

BIOMASS

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIBERIAN TUNDRA - DAY

A tall perimeter fence, topped with razor wire, cuts across the frozen tundra.

Inside the fence: a fleet of trucks, corrugated steel sheds, a looming mine tower... battered by the harsh winter climate.

TITLE CARD: YAKUTIA DIAMOND MINE
 NORTHERN SIBERIA
 FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

DISSOLVE TO:

OVER DARK SCREEN

The SOUND of heavy labor: jackhammers, hydraulic machines, rolling stock.

A dim ORANGE GLOW appears. The end of a burning cigarette barely illuminates a rigid mouth.

Something approaches the cigarette. A fuse stem... it flares into a bright flame on contact.

INT. MINE TUNNEL

KUSKIN -- 35, his impassive Slavic face caked in grime -- holds a stack of dynamite, the fuse stem burning.

He tosses his cigarette to the ground and yells over his shoulder (in Russian, with subtitles).

 KUSKIN
 <Heads up your Mother's asses!>

MINERS echo the warning as Kuskin tosses the dynamite into the shaft. He crouches behind a box-car, next to LEBED, a grizzled old-timer.

Lebed watches as Kuskin pulls several crude diamonds from his shirt pocket and fingers them in his palm.

LEBED

<If you get caught, they will shoot you. Then they will ask where you found them.>

KUSKIN

<I have seen too many men lost to this hell. I'm tired of waiting for my turn to die.>

Kuskin swallows the diamonds, chases with a swig from his flask. A quiet beat, followed by...

A LARGE EXPLOSION... a roiling cloud of dust plunges the tunnel into darkness.

INT. MINE TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Two shafts of light cut through the haze as Kuskin and Lebed explore the blast site, lanterns raised.

Kuskin steps through a pile of rubble, spots a large crevice in the rock wall. Something strange about it.

He exchanges a wary glance with Lebed, then pushes through.

INT. CAVERN

Stalactites throw off jagged shadows as Kuskin and Lebed enter, casting an eerie light across the cavernous space.

LEBED

<What is this place?>

Kuskin approaches a wall, runs his hand across odd geometric formations: INTERLACED CHANNELS carved into the rock.

Something CLATTERS in the darkness. Kuskin spins around. No sign of Lebed.

KUSKIN

<Old man?>

Silence. Followed by SKITTERING SOUNDS.

KUSKIN

<Is that you?>

Kuskin backs toward the crevice, growing alarm on his face...

Suddenly freezes as he bumps into...

Lebed. Slumped dead on the ground. Steam rising from dozens of horrible puncture wounds.

INT. MINE TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Kuskin backs out of the crevice, turns to run...

CLICKING AND BUZZING SOUNDS as something pursues him... hidden in the darkness of the tunnel.

He spots a METAL STORAGE SHED just ahead.

INT. METAL STORAGE SHED

Kuskin pulls the door shut.

The shed is stacked floor to ceiling with wooden crates. A few are open, filled with sticks of dynamite.

Something approaches from outside... followed by TICKING at the metal door.

Kuskin spins as the TICKING comes from different directions, growing LOUDER, the walls starting to PING like a hail storm.

He backs against the far wall as the CLATTERING NOISE grows to a horrible crescendo... then stops.

Quiet relief on Kuskin's face... which suddenly twists into a painful grimace as...

A DARK CRYSTALLINE SPIKE pierces the wall, impaling his shoulder.

He drops the lantern, stares at the spike, which moves unnaturally, articulated joints waver at the air.

The lantern falls into an open crate, leaks kerosene onto a pile of dynamite.

Kuskin reaches for the lantern, GROANS in agony as a second SPIKE bursts through his thigh, pins him in place.

A blue flame spills from the lantern, inches toward the dynamite.

Kuskin reaches out to smother the flame, almost there.

Several more spikes PUNCTURE the wall, JABBING his flesh like a pincushion.

Barely alive, Kuskin watches a stick of dynamite flare, pained resignation crossing his face, as...

INT. STAGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dozens of MINERS at work... stacking supplies, breaking piles of rock. A forklift loads ore skips onto a conveyor belt.

A YOUNG MINER pulls off his ear-protectors, wipes the sweat from his forehead.

A low RUMBLING SOUND draws his attention to a HAULAGE tunnel. His face drops as he sees a rapidly approaching BURST of ORANGE LIGHT.

The Young Miner signs a cross on his chest... the ground SHUDDERS below his feet as the Staging Room is engulfed in a BLAST of WHITE HOT ENERGY, vaporizing everything in its path.

DISSOLVE TO:

OVER DARK SCREEN

A muted DRONING SOUND. The darkness turns to grey as a diffuse light approaches, getting brighter...

Revealing the REMORA -- a Deep Sea Submersible, with two dome-shaped viewing bays.

