTIN (cont'd)
I write for the paper. Been trying to
get the administration to let me do
an obit section. It's kind of a
passion of mine, but so far, no go.

HENRIETTA
An obit section in a school newspaper?

DUSTIN
Yeah that's what they said. But you
know what? People die. This counselor
who retired a few years ago just did.
I could've written a heck of an obit
for Mr. Busekist. I could do one for
your dad if you want.

Henrietta smiles. Dustin's an oddball. She digs it.

One of the kids at the end of the table (his faded t-shirt shows the Rip, a fart cloud, and the words "I'll RIP you a new one!"), purposefully and loudly knocks over his milk. He SNAPS for the Janitor, who makes his way over.

As the Janitor dutifully cleans the spill, head down, MUSIC blares from his headphones as the kids stifle laughter.

KID #1

Thank you soooooo much!

Spill cleaned, the Janitor shuffles away. Henrietta watches him with pity. The kids ERUPT laughing.

DUSTIN

Hey, that's not cool.

KID #2

Whatever. Guy's a freak.

DUSTIN

He's not a freak, he's just a mute.

KID #2

Exactly. A freak. And so are you, o-
bitch-uary boy.

Dustin looks down, embarrassed, as the kids return to their own conversation. Henrietta tries to perk him up.

HENRIETTA

Hey, what's your article about?

DUSTIN

(excited)

This vending machine upstairs that always eats people's quarters. I call it the "Snack Hole". You know, as a play on black --

HENRIETTA

Who's the Millinocket hermit?

Henrietta points above another article: a crude drawing of a familiar looking man, long-haired and bearded. The headline: "Millinocket Hermit strikes again."

DUSTIN

Oh, right, you're new. Local legend says he's lived out in the woods around here for like decades. He eats dogs and little kids to survive.

HENRIETTA

Yeah, right...

DUSTIN

No, for real. A little girl went missing a few years ago and everyone says it was him. He robbed my cousin's house last spring and now my uncle goes out looking for him every other weekend with his buddies...

Henrietta looks disturbed, but then her attention gets pulled ACROSS THE ROOM, where she hears YELLING.

BULLIES taunt an unlucky soul: "What're you wearing, dummy?!" "Can't you hear?" "This isn't the army!"

WITH THE BULLIES: We're surrounded by FACES, contorting in screams. Somebody SPITS. But we don't hear any of it.

THE WORLD IS SILENT.

Why? The poor soul being bullied is BEN, and we're seeing the world FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE.

BACK WITH HENRIETTA: Sound returns as recognition dawns on her. In a flash, she's up and OUT OF HER SEAT --

Runs at FULL SPEED across the cafeteria --

Grabs a stray LUNCH TRAY from a table --

Arrives at the circle of bullies where Ben is being pushed around, TEARS in his eyes.

SMACK! SMACK! Henrietta pummels everyone in sight.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. WAITING ROOM. DAY.

CLOSE ON FINGERS typing. They belong to the SECRETARY, 70s.

On a bench sits Henrietta, cheek bruised. Through the ajar office door, she watches Sheila talk to the PRINCIPAL, 50s.

SHEILA

She's always had trouble making friends, but nothing like this.

PRINCIPAL

Any other behavior that concerns you?

SHEILA

Well she talks more to her Einstein doll than anyone else. It was a gift from her father, but still...

Henrietta looks at her feet, embarrassed. The secretary notices, SHUTS the door. With a nod to Henrietta, she waddles back to her desk. Henrietta's gaze follows her past the glass doorway leading to the hallway where --

-- the Janitor stands, STARING RIGHT AT HENRIETTA. As soon as he's made, he gets back to mopping. Heads down the hall.

SECRETARY

Don't mind Ed. He's the new janitor. A bit weird but harmless. I think.

(then)

Millinocket attracts all the kooks, but you'll end up liking it here...

(winks)

... so long as you don't beat up too many more boys.

Henrietta smiles, but it quickly fades when the principal's door re-opens and Sheila, in scrubs, walks out. Angry.

CUT TO:

SETTLERS OF CATAN. THE BOARD GAME --

-- on a table in the **THORNE DINING ROOM**. Ben examines the board carefully, but Henrietta's once again on her phone:

Bohrisabore123: any more sightings?

Bohrisabore123: you should really call the Rip hotline.

Bohrisabore123: update please!

Seems she's aroused somebody's curiosity. But her attention is pulled away by Sheila lecturing from the kitchen.

SHEILA (O.S.)

I know moving out here's been hard, but for crying out loud, a suspension on your first day of school?!

Henrietta fumes.

SHEILA (O.S.) (cont'd)

And I appreciate you defending your brother, I do.

(MORE)

SHEILA (O.S.) (cont'd)
But if somebody's mean to him, tell
an adult, don't start hitting people.
Oh, and I can't believe you're
dropping science!

HENRIETTA
Mother, you weren't there. It was a
joke.

SHEILA (O.S.)
Hey, now what did I say about calling
me mother? You know I hate that.

HENRIETTA
You're my mother, are you not?

Sheila enters, wearing a RED COCKTAIL DRESS and a face full
of makeup. Henrietta and Ben notice.

SHEILA
You're not the only one having a
tough time here, OK? I'm working
double shifts at the hospital --

HENRIETTA
You going to work dressed like that?

Sheila's tone changes.

SHEILA
What? No, I told you. I've got a
meeting with a coworker tonight.

HENRIETTA
A meeting.

SHEILA
(avoiding eye contact)
Yeah. I should be back around --

BEN
Lot of makeup for a meeting.

SHEILA
Well it's like a social slash work
thing so I thought I'd --

HENRIETTA
How many people are going to this
meeting?

SHEILA

(beat)

Fine, it's a date, OK? He works at the hospital. Now will you please --

Suddenly, the LOUD WAIL of the smoke alarm in the kitchen.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Dammit! The burner!

Sheila runs out. Ben and Henrietta follow her into --

THE KITCHEN

Filled with SMOKE. The sound is PIERCING -- Henrietta and Sheila cover their ears, but Ben is unfazed.

Sheila turns off the burner and frantically fans the smoke away from the alarm, which finally quiets. Then she looks down at her chicken cutlets, all burnt BLACK.

BEN

What're we gonna eat now?

EXT. THE RIVER ACCESS POINT. DAY.

Through a mirror we see a REFLECTION of the Man's dam.

REVERSE to reveal one end of a homemade PERISCOPE, barely peeking out of the woods. The mirror is affixed to an elbow joint, which is attached to PVC pipe.

HIDDEN IN THE TREES, the Man uses the periscope to peer around the corner and scan the surrounding area.

Satisfied he's alone, he steps into the clearing. Walks to the river's edge where he dropped the notebook. Looks along the ground. But of course, it's not there...

CUT TO:

THE MAN'S NOTEBOOK.

Sticking out of Henrietta's backpack. She and Ben sit at a table at the **RUSTY TAVERN**, a dive-y bar and eatery. Sawdust on the floor, **ALCOHOLICS** on the stools.

Ben scarfs a burger and fries. Henrietta's nose is buried in a **SCIENCE BOOK**. She's also eavesdropping on...

THE NEXT TABLE: Where RICHIE, 40s, a schlub of a man wearing a medium size dress shirt when he really needs a large, talks animatedly to Sheila, who tries to keep up.

RICHIE

They live on Gallifrey, located in the Kasterborous constellation. This one Time Lord steals a Tardis to go on an adventure through space and --

SHEILA

Wait - Tardis?

RICHIE

Time and Relative Dimension in Space.

SHEILA

OK, you're losing me...

RICHIE

Oh gosh, you know what? I told myself before I left the house, "Now, Richie, don't start talking about Doctor Who," and whaddaya know.

At the next table, Henrietta shakes her head. Then glances over at Ben, now doodling in the Man's notebook.

Henrietta grabs it from him, but before closing it, sees something in the notebook that seizes her attention.

BACK WITH SHEILA AND RICHIE:

RICHIE (cont'd)

So, you a big dater?

SHEILA

Not really. Nursing school and two kids will keep you pretty busy.

RICHIE

Oh I can imagine! Heh.

(then, he retreats)

Only vicariously, of course. I don't have kids. And I got my degree online.

Henrietta BOUNDS over, brandishing the Man's notebook.

HENRIETTA

He saw it! The Hermit saw it too!

SHEILA

Jesus, you startled me --

Henrietta shoves the Man's notebook in Sheila's face.

HENRIETTA

Electromagnetic storms, hurricanes...
Check out his last entry, from the
other night - "aurora." The same one
I saw. I told you!

SHEILA

Who saw what now?

HENRIETTA

He's been logging anomalies. I bet he
knows about the Rip, too!

She drops the notebook onto the table. Richie picks it up.

RICHIE

Wait a tic - you saying you took this
notebook from the Millinocket Hermit?

HENRIETTA

I didn't take it. He dropped it.

SHEILA

Hold on, who's the Millinocket --

RICHIE

Hermit. He's like a ghost. Nobody
knows how he even survives out in the
woods all year. I wouldn't go near
him. People tend to go missing around
these parts, and a lot of folks think
it's cuz of him. I heard he's got a
big cache of weapons, too.

SHEILA

Oh god. Henry, how did you meet
this --

HENRIETTA

It doesn't matter. Don't you get it?
The Rip is reactivated, and we're the
only ones who know about it!

Richie chuckles condescendingly.

RICHIE

Now you sound like one of those end
time wackos.

HENRIETTA

I'm not a wacko. I'm a scientist.

RICHIE

OK, if the Rip is reactivated, how come it hasn't started growing again?

She has no answer for that.

RICHIE (cont'd)

Uh huh. Maybe you should stick to princesses.

SHEILA

Whoa, that's not --

Richie tussles Henrietta's hair. Incensed, she steps back.

HENRIETTA

I wasn't even talking to you.

SHEILA

Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

Well I wasn't! Why would I? He doesn't know anything.

(to Richie)

Gallifrey can't exist within a constellation because constellations are relative to your location. That show is stupid, and so are you.

SHEILA

OK, that's enough!

Henrietta SWIPES at Sheila's plate and it CRASHES to the floor. Other patrons gawk as Henrietta runs out.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Excuse me.

Sheila gets up to follow -- but then turns back.

SHEILA (cont'd)

You ever tell my daughter to "stick to princesses" again, I'll make sure your voice ends up two octaves higher. Got it?

EXT. THE RUSTY TAVERN. NIGHT.

Sheila finds Henrietta leaning against their car. Tries to put her arm around her daughter, but she recoils.

SHEILA
You're upset. Cool.

HENRIETTA
You won't listen to me!

SHEILA
Because I'm on a date. Was on a --

HENRIETTA
You're so much better than that guy.

Beat.

SHEILA
Yeah he kinda sucks, doesn't he?

They laugh. The tension fades.

HENRIETTA
You always date these idiots... Was
dad like that?

SHEILA
What? No! I mean - not at all. Your
father was... He was the smartest
person I ever met.

HENRIETTA
I wish I could talk to him about the
Rip.

SHEILA
You'd have to get his attention first.
(off Henrietta)
I wish you'd gotten to know him, of
course, but... I worry he would've
disappointed you. Your father was
always in a lab. That's where he was
when you were born. Ben too. He never
thought of other people because he
couldn't see past his own work. Kind
of like you, actually. Henry, you've
gotta open yourself up to somebody.

Henrietta leans her head onto her mother's shoulder. We cut
across the parking lot to watch the tender moment from afar.

REVERSE to reveal a RUSTED PICK-UP. Through the windshield,
we see that someone else is also watching: Ed. The janitor.

EXT. THORNE HOME. BACK DOOR. DAY.

FROM A HANDHELD POV IN THE WOODS, we watch Henrietta emerge from the house, backpack on, and head for the trees.

EXT. RIVER ACCESS POINT. DAY.

We watch FROM THE WOODS as Henrietta arrives at the dam. She unzips her backpack. Takes out the notebook.

REVERSE to reveal we've been watching from the MAN'S POV.

LATER, ON THE RIVER BANK

Henrietta sits, picking at the dirt. Been a while. Finally, she gets up, leaves the notebook on the ground and heads back into the woods towards home.

WE STAY WITH THE MAN, hidden in the brush. He doesn't move, even when Henrietta's gone.

TIME LAPSE: The sun TRAVERSES the sky. As it approaches the horizon, the first stars appear. But the Rip never moves. And neither does the Man.

Time returns to normal as we hear an unnatural WHOOSH sound. There it is again. WHOOSH. Is it a car? A plane?

Moving just his eyes, the Man looks up: a flock of BIRDS in formation. As they all change direction at once, there again goes the WHOOSH. A surprising and beautiful sound. The Man smiles at this moment of natural tranquility.

WHOOSH... WHOOSH... WHOOSH.

FADE TO:

THE NIGHT SKY FILLED WITH STARS, ALONG WITH THE RIP.

TILT DOWN to the Man, still waiting. Dude has serious patience. At last, he emerges. Picks up the notebook.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
I saw the aurora, too.

The Man DARTS for the forest as Henrietta emerges.

HENRIETTA
Wait! I just want to talk --

He disappears behind trees. She chases. Dodges branches. Lumbers as quickly as she can, but the Man surges ahead.

She steps on a branch and her ankle TURNS. Henrietta screams and tumbles DOWN A RAVINE --

SKY

GROUND

SKY

GROUND

SKY

GROUND --

and CRUNCH! Her head HITS A ROCK and we --

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN ON:

Henrietta's face, unconscious, bobbing slightly. Her jaw is bruised, her hair matted with blood. She doesn't look good.

She's lying prone on a makeshift stretcher (duct tape used as support material between two long tree branches).

The Man pushes the stretcher, one hand on her shoulder to keep her stabilized.

ANGLE ON HIS FEET: HE IS FLOATING, a few feet up in the air.

The Man and the stretcher glide through the forest, drifting as gravity takes a holiday.

LATER IN THE NIGHT.

Henrietta's head is now wrapped in blood-soaked GAUZE.

She opens her eyes to find she's in **THE MAN'S CAMP**, though it's out of focus. She squints and we see the Man crouched over a hand-crank RADIO. We can barely make out the audio:

VOICE (RADIO)

Friends, now's the time to get an order of Rip Radio's ultra fish oil vitamins. These babies are exactly what you'll need to fend off the alien horde that's sure to...

Henrietta's eyes flutter, losing consciousness, and we...

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. THE MAN'S CAMP. NIGHT.

Henrietta wakes with a start. A bit more alert, but her face has SWOLLEN. Reddened. Infected.

She winces and looks down at her ankle. It's infected, too.

