

Antarctica

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5th Draft

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EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAY

The endless sheet of ice tucks away the continent into an eternal sleep. Everything remains the same here: frozen, numb and forgotten.

The sun strikes the motionless sea of white. The winds bellow with loneliness. They take the snow on a pointless journey it has seen an infinite number of times.

The ocean smashes into the coast and wrenches away a colossal block of ice. A piece of the continent is lost...

EXT. CAMP - ANTARCTICA - DAY

A blood-red tent prods out of the bleached tundra like a beacon broadcasting a warning: all survival on the surface is suspicious. And so is the man pacing outside the tent.

The man drags a large black bag away from the camp, past a frozen snow vehicle and through the depths of snow.

EXT. ANASTASIA STATION - DAY

Surrounded by mountains, still at the mercy of the winds, the research station, "Anastasia", stands firm and lonely.

Its two brutalist buildings air out a quiet pride in their victory over nature. They are connected by a glass passageway: the only window into the life of the station.

The man hauls the black bag with the last bit of strength. His long journey left a trail behind him, but any mark or sign of life on Antarctica is made just to be erased.

The man halts by the backdoor, twists the seal and the snow enters first. The man and his precious catch follow at once.

EXT. AIRFIELD - UN STATION - DAY

Another safe-haven on the continent: the "McEnroe" station. Larger than "Anastasia", not as remote and not as desolate. An airplane descends toward it.

The plane lands on the iced airstrip. This is the only way in or out of the place. Any other way is a certain death.

SUPER: 1981

The engine turns off and the propellers slow down. The most valuable passenger sticks her head out, ready to disembark.

But one glance is enough to know: she doesn't belong here. ISLA (30), steps out in a thin police uniform, without a hat or gloves or a complete understanding of where she arrived.

She shivers and scans the area for help. MARSHAL DAVIES (50) awaits on the strip, properly dressed and properly shocked.

DAVIES
What are you wearing!? You're going
to freeze to death!

Isla fights the cold on the way down the stairs.

DAVIES (cont'd)
Let's get you something warm!

ISLA
T-Thank you!

They march away in the rhythm of her clenching teeth.

INT. HALLWAY - UN STATION - DAY

Isla and Davies push their way through a hectic station. Their authoritative presence splits the mass of researchers and opens a way forward.

DAVIES
Name is Davies, I'm the Marshall
here.

ISLA
Isla - Officer Campbell.

DAVIES
You're not a detective?

ISLA
No, not yet.

A SCIENTIST emerges out of an office and almost crashes into Davies.

DAVIES
Hey, watch it!

SCIENTIST
Sorry, Marshall.

DAVIES
I apologize for the chaos, it's the
time of the move again.

ISLA
Move? What move?

DAVIES
What do you mean? We close down for the winter. You're the last person to arrive; everyone else is waiting to go the other way.

Isla shivers. Maybe the cold finally reached her bones.

ISLA
Nobody told me anything about that.

DAVIES
I'm surprised they sent anyone. And you're here alone?

ISLA
Yeah.

DAVIES
(chuckles)
You sure they even meant to send you here?

ISLA
-- I kind of volunteered.

INT. MARSHALS OFFICE - UN STATION - DAY

Davies searches through a closet and Isla rubs her arms and shoulders. She raises her chin high, as if she belongs here.

DAVIES
The winter is on the way and the storms are building. After that there's no in or out from Anastasia.

ISLA
And when is that?

DAVIES
Six days. Here-

He finds a jacket like his and gives it to Isla. Finally... It slides on her like a warm embrace.

DAVIES (cont'd)
Better, am I right?

ISLA
Warmer. But it's the wrong coat of arms.

She scratches at the U.S. MARSHAL badge.

DAVIES
They won't know the difference. The law is the law.

ISLA
I guess. So I have only six days to figure out what's going on?

DAVIES
If the weather doesn't get worse.

ISLA
Right.
(beat)
And what exactly is going on?

DAVIES
(chuckles)
You really didn't prepare much.

ISLA
It was a last minute call. They just said there's a researcher missing - Neil something, wasn't it?

DAVIES
Neil Walton. He was supposed to be here yesterday to gather the food and rest of the supplies for the winter.

ISLA
Didn't you say the station is closing down?