TITLE: MID-ATLANTIC TRENCH - 15,000 FEET
PRESENT DAY

INT. SUBMERSIBLE

The engine DRONE echoes through the cramped space as CLAIRE RYDBECK -- early 20's, khakis and fleece on the surface, pins and needles underneath -- stares out the viewing bay with her work-in-progress poker face.

CLAIRE
Give me a reading, Murph.

JACK MURPHY -- 20's, patchy beard, Metallica T-shirt -- eyes a monitor in the back of the sub.

MURPHY
Temperature's still at minus
fifteen.

CLAIRE
Two days in. Still no sign of the
target.

Murphy switches the monitor to a view of the sea floor,
overlaid with a rectangular grid.

MURPHY
The quake radius is four clicks and
we've already covered three.

CLAIRE
What are we missing here?

MURPHY
Trust me, Claire. We're closing
in.

CLAIRE
Because, I'm thinking we take a run
off the chart.

MURPHY
What?

CLAIRE
Catch a micro-thermal. See where
it takes us.

MURPHY
All this planning. And now you
want to roll the dice?

Claire chews on this, turns to the CAPTAIN -- 50's,
weatherbeaten, gruff.

CLAIRE
How much time left?

CAPTAIN
The Casino closes in sixty minutes.

Claire stares out the viewing bay, brows furrowed as she
weighs her decision.

Something catches Murphy's attention on the monitor.

MURPHY
Claire?

CLAIRE
I'm thinking.

MURPHY
How about a little light?

EXT. OCEAN

A ring of halogen lights FLARE across the bottom of the submersible, revealing a field of cone-shaped vents, spewing dark clouds of roiling volcanic gas.

The submersible is dwarfed as it floats between the massive undersea vents.

INT. SUBMERSIBLE

Claire and Murphy stare out in wonder.

CLAIRE
See anyone else?

MURPHY
(eyes on the monitor)
Looks like we're first ones to the dance.

CLAIRE
(to the Captain)
Can you get closer?

The Captain nudges the sub forward.

MURPHY
Careful where you park. Those vents are pushing eight hundred degrees.

As they approach a vent, they can see strange, worm-like organisms burrowed in the rock, radiating a prism of color.

CAPTAIN
Those things should be appetizers.
(to Claire)
What are they?

A robot arm extends from the sub as Claire works the controls.

CLAIRE
Hard to say...

A tube emerges from the robot-arm. Gentle suction pulls at an organism.

CLAIRE
... we've never seen one before.

The robot arm suddenly FREEZES with a mechanical THUD.

CLAIRE
What was that?

The Captain flicks at a bank of switches. A high pitched BEEPING as a bank of red lights start FLASHING.

CAPTAIN
We lost hydraulic.

Claire works the robot arm controls. Nothing happens.

CLAIRE
No, no, no...
(as the sub slowly backs
away from the vent)
Wait, where are you going?

CAPTAIN
Rudder's out. We lost lateral.

CLAIRE
Can you fix it?

CAPTAIN
I'll let you know. If we make it
back up.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESEARCH VESSEL - OUTSIDE DECK - DAY

The Remora sits fastened to the deck of a rusting, oil soaked ship.

Claire watches as the Captain inspects an open panel. Fluid leaks from a snake-pit of hoses and fittings.

CLAIRE
We got here fist.

CAPTAIN

What?

CLAIRE

Subduction quake. Hard to detect.
But we saw it. You know why?

CAPTAIN

Because you were looking.

Claire scans the horizon.

CLAIRE

Others will be here soon.

The Captain pulls out a cylindrical valve.

CAPTAIN

The gear pump is shot.

CLAIRE

Can you fix it?

CAPTAIN

I got a hungry crew and your funds
ran out.

Claire's eyes flare up, her face still placid.

CLAIRE

I'll find the money. Can you get
me a new one?

The Captain rubs his hands with a rag and stands, nods to
starboard.

CAPTAIN

Maybe you can ask them.

Claire follows the Captains gaze... her eye's narrow in anger
as she spots a sleek, modern vessel approaching. A helicopter
up top and two research subs in back.

A large emblem on the hull, with the words: RADIUM GENOMICS

CLAIRE

That son of a...

CUT TO:

A REMOTE BARREN LANDSCAPE

Steam rises from the bleak terrain, dotted with geothermal pools. It could be an alien planet.

ACADEMIC (V.O.)

We are here today to honor a new breed of scientist.

CUT TO:

A GLACIAL CAVERN

A translucent blue canopy arches over a churning stream of water.

ACADEMIC (V.O.)

Inspired by the golden age of exploration. Seeking out the most extreme habitats on earth...

CUT TO:

VOLCANIC UNDERWATER VENTS

ACADEMIC (V.O.)

... these brave pioneers are discovering radical new forms of life...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A DOWDY ACADEMIC -- crooked glasses, bad tux -- stands behind a podium, speaking to a crowd in more or less formal attire.

A series of STRANGE ORGANISMS are projected behind the podium. A large banner reads: 22ND ANNUAL MAGELLAN AWARDS

ACADEMIC

... in places no one thought to look before.

