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Tomb

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Tomb

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Billie Jo Mason

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Thesis Committee:

Professor Robin U. Russin, Chairperson

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Professor Stu Krieger

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The Thesis of Billie Jo Mason is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## Acknowledgements

To Madison, Zep and Lily, who sat by the door and were always glad to see me. Special props to Madison, who's been through *two* advanced degrees.

Chris, Mike, Judy, Kate, John "Stud" Perkins, and everyone else who helped take care of Chris on the nights I wasn't there. Which were a lot. It takes a very odd village.

Robin, Stu and Chuck for putting up with a lot of whining...

Notice the dogs get top billing..

To Freedom....

OVER BLACK:

KATE (V.O.)

They are called the Kresh. It means destroyer. A billion years before mankind emerged from Earth's seas, they'd already spread like locusts across the galaxy, killing everything in their path. The Kresh are gone now, extinct. My job? Shift through the ruins, study them, find their homeworld, unlock their secrets. Sell it all to the highest bidder.

BLACK BLEEDS INTO THE ROAR OF AN INFERNO

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - DAY

A twisted, overgrown jungle. Hot, humid tangled wildness.

THREE MOONS hang in the sky. Not earth.

A perfect SILENCE broken as...

SOMETHING falls from the sky, burning through the atmosphere. SLAMS into the ground. Debris explodes skyward, rains down. Settles.

A hydraulic WHIRRRRRL. Spiny metallic arms extend. A robotic DROID lifts from the impact crater.

Tests the soil, atmosphere, radiation. A BRIGHT BEAM of light radiates outwards, scanning the area.

BEEPS. Shuts off.

SILENCE again. Then...

THUNDER.

Three SHIPS drop out of the sky, falling through the cloud cover, plummeting towards that alien jungle. Agitated pebbles on the ground shake. Air trembles.

One hell of a ride.

The afterburners kick in, SCREAMING.

The ships aren't crashing. They're landing...

Just visible through the tangled overgrowth. RUINS. An ancient alien civilization. Toppled temples. Crumbling masonry. Reclaimed by the jungle.

The ships touch down. Settle.

METAL GRATES against METAL. A door slides open on the underbelly of one of the ships. A ramp slides down, harsh mechanical WHINE as it extends, SLAMS into the virgin soil.

Blackened, charred vegetation smolders at the perimeter of the landing site.

FIGURES appear at the top of the ramp.

Shirt buttoned wrong, DR. KATE CARTER (late 20s) tosses bags over her shoulder as she surveys the ruins beyond. Might be gorgeous under the careless mess, more interesting for it.

Turns her attention to a handheld scanner.

KATE

We're clear!

Her brow furrows as she examines the scanner again.

KATE (CONT'D)

(into comm-unit)

Hold that...just lost the signal. Fence, what's going on?

(listens)

Are we clear or not?

Kate's identical twin, JESS CARTER, no-doctorate, doesn't want one, looks the part of "intrepid explorer," shoves past Kate. Stunning, impatient, reckless. If Kate gave a damn, this is what she'd look like.

Jess whips the scanner out of Kate's hands, gives it a shake, tosses it back at Kate.

JESS

Just a glitch. We're clear!

Expedition PERSONNEL pour down the ramp to set up camp, decked out in futuristic gear. Kate jogs down the ramp after Jess, miffed.

KATE

Follow protocol just once.

(begins recording)

Carter Group site nineteen excavation notes.

Atmosphere .98, gravity 1.4 Earth norm. Digital imaging suggests possible Kresh infestation. End recording.

As Kate speaks, Jess pulls out high-powered binoculars. Scans the horizon, focuses on a massive tower disappearing into the clouds, tilted at a logic-defying forty-five degree angle.

Kate examines her hand-held device.

KATE (CONT'D)

Stone exterior, indeterminate sub-support.

Dig leader DR. H.R. CARTER (60s), Kate and Jess's father, tanned, distinguished but fraying at the seams, joins the women at the bottom of the ramp.

H.R.

Jess, map the site.

Jess salutes, disappears fast, grinning like the Cheshire Cat at her sister.

H.R. (CONT'D)

Kate, date and file the claim.

Kate's almost gone...

H.R. (CONT'D)

Kate! Keep an eye on your sister!

KATE

That's not my job.

H.R.

Do it anyway. Go, I'll catch up.

Irritated, Kate vanishes into the jungle.

H.R. (CONT'D)

(into comm-unit)

Fence? Where are you?

FENCE (O.S.)

Still...main...lab-

H.R.

(into comm-unit)

I need you down here.

FENCE (O.S.)

Something...should...see--

H.R.

(into comm-unit)

I'll look at it later. Fix the comms! Out.

H.R. races off after the twins.

EXT. JUNGLE

KATE'S POV: Kate's blue EYES have been GENETICALLY modified. She can SEE things normal humans can't. The dark places illuminate via infra-red. Heat signatures dance in dark spaces. Extreme close-up changes perspective.

Her world is a visual feast. Custom-crafted eyes for the job at hand. She records everything, time-code signature on the lower right racks up frames per second.

RECORDING: CARTER GROUP SITE-19

Kate follows Jess's GLOWING tracks, illuminated via the heat signature of the errant sibling's footsteps. A stone path peeks from ancient sediment.

H.R. catches up, chatters non-stop, examines everything, points at ruins, grabs at leaves. Jess gets the nervous energy from him.

H.R.

Nineteen worlds. Nineteen false leads.

KATE

Unwavering optimism is one of the things I love  
about you, dad.

Creepy black towers draped in rotting vegetation ahead. H.R. unbuttons his shirt, fanning himself, a barrel-chested titan next to his daughter's slender frame.

It's hot. Hard going in the high gravity. Kate leaps up on tumbled stone blocks, starts climbing what might once have been an ancient pyramid. H.R. swings up behind her. They climb higher.

H.R.

Better be Kresh. We're upside down, gettin' deeper  
in the hole--

H. R. trips, pulls them both down in a high-gravity tumble off the blocks, hitting hard all the way back down.

From out of nowhere, Jess bursts from the jungle. Like she felt it. Grabs H.R. and Kate before they take NECK-BREAKING spills on the ground.

She's amazingly STRONG. There's been a lot of genetic tampering in Carter family tree.

JESS

You okay?

KATE

I'm fine, help dad.

Jess turns to H.R., sets him right. H.R. grins, pulls Jess in for a long hug.

H.R.

My super-girl.

Jess tenses. He hit a nerve.

JESS

They call us freaks and you think it's funny.

KATE

Jess--

H.R.

How many times can I say I'm sorry it upsets you.  
I'm sorry--

JESS

We are what we are. Let's go.

Kate gives Jess a disproving glance, then heads back on her trajectory along the stone path. Examines the rubble, the remains. Targets a cluster of carved stone blocks along the path. Covered in cursive writing.

Kneels by the gigantic block. Far too heavy for her to lift. Jess turns the block without a word. Effortlessly.

Kate bends down to examine cursive text on the stone.

Green WORMS huddle on the underside. Kate brushes them off, picks one up to examine it. It SCREECHES. She sets it aside.

H.R.

Pre-landing report indicates rudimentary intelligence.

JESS

Smart slugs? Wonderful discovery, H.R.

KATE

It's a worm, not a slug.

Jess doesn't care about the distinction. Bored, picks up a worm, plays with it. Drops it. Picks it up again. Drops, picks up. Drops. Picks up.

H.R. reaches over, takes the worm away from Jess. Sets it down safely out of her reach.

H.R.

(irritated)

Those worms secrete a highly toxic venom. Leave them alone.

JESS

I doubt it would hurt me.

KATE

Both of you, stop. I'd love to have your adaptation, Jess.

Kate carefully brushes dirt out of the grooves of the stone with a delicate fan-brush. Reveals elaborate carvings. Strange text. Kate inches closer to the surface.

H.R. kneels beside her. Jess joins them. All three transfixed on the carvings.

KATE'S POV: MAGNIFIES THE SURFACE. GLOWING PARTICLES. IN THE CORNER OF HER VISION: UPLINK TO MINISTRY MAINFRAME.

Kate digs into her kit, pulls out equipment. Scapes off some of the glowing particles into a vial, shakes it.

KATE (CONT'D)

There's organic residue on the surface. Dating it now.

H.R. gets up, paces. Makes Kate nervous.

KATE (CONT'D)

You're losing perspective.

H.R.

Never mind my perspective.

KATE'S POV: MINISTRY DOWNLOAD. ANALYSIS COMPLETE. INSUFFICIENT DATA TO TYPE. SUGGEST NEW SPECIES. ORGANIC MATERIAL ONE-HUNDRED SEVENTY-MILLION YEARS OLD.

Kate SIGHS. Disappointed. A kid learning Santa isn't real.

KATE

Not old enough for Kresh.

H.R.

You're sure?

Her look says it all. She looks off at the tower.

H.R. (CONT'D)

Damn.

(into comm-unit)

Fence, you copy? Site nineteen's a bust. Leave second team behind to excavate and crate. We launch for site twenty in twelve hours.

KATE

Let's stay, excavate the site. Forget the Kresh for a season.

JESS

We can't.

KATE

Can't?

H.R.

Parker needs something spectacular to keep us funded.

KATE

This IS spectacular. And we've got a new species.

H.R.

Not spectacular enough. Find me the Kresh, Kate. Don't argue.

H.R. starts off, stops. Fatherly affection wins out.

H.R. (CONT'D)

Listen up. Twelve hours, explore, then get back on the pad. No trouble. I mean you, Jess. Kate, stay in touch.

H.R. disappears into the jungle. Jess notices that the green worms are relocating to another stone.

JESS

What's up with the slugs?

KATE

Worms. Do you even know how to read a preliminary landing report?

JESS

I know what one is.

KATE

(annoyed)

So read one. We disturbed the nest.

JESS

So?

KATE

They're migrating to a new spot.

(recording)

Carter-Ministry Expedition. In situ dated stone block one-hundred-seventy-two-million years solar standard. Origin species not yet identified. Carter Group filing claim. End recording.

(to Jess)

We've got twelve hours. Let's explore.

Kate tags the stone, stands. Kate's BLUE eyes meet Jess's GREEN. In perfect unison, they turn to the tall tower sticking up from the jungle.

EXT. RUINS

Kate races Jess to the base of the tower. Jess outruns her. Tilted at a forty-five degree angle, the rune-carved tower disappears into the clouds. Hundreds of feet. Perhaps a thousand.

KATE

Base must extend deep into the substructure.

Kate peers up at the top of the tower. No doorway. A piece of masonry dislodges.

JESS

Get back!

Jess pulls Kate out of the way at the last second. It CRASHES to ground. WIND rustles the trees.

KATE

Thanks.

KATE'S POV: A GLOWING WORM TRAIL UP THE TOWER. DIGGING INTO GAPS IN THE STONE.

EXT. LANDING SITE - CONTINUOUS

Fast, feckless, fearless, FREDDIE "FENCE" JACKSON (early 50s) jogs down the ramp, joins H.R. as he directs excavation traffic.

TECHS with electronics, GUARDS, MANUAL LABORERS driving loaders and lifts, and SKILLED EXCAVATORS pour out of the bays, unload equipment, set up camp, establish safe perimeters. Excavation future-style.

H.R. and Fence work their way through the chaos.

H.R.

Hey-second team, over there! Not there!

H.R. points to a DRIVER behind a heavy loader filled with boxes. The driver dumps the boxes.

H.R. (CONT'D)

Shit! No, no, NO! Get that cleaned up!

(to Fence)

Next time, hire experienced workers and don't pocket the credits.

FENCE

On our budget? There are no credits to pocket.

H.R. bolts, stopping another WORKER as he raises a Quanta hut, a temporary army-style barracks. Fence lopez after.

H.R.

Are you blind? Stay on the grid.

(to Fence)

What's up with comms?

FENCE

That big tower's a dead zone. That's not all--

H.R. beelines towards a fully erect Quanta hut as Fence thrusts a report in his face.

H.R.

What am I looking at?

FENCE

Report from digital imaging. There's something under that tower. Something big.

H.R. stops, stares at the report.

H.R.

This IS interesting. Delay launch until we check the tower out with drones. Tell the girls.

FENCE

Parker will kiss your ass for a change if we've found something.

H.R.

I'll enjoy that.

H.R. and Fence LAUGH at the thought.

INT. TOWER

A dull explosion followed by a pinprick of light.

Stonework CRUMBLES, illuminating the dark, dank interior of the tower. Old water stains, rust, wind HOWLS.

Jess's face appears as she yanks stones away from the newly formed hole, enlarging the gap until it's big enough to squeeze through.

She disappears, then Kate squeezes her upper-torso into the hole. Tosses a flare to test the depth. It falls, disappears into the black abyss.

KATE'S POV: ENHANCED NIGHT VISION. LOOKS DOWN, FREE-FALL FOREVER. A DIGITAL READOUT TICKS OFF IN THE CORNER OF HER FIELD OF VISION. CALCULATES THE DEPTH.

KATE

A thousand meters. Maybe more.

Kate examines the rest of the interior. Up, filtered sunshine, moss-covered stone, macabre runes cover the interior walls.

Jess changes places with her.

Attaches an "anchor" to the interior wall. It adheres. THUNKKK. Secure. In full climbing gear, Jess wiggles in through the hole, rope secured by the futuristic anchor.

Hangs on the wall, a thousand feet above nothing. Kate follows. Jess anchors Kate to the slippery wall. Kate grips the rope, feels around for purchase.

JESS

Trust me, you're secure.

A staircase creeps up the far side. Collapsed above and below them. Between their position and the stairs on the other side, nothing but freefall.

The tower cants at a wild angle. They could almost fall onto the stairs below.

Jess calculates the odds.

KATE

Let's call H.R., get anti-grav boots--

JESS

No time.

KATE

You're not serious?

Jess unhooks her harness, leaps without a safety-line across the bottomless chasm, free-falls onto the canted stairs below. Kate clings to the wall, watches her daredevil sibling fly through the air.

Jess lands square on the landing. Grins. Loved it.

KATE (CONT'D)

Are you out of your mind?

JESS

I'm strong, not crazy.

KATE

Be serious. I can't jump that far.

Kate stares down. Vertigo overwhelms her.

JESS

Just toss me your line and jump.

Jess motions her twin across. Challenges her. Kate, eyes up, grabs the line, tosses it over. Makes two aborted tries.

Then...pushes off, unhooks, lands on the edge. Windmills, falls back. A moment of terror before Jess pulls her up.

KATE

Damn it. This isn't a contest.

JESS

Isn't it?

Pissed, Kate pushes Jess away, taps her comm device.

KATE

H.R.? If you can hear me, we've breached the tower.

H.R. (O.S.)

Been trying...comm keep... going....back to..new in...

Jess shakes her head.

JESS

(mouths)

Say you can't hear him. Do it!

Jess uses her torch to illuminate the carved walls. Stunning hieroglyphics. Pushes Kate's intellectual buttons.

Torn. Very torn. Can't resist the lure.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Can't hear you, dad. We'll leave markers. Kate, out.

Kate slaps something on the wall. It beeps, flashes red.

KATE (CONT'D)

Which way?

JESS

Down. Good stuff's always down.

Jess confidently descends the staircase, in her element. Kate stares at the wall, follows.