Reaching to touch her face, she notices a thin BRACELET around her wrist. Like the sleekest Fitbit you've ever seen. An inscription reads "HEALTH FORWARD." A light glows RED.

What is this thing? She rips it off, and the inscription disappears. The light now FLASHES RED.

Lifting her head, she gets her first look around. She's on a twin-sized mattress, faded polka-dot Tommy Hilfiger sheets.

Brown and green plastic tarps are overlaid like roof tiles, anchored with bungee chords tied to the ground, creating an A-frame structure, open on both ends like a train tunnel.

Moon and Rip light shines through the tarps like stained glass windows, giving the place an almost church-like feel.

A two-burner stove rests atop milk crates, a garden hose repurposed as a gas-line. Cooking supplies hang from ropes. On the floor, mousetraps. A BIN stuffed with NOTEBOOKS.

It's all very impressive.

But then she sees the Man, sleeping under blankets across the A-Frame. Leaning up against a tree next to him: an AX and an apron covered in BLOOD.

Quietly, she swings her feet onto the worn carpet.

Slowly... silently... painfully... she slips on her shoes.

The BED CREAKS.

After a beat, she stands, legs wobbly and ankle screaming. She limps away, watching the Man the whole time.

He doesn't stir. And then -- she RUNS!

Outside the A-Frame, HUGE BOULDERS. Many COVERED in TICK MARKS, counting away the days. THOUSANDS of them.

She SPINS, overwhelmed.

Hearing the Man ROUSE, she claws her way to the top of a boulder. Jumps down the other side and SNAP! Her ankle collapses into AN UNEARTHLY BEND.

Henrietta WAILS in agony --

She lurches away. But in the black of night, she can't see. Looking up, she can barely make out the trees swaying above. Suddenly dizzy, she STUMBLES and lands with a THUD.

MORNING

Henrietta wakes, back in the bed. Her eyes bright, her color returned. Much improved.

Across the way, the Man uses a ladle to stir a steaming POT, then exits the A-frame. Henrietta tries to sit up when she senses something under her blanket. She lifts it to find --

HER ANKLES ARE TIED TO THE BED WITH OLD BELTS.

Frantic, she reaches to untie them when she sees, back on her wrist -- THE BRACELET. Now glowing GREEN.

Henrietta jumps when she hears a CLAMORING: a SQUIRREL scampers from a crude wooden BIRD FEEDER, hung from a tree.

The Man approaches and yanks down the feeder. Frustrated.

He turns to see her eyes open for half a beat before she quickly closes them. Doesn't dare breathe.

The Man fills a BOWL with the ladle then carries it over. She squints one of her eyes open. Busted.

HENRIETTA

If you let me go, I promise I won't
tell anyone...

He just holds the bowl until she takes it. Mac and Cheese.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

I've got a strong olfactory sense.
I'll know If you try to poison me.

Henrietta makes a show of taking a deep SNIFF, sneaking a peek at the Man, who's unconcerned. He's headed over to the bird feeder, where he pulls a rope to raise it even higher.

She dives in hungrily.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

You do know the average squirrel can
jump four feet vertically and more
than twice that horizontally, right?

The Man pauses. Then raises the feeder some more.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

With all the potential launching pads
around here, there's nowhere you can
hang it the squirrels can't reach.

He lets the feeder DROP, spins and approaches Henrietta. As he bears down on her, she leans back in a fearful reflex...

But he merely unties her legs then points to the bracelet. She takes it off and hands it to him, but she's more focused on her ankle.

The skin looks normal. No infection. She TWIRLS it around -- NO PAIN. Then she reaches to her forehead... NO GASH.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

What the heck?

The Man places the bracelet in a CIGAR BOX on a rock shelf.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

What is that thing?

THE MAN

Time... to go.

His voice clanks and stutters, an old engine turning over for the first time in ages. Each word a separate adventure.

HENRIETTA

You're not gonna eat me or anything?

THE MAN

Already had breakfast.

HENRIETTA

(laughs, then)
You don't seem like the dangerous
monster everyone says you are.

The Man shrugs as he pours water into a mug, she leans forward to look closer at his different colored EYES.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

I've never seen someone with iris
heterochromia before.

THE MAN

Drink.

He hands her the mug, but she just hops up and down on her ankle. Right as rain. She points at the cigar box.

HENRIETTA

My ankle was broken, and I'm pretty sure I had a --

THE MAN

You were hallucinating. After you fell. Probable dehydration. Which is why you need to drink.

HENRIETTA

What was the bracelet for then?

He just glares at her. A brick wall. She finally drinks, and he calms. Beat, then --

THE MAN

Shoes.

And with that, he disappears. She pokes around, mind racing.

HENRIETTA

Hey what's that dam for? At the river.

THE MAN (O.S.)

Easier to fish when the fish can't escape.

Henrietta comes upon his notebooks. Reaches for one --

THE MAN

Don't. Touch.

He drops her shoes at her feet. Returns to his feeder.

HENRIETTA

You've been tracking unexplained phenomena. I read your notebook.

THE MAN

Living out here, you need hobbies.

She clocks a handmade BOOKSHELF, changes tactics.

HENRIETTA

These your science books? I've got my own collection. I like to feel the pages. Way better than an iPad.

She pulls out a PAPERBACK. On the cover: a woman, sopping wet, hangs onto a muscular, shirtless man. The title: DOWN RIVER. Henrietta scans the shelf. Scoffs.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
These are all romance novels. Ew.

The Man snatches the book.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Why do you read that garbage?

THE MAN
Research.

HENRIETTA
Research... into what? Sexism?

THE MAN
A modeling of non-intellectual influences on human behavior.

HENRIETTA
So... emotion.

THE MAN
Sure.

HENRIETTA
Wow, you're even weirdier than I am.
(then)
You must be lonely.

He slides the book back in place. She studies him.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
I'm lonely, too. I just moved here, and it sucks. It's not like I had a ton of friends back in Pittsburgh.

The Man points down at her shoes. As she puts them on...

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
But at least there were libraries. And the science museum. I was lonely, I guess, but it didn't feel like I was alone, you know? Not like here.

Now it's the Man's turn to study her. He looks as if he's considering letting down his guard. But then --

THE MAN

Your parents must be worried. We're leaving.

HENRIETTA

Fine, Mr. Killjoy. Can I at least use the bathroom before I go?

The Man hesitates, then points to a boulder on the far side. Henrietta walks over to find a HOLE in the ground. Scrunches her nose. Walks back to the Man, who's now cleaning a pot.

She reaches out to tap his shoulder when he RECOILS. Like even the thought of her touch burns. Awkward beat, then --

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

TP?

THE MAN

Dan Brown novels. Next to the hole.

HENRIETTA

I can't go if you're in here.

The Man doesn't move.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Come on, don't be a perv.

THE MAN

(honestly confused)

I am not a... perv.

The Man exits through the boulders and into the woods beyond. Henrietta waits until he's out of sight.

EXT. WOODS. VARIOUS. DAY.

-- HENRIETTA'S POV: through a handkerchief blindfold, we see the ground and glimpses of Henrietta's feet as she walks through an undergrowth of ferns and red-topped mushrooms, her hands tied in front of her by rope, being led along...

HENRIETTA

I'm open to alternate theories, if you got 'em. But at this point, I can't see any other explanation. It has to be the Rip. The only question is why did it reactivate now?

LATER, STILL WALKING

We hear the sound of LOONS singing in the tree-tops,
Henrietta CRUNCHES BRANCHES as she steps...

HENRIETTA

So then when I was six I had this
real bad reaction to Rocky Road ice
cream. It was the marshmallows. Turns
out gelatin gives me a huge --

LATER, STILL WALKING

Burned embers, black stumps. Remnants of a forest fire.
Henrietta CRUNCHES more branches. And still...

HENRIETTA

I get it. You wanna be left alone. I
can relate. Sometimes I daydream
about everyone at school getting sick
so I can get way ahead in all my
classes. But I think it'd be lonely.

Suddenly, the rope goes slack and Henrietta stops. Through
the blindfold, she can barely make out the Man's feet. Beat.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

What's happening? Are we --

THE MAN

When I was a boy, if I ever felt
lonely, I would repeat the word
stardust to myself, over and over.

HENRIETTA

Stardust. Why?

THE MAN

We're surrounded by this vast
accumulation of planets and matter and
life. It's all made of stardust. Helps
me remember I'm not ever really alone.

(beat)

Never told anybody about that.

HENRIETTA

... I like it.

Beat. No response.

Henrietta peels off the blindfold. She squints as her eyes adjust to the sun. Back at **THE RIVER ACCESS POINT**. She spins -- the Man is gone. Sighs.

But then she unties her hands and pulls out the Man's BRACELET from her pocket. A wry smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATER.

Ben plays with his army action figurines on the floor. A door SLAMS and Henrietta enters. Steps over Bazooka (rolling around in a hamster ball) to tap Ben's shoulder.

HENRIETTA

Where's mother?

BEN

Still asleep. Got home late.

HENRIETTA

She didn't even notice I was --

BEN

You were right.

Ben points behind her, to the TV, playing the NEWS. The CHYRON reads: NASA SCIENTISTS BELIEVE RIP HAS REACTIVATED.

On TV, cell phone footage of SNOW blanketing PALM TREES.

BEN (cont'd)

It grew again, too.

CLOSE on Henrietta, her jaw dropping. Ben looks up at his sister, fearful.

BEN (cont'd)

What's gonna happen now?

Henrietta just watches the snow fall on TV, then a huge GRIN spreads across her face.

INT. LIBRARY. EAST MILLINOCKET SCHOOL. DAY.

PUSH THROUGH kid traffic until we arrive at a **READING NOOK**, where Henrietta sits surrounded by SCIENCE BOOKS.

She checks to make sure no one's watching then digs into her backpack, eyeing the Man's BRACELET.

But when Dustin appears, she quickly picks up a book and pretends to read. He stands there a beat.

DUSTIN

You should be careful. They usually send kids with the flu in here to wait 'til their parents pick 'em up.

HENRIETTA

I got a flu shot in early October.

DUSTIN

That's good. Smart.

Another beat. Awkward.

DUSTIN (cont'd)

Today in class everybody was making fun of Ms. Gagnon for not listening to you about that aurora.

Henrietta nods but doesn't look up. Dustin persists...

DUSTIN (cont'd)

Anyway, it's pretty cool. You knew about the Rip before anybody else.

HENRIETTA

And now I'm gonna figure out why that anomaly showed up here first.

(re: the books)

Using science. So if you don't mind --

DUSTIN

How come you care so much? About science I mean.

Henrietta puts down her book, takes a beat to consider.

HENRIETTA

It's the only way you can really know something. You don't have to think it or believe it. It's just true.

DUSTIN

Huh. That's prolly why science is my worst subject.

HENRIETTA

What do you mean?

DUSTIN

I don't want to know the truth. It's usually bad. That's why I like obits so much. They don't go on and on about people's mistakes. Just the good stuff, you know?

(then)

I got a sweet collection I could show you sometime.

HENRIETTA

Oh - yeah, sure.

DUSTIN

I'd invite you to my place but my dad sits around watching HGTV all day.

HENRIETTA

You could come to mine, I guess.

Dustin smiles, grabs Henrietta's PHONE from the floor.

DUSTIN

Super. Let's say Saturday? Here's my number, in case you wanna text before.

EXT./INT. SCHOOL BUS. LATER.

Henrietta sits alone in the back of the bus. In her hand: the Man's bracelet. Curious, she puts it on. The inscription emerges: HEALTH FORWARD. But then she feels a tiny PRICK --

HENRIETTA

Ow!

Henrietta yanks it off. A droplet of blood appears where it pricked her. The inscription on the bracelet fades away.

Ben plops down across the aisle, catching a glimpse of the bracelet before Henrietta can slip it into her pocket.

He looks at her, suspicious. Then he glances OUT THE WINDOW and spots an OLD JEEP driving next to them, with a sign on top: ANGIO'S PIZZA. Ben turns back to Henrietta.

BEN

Pizza tonight?

As Henrietta nods, the CAMERA drifts --

OUTSIDE THE BUS, to the Jeep. We float INSIDE, where a PIZZA GUY, 20s, a douche-y bro with a Bluetooth in his ear, rocks out to terrible music (probably MAROON 5). Makes a turn.

EXT. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING. NIGHT.

Pizza Guy gets out of his Jeep, a large PIE in hand, talking on his phone via the Bluetooth.

PIZZA GUY

Bring beer. Cassie's outta town so I got the place to myself.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Despite a NO TRESPASSING sign and BOARDED UP windows, Pizza Guy shoves open the door.

PIZZA GUY

Brazil. I guess her grandma slipped and broke her hip or something when they had that crazy Rip blizzard.

He enters the building, steps over broken bottles and heads up a flight of stairs, unfazed. He's done this before.

PIZZA GUY (cont'd)

I don't know, dude. She thinks this is like the Rapture or whatever.

INT. HALLWAY. ABANDONED APARTMENT BUILDING. A MINUTE LATER.

Pizza Guy heads down a darkened hall. Sketchy as hell.

PIZZA GUY

That's what I said. Nothing we can do about it anyway. If it is the end of the world, I'm gonna stop hitting the gym and just get wasted, you know?

Arriving at a door, he clocks an ENVELOPE on the floor.

PIZZA GUY (cont'd)

Hey lemme call you right back. Gotta deliver a pie to that crackpot on Maple.

Turns off his Bluetooth and sets the pizza down. Grabs the envelope and opens it: CASH. He counts it, seems satisfied, and then... waits to see if the door opens. Shakes his head.

PIZZA GUY (cont'd)
OK OK, catch you later, weirdo.

He leaves. But WE STAY AT THE DOOR for several beats before it finally opens a SLIVER. We can't see who's there. Just an EYE. Then the door opens the rest of the way --

Revealing Ed. As he grabs the pie, we follow him inside and see stained walls, a floor in tatters. The hum of a GENERATOR. This place should be (and probably is) condemned. But then we CUT AROUND:

-- a dozen FILING CABINETS and BOOKSHELVES, meticulously organized and catalogued.

-- meteorological EQUIPMENT, beeping and clicking.

-- a massive TIMELINE drawn out on one wall. Dates and descriptions (aurora, earthquake, etc). RIP anomalies.

Ed sets down his pizza on an egg-crate desk, next to a crackling POLICE SCANNER and an early 2000s pink iMac covered with unicorn stickers.

He sifts through a manila folder, pulls a sheet labeled "Henrietta Thorne transcript." Checks her ADDRESS then scans a MAP. CIRCLES a house.

As he opens the pizza box...

MATCH CUT TO:

AN ANGIO'S PIZZA BOX BEING OPENED...