Claire at a table near the front, fidgeting in her off-the-rack dress. Murphy, in an wrinkled blazer and Slayer T-shirt, pokes his fork at an rubbery piece of chicken.

MURPHY
(under his breath)
God, I hate these things.

CLAIRE
Then why are you here?

MURPHY
Can't have you drinking alone.

CLAIRE
I'm not drinking.

MURPHY
You will be.

CLAIRE
I'm good, Murph. I got this.
(softer now, almost to
herself)
I just need to know.

Up front, the Academic continues. An image of the WORM-LIKE ORGANISM from Claire's expedition now on the screen.

ACADEMIC
Without further delay, I am honored
to present the Magellan award to
this years most intrepid scientific
explorer: Dr. Bradford C. Shore.

A rising murmur, heads turn in unison as BRAD SHORE, late 40's, strides into the hall -- cocky grin, tailored suit, chunky watch -- the bright sheen of success.

A subtle wink for Claire as he walks by.

BRAD
There's always next year, Bean.

Claire shoots daggers as Brad strides toward the stage to address the crowd.

BRAD
Directly beneath our feet, there is
a hundred times more biomass,
organic matter, than all forms of
life on the surface combined. Some
of which has adapted to extreme
environments. Lava chambers.
(MORE)

BRAD (cont'd)

Deep sea vents. Acidic pools. For each new organism we discover, as we learn about their survival mechanisms, their fine tuned adaptations, perfected over millions of years, we find ourselves closer to cures for terminal disease, for genetic defects, perhaps even the secret to extending human life.

Claire watches with a look of utter disdain.

CLAIRE

(to Murphy, under breath)
Here it comes.

BRAD

But we must discard academic models of research that slow down progress with tedious fund-raising and peer reviews. The science of tomorrow, to be effective, must be profit based...

There is a CLATTER near the front of the stage. Brad grins as he watches Claire storm out the room.

BRAD

... and my company, Radium Genomics, wants to be at the forefront of that change.

INT. HONKY TONK BAR - NIGHT

Country music plays from the jukebox as Claire and Murphy down Tequila shots.

CLAIRE

It should have been us.
(grabs at the air)
It was right there.

MURPHY

(slurring)
We juss ran out of submarine.

CLAIRE

And he sweeps in behind. Like some parasite. And just takes it. For himself.

Murphy leans forward.

MURPHY

Listen. There are plenty more awards named after dead white men: the MacArthur, the Fermi, the wazzucallit?

CLAIRE

The Nobel?

MURPHY

Ezzacly... the Nobel.

CLAIRE

What's your point?

MURPHY

Have faith. There's a dead white man in your future.

CLAIRE

Do you know what he does with each new organism he discovers?

MURPHY

Who? Bradford C. Shore?

CLAIRE

Patents them. Keeps them locked up in his lab, away from everyone but his hand-picked team of lap-dogs. Just so he can make a buck.

MURPHY

He called you 'Bean'.

CLAIRE

Long story.

MURPHY

(glances at his watch)
It's eleven AM.

CLAIRE

Not today, Murph.

MURPHY

Okay... but still...
(with emphasis)
Brad Shore?

CLAIRE

Have you been listening to me?

MURPHY
... is standing right behind you.

Claire slow-turns to see Brad standing over the table, the award plaque tucked under his arm.

BRAD
You missed my speech.

CLAIRE
(cold as the arctic)
You named a sea insect after me.

Brad places the plaque in front of Claire.

BRAD
We all know you're the one who
deserves this.

As Claire stares at the plaque, Brad pushes a slip of paper across the table.

BRAD
And a little something extra.

CLAIRE
What's this?

BRAD
I hear you're planning a look-see
under the Ross ice-shelf.

Claire turns the slip over. It's a check. Sizable.

BRAD
Down payment on your Quonset hut.

Brad places a small BLACK ROCK on the table.

BRAD
All I need is for you to take a
look at this. Tell me what you
think.

Claire rises from the table and turns to Murphy, fire in her eyes as she heads for the exit.

CLAIRE
Tell my father, if he's not gone by
the time I get back, that dead
white man's gonna be here sooner
than we thought.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

Claire stands at a podium. Behind her, a video projection: jagged mountain peaks spew red hot magma into rivers of lava.

A title above reads: BIOCHEMISTRY 101

CLAIRE

This is the Earth. Our home.
 Three Billion years ago. Somewhere
 in this boiling, primordial pool,
 lies the complex mix of chemicals
 and energy required to create life.
 A miraculous chain of events
 leading directly to all of us,
 gathered in this room today. And
 we still don't know with a high
 degree of certainty how it started,
 with what agency? And where? What
 triggered the first organism, the
 first nascent strand of RNA? In
 this class, we will take a journey
 encompassing the first billion
 years of evolution, bringing us to
 this miracle... this immaculate
 conception.