INT. SHIP BAY

The sun hangs low in the sky. Wind MOANS like a dying beast. Fence stands at the top of the ramp, stares at the tower.

INT. OBELISK CAVERN - TOWER

Perfect black. Kate and Jess reach the end of the staircase, slivers of light from their helmets illuminating the way.

They emerge at the edge of a vaulted cavern. Row after row of obelisk shaped objects, crafted of strange alloy, ten-feet tall, warehoused for miles.

KATE'S POV: ELECTRIC CHARGES ARC BETWEEN THE OBELISKS.

Kate examines her scanner. Static on the screen. She shakes it. Tosses it to Jess. She has no better luck.

KATE  
(into comm-unit)  
Base camp, do you read? We found something.  
Anybody there?

Jess wanders off into the field, careful not to touch the strange obelisks. Kicks at the ground. Lots of dead worms. Jess bends down, scoops up worms. Looks at Kate.

JESS  
Giant bug zapper?

INT. QUANTA HUT

Fence enters. H.R. stands over Tech Guy BOB at the computer center. Rows and rows of high-tech monitors. Each for a different area, a different purpose.

Kate and Jess's path (via the beeping red lights) displays on one of the monitors. Interference plagues the electronics.

BOB  
Parker's on approach. Setting them down two  
clicks away from camp.

H.R. motions towards the disobedient electronics.

H.R.  
It's getting worse.

FENCE  
Still no word?

H.R.  
Nothing. I'm going to go get them.

FENCE  
Relax, papa bear.

THUNDER above, followed by a CRACKLING on one of the monitors. Then, everything electronic wigs out.

BOB  
Oh, shit!

Bob dives under the desk, starts ripping out wires just as a signal comes through.

MINISTRY PILOT (O.S.)

Base camp, this...Concordia...  
land...

BOB

What! No, no, no!

Everything starts to shake. The THUNDER gets louder. And LOUDER. H.R. and Fence exchange looks. H.R. races out while Fence dives under the desk, starts rewiring the comms.

EXT. QUANTA HUT

H.R. bolts out, stares overhead as a massive spaceship drops like a stone, afterburners ROARING.

H.R.

(into comm-unit)

They're right on top of us!

H.R. dives back inside.

INT. QUANTA HUT

H.R. grabs the communicator, frantically attempts to signal the ship. Fence works with Bob.

H.R.

(into comm-unit)

Concordia, you're landing right on the camp, do you read? Change your course!

FENCE

Bob, what the hell do we pay you for? Eye candy?  
Try it now.

H.R.

(into comm-unit)

Concordia, do you read?

Static...NO RESPONSE.

INT. OBELISK CAVERN - TOWER

The ROAR builds inside the tower, echoing down the shaft.

EXT. TOWER

The Concordia is a cumbersome beast. Veers away from camp at the last moment. CRASHES into the ancient tower, then plows through the trees.

EXPLODES.

Sets the jungle ablaze. The tower yields to gravity, ruptures, CRASHES to ground with a miserable GROAN.

INT. OBELISK CAVERN - TOWER

The ground quivers from blunt force trauma.

The obelisks fall like dominos. The arc dissipates as the tower ruptures.

Kate grabs Jess as Jess hooks a line between them. The floor and ceiling BUCKLE. Everything collapses.

OVER BLACK:

KATE (O.S.)

Jess? Jess? Wake up.

INT. CAVERN - TOWER

The air choked with debris. Settling stone. COUGHING.

KATE'S POV: INFRA-RED. THEY'RE HANGING FROM A LINE SWINGING BACK AND FORTH OVER A DARK, ENDLESS ABYSS, ANCHORED TO A SLENDER, FORTY-FOOT SHARD OF ROCK.

The tower's collapsed above them.

KATE

Jess?

Kate wipes blood from her sister's face, checks her pulse. Jess's eye's bolt open, she GASPS. Looks around. Looks at Kate, aware, awake. Kate SIGHS in relief.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh, Jess. You scared me.

JESS

Kate, can you see the bottom? Just look down.

Kate reluctantly looks down, nods. Kate's light shines as they descend.

EXT. CONCORDIA - NIGHT

The Concordia's on her side, wind fanning flames.

Ministry MAGISTRATE TOMISON PARKER (50s), harmless looking, stumbles out of the Concordia's damaged side.

Limps, pulls up in pain. Looks back into the ship.

PARKER

(calls up)

Hain!

Helping with the evacuation, Ministry COMMANDER IAN HAIN (30s). Handsome. Looks wicked cool in his blood-smeared, black Ministry uniform. Ambitious, conflicted as hell.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Find me the Captain! I'm gonna court martial that idiot!

HAIN

Died in the crash, sir.

PARKER

Good! Don't just stand there, help me into camp.

Hain's disgust is only mildly veiled. He pulls Parker away from the dying.

EXT. TOWER

H.R.'s directing rescue efforts at the base of the collapsed tower. Digging fast. H.R.'s terrified, an agonized father.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN TUNNEL/CAVERN - TOWER

Kate and Jess reach the end of their line, just short of the bottom of the cavern. Stone, debris beneath them. Another rock falls, CRASHES in the dark. Air choked with dust.

They unhook, drop ten feet, fall cushioned by ancient sediment.

JESS

Which way?

Dark tunnels branch off from the cavern, revealed by the collapse.

A RUMBLE builds. No time to be picky.

KATE

That one, go!

They dive into the largest tunnel as the ceiling collapses.

INT. TUNNEL

COUGHING. Kate examines the cave-in.

Trapped in the claustrophobic dark space, she assesses their situation.

KATE

Not getting out that way.

(into comm-unit)

Dad? Basecamp, come in. Can anyone hear us?

Damn it.

The twins look at each other. Jess offers...

JESS

H.R. will come. He always does.

A gigantic bore hole slants down. Deep. Dark.

Suddenly, more SHAKING. They press against the tunnel wall. Kate shines a light overhead, reveals a large crack running along the tunnel ceiling.

JESS (CONT'D)

This is getting oppressive.

KATE

Some structural damage all along here.

JESS

Really? Is that your expert opinion, Doctor?

KATE

I really hate it when you do that.

JESS

Stop analyzing everything.

Kate turns, looks at Jess. Blue eyes filled with tears.

KATE

We're probably going to die. That what you want to hear?

Jess grabs her, hugs her. Kate grabs her back. Everything forgiven.

JESS

Let's find a way out.

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS - LATER

Tunnel slants downwards, going deeper. Water trickles down the middle. Kate and Jess rest against the wall.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

Anyone? Can anyone hear us?

Nothing. Jess SIGHS, leans her head on Kate's shoulder. Jumps up, shakes something off her arm.

KATE'S POV: A LINE OF GREEN WORMS MOVES ALONG THE WALL, PATH GLOWING. MOVING DOWN A SIDE TUNNEL, OFF THE MAIN BRANCH.

KATE

This way.

Kate stands, moves on following the trail of worms. She stops, examines runes carved into the walls, some chiseled out, others disfigured. Someone's taken great pains to REMOVE these symbols.

They missed some. Kate's excited, darts from one side of the tunnel to the next.

KATE (CONT'D)

Not the same as the tower. Entirely different species.

Kate suddenly darts farther up the tunnel. Runs her hands over the carvings.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh, god. It's not possible.  
(into comm-unit)  
Base camp, do you READ? Dad? Fence?  
Anyone?

Kate barrels down the tunnel. Runs back.

KATE (CONT'D)

Come on!

Kate disappears into the darkness. Jess races after Kate, dashing down the pitch black tunnel, her helmet light a pitiful source of illumination.

JESS

Kate?!?

Kate stares, frozen in the center of the tunnel. Huge grin on her face.

KATE

We found them.

Jess slides up beside her. Kate grabs Jess, hugs her.

Crossing the width of the tunnel, a sliding door. To the side, a panel with a lock. Stuck in the middle of the lock,

A SILVER TALON.

Curved. Metallic. Six-inches long.

KATE (CONT'D)

We found the Kresh.

EXT. TOWER - SUNRISE

The frigid wind is making the rescue miserable and difficult. They've been at it all night.

H.R. supervises heavy dirt loaders and cranes. A gigantic hole sits where the tower once stood. H.R.'s team moves rubble fast.

INT. TOWER HALLWAY

Kate and Jess slowly approach the gleaming spike.

JESS

You're sure?

Kate gives Jess a look, goes in for a very close look. All business.

KATE'S POV: GLEAMING SILVER. ALONG THE EDGE, RIMMED IN RED.

Kate pulls equipment out of her bag, prods the "talon" with her pick-axe.

KATE

Some kind of secretion along the edge.

JESS

How much do you think it's worth?

KATE

Priceless. A King's Ransom.

Kate tears her eyes away from the talon, considers her sister.

JESS

Good. We put the ships up as collateral.

KATE

You put the ships up as collateral!

Disgusted, Kate glares at her twin, pulls out a hand-held blade, attempts to slice off a sliver from the talon. The blade slides off with a GRATING WHINE.

Examines the wall.

KATE (CONT'D)

This tunnel is much older than the ruins above.

(considers)

They hid it.

Kate turns to the talon in the lock. Considers the door, bisected diagonally. The ornate suggestion of a keyhole, the talon in position in the lock.

KATE (CONT'D)

Locks open doors.

Kate grasps the talon to pull it out with her gloved hand. Slices clean through the glove, drops it with a CLANK. She rips the glove off, examines the wound. Blood wells in her palm.

Kate's VISION: Flashes of silver. Curved talons. Silver-eyes, gleaming in the sun. So bright, it hurts. Really hurts. Bends her in half from the pain.

Nausea hits. Her tears are blood.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh, my god!

Vomits from the shock. At the same time, the wall blocking the tunnel moves, diagonally slanted opening parting with a disturbing mechanical WHOOSH.

INT. QUANTA HUT

Tech Guy Bob works with Parker's MINISTRY MEN, Hain in the hut with Parker nearby at a row of computer banks. H.R.'s face appears on one of the monitors. Bob pulls him up onscreen.

BOB

We just found their signal.

H.R.

(onscreen)

Thank God. Oh, my girls--

Onscreen, H.R. tears up, wipes at his eyes. Hain watches with some sympathy as H.R. regains composure.

H.R. (CONT'D)

(onscreen)

Tracking systems back up, comms?

HAIN

Everything. Sending data now.

BOB

H.R., the twins are right under you. One more thing, area's honeycombed from water runoff.

PARKER

Carter. We have to talk--

The screen goes dark.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Well, that was rude.

Parker stands with Hain examining two charts, side by side. Parker turns his attention back to Hain. He's scanning files on Kate and Jess.

Information whips by. Genetic modification. Ocular enhancement. Advanced strength and agility. Psychological reports. Evidence of inexplicable psychic twin behavior.

FILE: CLASSIFIED.

Hain reads very fast.

He freeze-frames on Kate's EYES. That stunning blue.

HAIN

These modifications are amazing.

PARKER

Most people think it unethical to engineer one's children.

HAIN

You obviously don't care.

PARKER

I care about results. Ethics are a different department.

INT. TUNNEL

Kate wipes her mouth, stumbles back to her feet. Jess is frightened to her core.

JESS

Kate, you alright? Talk to me.

KATE

Yeah. Wait, don't touch--it.

Jess retrieves the talon, examines it. A long beat. Pokes her thumb on the end, draws blood, sucks on it.

Kate wraps her hand, curious as she watches Jess.

KATE (CONT'D)

Why isn't it affecting you?

JESS

You tell me?

Jess stares at the gleaming spike. Kate grabs it away with a well wrapped hand, shoves the talon into her bag. A flash of anger flares across Jess's face. She turns away, stares down the tunnel. Senses something.

JESS (CONT'D)

Hear that?

STATIC diverts Kate:

H.R. (O.S.)

Kate...Jess...can you hear me?

Kate immediately replies.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Dad? Dad? We're here! Get us out of here!

H.R. (O.C.)

Hold tight. We're almost there.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Dad...we--

Kate turns, Jess is GONE.

INT. QUANTA HUT

Parker stands beside Hain.

BOB

We're getting some interesting readings.

Bob narrows the scope. Two heat signatures. Kate and Jess. One MASSIVE power reading ahead of them.

PARKER

Analyze that signal.

BOB

Entire area's unstable. Erosion under the bedrock.

PARKER

Hain, look at this...Hain?

Parker turns. Hain's gone.

INT. TUNNEL

Kate runs through the ancient rabbit-hole, searches for her reckless twin.

KATE

Jess?

JESS (O.S.)

Here.

Where? Tunnels branch off in several directions.

INT. ANTECHAMBER - TUNNEL

The tunnel levels out. Kate runs right into Jess as she barrels around a corner.

An antechamber opens up before them. A sealed doorway sits under a classic-catenary arch on the other side of the antechamber. A strange symbol on the door.

KATE

Kresh.

Strange runes cover every exposed surface, the ceiling, the floor. SCORCHED bones litter the floor, SCORCHED MARKS all over the walls.

KATE (CONT'D)

There was some kind of battle here...

The crack runs along the ceiling all the way to the doorway. The green worms are all over the doorway.

Somewhere up the tunnel, CRASHING STONE. SHOUTS, the SOUND of rescue echo in the distance. Kate turns.

H.R. (O.S.)

Kate? Jess?

KATE

We're down here!

H.R. runs down the tunnel, Fence behind him. RESCUE WORKERS behind. The two women throw themselves into H.R.'s arms. Hain ambles into the antechamber, glances around. Notices Kate, watches her work.

KATE (CONT'D)

(muffled by the hug)

We found them.

H.R.

What?

Kate digs in her bag, pulls out the talon, well wrapped. Gestures as she talks, all animated joy.

KATE

Don't touch it. Some vicious toxin on the edge,  
packs a wallop.

H.R.

Slow down, kid. Are you saying this is Kresh?  
You're confirming it?

KATE

Yes! Confirmed. We found them!

H.R.'s reeling. Rescuing his kids. The Kresh. His dream.

Hain kicks at the charred bones, almost deliberately making mischief. Kate notices Hain, stares a second longer than appropriate.

Jess notices her sister's second-too-long stare.

JESS

Ask him to help you carry something back to the  
lab.

Kate looks horrified.

KATE

Hey! You! Stop that. Get over in the corner and stay there.

HAIN

I'm sorry--

KATE

Quit destroying those artifacts.

Jess looks at her twin, amused. Hain's kicking at dirt and a few bones hardly qualifies as artifact destruction.

JESS

(to Hain)

I'll pay you to keep pushing her buttons.

Hain looks innocent of all crimes as an irritated Kate whips out a drone from her bag. Programs it, sets it down. It skitters across the floor, runs up the door, attaches itself.

Kate examines a scanner.

KATE

Massive power readings behind that door.

H.R., Kate, Jess and Fence look at each other. Nervous LAUGHTER.

KATE (CONT'D)

Curiosity killed the cat.

JESS

To hell with the cat.

H.R.

I'm with Jess.

FENCE

I'm with H.R.

KATE

Me, too.

All three Carters and Fence walk across the chamber together. NOTHING. Stand before the enormous doorway.

JESS

What's it say?

KATE

Go away or we'll eat you and your offspring.

Jess LAUGHS. Looks at Kate, not sure if she's kidding.

KATE (CONT'D)

If you'd learned Kresh, you'd be able to read it.