In the **THORNE DINING ROOM**. Sheila and Henrietta sit across from Ben, as the camera DRIFTS AROUND THE TABLE.

HENRIETTA

I guess you don't care about the planet, mother.

SHEILA

You know you're not helping your cause with this mother crap.

The argument continues as the camera lands ON BEN.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)

I'm working on the biggest scientific mystery in the history of mysteries - I don't have time to tile the roof!

SHEILA (O.S.)
Nobody's asking you to tile the roof.

PUSH IN on Ben. Eating quietly, staring straight ahead.

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
Not yet but it's a slippery slope!

SHEILA (O.S.)
It's vacuuming. I hardly think --

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
You're such a tyrant!

As Sheila and Henrietta's conversation ends, the camera, now in a Ben CU, REVOLVES AROUND HIM, until we're behind his head and can see Sheila and Henrietta again.

But they're actually STILL ARGUING. We just can't hear them. In fact, we hear NOTHING. Because we're in TOTAL SILENCE.

This, once again, is the world from Ben's perspective.

We finally see what Ben's been staring at: Henrietta's pocket, where he can make out the outline of the BRACELET.

INT. HENRIETTA & BEN'S ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.

STILL SILENT.

Ben lies in bed awake. Shuts his eyes when Henrietta enters, then opens them to see her stuff the Man's bracelet under her mattress before heading out to the bathroom in the hall.

INT. THORNE HOME. VARIOUS. MORNING.

STILL COMPLETELY SILENT.

In her PJs, Sheila cooks breakfast sausages in the **KITCHEN**. She moves to turn off the stove, when she glances up at the CLOCK. Running late, she hurries upstairs.

But we PUSH IN ON THE NOB of the stove -- once again left ON. The sausages continue to simmer...

ANGLE ON THE SMOKE, wafting up. We follow it to the ceiling, where it reaches the SMOKE ALARM. Several beats as the smoke envelops the alarm. Then a RED LIGHT turns ON, and --

THE SILENCE IS PUNCTURED. We hear a distant, warbled alarm.

As the CAMERA DRIFTS from the kitchen, floating through the **LIVING ROOM** and up **THE STAIRS**, the WAIL of the alarm grows louder, still warped...

Gliding down **THE HALLWAY**, past the bathroom door, behind which we can HEAR the SHOWER. The alarm gets LOUDER STILL...

We move THROUGH THE DOOR into **BEN & HENRIETTA'S ROOM**, where Ben sleeps in bed. Restless, twitching...

The sound GROWS...

We reach his bedside. Ben's ears are swollen, INFECTED. The veins on his neck discolored.

PUSH IN to an ECU of BEN'S INFECTED EAR...

The alarm CRESCENDOS...

His eyes FLY OPEN and we PULL BACK SUPER FAST as he SHOOTS UP in bed. His hands move to cover his EARS, the Man's BRACELET around his wrist. Glowing RED.

IN THE HALLWAY

The alarm is PIERCING. Ben furiously BANGS his head with his fists! As Henrietta exits the bathroom, Sheila rushes over and tries in vain to hold Ben's arms down as he CONVULSES.

EXT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. MINUTES LATER.

Sheila's car PEELS out of the driveway, and the camera LOWERS to the ground, where we see that the lawn is --

-- LITTERED WITH DEAD CICADAS. Thousands of them.

EXT./INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. DAY.

Sheila drives like a maniac. In back, Ben FOAMS at the mouth, shivering in a blanket as Henrietta tries to soothe him.

They SCREECH to a halt in front of the **HOSPITAL ER ENTRANCE**.

INT. HALLWAY. HOSPITAL. DAY.

Ben lies unconscious on a gurney as DOCTORS and NURSES race him down the hallway. Henrietta and Sheila run alongside. As they reach the ICU, a NURSE blocks Sheila and Henrietta.

NURSE

Sheila, you know you can't go in
there...

SHEILA

I have to stay with him. Please!

Sheila reaches out as the doors shut behind Ben.

NURSE

Let the doctors do their job.

Henrietta and Sheila stare at the closed doors, helpless.

CUT TO:

A TINY SWARM OF CICADAS, FLYING OUTSIDE A LARGE WINDOW.

In the **HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM**, Henrietta watches. Then --

SPLAT! The bugs smash into the glass. Henrietta jumps.

She turns: Sheila sits nearby, oblivious. Bouncing a knee, anxious as hell.

And then, through the window, Henrietta sees a **BLACK CLOUD** in the distance. Leans in for a better look.

It's not a cloud. It's another swarm of cicadas. Only this one's bigger. MUCH bigger. So big it dwarfs a distant tree.

Making her way down the hall, Henrietta follows the swarm. It grows larger as more cicadas join. She soon finds herself blocked by the double doors that lead to the **ICU**.

Then a **NURSE** pushes past, using an **ID BADGE** to open the doors. Henrietta catches the door before it closes.

IN THE ICU

Chaos. **DOCTORS** and **NURSES** rush about. Through the crush, Henrietta sees Ben, **THRASHING** on a bed.

DR. BRANDT

Someone get neuro on the phone! We've got serious brain swelling.

Suddenly Ben goes limp. Henrietta clocks his monitor: his heartbeat **SLOWS**. She takes a step closer. He's so still.

DR. BRANDT (cont'd)
I need a Dilantin load STAT!

As a nurse flies in with Dilantin, Henrietta steps aside, glancing out the window. The swarm of cicadas has GROWN CONSIDERABLY LARGER. She GASPS.

We hear Ben's heartbeat RETURN TO NORMAL...

ANOTHER DOCTOR
He's coming back! C'mon, kid.

Through the window, we see the swarm shrink in size almost immediately. Cicadas scatter. Henrietta turns back to her brother. Hopeful.

But then his heartbeat SLOWS AGAIN. And there's a loud --

SMACK!!!

A different CICADA SWARM slams into the glass! One of the ICU NURSES heard it too, drifting toward the window...

Cicadas swirl all over, as if they've gone collectively mad. The swarm literally PULSES ALONG WITH BEN'S HEARTBEAT.

ICU NURSE
What the...?

DR. BRANDT
Sam, I need another IV in him, now!

The ICU Nurse scrambles off. But Henrietta keeps watching: in the parking lot outside, she sees a WOMAN desperately swatting the bugs away. And then --

Ben's heartbeat QUICKENS... and the cicadas dissipate. The woman, relieved, stands down.

Ben's heartbeat SLOWS... and the cicadas return in force. The poor woman once again under attack.

Henrietta looks back and forth, from her brother to the swarms of bugs. Furrows her brow. No. Not possible. Is it?

Then Ben's heartbeat abruptly STOPS.

And the swarm MULTIPLIES. Every second, more cicadas emerge from the woods from all directions. She can see nothing out the window besides cicadas now. Blacking out the world.

IT'S A GODDAMN PLAGUE.

ANOTHER DOCTOR

No pulse!

Ben's covered in sweat. The doctor RIPS off his hospital gown, and Henrietta sees it. Around his wrist. Holy shit --

HENRIETTA

The bracelet! Take off the bracelet!!

They finally notice her --

ANOTHER DOCTOR

Someone get this kid outta here!

A nurse yanks Henrietta by the shoulder --

HENRIETTA

Please! You've got to take it off!

TAKE IT OFF!!

IN THE ER LOBBY

Henrietta is shoved out, catching one more glimpse of Ben as a nurse investigates the bracelet. Then the doors SHUT.

At this point, the cicadas outside have attracted attention. VISITORS and STAFF gawk out the window.

Henrietta joins them, holding her breath. A beat. Then another. And another.

And then...

In an instant, the blackness outside melts away. Within seconds, the cicadas disperse and all is clear.

As things calm down around her, Henrietta looks back at the double doors, and exhales.

FADE TO:

THE TV IN THE WAITING ROOM

On it, a White House PRESS BRIEFING in progress. The CHYRON: WHITE HOUSE CALLS FOR CALM AMID WORLDWIDE ANOMALIES.

As Henrietta huddles in a corner with Sheila, she stares at her phone. A new response on the message board:

Bohrisabore123: hey did u ever call the hotline?

DR. BRANDT (one of the doctors from the ICU: 40s, hardworking, conscientious) approaches. Sheila stands --

DR. BRANDT
He's stable.

Sheila covers her mouth with her hand. Can't even speak.

DR. BRANDT (cont'd)
He's also awake. One of the nurses signs so she's been translating. He keeps calling me sergeant.

SHEILA
When can we see him?

DR. BRANDT
I need to explain something first...
Somehow - and lord knows I've never seen anything like it - but, well - we just tested Ben's hearing, and he's at 30 decibels.

(re: their confusion)
He's got mild hearing loss... but Ben can hear.

Tears form in Sheila's eyes. Henrietta is flabbergasted.

SHEILA
... how is that possible?

DR. BRANDT
A lot of strange things have been happening obviously, but this...

Dr. Brandt reaches into his pocket, pulls out the BRACELET.

DR. BRANDT (cont'd)
(to Henrietta)
How'd you know to take this off him?

Sheila looks at Henrietta, who tries to think fast.

HENRIETTA
Just a guess. It was flashing red and I'd never seen it before. What is it?

DR. BRANDT
Do you have any idea where he might've gotten it or what it does?

Henrietta shakes her head no.

SHEILA

I don't understand. What does that thing have to do with his hearing?

DR. BRANDT

Honestly, I have no idea. The infection dissipated as soon as we removed it, but that could have been a coincidence. I'm grasping at straws here. We're going to have to send it out for testing tomorrow.

ANGLE ON Henrietta as she takes this in.

DR. BRANDT (cont'd)

In the meantime, I'd like Ben to visit a specialist in Bangor...

Dr. Brandt keeps talking, but his voice FADES DOWN as we PUSH IN on the TV above, where the PRESS SECRETARY speaks --

PRESS SECRETARY (TV)

... to remain calm and go about your lives as usual. The worst thing any of us can do right now is panic.

INT. WENTWORTH FAMILY GROCERY. DAY.

Panic. TOWNIES raid emptying shelves as they overfill shopping carts, stocking up for the coming apocalypse.

Sheila ushers Ben and Henrietta down an aisle. Henrietta takes in the chaos and taps her mother, impatient.

HENRIETTA

Can we go home, please?

SHEILA

Dr. Brandt said to get pain meds and cotton balls in case Ben's ears start bleeding again.

An ELDERLY MAN pushes past Sheila, heading for the pharmacy.

ANGLE ON BEN, looking around.

-- a nearby shopping cart wheel SQUEAKS.
-- two customers ARGUE over a loaf of bread.
-- groceries BEEP at check-out.
-- an ANNOUNCEMENT about a spill.

The CACOPHONY grows and Ben covers his ears. Bangs his head.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Oh no...

Sheila runs over and scoops Ben up. Rushes him toward the exit. As the double doors OPEN into the parking lot --

MATCH CUT TO:

THE DOOR TO SHEILA'S TOYOTA SLAMMING SHUT.

They're all inside. It's quiet. Finally.

SHEILA

Tell me what hurts.

BEN

Everything sounds... terrible.

SHEILA

Oh, baby. I think that's just how the world sounds.

After a beat, Ben actually smiles. They all share a breath. A beat of respite as they process this new reality.

INT. LIVING ROOM. THORNE HOME. DAY.

Sheila and Ben are glued to TV news coverage of the Rip. Behind them, through the window, we see Henrietta shimmy down the drain pipe and head off into the trees...

EXT. RIVER ACCESS POINT. LATER.

Standing by the dam, Henrietta unfurls a MAP of the area. With a pencil, she traces a path from the river out into the woods. Trying to remember how she got to the Man's camp.

IN THE WOODS. LATER.

Henrietta looks down as she hikes: BURNED EMBERS.

Stops to edit the route she's drawing on her map. Excited, she picks up the pace, on the right track.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS. LATER.

ANGLE ON the trees. Gently swaying.

Henrietta appears, crossing left to right. Sweaty now. She exits frame, but we hold on the trees. Beat.

She crosses again, this time right to left. And out.

Finally, she re-enters a third time and stops. Frustrated. Lost. But then, from the trees behind her --

-- the sound of LOONS. She heads that way.

ON THE GROUND: branches she broke on the way out. BREAD CRUMBS. Re-energized, she updates her map.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS. LATER.

Henrietta arrives at a minefield of vehicle-sized boulders. Folds her map and slips it into her jacket pocket...

ON THE GROUND: Her foot clips a WIRE, causing it to VIBRATE.

We FOLLOW THE VIBRATION, racing along the wire, past boulder after boulder before finally zooming up a tree, across a branch, snaking its way through more trees and down into --

THE MAN'S CAMP

The wire feeds into a WOOD BOX, triggering a FLASHING light.

BACK WITH HENRIETTA: As she finds the entrance...

But there's no sign of the Man. Just the flashing light. Then, sensing a presence behind her, she turns --

-- Just as the Man leaps down from a boulder. He gets in her face, intense. Holding the empty cigar box.

THE MAN

Where is it?!

HENRIETTA

I'm sorry. I...

She's flooded with shame.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

I know I shouldn't have taken it, but I - just wanted to figure out how it worked! And then - does that thing use nanobots? Is that what causes the infection?

THE MAN
What have you done? What's happened?

HENRIETTA
It's my brother, he... he can hear.

Stunned, the Man collapses onto the ground. Defeated.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
This may sound crazy, but is that
bracelet connected to the Rip?

The Man just sits there, staring at the ground.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
It seemed like the cicadas and the
bracelet were... I'm not sure, I --

THE MAN
TELL ME WHERE IT IS!

Henrietta reflexively takes a step back.

HENRIETTA
...this doctor... he took it.

Beat.

THE MAN
Please don't wait for more questions
before volunteering information.

HENRIETTA
He, um, said he's gonna send it
somewhere tomorrow. For testing.

EXT. WOODS ABOVE HOSPITAL. LATER.

Hidden in the trees up on a CLIFF, the Man looks through his binoculars. Henrietta crouches next to him.

In the valley below, several hundred yards away, the hospital, surrounded by woods. The Man lowers the glass.

THE MAN
You have to get it.

HENRIETTA
Are you - I'm a kid. That's like a
secure facility. My mom works there
and even she needs a badge to get in.

THE MAN
There's no other option.

HENRIETTA
Uh - how about you go?

THE MAN
Too dangerous.

HENRIETTA
But it's OK for me? Thanks a lot.

THE MAN
That device is paired to me. You saw
what happened when your brother --

HENRIETTA
The anomaly, you mean? The cicadas?

THE MAN
He could have died. That bracelet
causes an infection in anyone but me.