The image changes to a group of cells.

CLAIRE

The single celled organism.

Claire scans the lecture hall, energized... only to find a smattering of bored faces, some lit up by cellphones.

INT. UNIVERSITY - CLAIRE'S OFFICE - DAY

Claire sits in her spare office, on the phone. STUDENTS lounge outside her window. Hacky-Sack. Skateboards. Not a care in the world.

CLAIRE (INTO PHONE)

I understand, but... that's right,
 and I just wanted to point out the
 RNA profile of our latest... yes,
 our latest specimens, because...
 sorry?

(her expression melts)

You awarded the grant? Last week?
 No, I didn't know. Commercial
 applications? Yes, of course. I'll
 be sure to apply again. Next year.

Claire hangs up, puffs out her cheeks in rising frustration.

CLAIRE
(to herself)
Okay...

CUT TO:

A FOOT SLAMS INTO A 100LB TRAINING BAG

CUT TO:

INT. CAMPUS GYM - DAY

Claire, dressed in full-on MMA-style gym gear, circles the bag, her gloved hands upright and coiled.

She throws a flurry of punches - BAP BAP BAP - then dimples the leather with a reverse roundhouse kick.

EXT. CAMPUS GYM - DAY

Murphy watches Claire through the Gym window, apprehensive.

He steels himself, pushes through the entrance.

INT. CAMPUS GYM - DAY

Claire tosses a few jabs at the training bag, backs off... circles in a predatory dance.

MURPHY (O.S.)
No mas.

Claire spins around, sees Murphy at the edge of the mat, his hands raised in mock surrender.

MURPHY
I think the bag just tapped out.

Claire turns back to the bag, coils into a flighting stance.

CLAIRE
We're just getting started.

Claire works the bag as they speak.

MURPHY
Heard about the grant. Tough break.

CLAIRE
Bad news travels fast.

Murphy cringes as Claire grabs the bag, plants a knee to the groin.

MURPHY
First time for everything, right?

Claire turns to face Murphy, wipes the sweat from her brow.

CLAIRE
What are we doing here?

Murphy works his jaw for a beat.

MURPHY
I have something to show you.

CUT TO:

VIDEO SCREEN

A hazy green landscape, like a mountain range seen from high above... interlaced with dark GEOMETRIC CHANNELS. We've seen this pattern before.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Igneous markings, right?

CUT TO:

INT. BIO-LAB - DAY

Claire peers into an electron-microscope as Murphy stands nearby.

MURPHY
Exactly. The tracings are mostly biotite.

CLAIRE
Okay. A lava rock. Why was this was so important?

Murphy hands Claire a printout, a series of black vertical streaks and dots.

MURPHY

The sample is pre-Archaen. Over four billion years old.

Claire whistles, suddenly impressed. Looks back in the lens.

CLAIRE

The striations... where did they come from?

MURPHY

That's the thing. I analyzed the patterns. There's no geological process that can account for them.

Claire adjusts a dial. The dark channels come into relief. Precise angles and grooves.

CLAIRE

Okay. So what caused this?

MURPHY

What if they were, I'm just saying... created by organic matter?

CLAIRE

That's not possible. Your sample pre-dates all known forms of life.

MURPHY

But if they were. Created by cellular organisms. That would be kind of notable, right?

Claire looks up from the microscope, suddenly suspicious.

CLAIRE

Where did you get this?

MURPHY

Lithospheric core sample.

CLAIRE

That's not what I asked.

Murphy pulls the sample from his pocket: Brad's Black Rock.

MURPHY

He paid for the drinks.

Claire's eye's narrow in anger as the realization sinks in.

CLAIRE
Get that out of my sight.

Murphy follows Claire as she spins for the exit.

MURPHY
Claire, listen...

CLAIRE
We are not talking about this.

MURPHY
You're just going to walk away from
one of the biggest discoveries in
the history of science.

Claire whips around on Murphy.

CLAIRE
Is that what he told you?

MURPHY
The evidence is here. Right in
front of us.

CLAIRE
And what else did he say?

MURPHY
We've been close, Claire. So many
times. But there's always a
setback. Second rate equipment. A
lack of funds. A tin can
submarine. If you want to make a
difference in this world, you need
more than that. We just don't have
the resources to compete. He has
better toys. And he wants to help.

Claire chews on that, working up to a response.

CLAIRE
Trust me. We don't want his help.

A look of quiet exasperation on Murphy's face.

MURPHY
Fine.

He places the rock on the table, locks eyes with Claire.

MURPHY
He's not the only one trying to
help.

Claire watches, conflicted now, as Murphy exits the lab.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Threadbare furniture. Stacks of books on the floor. Claire on her couch, surfs the internet on her laptop. Takeout Chinese on the table. A glass of wine in her hand.

She scrolls through the Radium Genomics web site: sleek glass-walled headquarters. Young researchers in the lab. A rising stock chart. Brad regales celebrities and other notables.