DAVIES
Not the Anastasia. They have some "special" research which needs to run all year round.

ISLA
What kind of research?

Davies sighs as if the answer is obvious, although they're both ignorant of the "science stuff" (as they'd call it).

DAVIES

From what I heard, they preserve dead bodies in hopes of reviving them in the future. You know, when the technology advances. Freaky stuff if you ask me. I also heard it's pseudoscience, but what do I know.

ISLA

So they will be trapped in there for-

DAVIES

Six months.

ISLA

Without any contact with the outside?

DAVIES

That's how it's always been.

ISLA

I was also told that the comms were down or something. Can't we contact the... Anamaria?

DAVIES

Anastasia. That's the other issue - they have gone silent.

Davies fiddles with the radio to make his point more lucid.

ISLA

Since when?

DAVIES

Also since yesterday morning.

ISLA

Could it be a coincidence? The comms go down at the same time a person goes missing?

DAVIES

That's why you're here I guess.

ISLA

Is there no other way to reach them?

DAVIES

Only in person.

ISLA

Right... Have you been there already?

DAVIES

You really came unprepared... I can't go inside the station.

Isla frowns, more at Davies' pointing out her ignorance than at her ignorance itself.

ISLA

Why not?

DAVIES

Anastasia is New Zealand property. They claim it as their territory so we only have research ties with them, nothing else. I have no jurisdiction there.

ISLA

I didn't know New Zealand owned a part of Antarctica.

DAVIES

Antarctica and the Arctic are the last pieces of land not owned by anybody, so everyone naturally wants a piece of it. That station is just an attempt of your government to establish some claim on it. And of course, they don't want anybody else coming in.

(beat)

That's why they had to get you here.

ISLA

I feel honored.

DAVIES

All I can do is drive you there.

Isla accepts the offer and tightens the coat around her.

INT. SNOW VEHICLE - DAY

Davies plows their way through the snow. The traces of road begin in the icy flat-lands and soon vanish among the hills.

Isla soaks in the scenery: all the remoteness, and silence, and lack of her old world.

ISLA

It's beautiful.

DAVIES

Oh, yeah, it's a special place. You grow to love it. In a way you must.

ISLA

What's there not to love?

DAVIES

It gets boring very quickly. Nothing changes around here - it's a place frozen in time.

ISLA

That's what I like about it.

Davies chuckles. Isla amuses him.

DAVIES

I really don't understand you.

ISLA

What do you mean?

DAVIES

Why would you choose to come here? I get that it's something different, but heck, I wouldn't mind some New-Zealand heat!

ISLA

That's what I needed - something different.

DAVIES

It won't stay like that for long.

ISLA

Neither will I. I just needed to get away for a while.

DAVIES

Is that why you came here? To escape your boss?

ISLA

-- That's definitely one reason.

DAVIES

I get that. That's why I'm here as well: no superiors and no bullshit. There are no rulers on Antarctica...

Isla stares out into the blank canvas and her imagination takes over. They near the mountains that hide the station.

EXT. ANASTASIA STATION - DAY

The snow vehicle made its way and left a deep trail. It halts in front of the frostbitten walls of the "ANA".

DAVIES

If anything goes wrong, or you don't feel safe, just contact me and I will come to get you.

Isla steps out and Davies hands her a walkie-talkie.

ISLA

So you think it's dangerous?

DAVIES

It's just in case. Back at the McEnroe, nobody has much respect for this place - and we usually hear weird stories about it.

ISLA

What kind of stories?

DAVIES

The type you make up when you're bored, but still... If you get stuck in a place like this for months on end... People do worse for less.

ISLA

Right...

ISLA accepts the gift and pushes through the deep white.

INT. CONTAINMENT ZONE - "ANA" BUILDING

The seal turns and Isla breaks into the containment zone. A light breeze joins her inside.

Isla breathes out a thick fog and shakes off the cold. On the side, she sees seven jackets on a rack. She puts down her bag, takes off her coat and hangs it up as well.

Isla trembles, places her hand on the gun and heads inside.

INT. HALLWAY - "ANA" BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

No cheerful welcome. No welcome at all.

Isla strengthens her grip on the gun; gains courage.

The walls are naked and gray, the light weak. The station satisfies all architectural standards, but none which please the human eye.