They examine sealed the door. Runes. A matching "lock" twin to the one where the talon was found.

JESS

Give it to me.

Kate digs in her bag. Pulls the talon out with well covered hand. Jess slides the talon into the slot.

CLICK. The door unlocks, the seal breaks. Debris blocks the opening. Hain examines the talon, reaches to touch. Kate grabs it away, possibly to protect him. Her knees buckle.

Hain catches her just before she hits the ground.

KATE

I don't need help from the Ministry.

HAIN

Fine.

He drops her into the sand. She glares at him, furious. Jess slips her fingers into the broken door seal, pushes with all her strength. Opens the chamber.

Jess heaves the heavy door open with a GRUNT. Kate retrieves the talon with a covered hand, shoves it into her bag, slips inside, followed by Jess.

INT. THE STAR CHAMBER

At the first step, the room ILLUMINATES.

Cavernous. Circular. A star-chart of the Milky Way in perfect three-dimensional space appears around them. Enveloping them.

Cracked ceiling far above. Translucent floor. Strange lights beneath. As they move, the star-chart revolves.

KATE'S POV: CARTER-19, TIME-CODE IN THE CORNER. RECORDING THEIR ENTRY INTO THE STAR CHAMBER.

JESS

We're going to be so rich.

(off Kate's glare)

What? Profit's important.

KATE

Let's not cheapen the greatest find of all time.

FENCE

Guess we're not leaving.

H.R.

Over my dead body.

Kate's targeted the ultimate prize. At the center of the chamber. Suspended in a colossal block of blue crystal, a massive version of the talon from the lock.

Seven-feet long. Silver. The sharp end stuck in the crystal. The other end, mummified, withered bone, sinew and skin. Ripped from some living beast.

Kate ignores everything, mesmerized. This is her wheelhouse. She climbs up on the block to examine the giant talon. Hain watches her work, notes everything in the room.

KATE'S POV: THE TALON GLOWS RED ALONG THE EDGE.

Jess joins Kate on the block.

KATE

Must weigh two hundred pounds. Same secretion along the edge as the smaller talon. Probably kill me if I touched it.

Jess seems enraptured. Reaches out to touch it.

KATE (CONT'D)

Don't. Touch.

JESS

It won't hurt me.

KATE

We don't know that.

H.R.'s busy along the edge of the chamber, chatting with Fence, sharing a flask. Enjoying the moment.

H.R.

Jess, listen to your sister. Let Kate do her job.

Kate's hand brushes the blue crystal block as she kneels to open her kit. The crystal block GLOWS.

THRUM-THRUM. Kate looks wary.

KATE

Did I do that?

Kate looks up at Jess just as she reaches out, runs her hand along the edge of the giant talon.

KATE (CONT'D)

I told you to leave it alone.

JESS

I told you it wouldn't hurt me.

Pissed, Kate slaps Jess across the face. Hard to say which sibling is more shocked by the slap.

KATE

I'm sorry. I don't know what--

JESS

You can't stop me.

Jess reacts to the slap, grabs the giant talon with both hands, her incredible super-human strength heaving. Kate grabs at it to stop her, hands tangled with Jess, accidentally cuts herself, blood flowing over the talon.

It releases in one fluid motion, both of them holding it.

Both sisters are SLAMMED BY A VISION: A flash of silver eyes, curved claws, steel, SCREAMS OF PAIN. They go down on their knees. Kate SCREAMS and SCREAMS.

JESS (CONT'D)

I see them--

Hain runs to Kate, faster than H.R. Grabs her in his arms as she slumps, looks up at him.

KATE

So much pain--

H.R.

Kate!

Kate sees her dad. Shakes off the vision as Jess cradles the large talon, still incoherent, unfocused.

KATE

Jess!

The BLOCK GLOWS, the Star Chamber switches ON.

RUMBLING as the stress from the activated chamber RIPS at the weakened sub-structure. TITAN forces build, rupture, overhead, the ceiling crack widens.

H.R.

Everyone out!

The chamber BUCKLES from underneath.

The Star Chamber oscillates. Revolves upon its axis, faster and faster and faster. A path glows overhead, one star to the next.

KATE'S POV: COORDINATES FLASH AS OVERHEAD. RUNES GLOWING, A PATTERN INSCRIBED ON THE BLOCK. THE STAR CHAMBER OPENS A PORTAL TO A CITY WITH OBSIDIAN WALLS. A DOMED CITY.

Kate stares transfixed.

H.R. grabs Kate as Fence pulls Jess to her feet. Jess runs with the talon towards the door as the floor gives way.

Explosions blast them all off their feet.

The

RUMBLE

builds and builds.

Total structural failure.

The flooring disappears as the chamber COLLAPSES.

H.R. balances on the edge, the ground splits behind him, then HEAVES. Hain's tossed out of the way as the entire chamber disappears with a WHOOSH.

Already at the door, Jess turns as H.R. makes eye-contact with Kate, reaches out to her. Eyes full of regret. Knows he's going to die.

Kate leaps, grabs H.R.'s hand in a weak grip. Jess drops the talon. Has just enough time to grab either H.R. or Kate as the edge gives way.

She chooses Kate, pulls her out of H.R.'s grasp as he drops over the edge.

KATE'S POV: H.R.'S EYES STARING AT KATE. HER FATHER SAY'S SOMETHING, BUT SHE CAN'T HEAR HIM FOR THE ROAR.

KATE

NO! Let me GO!

H.R. disappears, several MEN fall with him, SCREAMING into the endless abyss.

KATE (CONT'D)

You fucking bitch--

Kate struggles, kicks. Jess locks Kate in her arms as she holds onto the edge. Then, the twins slide over. Towards the open pit. No purchase. They're going into the gaping hole.

Jess windmills as Kate's weight, momentum, take them. At the last moment, Jess holds on, long enough for Fence to pull her up. Hain and Fence heave the twins back to solid ground.

Fence collapses. He's wiping at his eyes, weaves as the ground rocks. Kate struggles, as Hain pulls her out.

KATE (CONT'D)

Get off me.

Kate kicks Hain off, turns away. Stares at the edge, leaps up, runs. Jess grabs the talon, follows with Fence. Hain brings up the rear.

INT. TUNNEL

Kate, Jess, Fence, Hain and the survivors race the cracked ceiling as the site implodes. A DEEP RUMBLE, builds beneath their feet. The tunnel vanishes just behind them, falling.

Kate trips, her light shatters. Covered in dust, debris. The others round a turn, disappear.

She rises, totters as the ground shakes. Kate runs alone, doesn't need light. Running in the dark. RUMBLING at their heels.

EXT. TOWER

Hellish. Tumbled blocks piled to the side.

Kate climbs from the open pit at the base of the collapsed tower. Reaches for the edge to pull herself out, can't make it. Hain stands above her, reaches down to help her up.

Jess waits, carrying the Kresh artifact. Kate slaps her away when she tries to take her other arm. Limp back to base on her own. Alone.

EXT. LANDING SITE - H.R.'S SHIP

THUNDER. The two crew ships blast off. Straight up into the sky.

Hain waits at the bottom of the ramp. A couple heavy loaders careen up the ramp past him. OFFICERS check loading docket, prepare for lift-off.

The ship's engines RUMBLE, pre-launch.

Hain stares at the tower. To the right, where the Quanta huts once stood, newly dug GRAVES. At least THIRTY. Small silver markers over each.

SHIP'S PILOT (O.S.)

Commander?

HAIN

(into comm-unit)

Go ahead.

SHIP'S PILOT (O.S.)

Minister Parker's insisting we launch.

HAIN

(into comm-unit)

Give me ten.

SHIP'S PILOT (O.S.)

Understood. We are go for launch, T-minus ten.

Hain checks his watch, sets a timer for TEN MINUTES. Stares at the toppled tower in the distance. Takes off.

EXT. TOWER RUINS

Kate stands staring into the gaping pit. A silver marker marks the site. H.R.'s grave. Her eyes wet. Devastated.

Hain slides up behind her. Out of breath. She turns. Looks relieved it's not Jess.

HAIN

We're leaving.

For the first time, she turns, considers him. She nods, follows.

EXT. LANDING SITE

The bay door slams shut, the engines FIRE.

EXT. SPACE

The ship rips free of the surface, disappears into warp.

INT. KATE'S CABIN - H.R.'S SHIP

Pitch black. Nightmares. A flash of silver-eyes. Claws. SCREAMS. Kate flips on the light. Breathing hard. Sick again. Checks her hand. Blood seeps through the bandage.

Dresses quickly. Looks beautiful. Devastated. Eyes rimmed-red. Grief stricken.

BUZZ. Kate presses a panel, opens the door. Light spills in from the hall. Hain hovers, cautious.

HAIN

Everyone's waiting.

Hain waits, then blurts.

HAIN (CONT'D)

I lost my father. And mother.

Hain looks deep into her eyes. Invades her personal space. She holds her ground, then notices his eyes. Something strange. He looks away.

KATE

Why are you telling me this?

HAIN

The point is, I'm sorry.

KATE

You didn't answer my question.

She pushes past, exits. He SIGHS, follows.

INT. LAB - H.R.'S SHIP

Jess, Fence, Parker and Tech-Guy Bob gather in the lab, stone tablets from the site all morbid reminders of Kate's recent loss. The large talon recovered from the Star Chamber rests on the table, secured in a high-tech protective case.

Kate storms in, Hain dogging her heels. She freezes, stares overhead.

Momentary loss of motion.

Color drains from her lovely face.

The star-chart projects overhead, re-enacted from Kate's own optical recordings. Her time-code counts up/down in the corner.

CARTER: SITE-19.

The recording plays back H.R.'s last moments, rewinds, freezes on the Star Chart.

Jess turns away, can't watch either. Kate reaches over Bob, freezes the playback loop before H.R.'s image plays again.

PARKER

I understand about the grieving process but answer  
your comm-

KATE

You don't understand how I feel.

He doesn't care about grief. She knows it. He knows it.

PARKER

You found something wonderful in that chamber.  
Something to turn around everyone's fortunes.

KATE

Ten of my men died, including my father. How  
many did you lose crashing into that tower?

Cuts her off, could care less.

PARKER

We need to talk about our next step.

KATE

What next step?

PARKER

There are at least six other groups looking for the  
Kresh homeworld.

Kate stares flabbergasted. Jess won't make eye contact when Kate looks at her. Fence  
shrugs.

JESS

Just listen.

PARKER

We can't afford to wait. Bob.

BOB

Very exciting, Kate. Watch.

Hain watches her. Finds her fascinating. She catches him. Eyes dart elsewhere.

Overhead, the star chart revolves. Stars align. One star BLINKS red.

KATE

You want to go straight to the Kresh homeworld?

PARKER

Well, yes. Don't you?

She points at the giant talon in the case.

KATE

We have no idea what that thing is, what that  
chamber really does.

PARKER

Exactly!

JESS

Kate, listen-

KATE

Shut up, Jess-

PARKER

Your father understood that things at home are difficult. We're faced with budget cuts, loss of enthusiasm--

KATE

I don't care about your budget problems--

PARKER

That's always been obvious, Doctor. And a problem. We indulge you because of your talents, but frankly, the Ministry has been tasked with providing big finds and artifacts to rally popular support. We need the Kresh. Find them and I'm off your back--

KATE

You really don't get it.

Kate bolts out.

PARKER

Get her back.

Hain starts after.

PARKER (CONT'D)

No, the sister. Jess, you try.

Jess reluctantly leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Kate bursts from the control room. Furious. Jess catches up to her.

JESS

Are you out of your mind!

That stops Kate dead in her tracks. Fury turns to grief.

KATE

Dad spent his whole life looking for the Kresh.  
Know what we found? A disaster.

JESS

H.R.'s gone.

KATE

I was there, remember.

JESS

Just say it.

KATE

All you had to do was reach out and you could have  
saved him.

Jess's eyes well.

JESS

I saved my sister, instead.

KATE

That's it?

JESS

That's it.

KATE

Stay away from me. Don't even think of showing  
up on one of my digs.

JESS

You're firing me? You can't do that--

KATE

I just did.

Kate turns away, disappears down the hall. Fence rounds the corner.

FENCE

Give it time.

JESS

As usual, she's going to be a pain in the ass.

FENCE

No, no, it won't. She won't even notice until we get there.

EXT. SPACE - H.R.'S SHIP

The ship speeds through space at FTL speeds. Faster Than Light travel. Light from stars compress, unable to catch the speeding spacecraft.

INT. KATE'S CABIN - H.R.'S SHIP

Another nightmare. A flash of silver-eyes. Gleaming talons. A towering black city. Black tombs. Opening. SCREAMS from within.

Kate bolts awake. Can't breathe. Panic attack. Jumps up, dresses with customary disregard for her appearance. Stops, re-buttons her shirt. Looks in the mirror. Washes her face. Pulls up her hair.

Kate wipes red-eyes dry, rubs her hand. Still bandaged. Darts out.

INT. LAB - H.R.'S SHIP

Fence reviews data at a bank of computer consuls. Bob sits nearby. The large talon sits in the middle of the lab, worms under lights, on slides, microscopes. Kate's been busy.

Kate enters, settles next to Fence, powers up a series of high-tech grids, computer panels, holographic charts.

KATE

I finished analyzing the data from Carter-19.

Kate animates a rotating, three-dimensional, holographic STAR CHART above and around them. The image from the Star Chamber.

KATE (CONT'D)

This is the red zone.

Kate programs in data. RED bleeds over half the galaxy, representing the path of the Kresh. Waxes and wanes. Repeats the cycle. Over and over again.

FENCE

Kate, stop. Get on with life. Take a lover. Make up with your sister. Stop thinking so much.

The lab suddenly shakes. Inertia dampers compensate.

KATE

We're dropping out of warp--

Kate quickly calculates their position. On screen: A four planet system, red giant star pops up. Not Earth.

KATE (CONT'D)

Those bastards changed course.

FENCE

Kate, wait, let me explain--

Kate shoots out of the lab. Fence shares a look with Bob.

INT. BRIDGE - H.R.'S SHIP

Floor to ceiling viewscreen. Kate scrambles in, stares at the view.

A dead world welcomes her through the viewscreen. A bright GLEAM on the surface.

The KRESH HOMEWORLD.

Standing to the side, Hain. Bastard knew. Kate cuts him off before he can offer any explanation.

KATE

I got it. You give a shit when you're ordered to give a shit. Stay away from me.

FLIGHT CREW mans controls near the front. Seats behind. The Pilot and CO-PILOT chatter at the front of the bridge.

Kate cuts Jess a dirty look as she enters with Parker.

PILOT

Probes away. No sign of life. Atmosphere .98  
Earth norm. Grav normal. No idea why. She's hot  
and dry.

CO-PILOT

Like your wife.

The pilots LAUGH.

CO-PILOT (CONT'D)

Digital imaging data being uploaded now. There's a  
lot of interference.

PILOT

Gonna get bumpy.

Hain moves up behind Kate.

HAIN

Strap in.  
(beat)  
Now.

Through the screen, flickers of FIRE chew at the ship as it PLUMMETS from high orbit.  
The curve of the horizon replaces stars.

Afterburners kick in with a spine shattering JOLT and a SCREAM of protest.

WHINE sharp enough to bust an eardrum.

Kate closes her eyes, not enjoying the ride. Grips the armrest. Hain glances at her,  
places his hand over hers. She whips it away, pissed as hell.