Claire takes a deep breath, picks up her cellphone and dials.

INT. RADIUM GENOMICS - CORPORATE LAB - EVENING

Brad walks through a high-tech laboratory, a team of WHITE COATS in his wake. His cellphone RINGS.

BRAD (INTO PHONE)

Brad Shore.

INTERCUT with Claire, speaking on her phone.

CLAIRE

Where did you get it?

BRAD

(recognizing the voice)
Claire?

CLAIRE

The sample. Where did it come from?

Brad waves off his team, a wry grin on his face.

BRAD

I'll need a non-disclosure for that.

CLAIRE

Fine. I want exclusive rights to the biotic structures for six months.

BRAD

No public domain.

CLAIRE
I can share the data with any
colleague of my choosing.

BRAD
You get four names, contingent on
vetting.

CLAIRE
And I want it all on paper.

BRAD
You'll have it first thing
tomorrow.

Claire soaks this... catching up to the conversation.

CLAIRE
One last question.

BRAD
Yeah, Bean?

CLAIRE
Where are you taking me?

CUT TO:

INT. SEEDY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Slavic-pop blares from twenty-inch woofers. FEMALE DANCERS gyrate on the bar. A firehose couldn't wash the grime away.

A WOMAN enters -- late 20's, athletic, slick black hair, wearing jeans and a leather jacket. Her name is RIGA.

Following her is TOM DEWBERRY -- 40's, short and balding, custom suit, metal briefcase -- and TUBBS -- twice the size of Dewberry, all muscle.

RIGA
(Russian accent)
This way.

Riga leads Dewberry to three MEN at a table in the back:

VLAD -- a mountain of chiseled flesh with a face like a block of ice.

PAVEL -- wearing aviators and a cowboy hat.

ARKADY -- 40's, cropped grey hair, the flint-etched face of a seasoned mercenary.

Dewberry takes a seat across from Arkady.

Tubbs backs against the wall, scans the room for trouble.

DEWBERRY

(of Riga)

The girl. She said we were meeting
at your office.

Arkady gestures around the room.

ARKADY

(Russian accent)

Corporate headquarters. Do you
like?

DEWBERRY

(eyes the dancers)

I see you have a taste for vintage
furniture.

Arkady fills a shot glass with Vodka, slides it to Dewberry.

ARKADY

It is tradition in my country to
bring your host a gift. For
hospitality.

DEWBERRY

(ignores the shot)

I've been told you can make
arrangements for access to a remote
location with certain logistical
challenges.

ARKADY

We can take you there, yes.

Dewberry scans the Russians, a wary look on his face.

DEWBERRY

We, as in the individuals presently
surrounding this table?

ARKADY

You have problem with this?

A DANCER approaches, climbs into Pavel's lap, takes a swig
from a vodka bottle in his hand.

DEWBERRY

I was under the impression we here
hiring professionals.

A tense beat. Arkady sits back, looks to Riga.

ARKADY

Our American friend here is looking
for professionals. Perhaps you can
assist.

RIGA

Da.

Riga pulls a large serrated COMBAT-KNIFE from her belt.
Tubbs clocks this, draws a Glock, takes a bead on Riga.

TUBBS

Drop the knife!

Riga saunters toward Tubbs, the knife twirling her hand.

TUBBS

One more step and I'll put a...

In a fluid move, Riga drops to the floor, kicks out Tubbs'
leg...

Tubbs hits the ground hard, looks up to see Riga standing
over him... his Glock in her hand.

Riga pops the bullet from the chamber and places the gun in
front of Dewberry, gives it a spin.

ARKADY

Access to location has been pre-
arranged.

Arkady nods across the bar to an INTOXICATED MAN in a high
ranking military suit, two dancers grinding in his lap.

ARKADY

The military guard will disappear
for forty eight hours.

Dewberry considers for a beat, then downs his shot and kicks
the metal case toward Arkady.

DEWBERRY
 For your hospitality.
 (rises to leave, gestures
 toward Tubbs)
 You can keep him too.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK YARD - DAY

A HAMMER SLAMS into a large round stone, splits it in half.

Murphy lifts a fragment from a work table, revealing a layer of colored crystals inside.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
 Looks like fun.

Murphy turns around to see Claire approaching.

CLAIRE
 Can I help?

MURPHY
 Grab a hammer.

Claire scans the workbench, which holds several stone fragments. She picks one up, admiring the crystals.

CLAIRE
 Geodes. Very nice.

MURPHY
 I volunteer at a high school. You
 hook the kids on geology, you hook
 them on the the earth.

Claire regards Murphy for a beat, her face softens.

CLAIRE
 She was the dean at Cal Tech.

MURPHY
 Sorry?

CLAIRE (O.S.)
 My Mom. Biochemistry Department.
 At the top of her field. And...
 well... he was her student.

MURPHY
 Your dad?

CLAIRE

We don't really call him that.

MURPHY

What happened?