ISLA

Hello?

Nothing.

Isla strides past a few doors and mouths the names of those who reside there.

ISLA (cont'd)

Is anyone here?

No response. Only her footsteps disturb the silence.

Isla comes to a half open door and slowly pushes it open.

INT. COMMUNAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's the one and only place which feels alive. It was specifically designed for comfort and with humans in mind. On one side, there are dining tables and chairs and on the other some sofas and armchairs and even a table football.

ISLA

Anyone here!? It's the police.

VOICE (O.S.)

H-Hello?

Form the opposite side comes TIMOTHY (20), a young neurotic man, with a mess on his head and a debilitating stutter in his throat. He just steps in and-

Isla twitches. Eyes him with the gun. Timothy puts his arms up, turns away his head-

TIMOTHY

I-It's not m-me! I d-didn't do i-it?

ISLA

What's going on here?

TIMOTHY

I-I d-don't know! I'm s-s-sorry!

ISLA

It's okay, calm down.

Timothy backs into the wall. He suffers from the surprise more than fear. Isla, the reverse. Tim dares to look at her.

TIMOTHY
You-You're the p-p-police!
(yells)
Everyone - the p-police is here!

ISLA
Where is everyone?

TIMOTHY
C-Come out! W-We're s-s-saved!

ISLA
Calm down.

TIMOTHY
But-But you're here to s-s-save us!

ISLA
One step at a time. What's your name?

TIMOTHY
T-Timothy, but everyone calls me Tim.

ISLA
Alright, Tim. The yelling obviously
isn't helping. Is there a way to turn
these on? Then everyone can hear me.

Speakers stick out of the ceiling corners.

TIMOTHY
I-I hope so. F-follow m-me.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - LATER

Timothy and Isla loom above the radio on the desk. But their
only contact with the outside world is smashed to pieces.

TIMOTHY
S-somebody d-destroyed it. I-I s-s-
swear it wasn't m-me!

ISLA
No sudden movements, Tim.

TIMOTHY
S-Sorry.

Isla's rests her hand on the holster and inspects the
destroyed piece of technology.

ISLA
I see. Do you have cameras?

TIMOTHY
I don't know...

ISLA
Have you not seen any or-

TIMOTHY
I don't know! It's not my job!

Tim's outburst howls from the depths of his throat. Strong. Stutter-less. Isla stares him down.

TIMOTHY (cont'd)
I'm s-s-sorry...

She finds a microphone on the ground below the desk.

ISLA
Let's hope this works at least.

Isla puts the microphone on the table, turns it on. She taps, it reverberates.

ISLA (cont'd)
Members of the Anastasia, this is
Isla Campbell, I'm a police officer.

INT. ANASTASIA STATION - VARIOUS

Isla's voice echoes throughout the station.

HALLWAY:

ISLA (O.S.)
I was sent here by the New Zealand
authorities to investigate the
disappearance of Neil Walton.

GEOLOGY ROOM:

ISLA (O.S.) (cont'd)
I ask all of you who can hear me to
make your way to the communal area.

LABORATORY:

ISLA (O.S.) (cont'd)
Every single one of you is a suspect
in whatever this situation is.

THE VAULT:

ISLA (O.S.) (cont'd)
To warn you, I am armed and prepared
to shoot anyone who makes any
suspicious movements.

CRYONICS ROOM:

ISLA (O.S.) (cont'd)
I repeat: make your way to the
communal area. And don't do anything
foolish.

INT. COMMUNAL ROOM

Foots tap a nervous rhythm. The five remaining members have gathered, but it feels like this is the first time they are all together. They keep to themselves, dispersed, solitary.

AVA
Now where is this lady? She told us
to come, but she's not here.

AVA (44), a graceful woman whose every movement is somewhat theatrical, although precisely calculated, crosses her arms to demonstrate how annoyed she is.

EDGAR
At least somebody came.

EDGAR (60), an elderly man who could pass for Santa Clause if he was on the other pole, leans back at the dining table. Next to him is FLORENCE (25), a young, gentle woman, curled up into herself; she's the only one who dares to show fear.

FLORENCE
Did-Did they send someone all the way
from home?

GABRIEL (50) squeezes the cross of Our Lord and Savior in painful devotion. He gives up prayer and speaks with worry.