HENRIETTA
How come you used it on me, then?

THE MAN
It was an emergency, under my
supervision. It's not --

The Man cuts himself off. Obviously holding something back.

HENRIETTA
C'mon. You can trust me.

THE MAN
... Never mind. I'll get it myself.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS

Three HUNTERS walk, a GERMAN SHEPHERD alongside them. They look rough, drinking beers and holding guns.

HUNTER #1
Don't care what nobody says, I'm not
letting it ruin my day.

HUNTER #2
Hear hear. It's a false flag anyways.

HUNTER #3

I don't know Daryl, if it is the government, why'd they wait 10 years to start them anomalies up again?

HUNTER #2

Not easy to set these things in motion. Takes time for the deep state to dot the I's and whatnot.

HUNTER #1

Plus you know the media's in on it.

The dog GROWLS. The hunters get quiet.

HUNTER #3

What is it, Mac? You got something?

HUNTER #2

Better not be another dang raccoon.

Hunter #3 squats down, pulls an old PAPERBACK from his bag. A DANIELLE STEELE novel. Holds it under the dog's nose.

HUNTER #3

Go catch us a hermit, boy.

BACK WITH HENRIETTA AND THE MAN

The Man stands abruptly. Spins.

HENRIETTA

What's the matter...

THE MAN

We need to go. Right --

GROWLING nearby. They look over and the GERMAN SHEPARD approaches. The Man's eyes dart. Making calculations.

Then, O.S. voices. As the Hunters emerge from the brush --

HUNTER #3

It's him! Holy crap!

They fan out to encircle the Man and Henrietta, who back away from the encroaching threat. The dog BARKS like mad.

HUNTER #2

Hold it there, hermit.

The Man and Henrietta back up to the cliff's edge. Cornered.

HUNTER #1
You all right, kid? He hurt you?

HENRIETTA
Listen, he's not dangerous --

HUNTER #2
Step away from him, honey...

The Man leans over, whispers to Henrietta --

THE MAN
Your hand. Now.

She hesitates. The Hunters RAISE THEIR GUNS.

THE MAN (cont'd)
Trust me!

TIGHT ON HIS EYES. Then TIGHT ON HER'S. She holds out her hand. As the Man reaches...

Hunter #3 pulls the trigger and FIRES!

And at the moment their hands touch --

*** WHOOSH ***

-- HENRIETTA AND THE MAN FLOAT UP INTO THE AIR!

The dog YELPS as the Hunters stumble back, eyes wide in terror. Then they run off into the woods.

A surreal beat as Henrietta and the Man hang there, floating as if in outer space. And then, the Man lets go of Henrietta's hand, and just as quickly as they went up --

THEY GO DOWN. Hard.

IN THE WOODS, A MINUTE LATER

They move FAST through the trees.

HENRIETTA
What the hell was that?!!

Henrietta tries to keep up as the Man pushes their pace.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
We freaking floated!

Her mind is racing. Making connections.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You said give me your hand and then -
did you know that was gonna happen?!

Just the SWISH SWISH SWISH of leaves brushing their legs.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Was that an anomaly? Did you cause
it?! But you don't have the bracelet.

EXT. THE MAN'S CAMP. DAY.

They rush in, out of breath. The Man staggers to the bed.

HENRIETTA
If it isn't the bracelet... is it
you? Are you causing them?!

Henrietta sees that his hand, clutching his abdomen, is
COVERED IN BLOOD. When he lets go, his shirt is soaked.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Oh my god. We need to get you to the
hospital!

The Man shakes his head. Digs through his supplies and pulls
out a TOWEL. Ties it around the wound. GASPS in pain.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You need help.

THE MAN
(weakly)
No...

He falls onto his back. The color draining from his face as
the towel soaks in blood.

HENRIETTA
But you're gonna die!

THE MAN
(choking the words)
The bracelet...

HENRIETTA
Yeah doctors can heal you, too! If you
won't go, I'll bring back help --

THE MAN
No!

HENRIETTA
Why the hell not?!

THE MAN
You're right... about the Rip... I'm
not... supposed to be here.

HENRIETTA
What are you talking about?!

He fights off unconsciousness to say --

THE MAN
... I'm from the future.

As soon as he says that, BLINDING LIGHT fills the forest.

Henrietta covers her eyes as a spectacular AURORA forms all around them. Ten times the size of the earlier one.

It literally knocks her off her feet.

As it dissipates, her eyes adjust, and she looks back to the Man, PASSED OUT. Stares at him, wide-eyed. And then --

HENRIETTA SPRINTS THROUGH THE WOODS...

... as fast as she can. Determined, focused.

OPPENHEIMER (FOOTAGE O.S.)
We knew the world would not be the
same...

CUT TO:

J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER.

Yes, *that* Oppenheimer. The father of nuclear power. He looks super intense as the camera bores into him in BLACK & WHITE.

OPPENHEIMER (FOOTAGE)
A few people laughed, a few people
cried, most people were silent...

Then we hear LOUD BANGING from O.S.

OPPENHEIMER (FOOTAGE) (cont'd)
I remembered the line from the Hindu
scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita...

PULL BACK to reveal that we're looking at a WWII documentary on the TV in the **THORNE LIVING ROOM**. More BANGING O.S.

OPPENHEIMER (FOOTAGE) (cont'd)

Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multi-armed form and says: 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.'

PULL BACK more to reveal Ben, using a wooden SPOON to BANG on pots and pans with joyful abandon. Sheila emerges from the basement, dragging up an EMPTY SUITCASE.

Just then the FRONT DOOR FLIES OPEN. It's Henrietta, sweaty and out of breath.

SHEILA

Henry - there's pizza in the fridge if you're hungry. But I need you to pack after you eat, OK?

Henrietta wants to scream: *The hermit is a time traveler. He might control the Rip. AND HE'S DYING!* Instead --

HENRIETTA

Pack... pack for what?

SHEILA

Bangor. I got Ben in to see that specialist tomorrow.

Henrietta fixates on the HOSPITAL ID BADGE clipped to the hip pocket of Sheila's scrubs. She approaches her mother, who's distracted by Ben banging on a wok.

Henrietta slowly... carefully... tentatively reaches for the ID badge. Almost has it, when Ben taps her. Henrietta turns and sees Ben was signing to her.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Try sounding out your words.

He moves his mouth to speak but becomes self-conscious, feeling their eyes bore into him.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Dr. Brandt said it could take years to learn to speak. I want you to get started.

But Ben gives up, frustrated. Returns to signing --

BEN
Just say something else, will you?

HENRIETTA
Like what?

He closes his eyes, marinates in the sound. Smiles big.

BEN
Your voice. It sounds... orange.

Ben laughs then returns to banging pots. The badge dangles from Sheila's hip, taunting Henrietta.

Sheila's eyes well with tears. Henrietta notices.

HENRIETTA
Hey, this is all so... Can I have a
hug?

Sheila smiles warmly. As they embrace, Henrietta carefully SWIPES the badge, pockets it, then abruptly pulls away.

In a flash, Henrietta is up and heading for the door.

SHEILA
Where are you --

HENRIETTA
New science project!

SHEILA
Henry, I don't want you going out
right now with all this crazy Rip
stuff happening. Plus we're leaving
first thing in the --

HENRIETTA
I'm not going to Bangor.

SHEILA
Well you're not staying here by
yourself.

HENRIETTA
Who's gonna take care of Bazooka?

SHEILA
We're taking him with us.

HENRIETTA
Then I'll stay at my friend Dustin's!

SHEILA
(perking up)
You have a friend?!

HENRIETTA
None of your business!

SHEILA
Well, OK. Good! Just leave me his
number. Henry, I'm so proud of --

Henrietta SLAMS the door on her way out. And Sheila smiles.

EXT. THORNE HOME. SAME.

Henrietta hops on her BIKE, pedaling furiously as she careens out of the driveway. As she turns onto the road, she SWERVES, barely missing a TRUCK, parked on the shoulder.

She brakes when she sees who's inside: ED. He opens the driver side door --

ED
Oh gosh, I'm so sorry. You all right?

Yep. ED SPEAKS. Henrietta is as stunned as you are. But then she snaps out of it.

HENRIETTA
Yeah. Yeah, I'm good. Aren't you --

ED
Where ya headed so fast?

Beyond creped out, Henrietta starts pedaling again...

ED (cont'd)
Henrietta, right? I can drive you
somewhere if you want!

She rides off, Ed cursing himself as he watches her go. He then looks to the Thorne home before glancing down at some DAISIES growing on the side of the road...

EXT. THE MAN'S CAMP. SUNSET.

The Man winces as he ties a new towel around his torso. Coughs into his hand. Blood. Tries to take a deep breath but it's too painful. As he lies down and looks up --

-- TILT UP to the RIP... then TILT DOWN to reveal we're...

EXT. HOSPITAL. A FEW MINUTES LATER.

Henrietta races into the PARKING LOT. Dumps her bike behind some bushes near the ER entrance.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM. HOSPITAL. SAME.

Behind the front desk, a BORED NURSE, 60s, does a crossword puzzle when the front doors slide open. She looks up but doesn't see anyone. Returns to her crossword.

In front of the desk, we TRACK near the floor where Henrietta CRAWLS, avoiding detection.

As she makes her way past the desk towards the double doors leading into the rest of the hospital --

ELDERLY LADY (O.S.)

Hello, dear.

Henrietta glances over at the waiting area, where an ELDERLY LADY, 80s, sits staring right at her. Henrietta freezes.

BORED NURSE

I said I'd call you when they're ready. Buttering me up won't help.

Henrietta resumes crawling. Reaches the double doors, pulls out her mom's ID BADGE. Holds it up to the sensor...

Behind the desk, the Bored Nurse sees the doors OPEN and, yet again, nobody comes or goes.

BORED NURSE (cont'd)

This place is falling apart.

INT. DINING ROOM. THORNE HOME. SAME.

ANGLE ON a small bouquet of DAISIES, as Sheila arranges them in a vase. Ed sits at the table, looking on.

SHEILA

Well these are lovely, thank you, Ed.
You said they're from your garden?

ED

I'm a bit of a horticulturalist, I must admit. I'm just sorry it took me so long to introduce myself. It's been a crazy few weeks since I started at the school.

SHEILA

You're our neighbor, you work at the kids' school, and you're new to the area. What are the odds?

ED

Gotta be a million to one.

Ben stares daggers across the table at Ed, who, unnerved by the boy's attention, smiles. As Sheila pours tea...

ED (cont'd)

I hate to be a bother, but I'd love some sugar if you have any.

SHEILA

Of course.

She reaches behind the teapot and reveals a sugar container.

ED

Oh - actually I was hoping you might have a sugar substitute?

SHEILA

Ah. Um, let me check in the kitchen.

ED

Sorry for being so persnickety. Just trying to watch the waistline...

As Sheila gets up, she rolls her eyes. Once she's out of the room, Ed "casually" turns his attention to Ben.

ED (cont'd)

It's Benjamin, right?

Ben nods.

ED

You liking Millinocket so far? Lots of fun exploring the woods I bet.

Ben shrugs.

ED

You haven't ever... run into anyone out there, have you? Maybe with your sister?

Off Ben...

INT. HALLWAY. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

Henrietta arrives at Dr. Brandt's OFFICE. Peeks in the window -- empty.

IN DR. BRANDT'S OFFICE

Henrietta approaches the messy desk. Pokes around.

IN THE HALLWAY

Rounding a corner is... Dr. Brandt.

IN DR. BRANDT'S OFFICE

Henrietta searches the desk before finally, beneath some papers, she sees a MANILA ENVELOPE. The bracelet.

The doorknob TURNS. Henrietta looks around. Nowhere to hide.

Brandt enters to find: AN EMPTY OFFICE.

UNDER THE DESK, Henrietta sits, holding her breath. We hear RUSTLING and then the door SLAMS. She stands to grab the --

Wait a second. The envelope is GONE.

HENRIETTA

Oh come on.

INT. HALLWAY. HOSPITAL. SAME.

CU on the ENVELOPE, nestled under Dr. Brandt's arm. Behind him, Henrietta surreptitiously follows.

Dr. Brandt arrives at the NURSES' STATION, passes the envelope to a YOUNG NURSE, 20s, who pulls out his earbuds.

DR. BRANDT

For the courier.

YOUNG NURSE

You got it, Dr. B.

As Dr. Brandt walk off, Henrietta looks around and slips into a nearby PATIENT'S ROOM.

IN THE PATIENT'S ROOM.

The lights are off. A PATIENT sleeps under covers. Henrietta grabs the CHART at the end of the bed. Forms a plan...

INT. DINING ROOM. THORNE HOME. SAME.

Sheila returns with EQUAL PACKETS. Finds Ed and Ben sipping their tea in silence.

SHEILA

Voila.

She slides an Equal across the table. He ignores it.

ED

Benjamin sure is a quiet one, huh.

SHEILA

Well, yes he... doesn't speak at all, actually.

(off Ed)

Oh I thought you might've known from school. He's deaf, or was, or... well it's really hard to explain.

Sheila laughs, so absurd hearing it out loud. Ed stares.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Yeah, they're telling me his hearing loss was maybe reversed somehow by this bracelet thing he found in a dumpster? Not that I let my kids root around --

(to Ben)

Hey what were you doing rooting around in a dumpster, anyway?

ED

Sorry, a bracelet fixed his hearing?

SHEILA

Oh we don't think of it as "fixed." Deafness isn't a disability --

ED

Where is the bracelet now?

SHEILA

(weirded out)

At the hospital. Why?

Ed stands abruptly.

ED
I'm sorry. I just realized, I - I
have to go. I have a... Excuse me.

He abruptly scoots out. The door slams. Beat.

SHEILA
Well that was weird.

INT. NURSES STATION. HOSPITAL. SAME.

Henrietta rushes up to the Young Nurse, listening to his music. She eyes the envelope on the desk in front of him.

HENRIETTA
My mommy... she needs help!

YOUNG NURSE
(takes out earbuds)
Huh?

HENRIETTA
She's having a reaction to her
Lisinopril medication!

YOUNG NURSE
Oh dang, OK --

HENRIETTA
It's taken orally three times a day!

The Young Nurse gathers his things.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Room 671. Hurry! She's vomiting all
over the place. Which is a rare side
effect, along with --

YOUNG NURSE
OK, OK --

The Young Nurse starts toward the room, but then stops...

YOUNG NURSE (cont'd)
Hold up - your mom's in 671?

HENRIETTA
Yeah! Please hurry!

YOUNG NURSE
... Your mom is Arthur Johnson?

Beat. Henrietta SWIPES the envelope and RUNS --

YOUNG NURSE (cont'd)
Hey!