He regrets it, nothing to do about it.

EXT. THE GATE - KRESH HOMEWORLD - DAY

The blistering sun broils this world dry. An endless sea of black sand. Something's  
making oxygen. No explanation.

Sixteen TOWERS exactly like the tower from Carter-19 circle the towering black city.

Mile high obsidian walls capped by CUT-CRYSTAL DOME. A perfectly contained biosphere. Defacing the obsidian perfection of the walls, sixteen circular GATES, twenty-foot tall, concentric rings set within rings.

No sign of life anywhere.

The ships SETTLE, ramps SLAM.

Kate settles at the top of the ramp, stares at the city, wary. Electronic scanner in her hand, shakes it. Considers the towers. The city.

Hain stops next to her. Armed with bad-ass, futuristic weapons, flak-gear, on-edge, ready to shoot at anything that moves.

HAIN

Two hundred mile radius. No idea what's inside.  
Nothing works.

Kate shakes her head. Not going to help. Hain shrugs, leads his MEN down the ramp.

KATE

Hain.

He turns, hopeful.

KATE (CONT'D)

Let the dead sleep.

He glances at the bars on his sleeve, offers them as explanation. No choice. Continues forward.

KATE (CONT'D)

Be careful.

A hint of a smile between them. He nods, continues towards the gate. Jess, Parker, his crew, pile out. Jess stops beside her.

KATE (CONT'D)

Save it.

Kate turns away, heads inside as Jess, angry, strides off with the others. Kate pauses at the top. Glances back, watches Jess for a long time.

INT. BRIDGE - H.R.'S SHIP

Kate sits in one of the officer's chairs, watches everything through the floor-to-ceiling viewscreen. Parker and his men attempt to breach the city.

Fence joins her, stands just behind her chair. She flexes her hand. Bandaged again. Never healed.

FENCE

Can't open the bloody thing. The gate. All this way for nothing.

She smiles.

FENCE (CONT'D)

You don't seem surprised.

KATE

We weren't the first space faring species to find this place.

FENCE

What are you saying?

KATE

The Kresh didn't stop, they were stopped. By another species. Something that liked to build towers.

FENCE

Those bloody towers?

KATE

The gates won't open while they stand. Nothing worked until the tower came down on Carter-19.

FENCE

I don't--

KATE

Sixteen towers. One for each gate. It isn't just for symmetry.

Fence nods, leaves.

KATE (CONT'D)

Fence?

EXT. GATE AREA - THE CITY

Kate blasts down the ramp, racing towards the tower. Fence tries to block her, but she slams him out of the way.

FENCE

Kate, don't-

MILITARY MEN run from the tower, explosive charges set. Kate keeps moving, furious.

KATE

You can't do this! Parker! Don't do it! You can't destroy that tower!

Parker looks up, motions towards Kate.

PARKER

Get her back!

BOOOOOOMMMM! Explosives rupture at the base of the tower. The blast blows her back, off her feet. She hits the sand, flying twenty feet back.

Tries to stand, wobbles, as the tower SHUDDERS, then crumbles with an ominous THUD. The concussion knocks everyone down.

EXT. SPACE

A blue light pulses from the Kresh homeworld. From the other FIFTEEN towers.

Straight into the Kresh star.

EXT. GATE AREA - THE CITY

Kate suffers tumbled consciousness. Drifts in and out. Jess SHOUTS HER NAME. Fence CALLS for help. Hain fights with Parker. Everything blends together.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MED LAB - H.R.'S SHIP

Kate relives the tower collapse. SOMEONE stands over her. She sleeps, suffers horrible NIGHTMARES, the VISIONS from before: SILVER EYES, SCREAMS, FLASHING CLAWS.

JESS (O.S.)

Kate? Can you hear me?

Kate hears her name...Hain's voice.

HAIN (O.S.)

Kate? Can you hear me?

INT. MED LAB - H.R.'S SHIP

Wakes. Alone in a tiny room, hooked up to monitors.

KATE

Who's there? Hello?

Kate rises. Rips off a medical cuff, needles piercing her wrist. She looks at the medical monitor above her head, sways. Dizzy. Grabs her clothes, dresses.

RUMBLES from the ship's engines. Pre-launch. Kate stumbles out.

EXT. GATE AREA - THE CITY

Kate races down the ramp, out onto the black sand, falls. The tower crumpled, camp cleared. Trash left behind. Mankind's mark.

MINISTRY MEN race after her. HAIN emerges, helps her up. The deck OFFICER contacts the bridge.

OFFICER

(into comm-unit)

Hold the count.

Steam HISSES from the engines.

HAIN

Kate, come inside. We're leaving.

We lost contact with the exploratory party--

KATE

Lost contact? Where's my sister?

HAIN

We haven't heard from them for sixteen days. They went in, but something came out, killed everyone in camp that night. The Ministry ordered us back to Earth-

KATE

(furious)

You didn't go in and get them? You left them there?

HAIN

We can't open the gate! We tried everything. Couldn't blast in, nothing worked.

KATE

I don't care what you couldn't do. Jess and Fence are the only family I've got.

Kate wipes her eyes again. Stares at the black walls. Makes a decision.

KATE (CONT'D)

I'm not leaving my sister. Can't. Don't close the ramp!

Kate whips back up the ramp. Disappears inside the ship. The Officer calls out.

OFFICER

They're all dead!

HAIN

Thank you for crystallizing that.

Hain motions to his men to hold lift-off procedures.

OFFICER

Sir-

HAIN

Just do it! Shit.

Hain checks his time-piece. Disappears inside.

INT. KATE'S CABIN - H.R.'S SHIP

Kate blasts in. Grabs stuff, tossing it on the bed. Reaches under the bed, opens a hidden panel, pulls out a rather impressive array of technical looking gear, including her excavation bag. Shoves stuff from the bed into the bag.

Checks it. She's got the small spike. If they were looking for it, she had it. Slings the bag over her shoulder, grabs gear, races out.

EXT. GATE AREA - THE CITY - MOMENTS LATER

The ship SHUDDERS. The ROAR builds.

Kate leaps off the ramp. The Officer tries to stop her.

KATE

Out of my way.

Kate leaps off the ramp, lands in the sand.

OFFICER

Doctor! Get back here!

HAIN (O.S.)

Catch!

Hain, jacket off, armed to the teeth and ready to shoot anything not homo-familiar, tosses a heavy, bad-ass assault rifle right at Kate.

He leaps down, slings the strap over her head.

HAIN (CONT'D)

(to the deck Officer)

Close it up! That's an order.

Dubious about the gun, Kate turns towards the gate, glances at Hain and his abundant gear. He's grabbed a LOT of stuff.

Behind them, the ramp lifts, last chance to change their minds. Kate plows ahead towards the gate. Hain follows.

INT. BRIDGE - H.R.'S SHIP

Through the main viewscreen. Kate and Hain are tiny dots approaching the massive gate, the city walls.

EXT. GATE - THE CITY

The sun hovers low on the horizon.

The gate's slammed closed. Abandoned in the sand, open, empty, the large talon's case.

Kate considers the runes carved above the gate, into the surface of the gate. A small slot in the middle about ten feet up.

Behind them, all three ships launch with a ROAR.

They're STRANDED as the sun sets.

KATE

Why are you here?

Kate scans the glyphs on the massive wall, glances at Hain.

HAIN

Keeping you safe will further my career. Thank you for the opportunity.

KATE

Sarcasm noted.

HAIN

I don't have a lot of supplies so I hope you can open this.

KATE

No problem.

She unwraps her damaged hand. Flexes. Considers the thin line of blood on her palm. Gathers up the bandages.

KATE (CONT'D)

You know anything useful?

HAIN

No.

KATE

Jess and Fence. More greed than common sense.

(reads, translates)

The Keeper guards. Stay out.

Hain looks a bit unsettled. Kate digs in her bag, pulls out the talon with the bandages, careful not to touch it.

KATE'S POV ON THE LOCK: SCRATCH MARKS AT THE OPENING, SUGGESTING YEARS OF SHARP CLAWS ENTERING THE SLOT. RED FROM THE KRESH'S SIGNATURE TOXIN.

KATE (CONT'D)

I figure these locks all work the same. Boost me up.

HAIN

Finally. A job I can get behind.

KATE

Hysterical.

Hain lifts her up. She stretches, presses the talon into the slot in the middle of the gate. Her hand slips onto the talon as she presses it in the slot, gets slammed hard by the talon's strange effect.

Kate has another vision, sees SILVER EYES, CLAWS, a FLASH of STEEL, rustling. A silver crypt in a large room. TALONS RAKING, SCREAMS, trying to get OUT.

She sways, passes out, pulls the talon out as she falls. Hain catches her in his arms.

#### INT. THE TOMB

Black-stone glows under Jess's helmet-light as she squeezes sideways onto a slanting surface. The large talon's strapped to her back.

She spasms as she shares Kate's vision, SILVER EYES, CLAWS, RUSTLING.

Slides downward FAST.

She's on a rooftop. Wakes, grabs the edge just as she goes over. Holding on with one hand, she pulls herself up. A bit of hope building.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

Kate? Kate, are you there? I know you're there.

NOTHING but static. Jess loses it. Sitting on the edge, literally on the edge, she CRIES.

#### EXT. THE GATE - THE CITY

Hain holds Kate in his arms.

HAIN

(distant)

Kate? Wake up. What's wrong with you?

She recovers, looks at him. Behind them, the gate GLOWS. A HUM builds from deep inside the wall.

KATE

You can put me down now.

An obscene, high-pitched, grating SCREAM as the ancient gate opens outward with a CLICK. Hain tenses. The pitch rises into a higher TONE. An angry SCREAM hidden by the reluctant CREAK of the gear shank.

Stale, dead AIR blasts out the open doorway. A reek beyond simple death. For a second time, Hain drops Kate.

KATE (CONT'D)

Stop doing that!

HAIN

Stop passing out.

He grabs his bad-ass weapon, aims it into the dark space beyond the gate.

KATE

I think Jess knew just enough to get them in serious trouble.

Kate leaps up, together they peer inside.

INT. TUNNEL - THE CITY

Ink black, forboding. Kate inches in, Hain covering her rear.

KATE

They didn't disarm the city's protections. The system's probably still active--

Kate's knocked off her feet by SOMETHING emerging from the gate, something fast. It SWERVES at the last second, MISSES her and the talon in her hand, disappears out the gate.

THE GATE KEEPER.

The Keeper is fast. Gone in the blink of an eye.

HAIN

I'd call that pretty active.

KATE'S POV: NOTHING BUT CRUSTED MUD ON THE WALL.

Kate examines the doorway. No lock to close the gate. Or she can't find it. Even with her special sight.

OUTSIDE THE GATE

The Keeper, a silver blur, disappears under the black sand surrounding the City. The sand erupts. IT races back towards the gate, SILENT, never makes a sound.

#### INSIDE THE TUNNEL

Kate frantic, searches for the slot.

Kate looks around, all around the opening. Nothing. Reaches in her bag, grabs a tiny fan-brush. Very, very carefully brushes sand off the wall. Hain looks at her, apoplectic.

HAIN (CONT'D)

What in God's name are you doing?

KATE

Looking for the lock.

Kate continues to brush crusted sand from the wall.

HAIN

It's coming!

KATE

You're making me nervous.

HAIN

I'm making you nervous?

Her actions reveal a small slot. She quickly brushes crusted dirt away, slides the talon into the keyhole.

Nothing happens.

Carefully brushes away more dirt.

SCRATCH, FLICK, SCRATCH, FLICK, SCRATCH, FLICK.

Hain's a nervous wreck watching her.

Kate uncovers a series of stela, strange pictographs. She reads, punches indented glyphs around the keyhole. An alien punch-pad.

The gate MOANS. GRINDS to a painful halt. Sand catches in the ancient gear shaft. Remains open. Hain SCREAMS in her ear.

HAIN (CONT'D)

Close it, now!

KATE

Stop yelling at me!

OUTSIDE THE GATE

The Keeper dives into the sand. Another flash, almost there.

INSIDE THE TUNNEL

Hain FIRES, misses again. It's so fast.

HAIN

What the hell is that thing?

KATE

Just shoot it!

HAIN

Very academic, doctor.

He fires again.

OUTSIDE, hits it. The shot bounces off.

In the TUNNEL, Kate punches in another sequence. The gate shudders. GROANS. She bends down, uses the brush all along the gear shaft. The gate quivers, doesn't move.

The Keeper's almost there.

HAIN (CONT'D)

Enough!

Hain KICKS it.

The gate SLAMS shut.

INT. TUNNEL - THE CITY

Pitch black. Only light, from their helmets.

KATE'S POV: INFRA-RED. THEY'RE IN A SHORT TUNNEL. TRACKS FROM THE MISSION TEAM'S ALL-TERRAINS RUN DOWN THE MIDDLE.

KATE

See? No problem.

HAIN

No, no problem.

She indicates the tracks, follows them. He follows, very close behind her.

INT. THE TUNNEL - THE CITY - LATER

Kate and Hain follow tire tracks from the team's all-terrain vehicles. Another gate ahead, cracked open.

KATE'S POV: THE TRACKS GLOW BRIGHT IN THE DARK. KATE YELPS, AS SHE TRIPS OVER A CORPSE, LYING IN MUDDY WATER, GREEN ALIEN WORMS CRAWLING IN THE EYE SOCKETS. SHE GAGS.

KATE

Oh, uh-no. There's a body.

Hain's light swivels in the dark.

HAIN

Several. They were attacked but didn't turn around.

KATE

Jess wouldn't. It's not her nature to turn back.  
She's afraid of nothing.

HAIN

She's an idiot, then.

KATE

You know nothing about her.

HAIN

I see more than you know.

LIGHT flares behind. Kate turns to look, the light blinds her as a nightmare shape races up the tunnel. Kate turns, sees the gate at the far end of the tunnel.

Still open.

KATE

Run!

Hain fires, misses. Deafening in the narrow corridor. Kate covers her ears, stumbles, Hain pulls her up as they flee for the gate.

It's a RACE, Hain firing behind him as he runs, Kate racing, the Hunter SCREAMING, gaining ground.

The thing is FAST. Very fast. More bodies. Kate leaps over one, two, more. The Hunter gains ground.

It's going to be close.

INT. THE CITY - NIGHT

Dim light filters through the crystal dome. Shadows everywhere.

Black obsidian road, twenty feet wide, leads off in three directions between madhouse skyscrapers and strange alien artwork.

It's an organized city, not an anthill. Strange and beautiful. Utterly, completely ALIEN. No way to comprehend it.

Kate and Hain fall through the open gate, wrest it shut. The Keeper slams against the gate, claws through with spindly arms.

Straining gears try to close. Hain leans his weight into it as the Keeper BANGS against the door, reaching for them.

Repeated BANGING.

The gate GROANS, SHUDDERS, CLOSES.

An arm falls to the ground. TWITCHING. The GATE vanishes back into the wall. Runes cover the doorway.

Hain pushes at the arm with his rifle. Grabs the end. Shows it to Kate. Mechanical, silver, an obscene replica of the talon she carries. Hain flips it away.

INSIDE, THE BANGS CONTINUE. The arm moves, mindless. Relentlessly. Heads straight for him. FAST. Hain shoots at it. No effect. Looks at Kate. What the fuck?