GABRIEL
Well, where is she then?

ISLA (O.S.)
Relax, I'm here.

Isla strides inside with Tim and everyone goes silent.

TIMOTHY
We got help! I found her first!

ISLA
Calm down Tim and find a seat.

Isla creeps to the middle of the room. Her hand never leaves the gun as she eyes out every single person.

ISLA (cont'd)
Is everyone here?

The only one who didn't say anything is JUSTIN (35). He's too absent-minded to remember to speak. He stares at his feet as if he's digging the ground...

AVA
Yes, this is everyone.

TIMOTHY
E-Except J-J-Jeffrey.

GABRIEL
And Neil.

ISLA
Right. Well, I'm here about Neil Walton. He was supposed to arrive at the McEnroe yesterday, but he never made it. I guess if he isn't here then he must be missing.

Eyebrows raise. Foreheads crease.

FLORENCE
A-Aren't you here because of Jeffrey?

ISLA
Who is that?

Silence. The suspects bow their heads, hide their eye-line.

ISLA (cont'd)
Who is this Jeffrey? Is he also missing?

AVA
-- He's dead.

ISLA
Dead?

EDGAR
Murdered.

ISLA
Here? On the station?

GABRIEL
In the cryonics room.

Isla lifts her hand as if to signal "stop".

ISLA
Alright, let's take a step back.
You're saying that this Jeffrey has
been murdered here on the station,
and that Neil is - where?

AVA
How should we know?

EDGAR
He's missing, you got that right.

ISLA
I need more details. When did you
last see him?

A cacophony of answers leaves no room for clarity.

ISLA (cont'd)
Enough!

Isla shuts them put. The command feeds her with confidence.

ISLA (cont'd)
Is there anyone in charge of the
station?

GABRIEL
That would be Jeffrey.

AVA
But Justin is next in command!

ISLA
Who's Justin?

Justin raises his head, not quite sure what's going on.

ISLA (cont'd)
Are you Justin?

JUSTIN
I-It's me.

EDGAR
Did they really only send you and no
one else?

ISLA
I am the one asking questions,
alright? Now tell me, Justin, what
happened?

JUSTIN
With Jeffrey or Neil?

ISLA
With both.

Justin searches for approval in the eyes of the others.

JUSTIN
We last saw them two days ago. Neil
was going to get the supplies and he
usually goes alone. But this time
Jeffrey joined him.

ISLA
Wait - both of them went? But didn't
you say Jeffrey was found in, in...

JUSTIN
In the cryonics room, right.

AVA
It's quite simple really: the two of
them left to get the supplies, they
came back to "Stasia", Neil killed
Jeffrey and then he ran away.

Isla doesn't trust it's so simple. And she doesn't trust
people who try to make it simple.

EDGAR
But why would he kill him here and
not out there?

ISLA
Enough. Who found the body?

TIMOTHY
M-me.

ISLA
When was that?

TIMOTHY
Y-Yesterday m-morning.

ISLA
And why didn't you report the murder?

TIMOTHY

I-I couldn't!

EDGAR

Have you seen our comms? Somebody
didn't want this to be found out.

Isla paces up and down the room. She can't think of any more
questions - she wants to give commands now.

ISLA

Is there any way to fix the comms?

Silence. She stumbled onto something.

ISLA (cont'd)

Is there?

GABRIEL

-- We have another radio in the shed.

ISLA

Excuse me?

JUSTIN

We have a spare radio in case of an
emergency.

ISLA

And don't you think this is an
emergency?

No answer.

ISLA (cont'd)

Why didn't anyone fix it and report
the murder?

No answer.

ISLA (cont'd)

Goddammit, why!? We could have sent a
forensics team as well.

No answer.

ISLA (cont'd)

Right. Tell me, Justin, are there any
guns or weapons present on the
station?

GABRIEL

Why would there be guns here?

JUSTIN

No, there are none. Why-

ISLA

I'm not sure any of you understand the situation you're in.

(beat)

If there has really been a murder on this station, then there is a murderer among you. This means each and every one of you is a suspect - and a possible threat to me, but also to everyone else.

AVA

That's preposterous - nobody here is a murderer!

TIMOTHY

It was N-Neil! H-He's m-mad...