CLAIRE

When she got pregnant, he just left. And that pretty much defines him. And our relationship, ever since.

MURPHY

I see.

CLAIRE

When she passed away. At her funeral. I was sixteen at the time. There he was. Brad Shore. Already a billionaire. Whatever. And they tell me... this man, this stranger... was now my legal guardian. Next thing I know we're doing the awkward father daughter dance. But I could never get over the fact that he abandoned us. After a year of trying to make it work. I did the same thing to him. I got as far away as I could. Came here. Dove into my studies. Never looked back.

MURPHY

But he was always there. In the background. Wasn't he?

CLAIRE

Kind of hard to miss.

MURPHY

You called him, didn't you?

Claire locks eyes with Murphy.

CLAIRE

What else did he tell you? At the bar?

MURPHY

That you were stubborn. A pain in the ass. But driven. And brilliant. That the two of you were stronger together.

CLAIRE

Hmmm.

MURPHY

He said you'd fight me on this.

CLAIRE

Yeah?

MURPHY

But that you'd come around.

Claire pulls the rock sample from her shirt pocket, turns it in the light, which refracts off the tessellated surface.

CLAIRE

(eyes on the rock sample)

Are your bags packed?

MURPHY

Always.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOW COVERED TUNDRA - DAY

A rusted wire fence, buttressed by tall drifts of snow.

A HELICOPTER approaches from the horizon, sprays clouds of white powder as it lands inside the perimeter.

EXT. MINE COMPOUND - DAY

Claire and Murphy exit the Helicopter, take in the vista.

Large industrial cinder-block buildings rise from the ruins of the old mine compound from the opening scene.

Brad exits from the cockpit, pulls off his helmet.

CLAIRE

A mine.

BRAD

What?

CLAIRE

You said we were going to a diamond mine.

Brad fires up a Cubano, gestures to various buildings.

BRAD

That's the ore processing plant.
Conveyors. Pithead's over there.

Claire surveys the compound. No sign of activity.

CLAIRE

This place is a ghost town.

BRAD

Debeers bought 'em out. Shut it
down to control the diamond supply.
That's how they get two weeks
salary for a lump of carbon.

CLAIRE

How are we getting inside?

BRAD

Got it under control, Bean.

Claire bristles, tosses her backpack to Brad. It hits hard.

CLAIRE

You going to load up, or is that
beneath your station?

BRAD

Where are you going?

CLAIRE

Mind if I have a look around?

BRAD

(big toothy smile)
Be my guest.

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

A map of the mine is laid out in the cargo bay. Brad watches as Murphy runs his hands along a tunnel that snakes out of the staging area, toward distant mine chambers and storage rooms.

MURPHY

We come in through the staging
area. Part of the new mine. But
our target is deeper inside. Over
here. Part of the old mine.
Intersected by a tectonic plate.

(MORE)

MURPHY (CONT'D)
(gestures to an area
circled in red ink)
We get access through the pit head.

BRAD
You've done your research.

Murphy's expression changes, he locks eyes with Brad.

MURPHY
She's in competition with you. You
know that.

BRAD
Claire?

MURPHY
Wants to prove you wrong.

BRAD
About what?

MURPHY
Everything.

BRAD
Good. Marketplace of ideas. Fight
it out. Let the best ones come out
on top.

MURPHY
I'm just saying. That might work
in the class room, or board room.
Whatever. But we're in the field.
And this is probably not the best
place for us to have a difference
of opinion.

BRAD
So you want me to back down? Let
her run the show?

MURPHY
One of you has to.

Brad chews on this for a beat, looks back up to Murphy.

BRAD
Ever been in a mine before?

MURPHY
How do you mean?

Brad drops a finger to an unmarked part of the map.

BRAD
 Pithead's over here.

Brad stands as Murphy's eyes go back and forth on the map.

BRAD
 Know what? You're probably right.
 (beat)
 We'll do it my way.

EXT. PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

The deteriorated structure lists from the weight of snow.
 Claire shoulders the entrance door, which slides open.

INT. PROCESSING PLANT - DAY

Claire enters the dark space, flicks on her flashlight, which reveals discarded supplies and rusting machinery.

She approaches a large pile of ore, lifts a stone and examines it for markings.

A SCRAPING SOUND comes from the darkness...

Claire rises... flares her flashlight toward the sound. Sees nothing. A wary expression on her face.

CLAIRE
 Hello?

Another SCRAPING SOUND.

Claire backs away, slowly, just as...

An ARM grabs her from behind. She is yanked back... the glint of a COMBAT-KNIFE closing in.

Without hesitation, she drives an elbow into her attacker's gut, drops to one knee, flips the attacker over her shoulder.

The fight is glimpsed in flashes and shadows... the knife CLATTERS to the floor... GRUNTING as two silhouettes wrestle... a hand stretching for the knife, then...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Oktahobka!

A BRIGHT LIGHT shines on Claire, who straddles the assailant from above.