Shoots it until it stops.

KATE

Robotic systems. Very advanced technology.

HAIN

It's very lethal.

KATE

That's the point. Sophisticated programming. Still running long after the programmer's gone.

Kate quickly scans the Kresh cryptographs, digs in her bag, slaps a beacon on the wall, virtual breadcrumbs.

Whips around. Eyes darting everywhere, looking for the monsters. For her sister.

INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

Very alien and yet somehow recognizable as an advanced systems control room. LIGHTS illuminate, a 3-D holographic image of the CITY appears. Flashing RED LIGHTS indicate the breach in the wall. Other intruders, too.

Systems activate, brightening in a room of vast scale. Very ALIEN in concept and design. Fully automated.

A quick holographic image of the planet appears, indicating atmospheric data. A fully engineered planet. Perfectly monitored. Perfectly suited for the Kresh.

Protected against intruders.

EXT. SECURITY ROOM - THE CITY

METAL GRATES on METAL as a sliding panel opens with a SLINK.

A chilling SCREECH reverberates. More systems activate, silver-eyed, security drones go online.

Long, sharp claws TWITCH. Functional and automated. Programmed to protect the City. Look vaguely spider-like with eight legs and lots of sharp things protruding.

These are the HUNTERS.

#### INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

The 3-D holographic image of the CITY tracks Kate and Hain, while a myriad BLINKING lights correspond with the release of the Hunters.

The WHITE lights head straight for the RED lights.

#### INT. THE TOMB - THE CITY

Oppressive gloom. Jess shivers, well hidden in the back of a small alcove. Shadows under her eyes, looks gaunt, nervous. The giant Kresh talon beside her. Pulls a water bottle from her bag. Sucks on it. Empty.

A SHADOW passes by, SCRAPING above. Jess looks up. Eyes wide as the shadow disengages from the wall above. Drops in freefall past her position, hidden in the recess.

She holds in her SCREAM. Shuts her eyes, paralyzed, as the Hunter SLAMS on the ground ten feet beneath her. In shadow, the Hunter can't find her. Moves away.

Spindly metal legs CLICKING on the hard surface of the city.

#### INT. ELSEWHERE IN THE TOMB - THE CITY

Another angle on fucking lost. Tight narrow paths through a mineshaft. Parker and Fence slip along passages. Ministry soldier JONES scans the dark.

FENCE

We're going in circles.

They find a rotting body along the pathway. Parker reaches down, pulls the man's gun from his bloodied hand, hands it to Jones.

PARKER

Clean that off. Now give it to me!

INT. THE CITY

Blood splattered outside the doorway. Some of the missing MEN from Jess's expedition. TORN APART. ONE of the all-terrain vehicles, door open, to the side.

So much blood.

KATE'S POV: SCANS THE REMAINS VIA HIGH-DENSITY MAGNIFICATION.

Relieved, she shakes her head at Hain. Jess isn't there.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Jess? Can you hear me?

Nothing but STATIC. Then strange, terrible SCREECHES, high pitched, tortured. Not far.

Kate circles. Scared, curious, all of the above.

KATE (CONT'D)

Where's it coming from?

HAIN

Let's not find out.

KATE'S POV: JESS'S GLOWING FOOTSTEPS LEADING AWAY FROM THE GATE. TIRE TRACKS. STRANGE ALIEN TRACKS FOLLOW.

KATE

That way.

They toss their gear into the all-terrain. Hain floors it, speeds down the black obsidian road.

INT. THE TOMB - THE CITY - NIGHT

Jess wanders through underground barrows, lost, carrying the large talon wrapped against her back. She stumbles upon a sinkhole. Water runs down the wall, pools in a dirty pond before seeping away into bedrock.

Her helmet light pierces absolute black. She scans the area. Searching. Waits. Listens. Hears something behind her. Waits.

TINKLING water sprays down a wall. She inches out, runs to the water. Gulps it down. GAGS, spits it out. Vomits. Wipes her mouth. So thirsty. Exhausted. Tired.

Fingers her comm-unit at a sudden burst of STATIC. Crying.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

Is anyone out there? It's Jess Carter. It's been sixteen days since we accessed the city. Kate, please, I know you're there...

Jess gets herself back in control. Tries again.

JESS (CONT'D)

(into comm-unit)

Is anybody there? Please come in...

KATE (O.S.)

(over comm-unit)

Jess! Where are you--

JESS

(over comm-unit)

Kate...?

SCRAPING. Jess FREEZES, switches off the comm-unit, the hardest thing she's ever done.

Again, SCRAPING. LOUDER.

Jess tosses everything back into the bag. Backs up. Slinks away, back to the shadows, turns runs.

INT. MAIN ROAD - THE CITY

Pitch perfect blackness. The all-terrain's headlights illuminate the alien's world.

STATIC blasts from Kate's comm-unit as Jess cuts her off.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Jess? Come in! Jess? Where are you? Come back?

NOT THERE.

Hain glances over as Kate turns away, slammed by her sister's voice.

HAIN

She's still alive. We're not chasing a ghost.

KATE

I can feel her. She's so scared. In over her head. I can't explain it.

HAIN

You and Jess have a very active twin bond--

A slip. Knows as soon as the words leave his mouth. Kate stares at him.

HAIN (CONT'D)

It's in your file.

KATE

You read my file?

HAIN

It's nothing.

(sighs)

Nothing you don't already know about.

KATE

Illuminate me.

HAIN

Detailed reports of your genetic adaptations.  
H.R.'s contract with the Ministry. That's it.

KATE

What else?

Hain indicates the scanner on the dashboard.

HAIN

Getting massive power spikes. Dead ahead.

KATE

You're not going to tell me?

HAIN

Nothing to tell.

KATE

Of course not.

HAIN

The power spike?

KATE

It's the same as the chamber on Carter-19. Why weren't you with them? Aren't you Parker's lap dog?

HAIN

Sorry to disappoint you.

KATE

Do you ever answer a direct question?

She looks at him. No answer.

KATE (CONT'D)

What's Parker want?

HAIN

You know what he wants. Artifacts.

Close on the speedometer.

Hain's hitting over a hundred-fifty. They fly along the obsidian roadway, meant for speed. Strange alien temples line the roadway. On the walls of the temples, symbols carved into the rock.

Hain's reflexes are fast as he avoids an obstacle here and there in the road. OBJECTS flash by, too fast to see.

KATE'S POV: RECORDED IMAGES, REWINDING, FREEZE-FRAME ON A ROBOTIC ARM, A DOOR FROM AN ALL-TERRAIN, A SIDE-VIEW MIRROR, A REAL ARM.

Hain's not stopping until...

A WRECKED VEHICLE. On it's side. Dented. Smoking. They fly past, slide to a stop.

Drive back. Hain has one hand on the wheel, one on his bad-ass rifle.

On the ground, ONE MAN, ripped breast to groin, lying in a pool of dried blood. A few Hunters blasted apart.

KATE

Keep going.

KATE'S POV: TRACKS FROM THE ALL-TERRAINS CONTINUE DOWN THE OBSIDIAN ROAD.

Hain floors it.

Ahead, the black structure rises.

INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

RED LIGHTS indicate movement along the roadway, tracking Kate and Hain's movements along the massive external perimeter of the structure.

HUNTERS tracked via multiple blinking lights. An overwhelming number. The lights converge on the red.

INT. FURTHER IN THE MAZE - THE CITY

Light from their helmets illuminating their flight, Parker and Fence argue as they catapult through the maze.

PARKER

What am I paying you for?

FENCE

Keep your money.

Parker huffs and puffs. Fence displays agility as he barrels along while Hain's man SMITH keeps up, pulling Parker along.

INT. SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY

Jess pauses, listens. Silence. Slides down the wall, exhausted. Unwraps the giant talon.

Slides her hands down its length. Enraptured. A strange fixation, almost a fetish.

The VISION hits her. Sees SILVER EYES, CLAWS, a FLASH of STEEL, rustling. A silver crypt in a large room. TALONS RAKING, SCREAMS, trying to get OUT.

Lifts her hands from the talon, the vision stops. Jess touches the talon again. The vision hits harder. She arches back. SMILES in pleasure.

INT. THE MAIN ROAD - THE CITY - SAME TIME

Kate shares another vision with Jess. SILVER EYES, CLAWS, a FLASH of STEEL. A silver crypt in a large room. TALONS RAKING, SCREAMS, trying to get OUT.

She passes out. Hain slams on the brakes, pulls her into his lap. Checks her pulse, her face.

HAIN

Kate? Wake up. Can you hear me?

Grabs water, pats it on her face. Kate's eyes open, then the vision hits her again. Harder.

INT. THE SARCOPHAGUS

THING TRAPPED INSIDE THE SARCOPHAGUS SCREAMS.

Claustrophobic space, entombed for millions of years. Clawing to get out. The inside scratched over two-hundred billion years entrapment.

Bleeding on one taloned claw.

INT. THE MAIN ROAD - THE CITY

Kate's eyes snap open. Hain's worried face above her.

HAIN

You scared me.

Kate sits up. They've pulled over. A dangerous thing to do.

KATE

Keep going. I'm okay, now.

Hain doesn't look convinced, but he steps on the gas.

HAIN

Explain what's happening to you?

KATE

My sister's infected by that thing we brought out of the chamber. I'm losing her to it.

Hain drives. Kate stares ahead.

INT. SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY - DAY

Jess wakes, covered in sweat. Wraps the talon back up. Listens for the sound of pursuit. Continues on. Far overhead, the rising sun filters through the dome.

INT. THE TOMB - THE CITY - DAY

Perfect night merges into endless dusk, scant light filtered through the dome.

Hain jams the breaks, SQUEALS to a stop as the obsidian roadway ends.

SRRRREEEECH!

Protected by a TRANSPARENT ENERGY FIELD.

Runes dance over the reflective silver surface. A force-field. Beyond, an open doorway beneath a large canted arch, identical to the entrance of the Star Chamber.

Kate and Hain clamber out of the all-terrain. Hain grabs the scanner, his equipment from the all-terrain.

FLASHING RED MARKER at the entrance, posted on the door-frame, just visible through the opaque force field between them and the doorway.

HAIN

They marked their path.

Hain probes the field with his rifle. SPARKS fly.

KATE

Be careful--

HAIN

At this point, don't you think we're past careful?

KATE

We're going to set off traps unless we're careful.

HAIN

Then we'll be careful.

KATE

I'm always very, very careful.

HAIN

You should really rethink that.

He makes her nervous and she doesn't quite get why. Guy's way too good at something she's not good at. He's blown her concentration.

She refocuses, turns back to the force field, the gigantic black Kresh structure, imminent death, runes. Facing death is preferable to thinking about this man.

KATE

This is part of the original structure--

(beat, blurts)

What are you saying exactly?

Hain glances at her, amused by the reaction.

HAIN

Go ahead. Impress me with your xeno-archeologist skills. Break in.

KATE

Do you ever answer a direct question?

HAIN

Do you ever ask one?

KATE

You're doing it again.

HAIN

Can you get us inside?

KATE

Absolutely.

She scans the cryptic language. Fascinated by something other than Hain again.

KATE (CONT'D)

I've never seen a form of Kresh this old. Pre-Empire. Archaic. This is--

HAIN

Fascinating.

He's looking at her. Distracted again, she points to runes over the arch.

KATE

It speaks of ancestors. The architects. The ONE. We have to know the right order or--

HAIN

Or what?

KATE

We don't get in.

HAIN

That's awfully anticlimat-

Hain turns on instinct. A HUNTER leaps at him. He FIRES. Lucky shot. Obliterates the head. The body keeps going. Circles the wrong way.

A WAVE of SILVER charges up the road after them. Hain looks up, along the rooftops of the strange structures:

FLASHES OF SILVER. MORE HUNTERS.

HAIN (CONT'D)

We've got company. There's a lot of them.

Kate digs in her bag, whips out the talon. Her knees buckle, she hits the ground. Hain almost stops shooting to help her.

KATE

I'm good.

She weaves to her feet, touches the field with the talon to see what happens. Runes rise to the surface. An alien touchscreen.

KATE'S POV: ON THE TOUCHSCREEN, MARKS FROM ANCIENT USE. A PATTERN.

Hain BLASTS another Hunter midair. Knocks it back. Hits it again. And again. Amazing shot, takes three hits to take it out of action.

HAIN

Hurry!

KATE

Making me nervous does not improve the situation.

He's really good. Shoots one Hunter after another after another, but there are too many.

She rearranges runes, tapping the more frequently used symbols. Suddenly, the touch-screen freezes.

KATE (CONT'D)

Are you kidding?

Kate hits the field with the talon, taps repeatedly.

HAIN

Don't do that. You froze it up!

KATE

I know that!

HAIN

Leave it alone--

Hain blasts another Hunter. Suddenly, the surface frees up. Kate moves another rune. The field suddenly parts.

Kate and Hain dash through the field which quickly reforms with a sizzling HUM. The Hunters dive through the field after them.

Kate and Hain dash through the doorway into...

INT. TOMB - THE CITY

A putrid alien horror as the door SLINKS shut behind them. Both twist in agony at first breath. Millions of years of decay.

KATE

Oh, god, the reek--

Hain fires at a Hunter as it bursts through the door. He rolls over, SLAPS a charge on the doorway, grabs Kate, pulls her away from the entrance. Covers her in a heap.

KATE (CONT'D)

You can't destroy--

HAIN

Sue me--

The doorway EXPLODES, sealing the entrance, spraying everything with black sand, debris.

Kate rolls over, stares at the damage. One of the Hunters crawls out from the rubble, fast, steel-sharp robot-claw legs stabbing. Hain shoots it. Looks at her.

KATE

I see your point.

Kate rises, stands next to Hain. Both speechless.

The grand gallery disappears into dim corners. No light save the inadequate glow cast from their helmet torches.

A billion geometric, stacked chambers, miles and miles running in all directions, a thicket of nests spaced along dark tunnels. Suggests a hive.

Individual chambers sealed with strange translucent covers, a veneer of sheer silver caps. By design or owing to the relentless span of time, the chambers drain a slippery, thickened, gelatinous-substance, perhaps a natural part of the hibernation process.

Hard to tell. This waste collects, drains down the middle of dark, mine-like shafts and tunnels.

HAIN

Cheery.

Kate examines the walls. Turns attention to one of the individual pods or chambers. It lights up, GLOWS at her touch. Strange and translucent. Lovely.

KATE

It's warm.

They move deeper into the hive, Kate fascinated, Hain nervous.

HAIN

We have to keep going--

KATE

Something's in there...shit!

Kate jumps as Hain pulls her back. EIGHT INCH TALONS float against the inner surface, suspended in fluid inside the pod. Nothing else visible.

The Kresh are entombed all around them. She spins, overwhelmed by the find.

KATE (CONT'D)

They're still here...buried alive, for two-hundred million years--

HAIN

Dead, right?

KATE

Of course.

Kate stares at the chambers, not sure of anything.

KATE (CONT'D)

The towers interrupted the life-cycle of the Kresh.

KATE'S POV: LOOKS FOR FOOTPRINTS. NOTHING. NO HEAT SIGNATURE TO FOLLOW.

Black sand covers the entire antechamber from the explosion.

KATE (CONT'D)

There's sand everywhere. I've lost her.