He takes off after Henrietta, who books it towards a set of double doors, she tries them but they're locked!

The Young Nurse is CATCHING UP --

Henrietta runs AROUND A CORNER and bursts through the first door she sees, into --

INT. HOSPITAL BREAK ROOM. SAME.

Empty, except for TWO EMPLOYEES talking near the coffee maker on the other side of the room. They don't notice Henrietta, but Henrietta definitely notices one of them --

It's RICHIE - Sheila's date, talking with a FEMALE NURSE. Henrietta freezes, a sitting duck.

RICHIE
(to Young Nurse)
See, I saw this aurora a few days before the Rip reactivated, so I actually knew all this was coming.

Henrietta rolls her eyes as she searches for an escape route.

FEMALE NURSE
(unimpressed)
Oh yeah?

RICHIE
Yeah, I've seen every ep of Dr. Who, even the lost Christmas episode with the fourth doctor. So that's kind of sharpened my scientific mind.

FEMALE NURSE
... Well, I better get back to it.

RICHIE
Oh sure, allow me to escort you.

And then... they HEAD STRAIGHT FOR HENRIETTA! She turns away, pretending to use a small bottle of HAND SANITIZER. As Richie passes, slows.

A hint of recognition on his face...?

But then he follows the Female Nurse out the door. Henrietta exhales. Looks at the hand sanitizer, plotting her next move.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Henrietta reaches the **ER LOBBY**. Almost free. She hugs the envelope tightly as she makes her way across the room.

The Bored Nurse doesn't even look up...

Almost to the door leading outside, Henrietta's lips curl into a smile when --

The door slides open revealing --

ED.

They freeze. Then a SECURITY GUARD steps between them, facing Henrietta.

The Young Nurse CHARGES through the double doors, gasping for air. Henrietta's trapped. Nowhere to go. Defeated.

YOUNG NURSE

Not cool, kid.

He rips the ENVELOPE from her hands. Ed clocks it.

The security guard tries to GRAB her, but Henrietta spins away, leaving him holding her jacket. Henrietta looks back as her MAP flutters out of a pocket and to the floor.

She watches Ed pick it up before she runs out into the night. The security guard starts after her, but the Young Nurse holds up the envelope.

YOUNG NURSE (cont'd)

Just let her go.

Ed unfolds the map - sees the drawn route to the Man's camp.

AT THE NURSES STATION. A FEW MINUTES LATER.

The Young Nurse DROPS the envelope on the counter and puts his earbuds in, rocks out. Spins around in his chair to grab a bag of Flamin' Hot Cheetos and starts munching. But when he spins back --

THE ENVELOPE IS GONE.

He stands up, looks both ways down the hall.

YOUNG NURSE
(sotto)
Son of a bitch.

EXT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

Ed exits, CARRYING THE ENVELOPE. Rips it open and pulls out --

THE SMALL BOTTLE OF HAND SANITIZER.

CUT TO:

THE BRACELET

In Henrietta's hand as she bikes up the **ROAD**, the hospital receding in the distance behind her.

EXT./INT. ED'S TRUCK. SAME.

ENGINE REVS as Ed squeals out of the HOSPITAL PARKING LOT. Henrietta's MAP unfurled next to him. A PISTOL rests on top.

EXT. WOODS. LATER.

On foot now, Henrietta pushes her way through trees. Veers left. But then spins and comes back. Trying to remember her way in the dark, she grows frantic.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS.

Map in hand, Ed emerges at the **RIVER ACCESS POINT**.

Discovers the **DAM**, put together rock by painstaking rock over many years. He pauses. Impressed.

ED
Clever.

He wades into the water and PULLS rocks, DISLODGES twigs, YANKS branches. A bit maniacal, destroying years of the Man's work in a matter of minutes.

EXT. THE MAN'S CAMP. NIGHT.

The Man's LIFELESS BODY lies prone, half off the mattress.

The PERIMETER WARNING LIGHT flashes, and the Man stirs, but he's too weak to move. Crunching FOOTSTEPS O.S.

Then, bursting into the A-Frame is --

Henrietta. Out of breath. Relieved she got there before Ed.

She pulls the bracelet out of her pocket and squats down to the Man. But as soon as she grabs his arm --

-- they FLOAT again! A few feet up in the air.

Henrietta GASPS and lets go, sending them CRASHING TO THE GROUND. The Man GRUNTS in pain.

Henrietta tries to fasten the bracelet on his wrist without touching him. But her fingertips graze him, and they FLOAT a few inches up...

This time she's ready for it, keeping her focus as she hovers in the air -- CLICKING the bracelet in place.

Once they're no longer touching, they PLUNK back down.

The Man lies there, still. And nothing happens. No red light. No "Health Forward" insignia. Nothing.

Is she too late?

Beat.

Then the flashing light GLOWS RED. "Health Forward" emerges.

She relaxes. But then remembers ED. She leans in close to the Man, careful not to touch him.

HENRIETTA

Hey. Hey --

The Man doesn't move.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

No chance you can walk, right?

No response. He's covered in blood. His breathing, shallow. He can barely move let alone walk.

Henrietta sighs, looks around. Tries to find something, anything she can use to move him.

Then an idea forms. A very very crazy idea...

A MINUTE LATER

Henrietta has draped a blanket over the Man's shivering body. She POKES him with a STICK until he wakes. But he immediately drifts off again --

HENRIETTA

No! No. You have to stay awake for this. Please. Someone's coming.

He manages to hold his head up. Nods weakly.

Then with a deep breath --

-- Henrietta takes him by the hand --

-- and they float up in the air.

They hang there, a few feet up, as she gathers herself.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Whoa... OK... Now what?

The Man looks to his feet. Takes a "step" in mid-air...

They move forward.

Henrietta follows suit and steps forward, using her other hand to "swim" through the air. They gain momentum. Make their way out of the A-Frame and toward the boulders...

JUST OUTSIDE THE MAN'S CAMP.

Ed tiptoes through the boulders, PISTOL up, finger on the trigger.

He finds the entrance to the camp and heads in --

EMPTY. Ed lowers his gun.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS.

Henrietta keeps stepping and "swimming," struggling to steer them around trees. Eventually, the woods grow too dense, and they CRASH into pine after pine.

HENRIETTA

Oof - sorry!

The Man reaches over. He interlocks his arm into hers and pulls them close so their sides are touching...

WHOOSH

They FLY STRAIGHT UP!

Above the trees, they're still ascending -- a bit too fast and a bit too high -- so the Man pushes Henrietta away...

But he pushes too hard, so that only their hands are touching, and Henrietta SCREAMS as they PLUMMET BACK DOWN!

After a few more fits and starts -- rising then plummeting -- they find the right amount of contact that enables them to more or less hover above the trees.

More steady now, they sail through the night, flying over the forest, awkwardly tumbling and twisting through space.

A beautiful, moon-lit ballet.

Henrietta squeals in delight. Even the Man manages a smile.

And then, in the distance, Henrietta sees the **THORNE HOME**.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Now how do we land?

The Man slowly releases her arm and they lower a bit. Then he UNCLASPS his hand from hers, finger by finger, and they float gently toward the ground...

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN ON THE MAN'S FACE.

The color has returned. Opening his eyes, he looks better. The bracelet on his wrist, however, still glows RED.

THE MAN'S POV: Henrietta enters frame, blinks down at us. We're in **THE SHED**. The sun shines through the window.

HENRIETTA

Hi.

The Man manages to prop himself up on his elbows.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

They left for Bangor, so the coast is clear. You hungry?

INT. DINING ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATER.

Chips, salsa, cookies and whatever else Henrietta could scrounge. She nibbles while the Man DEVOURS. Been a long time since he could freely eat junk.

HENRIETTA

So I have a buttload of questions.
You can probably guess the first...

THE MAN

More efficient if you just asked.

HENRIETTA

I mean, we float whenever we touch.

He chews, mouth full. She looks at him expectantly.

THE MAN

There was no question.

HENRIETTA

My question is what the hell's going on??!

A beat until he swallows the food.

THE MAN

Difficult to say. My presence causes any number of unexpected reactions.

HENRIETTA

Anomalies.

He nods, then helps himself to more cookies.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

So it is all you. The storms, the cicadas, it's all because you're from the future.

THE MAN

(nodding)

Mm hmm.

HENRIETTA

But... why?

THE MAN

My theory? I've disrupted the fabric of space-time. The more I change things, the larger the reaction.

HENRIETTA

But everything you do changes things.

THE MAN

To a degree, yes.

HENRIETTA

Even us talking like this. How come
there aren't any anomalies now?

THE MAN

Just because we can't see them
doesn't mean they aren't there.

INT. KITCHEN. THORNE HOME. A MINUTE LATER.

Water boils in a POT on the stove. Steam WAFTS.

THE MAN

If I alter things in a small way, the
reaction will be correspondingly
small. Us talking causes a reaction,
but it's microscopic. Molecules
bouncing differently, too tiny for
humans to perceive.

HENRIETTA

OK...

THE MAN

But if I do something a bit more
impactful, like, say, reveal
something about the future...

(beat, as he thinks)

In five years, the VR game "Dino
Hunt" will revolutionize gaming. It
will literally break the Internet.

Beat. Henrietta looks confused. The Man smirks.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Small changes, small reactions.

HENRIETTA

Small reactions? What reac --

The Man nods towards the boiling pot, and when Henrietta
sees it, her face goes slack.

The flame still burns underneath, but the water no longer
boils. In fact, it's FROZEN SOLID.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

What happens if you change something
really big?

THE MAN

It would be... bad.

HENRIETTA

How bad?

THE MAN

I can only make projections, but
likely... end of the world bad.

CUT TO:

A STAR CLUSTER AT NIGHT, SEEN THROUGH A TELESCOPE LENS

REVEAL Henrietta and the Man, in the **THORNE BACKYARD**, taking turns looking through Henrietta's telescope.

HENRIETTA

But just you being here has changed things. You've set the whole world on a totally different path.

THE MAN

That one troubled me for some time...

The Man pans the telescope, then leans back. She looks through the viewfinder: He's focused it on the Rip.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Even when I isolated myself, when I disconnected from society so that there were no more perceptible anomalies, the Rip never went away.

HENRIETTA

... Because the Rip is an anomaly.

THE MAN

It's here because I'm here. It grows because my presence changes everything.

HENRIETTA

... why are you here?

The Man takes a beat, then looks down.

THE MAN

It was an accident. An experiment
gone wrong.

HENRIETTA

So you never even meant to be here
and now you're just trying to prevent
anomalies. That's why you're stuck
hiding in the woods.

He nods.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

(realizes)

I ruined it! You can't go back out
there, now that the janitor knows...

THE MAN

It's OK. The forest is large. I'll
find another spot.

She watches him a beat.

HENRIETTA

It's all just so sad.

THE MAN

It's what I deserve.

HENRIETTA

What does that mean?

THE MAN

In my time, I... I hurt people.

HENRIETTA

Well, you're making up for it now.
You're sacrificing your whole life to
protect people. To save the world.

He doesn't respond.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

How did you figure all this out?

THE MAN

I've had a long time to experiment.
To note trends, accumulate data.

HENRIETTA

And you discovered that whenever you
touch somebody, you float?

THE MAN
That never happened before. Not until
I met you.

The Man stares up at the stars a beat, and then --

THE MAN (cont'd)
Hey, there's something I always
wanted to show my kids and... never
got the chance.

HENRIETTA
What is it?

Beat. The Man smiles.

CARL SAGAN (V.O.)
The cosmos is all that is, or ever
was, or ever will be.

INT. LIVING ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATER.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC plays. The Man and Henrietta eat popcorn on the couch. Colors from a TV screen flicker in their eyes.

CARL SAGAN (TV)
Our contemplations of the cosmos stir us. There's a tingling of the spine, a catch in the voice, a faint sensation as if a distant memory of falling from a great height. We know we are approaching the grandest of mysteries.

ON THE TV: The original "COSMOS" with CARL SAGAN.

CARL SAGAN
We are made of star stuff. We are a way for the cosmos to know itself.

ANGLE ON the Man and Henrietta, happier than we've ever seen them.

INT. LIVING ROOM. THORNE HOME. MORNING.

The Man SNORES on the floor. Henrietta lies asleep on a couch. Empty pizza boxes, candy wrappers, and science books litter the place. Like a slumber party for science nerds.

It's peaceful. It's quiet. Then --

DING DONG!

The Man SHOOTS UP. Awake in a heartbeat. He dashes to the window and peeks through the curtain as Henrietta comes to.

HENRIETTA

Who is it?!

THE MAN

A child.

Confused, Henrietta joins the Man, sees DUSTIN outside, holding a scrapbook.

HENRIETTA

Oh no. It's Saturday! I forgot I made plans with this kid in my class to look at obituaries.

(off the Man's look)

Long story. You better go hide. My closet's full of stuffed animals. You can blend in.

THE MAN

(honestly confused)

I look nothing like a stuffed animal.

DING DONG!

HENRIETTA

Just get out of sight, OK?! I'll get rid of him...

The Man goes upstairs as Henrietta opens the door. She slips out onto the porch, closing the door behind her.

DUSTIN

Huzzah! I know I'm a bit late, but my dad's obsessed with building a bomb shelter before the next Rip thing and --

HENRIETTA

Listen, I'm real sorry about this but I can't actually hang out right now.

Dustin can't hide his disappointment.

DUSTIN

Oh. Yeah. Sure. No problem...

HENRIETTA

It's just, I'm working on something
and I really need to --

DUSTIN

Maybe I could help?

HENRIETTA

Ah, yeah, I don't think so. It's, uh,
it's pretty heady stuff.

DUSTIN

OK. I get it.

HENRIETTA

Maybe we can reschedule?

DUSTIN

No, no. You don't have to say that --

HENRIETTA

I'm not just saying it. The truth is
it's been a real crazy couple days
and I - I just gotta go, OK?

As she turns to head back inside --

DUSTIN

Wait! I, uh, I wasn't gonna tell you
about this yet, but I'm working on a
really big story...

HENRIETTA

For the paper?

DUSTIN

More of a side project, actually. But
it's an amazing scoop. I haven't
quite confirmed everything, but I
think you should know --

HENRIETTA

Cool! You can tell me all about it
at school on Monday. Thanks for
understanding.

Henrietta heads back inside, closing the door behind her.
Dustin STICKS his foot out to stop it from shutting.

DUSTIN

But I really think you should know...

Dustin trails off as Henrietta has already bounded up the stairs. Then he notices the state of the living room. The evidence of a slumber party. He shakes his head.