Vlad, Pavel and Arkady step forward, dressed in tactical gear... Tech-9 rifles slung over their shoulders.

Claire looks down at her assailant: RIGA.

CLAIRE
(to Arkady, eyes on Riga)
Look, we don't want any trouble.

Arkady cocks his head at the sight of Claire straddling Riga.

ARKADY
You have odd way of showing this.

Dewberry steps out of the shadows, waves off Arkady.

DEWBERRY
Stand down. She's with us.

Dewberry approaches Claire, helps her up. Riga rolls to the side and rises... eyes on Claire as she backs away.

DEWBERRY
Claire Rydbeck?

CLAIRE
That's right.

DEWBERRY
Tom Dewberry. Pleased to meet you.

CLAIRE
You work for Brad?

DEWBERRY
Don't we all?

EXT. MINE COMPOUND - DAY

The Americans and Russians cross the compound, heading for a large cinder-block building. Claire and Brad trail behind, speaking in hushed tones.

CLAIRE
They have guns.

BRAD
I see that, Claire.

CLAIRE

We're a little off the playbook,
aren't we?

BRAD

Your playbook, maybe.

CLAIRE

What's that supposed to mean?

BRAD

(calls out)
Dewberry.

Dewberry, struggling to keep pace, hustles up to his boss.

DEWBERRY

Yes, boss?

BRAD

She wants to know why they have
guns.

DEWBERRY

That's 'need to know'.

BRAD

It's okay. She's papered up.

Reluctantly, Dewberry turns to Claire.

DEWBERRY

To get into this mine. To get
within a hundred miles of here.
For ten months, we tried legitimate
channels. Here's the thing: in
Russia, there are no legitimate
channels.

CLAIRE

So you hired mercenaries to break
into the mine?

DEWBERRY

Former security. Operations. They
used to work here. Before they shut
it down.

BRAD

Sometimes, Bean, to do good, you
have to bend the rules.

CLAIRE

To do good?

BRAD
Isn't that why we're here?

CLAIRE
No. It's why *I'm* here.

Up ahead, Arkady and Vlad stop at the Cinder Block building, confronted by a reinforced metal door.

Arkady tries the handle, the door is locked.

BRAD
(shouts ahead)
There a problem?

Arkady nods to Vlad, who rifles through his utility belt.

ARKADY
My associate is searching for key.

BRAD
(to Claire)
You see. Just think of them as
tour guides.

Vlad pops a mortar into a launcher on his Tech-9 and pulls the trigger... BLOWS a MASSIVE HOLE hole in the door.

Arkady pushes at the door, which swings open. A wisp of smoke hangs in the air.

ARKADY
First try. Must be lucky day.

On Brad - avoiding eye contact with Claire's stone cold gaze.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Flashlight beams arc across the large windowless hall as the group enters.

Claire approaches a massive CONTROL CONSOLE. Switches and dials laid out within a schematic diagram of a mine.

RIGA (O.S.)
No one has done that before.

Claire looks over as Riga approaches from the shadows.

CLAIRE
I'm sorry?

RIGA
Take my knife.

Claire pulls Riga's combat-knife from her belt loop, bounces it in her hand.

CLAIRE
It's nice. Has good balance.
(locks eyes with Riga)
Carbon steel?

Riga raises an eyebrow, she's impressed.

CLAIRE
(explaining)
My mother. After she saw my first recital. We traded in the ballet slippers for a black belt. I picked up a few more along the way.
(offers the knife to Riga)
Here.

RIGA
(as she takes the knife)
Care to make it best of three?

Claire loosens up. A grin of solidarity.

CLAIRE
Look. We both have a job to do. I get that. I'm not going to ask any questions. Just do me a favor, between us girls.

Claire nods toward the Console. Pavel works the controls as Arkady and Vlad stand nearby.

CLAIRE
Tell me if there's anything I should know.

RIGA
You do not trust them?

CLAIRE
Do you?

Riga slides the knife into her sheath.

RIGA
I will let you know.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A white beam flares across dirt-streaked walls as Murphy navigates a dark corridor.

He aims his flashlight to the side, spots a metal door, the surface dimpled and scarred.

He regards the odd markings for a beat, then pushes at the door, entering...

INT. SUPPLY ROOM - DAY

Murphy walks down a row of floor-to-ceiling shelving units, stacked with mining tools.

He grabs a hand-pick, admires the well crafted metal, bangs a shelf to test it.

A confetti-blast of maggots rains over him.

He looks up to see a stack of spoiled provisions, maggots squirming in the rot.

MURPHY

(covers his nose)

Damn.

As he backs away in disgust, his heel kicks something, which SKITTERS across the floor, stops against a METAL CONTAINER.

He approaches the container... bends down to lift a DARK CRYSTALLINE FRAGMENT, tapered to a sharp point.

The container door is ripped outward. Murphy inspects the frayed edges, stoops to peer inside.