Hain looks genuinely chagrined. He pulls out the scanner from the all-terrain.

HAIN

Can't get a good signal.

Then...POUNDING. Something's coming.

Hain aims. Kate raises her weapon. Hain reaches over, arms it for her. The rifle POWERS UP.

KATE

Thanks.

He smiles. Something loud and multi-legged runs towards them. Hain waits for a shot. Kate fires at the motion.

Fence, Parker and Hain's man Smith blast into the chamber, nearly get their heads blown off. Luckily, Kate's a terrible shot.

PARKER

Are you insane! Who gave her a gun?

Fence recognizes Kate, grabs her in a bear hug. Kate hugs him back.

FENCE

Thank god.

Fence sets her back down. They look at each other.

FENCE (CONT'D)

You know Jess. Nothing was going to stop her--

PARKER

Can we get out of here.

Kate's head swings past Fence.

KATE

Where's Jess?

Fence and Parker stare at her blankly.

KATE (CONT'D)

Where's my sister?

PARKER

We were separated.

KATE

You lost my sister? How is that even possible?  
She's loud and obnoxious. What is wrong with  
you? Where?

Fence and Parker point. Opposite directions. She raises the rifle. Points it at them.

PARKER

I don't know. I just want to get out of here.  
Where's everyone?

HAIN

We're it. The Ministry recalled the expedition.

PARKER

They left us? Impossible.

KATE

You're not as important as you think.

Hain keeps looking around.

HAIN

We need to move.

KATE

Show me where you lost Jess.

Jones points, a bit frazzled but ready to leave. They move deeper into the abyss.

JONES

That way.

INT. THE TOMB - THE CITY - DAY

Kate, Hain, Fence, Parker, and Jones have picked up the path of the first expedition. Blinking RED markers light the path.

Kate bends down to examine a ruptured hive-tomb.

KATE

You opened a tomb?

FENCE

Well, we tried.

PARKER

I swear it was moving when it fell out. There was this ear splitting scream and it disappeared.

KATE

You're imagining things. Some of these crypts are bound to be empty--

Hain puts his hand up. They stop arguing. SOMETHING is moving behind them.

They hurry on, following the red BLINKING LIGHTS.

INT. THE SILVER CATHEDRAL - THE CITY - CONTINUOUS

Jess stumbles from an opening in the maze, emerging at the base of a strange alien structure. A twisted staircase leads upwards to the spiked, silver structure. A silver cathedral.

More impressive, more disturbing, than anything else in the city. Composed of multiple interwoven-spires, far different from the towers circling the city. Far more beautiful. Alien. Keeps shifting, moving at the top. Alive.

Jess tries her comm-unit again.

Discordant, atonal BOOMS in the distance. And another.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

Kate? Can you hear me?

Kate's voice offers one tangible moment of hope as it breaks through.

KATE (O.S.)

Jess? Jess? Where are you? I'm here--

A FLASH of silver distracts Jess. She's crying, so happy to hear her sister's voice.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

I knew you'd come.

A silver flash behind her. A SCREECH. Jess RUNS for the entrance. Trips.

The Hunter moves towards her. In the night, it's just a silver shadow. Petrified, Jess grabs the large talon to protect herself, wielding it like a sword.

The Hunter jerks back. Backs off immediately. Kate's comm-unit BLASTS again.

KATE (O.S.)

What's happening..?

The Hunter SCREECHES. Jess leaps up, runs. Fast.

Double-doors PART for her. A herd of silver Hunters follow Jess as she dives into the entrance. Jess turns, looks at the gathered Hunters, grouped in perfect lines.

Strange symmetry.

INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

An antechamber opens into a gigantic multi-layered hall with dark recesses. Dim lights from the actual flooring light the path. Jess stands alone inside the edifice. Dwarfed.

A SILVER line twenty-feet thick runs straight through the middle. Fluid. Jess glances behind her. The Hunters gather outside, unable to enter.

JESS

(into comm-unit)

Kate...are you still there? You should really see this.

INT. THE TOMB - THE CITY - DAY

Just ahead of Hain, Kate responds to her sister's voice. She keeps moving, running ahead of Hunters now BAYING at their back.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Jess? I'm here! Come back!

(to Hain)

Can we track her?

INTERCUT AS NEEDED BETWEEN KATE AND JESS.

JESS

It's good to hear your voice.

KATE

Do you know where you are?

Jess circles. An ornate hallway.

JESS

Somewhere in the center. Spires and spikes. I  
thought--

PLAINTIVE CRIES echo from below. Jess stares, focused on the SOUND.

KATE

What?

JESS

I'm sorry, Kate.

KATE

Nothing to be sorry about.

JESS

Leave. If you come for me, you're going to die.

KATE

I'm not leaving--

JESS

It's the right thing to do.

STATIC BREAKS UP THE SIGNAL.

KATE

Jess?

JESS

Don't trust anyone. Even me.

STATIC again. She's gone.

KATE

Damn it.

INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Jess steps on the silver path. The moment her foot hits the path, the entire space illuminates. Jess jerks to a stop. Tries to move forward, can't. She's on the silver line.

Deep in the heart of the Kresh's inner sanctum. Close to the source of the visions. Reaches back, grabs the large talon, strapped to her back. Unwraps it. Rubs her hand over it, almost caresses it. Cuts herself.

Blood runs down it's massive length, hits the floor. She arches back. Another VISION. Trembling, Jess removes her hand, comes back.

Jess rewraps the talon. Steps forward.

INT. THE GRAND GALLERY - THE CITY

Kate cranes her head. A narrow set of staggering, steep stairs carved up one side of the tomb wall, a vaulted ceiling so far distant, it disappears.

Tiny steps, no rail, no room for error. Half-way up the wall, a red MARKER. Hain follows her gaze. Fence shakes his head, weary. Parker and Fence find common ground in looking miserable.

Kate grabs Fence, drags him along. She doesn't look happy.

KATE

Here are the rules. We keep moving. We don't split up. We find Jess. We get out of here.

Parker scoffs. Follows rather than wait alone.

INT. STAIRS - THE CITY

Pressed against the wall, Kate follows Hain up a narrow staircase, the gallery pressing between walls. Barely wider than a man's body, no rail.

Kresh entombed on one side of the wall.

Fence follows, followed by Parker and Jones.

Kate pushes against the wall, feeling her way, trying not to notice the drop. Her eyes focused on the stairs. Suddenly, movement next to her head.

She wavers.

Vertigo overwhelms her as she glances down at the drop. Hain presses her back against the wall.

KATE

I prefer excavating on solid ground.

HAIN

I've got you.

PARKER

Explain to me. We're running from disgruntled security guards?

KATE

A fully automated security system.

Then, the weird sounds begin.

KA-BOMB. KA-BOMB. KA-BOMB.

KATE (CONT'D)

One that seems capable of tracking intruders.

KA-BOOM. KA-BOOM. KA-BOOM.

The sound echoes through the city. The lights slowly rise. A strange HUM of machines warming up after an eternity off-line.

The CRYPTS warm. GLOW. Kate checks the crypt behind her, all around.

KATE (CONT'D)

This isn't good.

HAIN

It's getting warmer.

KATE

They're trying to wake them up.

PARKER

Waking them up? From what? A fucking nap?

The crypts change COLOR.

KATE

It's possible the automated system has no idea how long they've been off-line.

A SCREECH alerts them. Silver HUNTERS racing up the stairs.

A hundred feet above their head, a dark gash in the wall. A doorway at last. Kate shifts her weight forward, moves in a rush. Keeps pace with Hain, followed by the others.

Hunters BOUND up the stairs, BAYING like dogs.

FENCE

H.R. would love this. Wish that asshole was here instead of me.

HAIN

There's a doorway!

The Hunters gain ground. More HUNTERS race down the wall. Kate and the others are caught between them.

Everyone dives into the doorway just ahead of the Kresh guardians. The door SLAMS shut.

INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

The systems control room now fully online. Flashing RED LIGHTS indicate movement along the interior of the crypt, keeping track of Kate, Hain and the others.

Intruders in the massive central structure. And...Jess's movements inside the Cathedral.

INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Jess follows the silver line. Mesmerized. Inside the Cathedral, the dark spaces evaporate as the lights rise.

The temperature rises rapidly. She removes the talon, wrapped against her back, sets it down, takes off her jacket. Sweat-lodge hot.

Jess grips the talon, easily hefts the two-hundred pounds, runs her hand down the length. Prompts the VISION, like a drug, forcing contact with THE ONE, the Kresh hive-queen, the trapped being in the sarcophagus.

She's HOOKED, wants another fix.

Jess returns to consciousness. Changed. Not herself. Examines her hand, LICKS off the blood.

JESS

I'm coming.

Losing her identity, MERGING with the thing in the sarcophagus. She follows the silver line down to the depths, towards whatever is calling to her.

She's been taken.

Her eyes are dead, staring. One with the Hive Queen, one identity, with one purpose.

Jess will release the Kresh.

INT. THE PANTHEON

Hain slides through the entry, Kate on his heels, followed by the team into a cavernous, circular room. A transparent ceiling far above. Mysterious purpose.

Kate whips out the talon, careful not to touch it directly.

Uses it on the lock moments before she's slammed again, shares Jess's vision. SILVER EYES, CLAWS, SLITHERS. Kate SEES INSIDE THE SARCOFAGUS. MISSING ONE-LONG TALON, CLAWS SCRATCHING, SCREAMING, TRYING TO GET OUT--

Fence's touch brings her back. He bends over her, with Hain.

KATE

Jess, oh, no.

FENCE

Hey, what?

KATE

The large talon was ripped from the flesh of a living  
Kresh. I think their queen is still trapped here--

HAIN

One of them is still alive?

Kate nods, shoves the talon back in her bag, turns with Hain to the hall.

KATE

We have to find my sister. She's going to release it.

Circular. Hole in the ceiling. A slight raised platform in the middle of the room. Bright  
liquid runs under the floor. Small living streams of silver.

Looks like a giant piston or gear shaft. Hain leans over to Kate.

HAIN

They ran us in here.

KATE

I know.

(to Parker)

I wouldn't do that.

Parker freezes, two steps into the room. Fence kneels, rubs his hand over the transparent  
flooring. Something moves underneath, following his hand.

SILVER liquid. Kate kneels beside him.

FENCE

What is it?

Kate pulls out a tiny hammer from her bag.

PARKER

What the hell are you doing?

Kate SMASHES the tile in front of her. It SHATTERS. She flicks the stone away with  
the hammer. Liquid pools underneath.

From far away, a deep, atonal BLAST of DISCORDANT NOISE. Parker paces, a nervous little rat.

PARKER (CONT'D)

What's that? What's happening?

KATE

The automated systems don't know the Kresh are dead. Stop pacing.

The liquid MOVES as she jerks out equipment from her bag, takes a sample. Scans it, shows it to Hain.

KATE (CONT'D)

Some kind of nanotechnology.

HAIN

Smart lubricant? For what?

Kate nods, jams the sample into her bag. Scans the floor, focuses on the center.

KATE

It would be a useful adaptation to reduce friction.  
We're just in the way.

KATE'S POV: KATE CYCLES THROUGH VISUAL ENHANCEMENTS. SETTLES ON INFRA-RED. UNDERNEATH, THE LIQUID GATHERS UNDER EACH OF THE HUMANS. IT RESPONDS TO HEAT.

Suddenly, ancient, timeworn GEARS slip into motion as the transparent CEILING descends, twisting around the central core as the room activates.

At the same time, the platform in the middle RAISES towards the ceiling. Parker stands on two tiles, one BRIGHTLY LIT. Looks a bit guilty.

PARKER

What?

Liquid seeps from the base of the pillars as they sink into the transparent floor. If they stay there, they're going to be crushed by the ceiling or covered by the silver liquid.

Everyone runs. A strange HUM and the room illuminates into blinding WHITE LIGHT. Impossible to see.

Kate and the others reach the core, leap up. Smith slips on the silver lubricant. He SCREAMS as the ceiling spins down, and he's crushed between floor and ceiling.

His skull POPS in an obscene spray of crimson mixed with silver.

The gears don't stop. The ceiling, or what was the ceiling, zips by, as the platform rises higher, moving faster and faster, an elevator with no controls to stop it, no way to get off it.

They rise up through the Kresh tomb, dark levels of crypts, layers of the hive-like structure, riding the platform.

#### INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Jess moves deeper into the bowels of the structure, down to the sub-levels. Many different paths to go.

A labyrinth.

Jess pauses. A moment of confusion. Starts off one way. Stops, looks in the opposite direction.

Rubs her hands along the talon. Her talisman.

Slammed by another vision: TRAVELING THE PATH DOWNWARDS, SEES GOING TO THE RIGHT. MILLIONS OF YEARS BEFORE. SILVER BODIES AROUND HER.

Corrects herself, turns to the right, downwards.

#### INT. THE CORE - THE CITY - DAY

Kate suddenly turns. Shares the vision with Jess. The ancient path, the Kresh.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Jess, come in? I know you can hear me. Talk to me, please.

Kate, Hain, Fence and Parker ride the core upwards.

The city spreads before them, glorious, alien and strange. The core keeps rising. Higher. Higher still.

In the distance, the Cathedral, spires visible over the hive. Finally, the core stops with a JOLT, almost touching the cut-crystal dome above. The view is spectacular.

KATE (CONT'D)

(into comm-unit)

Jess, you're confused. Just talk to me.

Hive-tombs circle in the distance, each gate leading to its own hive-complex. In the center of the city, the cathedral.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM again. PLAINTIVE CRIES echo up from below.

Kate scans the horizon, runs to the edge of the core. The silver spires peek above all else. She reels back at the mile high drop.

Something glitters above as the sun reaches ZENITH. Beneath their feet, panels light up. Hain's attention focuses on the new threat.

Hain examines the glowing panels, darting to the edge.

HAIN

We've got a problem. I've seen solar relay units before.

KATE

Hypothetically, right?

The core beneath them HUMS and turns GLOWING BLUE.

HAIN (O.S.)

Just shut up and jump.

INT. THE SPIRE - THE CITY - LATER

Kate's staring down at the abyss. Hain hooks Parker up with futuristic skydiving equipment. Portable. Tiny pack.

PARKER

I am not jumping.

HAIN

Jump or I'll push you.

Hain calculates the jump.

HAIN (CONT'D)

Count to five and order it to open.

PARKER

I want to jump with you.

HAIN

No. Do as I say.

A strange KEEN floats up, the GRATE of steel against steel. CLICKING.

Indistinct motion below.

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SILVER.

FENCE

What now?

KATE

It's impossible. No.

KATE'S POV: KATE ZOOMS IN - FAR BELOW, THE HIVE-TOMBS OPEN WITH SICKENING WET POPS AS AFTER-BIRTH EXPLODES OUTWARD. KRESH EMERGE FROM THEIR CHAMBERS, FOLDED, DISORIENTED, FURIOUS, DRIPPING AFTERBIRTH DOWN THE WALLS BEHIND THEM.

Hain peers over the edge. Kate and Hain whip back, look at each other.

HAIN

You see that?

KATE

I see it, but it's just not possible.

RRRRRRRUUMMMM, and the power grid beneath their feet POWERS on.  
Overhead, the crystal dome brightens. Oscillates.

THRUMB. THRUMB. THRUMB.