DUSTIN (cont'd)
Heady stuff.

Disappointed, Dustin leaves, the door STILL OPEN.

INT. BEN AND HENRIETTA'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. SAME.

The Man stares at the closet full of stuffed animals. Shakes his head. As Henrietta enters, he admires all her gear.

THE MAN
Quite the scientist, aren't you?

Henrietta shrugs, then proudly points out items on her desk -- chemistry set, Milky Way mobile, microscope...

HENRIETTA
I got this set in third grade when I taught myself to make slime, I made this for my science fair, oh and I got the scope in a yard sale so I could see a spider web up close.

She pauses when she comes to the Albert Einstein doll.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
This was from my dad. I guess he got it for me when I was born. Now it's the only thing I have of his.
(then)
Sometimes I talk to it cuz it feels like, in a way, he can hear me.

The Man has tears in his eyes. Something occurs to Henrietta.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You never got to say goodbye to your family. Cuz you came back by accident.

He nods.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You must really miss them.
(then)
Nobody knows about that shed but me and my brother. You could stay there.

The Man smiles. But --

THE MAN
I wish I could.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

As they reach the bottom of the stairs --
-- they notice the front door WIDE OPEN.

VOICE (O.S.)
AnnusMirabilis1905?

Henrietta spins to find a woman (40s) with ROUND GLASSES and a warm smile sitting on the couch. Standing behind her, a man (also 40s) in a DARK SUIT.

HENRIETTA
Uh, who are you and what --

ROUND GLASSES (FORMERLY VOICE)
I'm Bohrisabore123. From the Science
forum message boards. Remember?

Henrietta is flabbergasted. The Man notices Dark Suit's holstered GUN.

ROUND GLASSES
We mean no harm, sir. We just need to speak to your daughter. It's urgent.

HENRIETTA
He - he's my grandpa. Grandpa Albert.

ROUND GLASSES
Nice to meet you. I'm Dr. Rosalind Wells.

HENRIETTA
How... did you know where I live?

ROUND GLASSES
You never did call that hotline, so...
I am sorry about this, but we had to use a Stingray to track your phone.

HENRIETTA
Stringray?

ROUND GLASSES

Shoot, I'm getting ahead of myself. I work out of Goddard - for NASA - and I'm studying the potential origins of the Rip.

INT. DINING ROOM. THORNE HOME. DAY.

Henrietta sits opposite Round Glasses, while the Man stands in the doorway, watching Dark Suit pace.

ROUND GLASSES

We monitor chatter on every science blog, forum, message board and DM on the net. So when I read your post --

HENRIETTA

I'm sorry you came all the way out here. I don't know anything.

ROUND GLASSES

Henrietta, I'm a scientist, too, you know.

(then, to the Man)

Your granddaughter reminds me a lot of me when I was her age.

HENRIETTA

Now that I think about it, I'm not even sure exactly what I saw.

Dark Suit swoops in. His frustration evident...

DARK SUIT

We just need to know where you saw --

Round Glasses holds up a hand and Dark Suit shuts up. Round Glasses smiles anew and leans in.

ROUND GLASSES

You know I cried when I first saw the Rip. I thought, how lucky am I to have the chance to solve the greatest mystery in the history of the world?

HENRIETTA

... I get that.

ROUND GLASSES

I've been following every lead for 13 years. Tracking every sighting.

(MORE)

ROUND GLASSES (cont'd)

You're the only person on Earth who
credibly cited an anomaly in the days
before the Rip started growing again.

(leans in)

If I could just measure the
vibrational spectroscopy of the air
around where you saw this aurora...
Henrietta, you could be part of the
answer we've all been looking for.

HENRIETTA

I... don't remember where I saw it.
In the woods somewhere. It was dark.
Sorry.

INT. LIVING ROOM. THORNE HOME. A MINUTE LATER.

Round Glasses and Dark Suit exit, Henrietta closing the door
behind them. The Man watches through the window.

THE MAN

Might be harder than anticipated to
get out of here unnoticed.

THROUGH THE WINDOW: Round Glasses and Dark Suit get into an
unmarked BLACK SUV. Two more BLACK SUVs behind them.

HENRIETTA

This is all my fault. If I just left
you alone, like you asked --

THE MAN

It's OK --

HENRIETTA

No. You need to get far away. And I'm
gonna help.

INT. KITCHEN. THORNE HOME. LATER.

Henrietta pulls a can of spinach from the back of the
pantry. Stuffs it into a duffel. Searches for more...

HENRIETTA

She'll never notice these are gone.
What else do you want? Heart of palm?

THE MAN

Really, I can make it fine on my --

KEYS DANGLE outside. Henrietta scoots over to the window.

HENRIETTA
What the - it's my mother!

Sheila's at the back door. The Man makes a break for the living room just as the lock turns, and the door opens --

-- Not knowing what else to do, Henrietta just holds out her arms. Ta-da! Sheila stares at her a beat, confused, then --

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
You're back early!

SHEILA
Don't get me started. When the "specialist" got into your brother's gluten intake, we were outta there.

HENRIETTA
(realizing)
Where is Ben?

IN THE LIVING ROOM: The Man stands frozen. Through the window, he can see Ben letting his hamster out of its cage to run around the porch. Blocking the Man's way out. Then --

HENRIETTA (O.S.)
I'll get him! You stay in here!

SHEILA (O.S.)
What's the matter with you?

Hearing them approach, the Man hurries UPSTAIRS just as Sheila enters, Henrietta on her heels.

Sheila crosses to the window, knocks. Ben looks over.

SHEILA
Come inside. It's getting dark.

BEN
Bazooka needs exercise.

SHEILA
Put him in his ball then. Henry, come help me with the luggage.

As Henrietta looks around, confused and concerned, Ben scoops up the hamster...

CUT TO:

A HAMSTER BALL, ROLLING DOWN THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY.

Bazooka runs with abandon, Ben following, into **BEN AND HENRIETTA'S ROOM**. The ball crashes into the CLOSET DOOR.

Then it stops, backs up, and CRASHES into it again.

And again.

Ben notices. Squats down to watch Bazooka with interest.

The hamster is scrambling to get at the closet door, backing up and crashing into it now on repeat. Really freaking out.

Ben reaches for the door to open it when --

HENRIETTA

Ben!

He turns to find Henrietta running in. She glances to the closet. He looks at her expectantly. She thinks fast...

HENRIETTA

Ken Burns' Vietnam doc is on TV again. Just started.

Ben excitedly grabs the hamster ball and runs out. As soon as he's gone, Henrietta slams the door. Exhales.

She opens the closet to find the Man, standing there among the stuffed animals.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Fine. The closet was a bad idea.

Henrietta walks over to the window and opens it.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

(off the Man's look)
One more night in the shed. Sorry.

INT. KITCHEN. THORNE HOME. THE NEXT MORNING.

Sheila enters. It's spotless. Breakfast is on the table.

SHEILA

What in the world?

Henrietta appears.

HENRIETTA

Oh, hi mom. Yeah, I made breakfast.

SHEILA

You cleaned the kitchen, too. And was that a 'mom' I just heard?

HENRIETTA

Was it? I didn't realize...

SHEILA

Uh huh. And what is it that you want?

HENRIETTA

A ride.

SHEILA

Yep, there it is.

HENRIETTA

There's this botanical garden, about thirty miles down highway 157. They have this flower there called the Agalinis neoscotica. Well, that's the scientific name. You'd know it as the False Foxglove --

SHEILA

I really wouldn't.

HENRIETTA

Anyway, I'm doing an experiment on --

SHEILA

OK OK. I'm just glad to see you're back to your old self. We'll go after breakfast.

Henrietta smiles big.

EXT./INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. DAY.

Sheila drives down a rural road. Passes a truck parked on the shoulder. INSIDE: Ed. He starts to follow...

INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. MINUTES LATER.

Henrietta's in the passenger seat, Ben in back.

SHEILA

OK Ben, you're gonna like this one...

Sheila presses a button on her phone, and the opening chords of The Flaming Lips' "Do You Realize" play. Ben nods, sways.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Right?!

Ben leans back and closes his eyes. They drive a few beats.

But then, as Sheila makes a TIGHT TURN, Ben hears something RUMBLE AROUND in the trunk. He opens his eyes.

Another quick turn and another RUMBLE from behind. He looks through the back windshield at the trunk, but he sees --

-- a black SUV. Tailing them. And then, FLASHING LIGHTS.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Are you kidding me?! I wasn't even speeding.

Henrietta turns around and sees the SUV.

HENRIETTA

Don't pull over.

SHEILA

What? Oh, don't be ridiculous.

Sheila slows to a stop.

The first SUV is trailed by another. And a THIRD. Once they all stop, ROUND GLASSES and DARK SUIT get out of the first.

SHEILA (cont'd)

What's going on?

Through Sheila's side mirror: Dark Suit approaches. Leans down to the driver-side window. Scopes it out.

DARK SUIT

Ma'am, please step out of the vehicle. Henrietta...

SHEILA

How do you know my daughter's --

HENRIETTA

They came to the house earlier.

SHEILA

(as she gets out)

What? Why didn't you say anything?!

HENRIETTA

I didn't think it was a big deal!

Sheila walks away, answering Dark Suit's questions. Then Henrietta hears the backdoor OPEN. Ben's getting out, too.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
(urgent whisper)
Ben, stay in the --

But he's already out. Round Glasses appears at the passenger side window. Leans down. Smiles thinly.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Howdy.

ROUND GLASSES
You don't have a Grandpa Albert. You lied to me, Henrietta.

Henrietta doesn't respond. Ben makes his way to the TRUNK.

ROUND GLASSES (cont'd)
Matter of fact, you don't have any living grandparents, do you?

Ben puts his ear against the trunk. Listening.

ROUND GLASSES (cont'd)
Henrietta... Who was that man, and where is he now?

Henrietta glances to Ben in the side mirror and Round Glasses notices. She looks at Ben, too.

Henrietta watches with growing dread as Round Glasses heads back to join Ben at the trunk.

ROUND GLASSES (cont'd)
(to Sheila)
Can we get this trunk open, ma'am?

Sheila and Dark Suit turn, make their way over.

DARK SUIT
What is it?

ROUND GLASSES
I'm not sure yet. I'd just like to --

But the car's ENGINE turns over, and it LURCHES AWAY!

SHEILA
Henrietta!

Sheila stands there stunned, as Round Glasses and Dark Suit RUN back to their SUV.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Hey...

The SUVs - ALL OF THEM - take off after Henrietta.

SHEILA (cont'd)

Hey!

As the SUVs head down the road, Sheila and Ben are stranded.

SHEILA (cont'd)

What about us?!!!

INT. SHEILA'S TRUNK. SAME.

The Man lies scrunched, bouncing and rolling this way and that as he hears Henrietta's muffled SCREAM O.S.

THE MAN

What is happening?!

HENRIETTA (O.S.)

They're chasing us! And I'm driving!

As that lands, he starts KICKING against the backseat.

IN THE CAR: The back seat LURCHES with each KICK, but it holds. Police lights FLASH behind them. Sirens BLARE.

Henrietta SCREAMS again. It's insanity. But then --

EXT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. SAME.

Henrietta plods along, maybe going 15 MPH. The SUVs trail a few car lengths behind. It's like Bullitt. In slo-mo.

Dark Suit gets on a LOUDSPEAKER --

DARK SUIT

HENRIETTA. STOP THE CAR!

INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. SAME.

Another KICK and the seat back FLIES OPEN! The Man rolls onto the backseat.

THE MAN
What are you doing?! You don't know
how to drive!

HENRIETTA
Don't you think I know that?!

THE MAN
Go. FASTER.

HENRIETTA
I can barely reach the pedal!

Henrietta's cell phone RINGS. Fumbling as she drives, she
sees it's her mom. SILENCES it.

One of the SUV's PASSES them and skids to a halt in the
middle of the road up ahead. Blocking their path.

The Man thinks fast. Then --

THE MAN
Hang on.

HENRIETTA
What are you --

Before she can finish her question, he puts a hand on her
shoulder. They FLOAT UP -- and BUMP INTO THE CAR CEILING!

Her foot no longer on the gas, the Toyota SLOWS TO A STOP.
The Man lets go, and they both fall back into their seats.

THE MAN
Damn.

EXT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. SAME.

WIDE SHOT: the SUVs behind them pull to a stop as well. All
four cars sit still. But there's MOVEMENT inside the Toyota.

DARK SUIT
(loudspeaker)
STEP OUT OF THE VEHICLE.

A long beat. Then another. Agents start to get out of the
SUVs and then... the Toyota takes off!

INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. SAME.

The Man's behind the wheel now. He swerves around the SUV, SCRAPING against the guard rail. Henrietta gives him a look.

THE MAN

It's been a while, OK!? Put on your seat belt.

She does, and he maneuvers them back onto the open road. All three SUVs again follow, only now everybody's driving FAST.

The Man checks the rear view. Shakes his head.

THE MAN (cont'd)

We're never going to outrun them.

His eyes dart. His mind in overdrive. And then he sees something --

-- he makes a sharp turn onto another road. Now driving alongside a RIVER. Presses the gas. Henrietta is confused.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Next year, the Chicago Cubs will lose a record 121 games.

HENRIETTA

Huh? Who are the Chicago Cubs?!

THE MAN

Just listen! Remember the boiling water?

He turns OFF ROAD and careens towards the flowing RIVER.

THE MAN (cont'd)

In 2024 we find evidence of microbial life on Jupiter's moon Europa.

The SUVs follow. They're headed straight for the water!

HENRIETTA

It's not working! Stop the car!

The Man's face twists in consternation, then, desperate --

THE MAN

I didn't come back by accident.

Behind them, the SUVs slam on the brakes. But the Man FLOORS IT. At the river now. Henrietta turns to him...

THE MAN (cont'd)
I... I invented time travel.

Just as they reach the river's edge --

-- IT FREEZES OVER!

INSIDE THE SUV: Dark Suit and Round Glasses watch the Toyota drive safely across the now frozen river, mouths agape.

INSIDE SHEILA'S TOYOTA: The Man and Henrietta SCREAM!

BACK WITH THE SUV: Dark Suit hits the gas. Reaches the edge of the river to find -- the ice melting. SLAMS the brakes and skids to a stop just before they hit the water.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER: As they drive off, Henrietta looks back across the river at the SUVs. Her phone RINGS again. The Man grabs it and TOSSES it out the window.

EXT./INT. SHEILA'S TOYOTA. A FEW MINUTES LATER.

Mountains loom in the b.g. Sheila's Toyota careens into a quaint "downtown," one main drag with shops on either side. American flags hang from nearly every storefront.