A sharp BUZZING SOUND. Murphy shoots back, alarmed.

Overhead lights flicker on... the SOUND of heating and ventilation systems GROANING to life.

The BUZZING sound again. Murphy grabs a yellow RADIO COMMUNICATOR clipped to his belt.

MURPHY

(into communicator)

Claire? That you?

INTERCUT with Claire in the Control Room, now illuminated. The Control Panel is alive with flashing lights.

CLAIRE
(into communicator)
We're heading down, Murph. Thought
you'd like to know.

MURPHY
(into communicator)
Sure thing. Be right with you.

Murphy crosses for the exit, passes some fallen shelves...

Which hide the desiccated corpse of a MINE TECH... pitted
with dark puncture holes... his eyes frozen open in a final
moment of horror.

INT. PITHEAD BUILDING - DAY

A five story concrete structure. Heavy-gauge cables descend
from an elevated pulley mechanism, connect to an ELEVATOR
PLATFORM at ground level.

Brad speaks to Dewberry as the team loads equipment onto the
platform.

BRAD
How long before the military
returns?

DEWBERRY
Forty-eight hours... give or take a
case of vodka.

BRAD
Good work.

DEWBERRY
After that. All bets are off.

BRAD
Understood.

DEWBERRY
You're not the least bit curious
why the military is guarding this
dump?

Brad places a hand on Dewberry's shoulder.

BRAD
Stay warm, Tom.

DEWBERRY
Stay alive, boss.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER

Dewberry watches as the Americans and Russians cram onto the elevator platform.

Arkady nods to Pavel, who pulls a hydraulic lever. A heavy shudder as the platform lurches down into the shaft.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER

A long period of silence as the platform drops... elevator gears DRONING... passing the occasional exit shaft.

Everyone in close quarters, awkwardly avoiding eye contact.

Murphy's watches Riga from the corner of his eye. She catches him... gives a wink.

Murphy looks away... toward the glistening rock wall as it glides past the platform.

He hears a low HUMMING SOUND...

Murphy focuses in...

The HUMMING grows louder...

A heavy-gauge steel cable is VIBRATING.

MURPHY
That supposed to happen?

Arkady follows Murphy's eyes to the cable, raises a hand to Pavel.

ARKADY
(speaking Russian)
Oshtain.

Pavel slams the hydraulic lever forward.

The Platform jolts to a stop.

Brad catches this, turns to Arkady.

BRAD
Is there a problem?

Arkady gestures to the vibrating cable.

ARKADY
Support cable. Is unstable.

Pavel fights the lever as the Platform STUTTERS in place,
then LURCHES upward.

BRAD
Wait! We're not going back up?

The platform FREEZES. A deep THROBBING SOUND as it shakes
with growing intensity.

ARKADY
We will go down.

BRAD
Good.

Cables VIBRATING on all sides now, ECHOING through the shaft.

ARKADY
Only question is: how fast?

A MASSIVE JOLT as the platform drops at one corner, followed
by the WHOOSHING SOUND of a steel cable unraveling.

PAVEL
Byet drast!

Everyone dives for cover as the cable unleashes its fury,
WHIPPING past with a high-pitched SHRIEK.

Murphy GROANS in pain as the cable slashes his forearm.

Everyone on the deck... darting eyeballs... the ominous GROAN
of slowly bending metal as the platform lists...

A final SNAPPING SOUND... we are in free fall...

Pavel fights the controls... it's futile.

Vlad suddenly rises... grabs a metal spar and snaps it
free... jams it into the rail-guide...

A RASPING sound as the spar throws off FLAMING EMBERS,
slowing the Platform...

Which CRASHES INTO THE GROUND... belching out a cloud of dust
and debris.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - DARKNESS

Silence... as echoes from the impact dissipate.

A beam of light shoots through the haze... wriggles forward as Claire crawls from the wreckage.

A hand reaches down to help her up. It's Brad. They regard each other for a beat... a moment of genuine concern.

BRAD

You okay?

CLAIRE

Yeah. I think so.

Claire turns back to the wreckage as silhouettes emerge... Pavel, Arkady, Riga... coughing and wheezing.

Then finally Murphy, in shock, holding his injured arm.

CLAIRE

(rushes over)

Here. Let me help.

MURPHY

No. I'm good.

(slides to the ground)

Just gonna sit here for a bit. Can I do that?

CLAIRE

(offers a bottle)

Have some water.

As Murphy takes a deep gulp, Vlad emerges from the wreckage... an ash covered Golem.

MURPHY

(still dazed)

He saved us.

RIGA

(nearby, dusting off)

He saved himself. You just happened to be in vicinity.

A bright FLASH as Arkady snaps a FLARE and tosses it to the ground, throwing light across the STAGING AREA: cavernous and dark, sheer concrete walls lined with conduit and cables.

Squatting in the shadows are dozens of heavy-duty MINING MACHINES. In the silted darkness and flickering light, the space looks like hell's storage vault.