HAIN

Get going.

PARKER

What's going on down there?

KATE

My theory about the Kresh needs some adjustment.

PARKER

Adjustment?

Hain finishes hooking Parker up. Nods to Fence.

FENCE

I'm sorry.

(to Parker)

After you, asshole.

Fence pushes Parker off the ledge with a kick, kisses Kate on the cheek. She's already hooked up.

FENCE (CONT'D)

(to Hain)

Keep your eyes on her. You understand.

Fence leaps before Hain can reply. Hain grabs Kate, shoves her to the edge. She cants back against him.

Takes a deep breath. Hain inches them right to the edge. Wind forces her forward, she teeters. Long way down.

Hain slides up against her, hooks up to her harness. Speaks in her ear, lips pressed in to be heard against the wind. Damn, he makes her nervous.

HAIN

Relax.

Kate glances back at Hain. Can't tell if she should trust him, slap him or fuck him.

Another PULSE, louder. Another.

KATE

I can't do this, I really, really can't--

HAIN

Trust me.

KATE

No, wait--

Hain leaps with Kate.

KATE (CONT'D)

Haaaaiiiiinnn---

They disappear just as the power array BURSTS. White light pulses from the crystal dome, hits the array. The relay thrums. Rebounds up to the dome.

THRUM. THRUM. THRUM.

A bolt of light streaks from the cut-crystal dome, SPLINTERS, shines into the city, raising the temperature, the humidity, the light.

Power ON.

The City WAKES.

The KRESH are alive.

INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

The systems control room now fully online. The computer system focuses on the Kresh star.

A holographic image of the Kresh system appears overhead. The star appears to be growing in relation to the Kresh planetary system.

SUPER: STRANGE HIEROGLYPHICS.

INT. TOMB - THE CITY

After-birth runs down the walls as the Kresh seek warmth to dry.

Parker lands in a very narrow passage just outside the main hive complex. No illumination between the walls. Hits hard. Unhooks. Alone.

Scrambles up against the wall, merges into shadows to hide. Oppressive SILENCE broken by strange DRIPPING sounds, a SLITHER here and there.

He SNIFFS, GAGS at the reek. He's offended by the filth.

He stares at the dark tombs lining the outside walls, fouled with waste. Ajar, inviting him to peek.

Gingerly approaches. Can't see much unless he cracks open one of the hatches. In the distance, SHOTS distract him. He circles, completely disoriented.

Pulls out a TRACKING DEVICE. Beeps RED. Double-crossing bastard never said he could find Jess.

He takes off in the wrong direction. Realizes the mistake, turns around. Too enthusiastic, he slips in the black decay pooling at the center of the narrow crevice where he's landed.

PARKER

Shit.

Literally. A rustle inside one the individual cells diverts his attention. He pulls out his gun. Slips.

Inches forward, uses the gun to open the fine-silver hatch, just above his head. After-birth spills out. Parker's too jumpy, he shoots.

BAM-BAM-BAM!!!

A HAND grabs his shoulder. Parker jumps back.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Christ!

Fence grabs Parker's hand before he can shoot him. Also covered in crap. Hasn't improved his mood.

FENCE

Why don't you just send up a flare.

INT. SILVER CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Jess carries the talon wrapped behind her. Her eyes dart above her. KRESH. Everywhere. Following her. Joining her.

She freezes in her path. On the walls, behind her, Kresh blanket the wall, fluid silver.

She stops. Looks around. For a moment, the real Jess emerges. Fear on her face. She turns around.

A KRESH blocks her escape. SCREAMS at her. She stares at it, slowly backs up. The wings lower. Turns, continues back down the path.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE MAZE - THE CITY - SAME TIME

Hain and Kate land deep in the maze, the chute caught on one of the open hatches. Hain steadies them, attempts to swing over, use the open hatch to climb into a cell, get them down to the ground.

Kate grabs at his leg. Squeezes.

KATE

(whispers)

Freeze.

Beneath them, a Kresh. Huge. The still-open chute hides its full form from them.

Rasping breathing. The Kresh CRIES, plaintive. Moves away.

Hain unhooks, swings across to the open hive-tomb. Clasps Kate's hand, pulls her over. They drop the chute. It floats to the ground, gently.

Kate sits on the edge of the open hive.

Suddenly, a shadow blocks the light from above. Kate grabs Hain, heaves him inside the hive-tomb on top of her. Pulls the chamber-lid shut as the Kresh LEAPS for them.

The Kresh SLAMS against the closed lid. Hain fires through it. The Kresh KEENS, flexes its claws, then withdraws them. SILENCE.

Kate grips Hain's shoulder then...the covering is RIPPED away. Hain fires again.

They push further back into the wet inner chamber.

HAIN

How do we kill them!

KATE

Who says we can!

The Kresh, tangled in the chute, snaps at Hain's point-blank shots, backs out to pull off the chute.

Kate looks up. The surface is marred by rips from inside. She kicks at the back of the cell wall. It gives.

Hain turns, fires, circles a cut-out hole. Kicks at it. Enough for them to push the cut-out into the next chamber. Fetid after-birth pours inside.

The Kresh returns, starts to come INSIDE.

HAIN

Go!

Hain shoves her in. It STINKS.

KATE

But--

HAIN

Complain about it later.

The Kresh is on him, grabs his leg, he kicks free, hears SHOTS coming from the other chamber. Nothing seems to faze the damn thing. It plucks his rifle away, sniffs it, FASCINATED.

Hain takes that moment to squeeze in after Kate. Might be sorry he did. Kate's trying to kick out the seal, it's still shut tight.

And...there's a KRESH inside with them, very unhappy, trashing around. Hasn't emerged yet for some reason. It's snapping at Kate. She's caught on its head, trying to keep out of reach of the jaws.

KATE

Can't breathe.

She kicks at the seal. In close, it can't reach them in the tight space, eyes still shut tight. It's HUGE.

Hain grabs the rifle, uses the end to pry open the hive, CRACKS the silver cap open.

They're ALL expelled in a rush, Kate and Hain DRENCHED in after-birth, landing on top of each other. A mean-spirited HOWL as the Kresh shakes off the slimy hive-tomb matter.

Still disoriented from two-hundred million years sleep, it SNIFFS for them but they're covered in its own scent. Hain freezes, reaches for the rifle, just out of reach. Kate reaches down, grabs for his sidearm.

Then, a flutter of WINGS, a shadow overhead. Beating sounds of something flying away.

HAIN

(whispers)

Nothing's unstoppable.

KATE

(whispers)

The Tower-Builders stopped them. We weren't supposed to wake them up.

Kate and Hain, arms and legs tangled, adrenalin high. Kate looks at Hain, conflicted. He inches towards her, wipes disgusting crap off her face, gentle, at least he knows he wants this. Leans in...

HAIN

I shouldn't...

KATE

No, you...

She gazes into his eyes. Deep into his eyes. His EYES! Grabs his jaw.

KATE'S POV: SHE ZOOMS IN ON HIS IRIS. IN CLOSER. THE IRIS OF HIS EYE ISN'T NATURAL. MECHANIZED. A LIGHT FLASHES. HE'S RECORDING HER.

KATE (CONT'D)

You unscrupulous bastard. Is the Ministry getting the feed?

Furious, she kicks him off her. He lands right in a puddle of Kresh crap.

INT. THE MAZE - THE CITY

Fence hacks up dirty spit at Parker, just misses his leg. Parker pushes him back, offended.

FENCE

Hand it over.

PARKER

Go to hell-

Fence whips the scanner out of his clenched hands, examines it.

FENCE

Nice going, waking these fucking things up.

PARKER

That was an unfortunate miscalculation.

FENCE

An unfortunate miscalculation?

PARKER

Carter didn't know they were still alive! I'm tired of this insubordination--

FENCE

Don't talk.

Fence takes off, following the scanner signal.

INT. OUTSIDE THE BROKEN HIVE - THE CITY

Overhead, Kresh climb towards the sun to dry, reflecting sun and light. The dark city illuminates.

Kate stands, wipes off gunk and goo. Not much luck. Glares at Hain. He stands, grabs his equipment bag. Kate grabs the rifle, hefts it on her hip.

Kate takes off, Hain follows, rearming himself. More than a little chagrined, a lot annoyed. The Kresh collect far overhead, still drying.

KATE

Were you going to tell me?

HAIN

I--

KATE

When were you modified?

HAIN

It's not--

KATE

What's your mission? Answer the damned question!!!

HAIN

Stop interrupting me!?!

KATE

So you can lie to me?

HAIN

I can't get a word in edgewise.

KATE

Fine. Explain.

HAIN

Genetic modificat--

KATE

Anything besides your eyes?

HAIN

No.

KATE

Ha! Did you know you've got a serious tell? Your pupils dilate when you're lying.

HAIN

Only you can tell.

KATE

Anything else?

HAIN

Just the eyes.

KATE

You're lying. Anything else?

HAIN

A few things.

KATE

Why me?

HAIN

It's a rare gift. I thought--

Kate stops, turns on him.

KATE

What? We're the same? Soul mates? I'm going to understand you better than anyone else?

HAIN

Yes, maybe, if you hold still--

KATE

Go. To. Hell.

Beyond exasperated, he follows her, keeping a wary eye out for Kresh.

INT. OUTSIDE THE INNER SANCTUM - SILVER CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Deep into the structure, Jess stops. KRESH follow her, everywhere. Her eyes, theirs, reflecting silver.

Jess stands before enormous double-doors, ornate and sinister, with a large lock in the center.

Jess/Hive-Queen removes the large talon. Jess hefts the talon...

INT./EXT. OUTSIDE THE BROKEN HIVE - THE CITY

Suddenly, Kate pulls up, looks confused.

Another VISION, Kate sees the double-doors, the Kresh, Jess holding the talon up to the lock.

Kate weaves, keeps her feet.

KATE

(into comm-unit)

Turn around, walk away.

(into comm-unit)

JESS, TALK TO ME!

She shakes her head, works through the disorientation. Hain pulls her over, worried.

KATE (CONT'D)

I've lost her.

INT. INNER SANCTUM - THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Jess pauses, turns at the sound of Kate's voice, crackling over her comm.

KATE (O.S.)

Jess, please talk to me!

Jess rips her comm-unit off her neck, tosses it away. With her great strength, heaves the talon into the lock.

The enormous double-doors CLICK open with a tired MOAN. The room inside is stale. Jess smiles.

JESS

I'm coming.

Jess disappears inside. The Kresh gather OUTSIDE.

INT./EXT. OUTSIDE THE BROKEN HIVE - THE CITY

Kate's scared, turns to Hain.

KATE

We've got to hurry. Stop her.

Kate heads towards the tips of the silver spiked cathedral.

Suddenly, above their heads, millions of KRESH take to the air. Flying in perfect unified, organized patterns. They're even faster than the robots. They form rings overhead.

KATE (CONT'D)

They're getting ready to leave. As soon as they release the queen.

Hain checks his scanner.

HAIN

It's getting very hot in here.

HAIN'S POV: SPECTRAL ANALYSIS, SUNLIGHT INTENSITY. DIAGNOSIS: HYDROGEN BUILDUP IN STELLAR CORE.

Hain shows the data to Kate.

KATE

Supernova is a process that takes billions of years.

HAIN

We don't have that much time.

KATE

Right.

INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Fence and Parker step through the double-doors. The Kresh are every where.

Kresh behind them. Above them. All around them. A KRESH sniffs at them. Not interested.

PARKER

(whispers)

Why are they ignoring us?

FENCE

(whispers)

We're covered in that stuff from the tombs.

Fence steps on the silver ribbon. They pass Jess's jacket, blood on the silver ribbon. Examines the tracker.

Continue on.

INT. SARCOPHOGUS

The Kresh Hive-Queen SCREAMS inside her tomb, aware of intruders.

INT. THE MAZE - THE CITY - CONTINUOUS

Hain leads Kate past late-blooming Kresh emerging from chambers, hanging on walls. They slip through the narrow paths, racing past, unnoticed.

Hain pauses as they emerge from the maze at the base of the

TWISTED STAIRS

leading to the open double-doors of the Cathedral.

Kate looks at Hain, shakes her head as he fingers his rifle. Kresh wait outside the Cathedral. Silver-eyes stare, unblinking, forming long rows outside the cathedral.

MILLIONS, everywhere.

KATE

We're ants to them.

Kate inches out past the Kresh. They reach the stairs.

One of the Kresh turns, sniffs at her. Silver tongue comes out, curiously licks her.

The tongue SLICES across her cheek.

Kate BLEEDS bad. The Kresh moves after her. Tasting her blood. Hungry after the long sleep.

Definitely noticed this ant.

The Kresh KEENS at her. Bares teeth, razor sharp. Kate falls back. Eyes frozen on those talons as they reach for her...

Hain unceremoniously punches the fucking thing on the nose. It blinks the silver-eyes, STARES at him. Other Kresh turn.

They've been noticed.

Some kind of psychic connection.

Kate leaps up, grabs Hain's hand, together they race up the crooked path, reach the top of the stairs, the double-doors. Dive inside.

Angry Kresh follows.

INT. THE CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

More Kresh.

Kate pulls Hain down behind the massive body of one of the other Kresh just as Angry Kresh enters, looking for them.

Angry Kresh leaps inside. It's head whips back and forth, sniffing them out. Kate peeks up. Angry Kresh leaps, lands on the other Kresh.

A fight breaks out. The Kresh turn, several join in. A snowball of silver.

Kate and Hain dive for cover, just manage to slip away. Hain plucks Jess's jacket from the floor.

Kate steps onto the silver path. It BRIGHTENS, oscillates. THRUM, THRUM, THRUM.

KATE

Nice touch.

KATE'S POV: THREE SETS OF FOOTPRINTS. JESS, FENCE AND PARKER.

Kate races down the silver line, Hain alongside.

INT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - THE CITY - SAME TIME

Jess/Hive-Queen enters, before her, a gigantic, twenty-foot high, fifty-foot long

SARCOPHAGUS

glows in the center of an dark chamber. Liquid runes dance across the surface of the artifact which seems crafted of solid obsidian.

Jess screams, furious at the entrapment.

Another vision: Jess/Hive-Queen sees Kate and Hain running down the ribbon, coming for her.

Jess motions to Kresh lined up by the door, dispatches them with a knowing nod. They disappear, a sliver blur. Jess runs her hands over the sarcophagus. Eyes roll back in her head as she spasms.

Violently.

A sad KEENING fills the chamber.

INT. CATHEDRAL - THE CITY - SAME TIME

Fence and Parker slip into the sub-level where Jess left the blinking marker, her last act of genuine will. Parker grabs Fence's arm, quick glance at the scanner.

PARKER

Which way?

FENCE

There.

Fence takes off in the opposite direction. Parker stares after him.

FENCE (CONT'D)

I'm getting Jess. You're welcome to get lost.

PARKER

Wait! Show me again.

As Fence turns, Parker nails him with the butt of the gun. Takes the scanner.

Parker runs off following the scanner's beeping signal.

INT. ELSEWHERE IN THE CATHEDRAL - SAME TIME

The Kresh begin to WAIL and KEEN on another level as Kate and Hain find Fence on the ground, rubbing his head. Hain helps him up.

KATE

Fence?

FENCE

Didn't see that coming. Slippery bastard took off with our tracker.