Henrietta clocks one store that's boarded up with a sign out front: "Closed for the end of the world!"

THE MAN
Gotta get rid of this car.

HENRIETTA
Why?

THE MAN
After what they just saw, we've only got a few minutes before every satellite over the western hemisphere will be looking for us.

HENRIETTA
Right.
(then)
That was... incredible.

THE MAN
It was, wasn't it?

They allow themselves a beat to laugh in disbelief. Then --

HENRIETTA
You invented time travel...

The Man's smile fades.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Just so you could hide out in the
woods? Why would you do that?

He can't bring himself to look at her as he pulls to a stop at an intersection. Then, with a deep breath he turns -- but Henrietta is staring past him, terror in her eyes...

The Man spins to find ED'S TRUCK barreling towards them at full speed. He has time for just one word --

THE MAN
Oliver?

Before the truck PLOWS INTO THE DRIVER'S SIDE of the Toyota!

-- THEY SPIN -- AND SPIN --

And then CRASH into a LIGHT POST.

CUT TO BLACK.

WE HEAR A RINGING...

FADE IN on Henrietta. She's woozy, her forehead BLEEDS and the world is out of focus.

She looks at the Man, BLOODIED and UNCONSCIOUS.

Through the window, she sees TOWNSFOLK exit stores to check out what happened. Henrietta's eyes flutter...

SMACK!

She's startled by a DEAD BIRD SPLATTERING against the windshield.

SMACK. Another. Henrietta looks up --

Specks. Getting larger. DEAD BIRDS RAINING DOWN.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

The townsfolk SCREAM and run for cover. And then --

CLUNK! The driver side door is pulled open with a crowbar.

It's Ed. As he reaches into the car, Henrietta sees --

ON ED'S WRIST, A BRACELET.

Just like the Man's, but a different hue. She is staggered.

HENRIETTA
(so weak)
... You too?

Ed ignores her as he DRAGS the Man out of the car. She reaches out to stop him but she's too dazed and debilitated.

Finally, the RINGING in her ears dies down and she manages to unbuckle her seat belt. Pushes against her door. Won't budge. Tries again, using all her strength.

The door swings open and she tumbles from the car only to see Ed's truck SQUEAL away...

The dead birds stop falling. LOOKY-LOOS re-emerge from the safety of the stores, descending on the crash site just as Henrietta hears distant SIRENS. THEY'RE COMING.

She backs away from the crash and TAKES OFF.

Running down Main Street, she turns a corner and almost smacks into --

DUSTIN
Henrietta?

She skids to a stop. DUSTIN'S DAD, 30s, slovenly and disheveled, stands behind him chewing tobacco.

DUSTIN
Did you see those birds?! We were over at the hardware store when --

Dustin notices Henrietta's frantic energy and bleeding face.

DUSTIN (cont'd)
Whoa - you OK? A bird hit your face or something?

The sirens are louder now. GETTING CLOSER.

HENRIETTA
(intense)
I need a ride.

DUSTIN
Oh. Uh, Dad?

Henrietta peeks around the corner, the SUVs approach the intersection.

HENRIETTA

Please...

Henrietta grabs Dustin's hand.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

NOW.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT. ABANDONED BUILDING. DAY.

Ed carries the Man, battered, bruised and unconscious, over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. Dumps him onto the floor.

Checks to make sure his own bracelet is still in place before he bends over --

-- and REMOVES THE MAN'S BRACELET. As Ed looks down at the Man and tries to catch his breath...

INT. DUSTIN'S DAD'S OLD BEATER. SAME.

Dustin and Henrietta sit in back as his dad chugs a red bull behind the wheel. Henrietta stares off, in her own world.

DUSTIN

I'm just gonna call out the elephant in the room. Your slumber party.

HENRIETTA

... What?

DUSTIN

It would've been better if you just told me the truth is all.

HENRIETTA

The truth about what --

DUSTIN

I saw it. All the snacks and blankets and... you know if you didn't want to hang out, you could have simply --

HENRIETTA

I wasn't having a slumber party.

DUSTIN

OK, whatever.

HENRIETTA
You don't... understand.

Henrietta turns away as her eyes well with tears. She can't hold it in though, and the tears flow. She SNIFFLES audibly.

DUSTIN
Oh, um, sorry, I... I didn't want --

He cuts himself off. Watches her cry, deeply uncomfortable.

DUSTIN (cont'd)
It's not a big deal, I - you can have slumber parties. Not that I should even tell you what you can and can't do. Like Mrs. Potts says, women have agency, I just --

Henrietta can't help but laugh through her tears at Dustin's awkwardness. She wipes her face, then resets.

HENRIETTA
I'm sorry. About yesterday. I'm just going through a lot right now.

Beat. Then Dustin smiles big and leans in, excited.

DUSTIN
I got just the thing to cheer you up. I've been burying the lede! I confirmed my big scoop, and I - let me just start from the beginning. So I was poking around online that day you told us about your dad, and I thought, hey, wouldn't it be cool if I could find his obit.

HENRIETTA
Wait, what?

DUSTIN
(not breathing)
Yeah, but I came up empty, which is pretty rare cause I'm usually really good at that sort of thing. Anyway I got a little bit obsessed, and I eventually realized your mom goes by her maiden name, Thorne --

HENRIETTA
Dustin --

DUSTIN

-- so I did some more digging and found your parents' wedding announcement, and then I discovered your dad's real last name was Visser, but as far as I can tell the only dead Griffin Visser kicked the bucket a hundred and fifty years ago!

HENRIETTA

I don't understand.

DUSTIN

But then I found out that there's actually one other Griffin Visser and he's listed as a physics professor at Cal Tech right now!

Henrietta just looks at Dustin, totally confused.

DUSTIN (cont'd)

Henrietta, did you go to your dad's funeral?

HENRIETTA

I was too young. I don't remember.
Why?

DUSTIN

I think your dad is alive.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT. ABANDONED BUILDING. DAY.

ANGLE ON THE MAN'S FACE as he slowly comes to. Still on the floor. Checks his wrist to find his bracelet missing --

ED

Hello, old friend.

Across the room, Ed sits on a crate, twiddling the bracelet.

ED (cont'd)

I had to take it off, you understand. Couldn't risk you getting your strength back. Not when we're so close.

The Man clocks the PISTOL on the floor next to Ed.

THE MAN

Oliver...

ED
(wistful)
Haven't heard that name in ages.
(then)
I've imagined this moment, every day,
for thirteen years... Do you have any
idea what I've been through? I'll
never see my wife again. My kids...

THE MAN
I didn't make you come back.

ED
You left me no choice!

THE MAN
How did you even...

The Man's brow furrows. Realizing.

THE MAN (cont'd)
You were in the cylinder...

Ed nods.

THE MAN (cont'd)
Tipler postulated it was impossible --

ED
-- but we always thought the light
cones would tilt such that they
would --

THE MAN
-- spin along the longitudinal axis.

ED
Yes. Turns out the frame-dragging --

THE MAN
-- pointed the cones backwards.

ED
Exactly. That's right. We were right.

The Man manages a satisfied chuckle. Ed does too, in spite
of himself. For a beat, they forget their differences.

But then Ed grows serious. Incredulous.

ED (cont'd)

Even now, you're more interested in
the science of how we both traveled
in time than the damage its caused.

THE MAN

(defensive)

I went into hiding. I didn't --

The Man notices Ed's JANITOR BADGE, hanging off of a chair.

THE MAN (cont'd)

(realizing)

You're the janitor.

(then)

You criticize me when you went to
work at a school?!

ED

I got desperate! Time was running out,
so yes, I got a job. Figured when she
came along, you would follow.

THE MAN

... so what now?

Ed leans back. Picks up the gun.

ED

Now we wait. Until it's over.

EXT. MAIN STREET. DAY.

The SUVs surround the scene of the accident. Round Glasses
interviews a TOWNIE when Dark Suit approaches --

DARK SUIT

Store owner saw the other guy drag a
man into his truck and drive off. Got
the plate number and local PD spotted
it outside a building a few miles
away.

Round Glasses and Dark Suit hurry to their SUV...

EXT./INT. DUSTIN'S DAD'S OLD BEATER. DAY.

Dustin's dad pulls into the Thorne driveway. Henrietta moves
to open the door before the old beater even stops.

DUSTIN'S DAD
Whoa, slow down, kid.

Henrietta hops out.

HENRIETTA
Sorry thanks bye!

Dustin and his dad watch her run to the house. Beat.

DUSTIN
She's great, right?

INT. BEN AND HENRIETTA'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. DAY.

Henrietta's on her computer. Typing into a search bar:

Griffin Visser Caltech

We stay on her as she reads, and we can see it on her face.
It's true. Her dad is alive. Her whole world crumbles...

INT. ED'S APARTMENT. ABANDONED BUILDING. SAME.

The Man's eyes are half-closed. Slumped even more. Across the way, Ed looks a bit better. His bracelet working.

THE MAN
You know she might not even run away.

ED
How's that?

THE MAN
You remember Kassapa's theory. Our very presence altered the timeline. Perhaps I've inadvertently eliminated whatever reason she had to run.

ED
Maybe. Maybe not. Kassapa was also a drunk. He plagiarized his entire --

THE MAN
Even if she does, the machine's imprecision turned in my favor.

The Man smiles. Almost cocky.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Coming back years earlier than I intended gave me time to discover how to change the past without inciting a GCV. The key is incrementalism. Little by little, year after year, I built something to stop her. And the universe didn't react.

ED

I assume you're referring to the dam.

For the first time, the Man looks seriously concerned.

ED (cont'd)

I knew what it was as soon as I found it. Had to destroy it of course.

The Man pulls himself up, vibrates with rage. Ed stands too.

THE MAN

God dammit, Oliver! I spent a DECADE in those woods! I stole from people's homes, I ate rats, I nearly starved! Men hunt me, children fear me... I'm a monster! But I survived it all, just so I could save my daughter. I can't let you ruin this... Not now --

The Man takes a step forward. Ed aims his gun.

ED

I'll shoot if I have to. You know that's how this has to end. We both have to die.

THE MAN

Do it. Pull the trigger. I won't sit here while she dies all over again.

The Man inches closer. Ed's face twists. His hand shakes.

ED

(pleading)
I'm just a physicist...

THE MAN

Not anymore.

The Man closes his eyes.

Ed's finger tightens around the trigger, when...

CAR DOORS SLAM OUTSIDE.

Ed glances to the boarded up window, and in that split second, the Man LEAPS forward and SWINGS his arm --

-- managing to knock Ed's pistol away just as he FIRES!

The pistol SLIDES across the floor and under a file cabinet as the Man DIVES into Ed's midsection.

They fall to the ground and the Man grabs Ed's head and SLAMS it to the floor. Ed's out.

On his knees, the Man grimaces. His whole body on fire. He crawls to his bracelet, grabs it and heads for the door.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING. SAME.

Dark Suit pulls his gun as he runs past Ed's truck and into the building. As Round Glasses follows, the Man sneaks out a side window and heads for the treeline, unseen.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT. ABANDONED BUILDING. SAME.

Dark Suit and Round Glasses BUST the door open to find --

Nothing. Ed's gone. Dark Suit lowers his gun.

INT. SHEILA'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. DAY.

A series of quick cuts as Henrietta RAGES:

-- Henrietta tosses CLOTHES from her mom's dresser.

-- EMPTIES out the drawers of a nightstand.

-- TEARS through the closet.

High on a closet shelf, she sees a BOX. Unmarked, completely covered in tape, as if it's never meant to be opened... The box from the beginning.

Henrietta gets on her tippy-toes, pulls it down. Rips through the tape, tears into the box to find -- PAPERS.

She rifles through: Birth certificates, apartment leases, loan agreements, and then --

-- a DIVORCE DECREE. For Griffin Visser and Sheila Thorne.

Henrietta can't move, can't breathe. As the paper flutters to the floor...

CUT TO:

A TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF MILLINOCKET

On the desk in **BEN AND HENRIETTA'S ROOM**. A pencil circles the BUS DEPOT. Traces along the road. It's circuitous. Long.

Henrietta scribbles a few quick calculations.

HENRIETTA

41 miles to the bus depot. Average incline... 18 degrees.

Sighs. Looks over at her Einstein doll staring back.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Won't make it before dark...

Then Henrietta sees something on the map. Leans back in. The RIVER. She draws a NEW PATH -- the river cuts across the center of the map, directly to the depot. A straight shot.

A few more calculations.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

7 miles... downstream.

INT. SHED. DAY.

The door swings open to reveal Henrietta, her backpack so stuffed it can't quite close. She eyes the OLD RAFT propped up against the wall.

EXT. THE WOODS. SAME.

The Man runs, using all his strength. But he stumbles and falls, doubling over in pain.

Hearing a HELICOPTER above, he hides beneath tree cover. Once it's gone, he's again on the move.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS.

Ed TEARS his way through the trees. Not as graceful as the Man, but at full strength he's going fast...

EXT. THORNE HOME. LATE AFTERNOON.

A SQUAD CAR pulls into the driveway. Sheila and Ben wearily get out. Head for the door.

INT. BEN & HENRIETTA'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATE AFTERNOON.

Ben enters to find Henrietta's drawers open, clothes strewn about. He glances over to the window, WIDE OPEN.

INT. SHEILA'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATE AFTERNOON.

Sheila stands in the doorway, staring at the torn open box.

Then she sees the DIVORCE DECREE on her bed. Mortified, she covers her mouth with her hand.

SHEILA

Oh, no.

Next to the decree, a NOTE: "GOING TO CALIFORNIA"

EXT. THORNE HOME. LATE AFTERNOON.

Ben walks through the brush beyond the house, comes upon THE SHED. A dragged PATH leading from the open door. The RAFT.

INT. KITCHEN. THORNE HOME. MINUTES LATER.

Sheila rushes in, grabs her car keys from the kitchen table. She turns to yell for Ben when he appears in the doorway, wearing army fatigues, boots and a bandanna. BB-gun in his hands. He looks like a tiny Rambo.

EXT. WOODS. SUNSET.

ANGLE ON the Rip, illuminated by a red sunset.

PAN DOWN to find Henrietta dragging the raft out of the woods at the **RIVER ACCESS POINT**. She looks downriver and sees the broken dam.

Surprised, she sets the raft down and drags it to the water, eases it onto the river. Steps inside, wobbly. Pushes herself off, using a branch as a paddle. Drifting downstream.

We PUSH AHEAD, past the busted dam to free-flowing rapids.

ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS.

The Man SPRINTS, breaks through the treeline, arriving at the **RIVER ACCESS POINT**. Sees Henrietta down river.