KATE

(to Hain)

You gave them a tracker?

KATE'S POV: PARKER'S TRACKS. OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM JESS'S TRACKS.

HAIN

Trust me?

KATE

No.

HAIN

Good girl.

Hain pulls Kate in, kisses her fast as one of the KRESH drops from the ceiling, WAILING. Hain and Fence fire as Kate leaps back.

HAIN (CONT'D)

I'll get Parker.

HAIN'S POV: PARKER'S TRACKS LEADING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

Hain tosses off a charge, disappears in the falling debris. The Kresh rises, shakes off the blast. SQUEALS, races after Hain.

Kate takes off, followed by Fence.

INT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Jess wakes to find herself against the sarcophagus. The Kresh talon on the ground. She turns, places her hands on the sarcophagus. Rubs her face against it. Caressees it.

JESS

I'm here.

Jess retrieves the talon. The lock is just above her head, hefts the talon into her hands. Eyes the lock.

INT./EXT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - THE CITY

Kate races towards the doorway, stumbles, another vision as Jess picks up the large talon.

Pushes off from the wall, pauses at the Kresh around the entrance, Fence behind her. Jess's comm-unit on the ground. Kate picks it up, careens forward.

INT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - THE CITY

Kate stands in the doorway. Fence behind her.

KATE

Jess, stop!

Jess turns, just about to thrust the talon into the lock. She hesitates. Holds the tip at the edge.

JESS

Go away.

The sarcophagus begins to shake. Something INSIDE wants out...

KATE

They couldn't kill her, either.

JESS

You hear her? She's inside my head. It never stops!

KATE

I hear her. But I'm here for you.

Fence looks at them.

KATE (CONT'D)

The Hive-Queen's been awake. For eons. Unable to release her children.

Kate steps towards Jess. A few more steps.

KATE (CONT'D)

Put it down.

JESS

We have to free her.

KATE

Consider the implications. Your race or hers. You're human, Jess.

JESS

Not really.

KATE

Oh, but you are. So much so it I envy you.

Kate stands across from Jess. Jess breaks down at this, a hint of Jess comes through. Disappears again.

JESS

Millions of years, locked inside, trying to get out.

It's horrible.

TOUCH IT!

Kate looks at the sarcophagus, reaches out to touch it. It burns. Pulls away. Kate tries again. Makes full contact.

KATE'S POV: SEES OUTSIDE THE SARCOPHOGUS. THE COMPUTER ROOM. PARKER RUNNING TOWARDS IT. HAIN ON HIS TRAIL.

SEES THE HUNTERS ALL OVER THE CITY. JESS, LOOKING DOWN HER OWN BODY. KNOWS WHERE EVERYONE IS--SHE'S SHARING CONSCIOUSNESS WITH THE HIVE-QUEEN. SEES EVERYTHING THE QUEEN SEES.

Kate's on her knees, eyes bleeding. Blood drips from her tear ducts. She comes back, wipes her eyes, smears blood.

INT. THE COMPUTER ROOM - THE CITY

Parker wanders through the alien computer room following the scanner. Above, a holographic image appears.

He tries to use the touch-screen but he can't read Kresh.

PARKER

Fuck!

The automated image of the Kresh star appears.

HAIN (O.S.)

I've been monitoring massive radiation spikes in the solar core for hours.

Parker turns. Hain walks across the room, joins him. The holograph rotates, strange Kresh numerology flashes in the air above them.

HAIN (CONT'D)

The Tower-Builders had a back-up plan. The star's hydrogen is burning up, will culminate in inevitable interstellar breakdown.

PARKER

I never know exactly what you're saying.

HAIN

I get that. The sun's going to explode.

PARKER

Then download the data, let's get out of here.

HAIN

The download's finished. But we're not connected to the Ministry mainframe. It's all in here.

Hain taps his eyes.

PARKER

Then let's get out of here. You are very valuable to me.

Hain reprograms the tracker. Hands it to Parker.

HAIN

It'll take you to your ship.

Parker pauses, conflicted, heads after Hain.

INT. SARCOPHAGUS

Kate scratches and claws until her fingers bleed, trapped inside the sarcophagus, SCREAMING, trying to get OUT!

For millions of years...

INT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - THE CITY

Kate GASPS, returns to the chamber. Kate spits up blood. Recovers. Turns to Jess.

JESS

Help me.

KATE

No. Not this. Can't you see?

Kate grabs Jess, turns her around to look at the sarcophagus. They struggle, Jess easily tosses her off, slaps Kate HARD. Kate flies across the chamber.

FENCE

Jess, no!

Kate rolls over, face bleeding.

KATE

They'll start again. Every colony, every world. All life, GONE. They're monsters!

JESS

They're intelligent. You don't understand.

KATE

Lying is something sophisticated beings learn early in their development.

Jess shakes her head. Picks up the giant talon, slaps Fence out of the way. He flips over. Out cold. She turns, slides the talon into the keyhole.

The sarcophagus GLOWS brighter.

INT. CATHEDRAL - THE CITY

Hain barrels down a sub-tunnel, SOUNDS from the QUEEN ahead. Parker scrambles behind him.

INT. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER - THE CITY

Kate shakes off Jess's hit, leaps up. Grabs the talon, tries to pull it out, screams as she touches it. Goes down, stands back up, pulls.

Jess steps back as the sarcophagus shakes. Kate grabs it again, harder.

KATE  
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

KATE'S POV: SHE SEES WHAT THE QUEEN SEES. THE ENTIRE CITY. HAIN APPROACHING.

Kate dislodges the talon, the being inside the sarcophagus SCREAMS in fury. Kate grabs Jess as she steps in, replaces the talon. Tug-o-war ensues.

KATE (CONT'D)  
They kill. That's what they do.

Both women crying now. Kate pushes Jess, gets knocked off her feet again.

She hears the sound of GUNFIRE outside.

Kate rolls over,

TOUCHES THE SARCOPHAGUS: KATE'S POV: THE CHAMBER, HAIN JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR, THE KRESH TURNING ON HIM. SHE WILLS THE KRESH OUTSIDE THE DOOR TO STOP THEIR ATTACK.

The Queen SCREAMS in protest.

Hain runs inside, dragging Parker. Hain slams the chamber doors shut, braces them.

Kate turns back to her sister, pulls her off the talon.

JESS  
She's suffering!

KATE  
So will we if you let her out.

Kate ducks, realizes that as strong as she is, Jess could kill her in her deluded state. Jess SCREAMS, channeling the Queen in the sarcophagus, comes at her in a RAGE.

Kate pulls the talon part-way out, runs around the far side of the sarcophagus. Something pushes through the lid, GIANT TALONS force their way under the lid.

Fence wakes, climbs to his feet.

KATE (CONT'D)

Jess, snap out of it.

JESS

Release me!

KATE

Shit.

Kate uses her rifle to fend off Jess. She easily bats it out of her hand. Grabs a tumbled stone, poised to bash Kate's head in. Kate pulls her close. Forehead to forehead.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's me! Kate. Remember?

Jess stares at her sister. Stone in her hand. Fence pulls his handgun, aims for Jess's head.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's me. Come back.

Jess blinks.

JESS

Kate?

KATE

Come back to me. Please, come back. I love you, please.

Kate pulls her twin to her, hugs her tight. Jess drops the stone. Hugs her. Fence looks up at the sarcophagus.

FENCE

Um, might want to do something here.

Kate and Jess look up. Gigantic talons force their way under the lid of the sarcophagus. One talon, ripped off.

Together, they race to the talon, pull it out. Kate still reacts, Jess falls to her knees, grabs Kate's hand.

KATE

Don't leave me.

Jess looks worried, a junky afraid to touch the stash.

The sarcophagus dims. Inside, the Kresh WAILS. POUNDING on the doors. Not much time.

The lid STRAINS.

KATE'S POV: SHE SEES WHAT THE QUEEN SEES. THE KRESH ALMOST DIRECTLY BELOW THEM, ANOTHER STAR CHAMBER.

KATE (CONT'D)

Hain, can we get down another level?

HAIN'S POV: HAIN EXAMINES THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE FLOORING. SOLID BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK THROUGH.

He moves, sets charges from his bag, which he's managed to carry through all of their adventures.

HAIN

Get behind this thing.

Suddenly, the doors BURST open, KRESH POUR IN, headed for the sarcophagus to free the Queen. Jess stabs them with the talon, knocks them out of the way with it.

Hain fires but gunshots have no effect. He grabs Kate, everyone, including Parker, runs to the far side of the massive obsidian crypt.

They fight their way back as the Kresh COVER the sarcophagus, pulling it apart.

HAIN (CONT'D)

Get down!

THE CHARGES EXPLODE! Dust everywhere. A massive MOAN, The floor collapses.

KATE'S POV: PITCH BACK, DRAGS JESS, HAIN BRINGS FENCE, PARKER.  
THEY DIVE INTO THE HOLE.

Behind them, the lid of the sarcophagus strains, bursts open and  
THE ONE, THE QUEEN

frees herself from her prison. She's furious, glorious and pissed off.

INT. ANTECHAMBER - STAR CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Kate, Jess, Hain, Fence and Parker drop down into a tunnel.

Kate turns, stare up at a doorway identical to the star chamber on Carter-19. They run.  
Jess picks up the large talon. Follows.

HAIN

Got a problem--

SCREAMS behind them. The KRESH are coming.

HAIN (CONT'D)

There's a ship, but we can't get to it.

KATE

You've got a ship?

HAIN

Kate, listen, check the solar readings again--

The KRESH block their path. Hain shoots at the ceiling, drops blocks on them. Jess hits  
another one scrambling over. Slows them down.

JESS

What stops them?

HAIN

Nothing.

KATE'S POV: THE STAR CHAMBER'S DIRECTLY AHEAD, TO THE RIGHT.

KATE

Give me the scanner.

(examines it)

Shit. We're out of time.

Kate pivots, Hain, everyone else follows. A wave of silver follows. SCREAMS, stone collapsing, the queen follows.

EXT. KRESH STAR

The star expands, solar flares

BURSTING

from its surface.

INT. CATHEDRAL - THE CITY - MOMENTS LATER

Kate follows the scanner, rips around a corner. Slides to a stop.

A familiar antechamber. An arched doorway.

Another Star Chamber. Undisturbed for two-hundred million years. She scans the floor. Looking for traps.

KATE'S POV: RED SQUARES, BLUE SQUARES. Hot, cold. Traps.

KATE

Do NOT step unless I step.

Kate looks at everyone. Even Hain nods. She quickly moves across the floor, two steps forward, one step to the side, one back, three forward.

Quickly makes it to the sealed entrance.

KATE (CONT'D)

Jess?

Jess busts the seal, pulls the door open. They step inside.

EXT. KRESH STAR

The Kresh star EXPLODES. Six minutes to impact.

INT. STAR CHAMBER - THE CITY

Perfectly preserved. Identical. Except, there's no talon in the blue crystal block.

They enter, the star chart revolves around them. Jess pulls the doors shut.

KATE

Bust the lock.

Jess hits the lock with her fist. Hain shoots at the doorway just for good measure. Sealing them in. Checks the scanner.

PARKER

Fucking genius, all of you.

HAIN

We're committed now.

PARKER

Do you have any idea how this works?

KATE

I know exactly how it works. Between mamma-Kresh and my recorded imagery...

Kate runs to the platform, touches the crystal. Jess joins her, pulls out the talon. Hain leans against Kate, looks over her shoulder.

Outside the doorway, rubble crumbles. Kresh SCREAM at them. Hain looks around, checks his scanner.

HAIN'S POV: THE LIGHT CHANGES SPECTRUM. WHITE HOT INFRA-RAYS RADIATE.

HAIN

We're out of time.

KATE

Jess, help me!

Jess and Kate slide the talon into the slot in the block. The star chart revolves faster.

KATE (CONT'D)

They were run off Carter-19, escaped when the hive was disturbed.

JESS

Like the worms. Migrated.

KATE

When the Kresh fought the Tower-builders, they relocated here. They didn't reset the dial. We can go anywhere.

Hain grabs Kate's hand.

HAIN

Kate, listen.

KATE

Oh, for heaven's sake, I forgive you!

Kate and Jess lift the talon, attempt to find a spot.

Parker pulls his gun, aims it at Kate.

PARKER

Set it for Earth. Do it.

Kate shakes her head.

KATE

I won't do it.

HAIN

Parker, we're out of time.

PARKER

Easy choice.

Parker pulls the trigger, grazes Kate's cheek. The Queen slices at him, knocks Parker off his feet, snags him on her giant talon.

PARKER (CONT'D)

AH!

Fence and Hain try to pull Parker back but the Queen's stabbed him again. Blood spurts from his mouth.

PARKER (CONT'D)

Hain's got--

Parker dies. Kate looks at Hain, knows he's got yet another confession. When they've got time.

The Queen rips the entrance apart. Hain fires shot after shot.

KATE

It's not working. I'm doing something wrong. How long?

Hain checks the scanner, looks at her. Kate touches the panel. Nothing.

HAIN

Ten seconds. Eight. Hurry!

KATE'S POV: MARKS ON THE PANEL. SCRATCH MARKS FROM A TALON.

KATE

Shit, stupid.

Pulls out the small talon, Jess grabs her as her knees buckle from the contact. Together, they touch the panel. Tap out a path with the talon.

The star chart GLOWS above them.

ROTATES as she types in their destination. STARS appear, a PATH ACROSS THE GALAXY.

One STAR to another STAR and beyond.

Then it gets scary. The stars move in time, rotating forward and backwards, passing through a WORMHOLE,

INTO A NEW UNIVERSE. The STAR CHAMBER traverses the multiverse. Time and space.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh, my God. It's four dimensional.

HAIN

Just pick somewhere!

JESS

We could end up anywhere--

HAIN

We're out of--

The Queen reaches in, reaches for Hain. He ducks as she bites down on him. Kate sees, taps to save HIM.

EVERYTHING GOES WHITE.

EXT. KRESH HOMEWORLD

The shockwave hits the planet. Bursts into rubble.

INT. STAR CHAMBER

The holograph freezes on a planetary system. Fourteen planets, one white dwarf star.

In a BURST, the chamber stops the rotation.

HAIN

--time.

The Queen's head does not travel with the body.

KATE

Hain! Oh, my god.

Kate races over, looking for him. He pushes the Queen's open-mouthed maw off him. He grabs her, tight. She looks around. Jess pulls Fence up, hugs him.

JESS

Damn, that was a rush.

FENCE

Ah, silence.

The Kresh, gone.

Kate walks with Hain to the tumbled stone at the entrance. Jess and Fence fall on the platform steps, exhausted.

Sunlight peeks through, warm and inviting. Hain bends over, kisses Kate.

KATE

Wonder where we are?

Hain steps up to the rubble, peers out. Whips around. Can't contain the horror on his face.

HAIN

Don't look--

Kate pushes past him.

KATE'S POV: KRESH. EVERYWHERE. THE PLANET'S BEEN OVERRUN BY KRESH. SILVER-EYES, TEETH. SCREAMS FINALLY REACH THEM.

They look at each other.

KATE

We go again.

HAIN

How long?

KATE

Until we find a place without them.

Together, they begin again.

OVER BLACK:

KATE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh, God, no. They're everywhere.

JESS (O.S.)

Try again.

THE END.