THE MAN
(waves frantically)
HENRY!!!

WITH HENRIETTA: She turns, squints in confusion. Then she looks up -- a HELICOPTER emerges above them.

WITH THE MAN: He tries to scream over the cacophony.

THE MAN (cont'd)
YOU'RE GOING TO DROWN! THAT'S WHY I
CAME BACK!

As this lands on Henrietta, her attention is drawn to the sky above, where all the sudden --

-- a BLACK HOLE MATERIALIZES. Swirling and growing, the colors of the sunset bend and bow to its will.

The helicopter retreats as the WIND HOWLS, the current taking Henrietta past the busted dam. The raft speeds up.

AT THE RIVER ACCESS POINT: The Man goes after her, running down river, hopping over rocks, catching up.

He's about to dive into the water when --

Ed emerges from the woods and TACKLES him. The Man SCREAMS in agony as Ed rips off his bracelet.

WITH HENRIETTA: In the rapids now, Henrietta approaches a sharp turn in the river. Attempts to use her branch/paddle to navigate it, but she can't quite make the turn and --

-- the raft collides with some rocks and FLIPS OVER!

SPLASH! Desperate, she wrestles herself out from under the overturned raft, managing to hold on with one arm.

The raft lodges up against a large rock...

ANGLE ON Henrietta's hand, as her fingers start to slip.

ELSEWHERE ALONG THE RIVER'S EDGE: Ben leads Sheila out of the woods and into the clearing to find --

-- THE MAN & ED, GRAPPLING thirty yards away.

The wind grows even stronger. Storm clouds. LIGHTNING.

Ben looks to the sky. The black hole CHURNING. Then he squints downriver, sees the raft in the distance.

THUNDER and he hides behind Sheila, SCARED.

THE MAN (cont'd)
She's going to DIE!

TIGHT ON Sheila. Something about that voice. She drifts toward it, almost as if in a dream...

The Man pushes Ed off of him, grabs his bracelet from the ground and sprints down the riverbank.

WITH HENRIETTA: Her fingers slip -- she LOSES HER GRIP!

Now hurtling downstream, she's headed directly for a collection of JAGGED ROCKS!

She SLAMS into one. Grabs it as the current TUGS.

ON THE RIVER'S EDGE: The Man runs, Ed a ways behind.

We hear a LOW RUMBLE. Across the river, wind WHIPS, the clouds TWIST and a TORNADO appears!

Trees are TORN from their roots and FLY through the air.

The black hole EXPANDS, a stain spreading across the sky.

The Man stands frozen. Ben and Sheila as well. Ed stares up.

Then the earth SHAKES. More tornadoes materialize all around them. Small and large. A tree catches FIRE. Cicadas SWARM.

The HELICOPTER crests the ridge. Struggles with the wind. Then it goes down, EXPLODING IN A FIERY CRASH.

It's the end of the goddamned world.

ED

My god.

WITH HENRIETTA: As she clutches the rock in the river, she looks around in terror and awe.

ON THE RIVER'S EDGE: The Man steps closer to the river, to Henrietta, and the black hole DESCENDS, inhaling more sky.

The Man stops.

And the black hole stops.

Something truly horrifying occurs to him.

The same thing occurs to Henrietta, in the water.

The Man again moves closer to the river, and the the black hole responds in kind, OPENING wider and LOWERING EVEN MORE!

When he stops, it stops. His heart sinks.

Behind the Man, Ed yells --

ED (cont'd)

You see?! You can't save her, not without putting everything in danger!

The Man turns to Ed, then up to the black hole, and then --

-- to Henrietta. Holding onto the rock but looking right at him. Resignation and resolve on her face. She knows what she has to do. It's the only rational choice.

SHE PURPOSEFULLY LETS GO OF THE ROCK.

As she is swept into the rapids --

THE MAN

No!!

WITH HENRIETTA: She's thrown about like a rag-doll until her head SLAMS into another rock, knocking her out.

Her eyes roll back as she SINKS beneath the surface!

UPSTREAM, ON THE RIVER'S EDGE: Ben watches it all unfold in horror. Then he opens his mouth... AND SCREAMS!!

As the Man makes eye contact with Ben, the Man feels the full weight of every mistake he's ever made. And he can't take the pain anymore.

HE DIVES INTO THE RIVER.

The black hole GROWS again, enveloping more of the world in darkness.

UNDERWATER: Unconscious, Henrietta's body sinks until she's lodged among the rocks she collided with.

ON THE RIVER: The Man swims with the current. Then he takes a deep inhale and DIVES --

INTO THE MURKY WATER: He struggles to see. Then --

SPLOOSH! SPLOOSH! SPLOOSH!

DEAD BIRDS crash into the surface of the river and descend into the depths all around him...

ON THE RIVER'S EDGE: Ben and Sheila try to follow the Man along the riverbank, slowing when they see --

-- A COYOTE FLOATING IN THE AIR, ACROSS THE RIVER.

Panic in its black eyes. And then - SHOOP! The coyote gets SUCKED into the black hole. They stare, bewildered.

UNDERWATER WITH HENRIETTA: She's still. Dying.

Beat. Another.

Then, on her cheek, a reflection. A faint RED LIGHT.

Flashing. It grows stronger and BRIGHTER.

Finally, the glow envelopes Henrietta's lifeless face.

A HAND reaches out, trying to dislodge her. It's the Man, RED LIGHT from the bracelet shining from his clenched jaw.

He pulls. HARDER. She won't budge. STUCK. She's going to die.

The bracelet lands with a silent thud on the river bottom, and the light flickers OUT.

ON THE SURFACE: An eerie moment of calm. The waves of the river lap. The wind dies down. The black hole appears to wane. Sheila and Ben hold their breath. Ed relaxes.

And then -- BOOM! Henrietta and the Man BURST THROUGH THE WATER'S SURFACE!

THE MAN HUGS A LIMP HENRIETTA TIGHTLY AS THEY TWIST --

-- AND TWIST --

-- UP AND UP --

-- INTO THE SKY.

For a beat THEY HOVER, spinning amidst the chaos of a world gone awry. The black hole once again EXPANDING AND MOVING...

Ed watches, dumbstruck, as the Man maneuvers them to the ground on the edge of the water.

As they land, Ed runs over and SHOVES the Man and Henrietta back into the water. Ed holds them under, drowning them...

The forest teems with ANIMAL SCREAMS... Then --

FWIP! FWIP!

Ed lets go! HOWLS in pain as he clutches his back. Freed from Ed's grasp, the Man leaps up and lands a PUNCH. As Ed collapses, the Man looks past him to see --

Ben, clutching his BB-gun.

Sheila catches up to the Man and Henrietta...

SHEILA

Griffin? I don't understand... how --

THE MAN

Save her.

Sheila takes Henrietta and lays her on the riverbank. Not breathing.

The black hole hovers above the Man. Empty. Dark. Menacing.

Sheila attempts CPR as the Man stares up, the universe dying all around him.

TIGHT ON HIS EYES... And we are BLINDED by WHITE LIGHT.

FADE TO:

A CEMETERY.

It's a funeral. Henrietta's funeral. TRACK ALONG the mourners: Sheila, Ben, a few others and then finally --

-- a man, our Man, THE MAN, only YOUNGER, 30s. Clean-shaven and rather pudgy, his TWO BROWN EYES, staring off, vacant.

BEGIN SEQUENCE:

(Throughout the following, the camera is always in motion, moving left to right)

-- **A MESSY OFFICE.** The Man drinks from a CALTECH mug, half-empty bottle of whiskey on his desk. Suddenly he sits up.

LEAPS from his chair and uses his sleeve to WIPE math equations off a dry erase board. Starts writing anew.

-- **A VAST CONCRETE TUNNEL.** Sandwiched between 100-foot-tall hexagonal walls covered with fiber optic cables, metal and tubes. At the center of the hexagons, two beams jut out.

At their point of collision, the Man, now early 50s, gray hair, works alongside...

A YOUNGER ED, 40s, up on an elevated platform. Familiar looking BRACELETS around both their wrists, glowing green.

Two G-MEN in suits enter on the ground floor. Flash BADGES.

-- **A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM.** The Man faces the COMMITTEE. Speaks solemnly into a microphone. A row behind him, Ed looks concerned.

-- **A SMALL, EMPTY OFFICE.** Stuff packed, Ed places a FAMILY PHOTO into his last box and heads DOWN THE HALL, passing vending machines, including one touting the various electronic wares from a company called HEALTH FORWARD.

He slows as he reaches **THE CONCRETE TUNNEL** entrance. The doors are CHAINED but a window is BROKEN. Blood on the floor.

Ed's face goes slack. He drops his box, approaches the window and cranes his neck up to the elevated work platform: the Man furiously types on a laptop wired to an access panel.

A DEEP, RUMBLING WHOOSH SOUND PULSATES in the tunnel.

ON THE PLATFORM, the Man keeps typing, manic, as Ed climbs the ladder. The WHOOSH sound intensifies.

The Man shuts his laptop, and a BEAM OF LIGHT erupts between the two hexagonal plates.

Ed reaches the platform and SWIPES at the Man's leg. The Man kicks him OFF the ladder, and he lands with a THUD below.

But the Man is off balance and he tumbles INTO THE BEAM --

Which pierces HIS LEFT EYE, and we --

FOLLOW THE BEAM OF LIGHT until we're INSIDE the Man's eye...

Until we are looking at a SINGLE ATOM...

Until we penetrate the nucleus wall and land on a PROTON.

The proton ACCELERATES. Faster and faster. Everything around us blurs, as we're moving at LIGHT SPEED.

Then the proton COLLIDES with another proton and we --

FLASH TO:

A VOID OF... WHITE

It's blinding. We hear a distant scratching. It gets closer, grows louder. More insistent. And then --

-- the white starts to TEAR. Every color in the universe bounces, ricocheting this way and that. Through the tear, we initially see darkness. Then... TWINKLING. Stars?

Our POV moves FAST, first to the Rip and then THROUGH IT. The twinkles revealing themselves to be CITY LIGHTS.

We descend at an impossibly fast rate towards the Earth. Down to a CORN FIELD at night, next to a BARN.

We find THE MAN, lying on the ground. We move down until --

WE'RE TIGHT ON THE MAN'S EYES. CLOSED.

With a GASP, he opens them. His left eye now CRYSTAL BLUE.

He vomits, then scrambles off into the night.

But we move THROUGH THE WALL of the barn to find ED, also vomiting. He runs --

-- OUTSIDE. But the Man's already gone. PAN UP to the night sky. TO THE RIP.

CUT TO:

THE MAN'S EYES, OLDER NOW

Back at the **RIVER ACCESS POINT**. The night Henrietta dies. Sheila still applies CPR to Henrietta.

SHEILA

Henry, please, wake up! I'm so sorry!

Around the Man: Fire. Hail. Locusts. And then --

HENRIETTA GASPS!

And the Man closes his eyes, overcome with relief. When he opens them again, his blue eye has MORPHED BACK TO BROWN.

He watches Ben and Sheila help Henrietta sit up. Then he turns to the black hole, still warping space around them.

Henrietta sees the Man, and everything suddenly starts to make sense. Weakly...

HENRIETTA

... Dad?

The Man turns back to her.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

You did all this... for me.

There's so much he could say: *I had everything but screwed it all up. I let you down. I love you. What comes out is --*

THE MAN

I'm sorry I took so long.

The Man smiles, then picks up a still unconscious Ed, straining to hold him up as he steps toward the black hole.

HENRIETTA

Wait, what are you...

With one last look --

THE MAN

Write a letter. Tell him everything.

As the Man edges closer to the black hole, he whispers --

THE MAN (cont'd)

Stardust. Stardust. Star --

The black hole WARPS their bodies and SUCKS THEM IN.

We hear a WHOOOOOSH --

And the black hole implodes, collapsing inside itself, consuming all the anomalies as well.

The Rip... CLOSES. And then -- silence.

The river flows. The birds chirp. The Rip is gone.

FROM ABOVE: We see Henrietta crying, Ben and Sheila next to her. The forest now a wasteland.

FADE TO:

THE NIGHT SKY, FILLED WITH STARS

The clearest of nights. Almost out of a storybook.

We PAN down to the **THORNE HOME** and find HENRIETTA in the backyard, looking up through her telescope.

A STREAK across the sky. Then another. AND ANOTHER. She SQUEALS in delight. Bolts towards the house --

IN THE KITCHEN

Henrietta runs up to Sheila, hunched over the stove.

HENRIETTA

I saw the Geminids! Three or four of them, right in a row, just like that. If you come now, we can --

SHEILA

(distracted)
Germs? Wash your hands please...

Henrietta GRUNTS in frustration.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

ANGLE ON THE TV, with the Reporter from the beginning --

REPORTER (TV)

Scientists are still trying to piece together why the Rip disappeared and exactly what a tiny coal mining town in Maine has to do with it. If the --

But Ben's not watching. He's on the couch rocking out to THE FLAMING LIPS, blasting through his headphones.

Henrietta runs in from the kitchen.

HENRIETTA

Ben! I saw the Geminids! You wanna --

Ben waves her away, lost in the music. Her shoulders slump.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON HENRIETTA'S FACE, FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT.

HENRIETTA

I saw the first one near Castor, at the mid-Northern latitude. The quarter moon didn't diminish it AT ALL! Really remarkable. It's...
(MORE)

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
(losing steam)
It's the best shower I've ever seen.

Silence. Her enthusiasm fades.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)
Anyway...

REVERSE to find her talking once again to her Einstein doll. But it's clearly not the same. She sits, frustrated.

INT. HENRIETTA & BEN'S ROOM. THORNE HOME. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Ben tinkers with a keyboard on GarageBand. Henrietta reads a book. Then --

SHEILA (O.S.)
Henrietta! Trash!

Ben looks over at her, and Henrietta sighs.

EXT. THORNE HOME. A MINUTE LATER.

Henrietta tosses a trash bag in the garbage can as a TAXI pulls into the driveway.

A man gets out. As he steps into the light, we see it's not just any man. It's our Man. THE MAN. Her dad. Young again.

They both stand there a beat as the taxi drives off. Then --

HENRIETTA
You got my letter.

THE MAN
I wouldn't have believed it but
then... Stardust.

Henrietta betrays no emotion. The Man's eyes well with tears.

THE MAN (cont'd)
I'm sorry, Henry. If you tell me to
shove it, well, that's probably what
I deserve, but, I was thinking...
Tonight's a pretty good night to see
the Geminids. If you're interested.

We cut back and forth, from Henrietta to the Man. And then, as she shows the hint of a smile --

CUT TO BLACK.