EDGAR

He's mad? I bet you're involved, pretending to be confused and naive.

Edgar points at the clueless Timothy with his nose and head.

FLORENCE

(to Edgar)

Don't put the blame on him.

GABRIEL

If it was anyone, then it was Neil. Why else wouldn't he be back?

ISLA

I will make up my own mind on this. I'm first going to go to the, uh...

JUSTIN

Cryonics room.

ISLA

Yes, and you will take me there. Everyone else: lock yourselves into your rooms and don't let anybody in. I will come and talk to you later.

AVA

-- What about our work?

ISLA

Work?

AVA

We have to keep the station running -
no matter what.

ISLA

This is a murder investigation, I
hope you understand that.

FLORENCE

It says in our contract...

EDGAR

Why do you think we need to spend a
whole year here?

ISLA

Fine! I don't actually care...

The suspects won and they disperse.

ISLA (cont'd)

I just need someone to fix the
goddamn radio.

The room empties out and hopefully somebody heard her. Only
Justin remains. His weight shifting from leg to leg...

INT. GLASS PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Isla and Justin pace under a roof of snow. Isla slows down
and observes the mountains around them. Winds claw at the
glass tunnel. Snowflakes freeze on the glass.

JUSTIN

The other building is just down
there.

ISLA

Somebody said "Stasia". What does
that mean?

JUSTIN

Yes, uh, the first building is called
"Ana", it's our living space with our
rooms and the communal area. This
building here is called "Stasia".
It's the research area.

(beat)

They're just nicknames.

ISLA

You guys must be very bored.

JUSTIN

Yeah... It's not as bad as it seems.

INT. HALLWAY - "STASIA" - DAY

Justin leads and Isla follows. Naked walls, dim light and many doors. On the right is a door with a sign "LABORATORY". Next to it is another: "GEOLOGY LAB". On the left: "VAULT".

ISLA

Who works where?

JUSTIN

We all use the laboratory. Ava and Neil are part of our geology team and they are mostly here; Edgar and Florence are bio-preservation and they also take care of the Vault.

ISLA

And you?

JUSTIN

Me, Jeffrey and Timmy are part of the life-preservation team.

ISLA

"Life-preservation"?

JUSTIN

Cryonics, if you will. We take care of the preserved humans and try to find a way to cure them.

(beat)

It's this door here.

Justin moves to the side and Isla comes face to face with the sign "CRYONICS". It still doesn't make sense to her...

The secrets of this mysterious research air out from underneath the door. Isla nods and Justin unlocks the door.

INT. CRYONICS - MOMENTS LATER

There's something ominous about the room and it's not just the dead, beaten body of a man. It actually fits the atmosphere which already reeked of death.

On the left side of the room is an operating table with a massive piece of technology hanging over it. On the right side are almost two dozen containers with frozen bodies inside. In front of the frozen people, two desks.

The body lays by the operating table. Somebody didn't just want to kill him: they wanted to erase any sign of humanity from him. His face is smashed to a pulp and the torso has been planted with purple bruises.

ISLA

My God...

A puddle of water formed underneath the table. Isla kneels toward the body and examines it.

ISLA (cont'd)

Somebody really wanted him dead. His whole face is smashed in.

(beat)

This was personal.

Justin averts his gaze, taps his foot...

ISLA (cont'd)

This one's Jeffrey, right?

JUSTIN

-- Yeah...

Isla notices a trail of blood leading to the backdoor.

ISLA

Any other exits except this one?

JUSTIN

Just the main one. That's all.

Isla grabs hold of her stomach... and runs into the corner.

JUSTIN (cont'd)

Are you alright?

Isla pukes her guts out. Justin runs to her-

ISLA

I'm fine... Step away from me!

Justin steps back with his arms up.

JUSTIN

I was just trying to help.

ISLA

You are a suspect in this murder as well. You need to keep your distance.

Isla wipes off the puke from her lips, but the bitterness remains in her mouth and stomach.

JUSTIN

What kind of a cop are you? Have you
never seen a dead body before?

Isla ignores him. She notices a black bag of 2 meters height
by the pool of her vomit.

ISLA

What's this?

JUSTIN

I don't know. Just a bag.

Isla feels the material but her gaze drifts away, towards
the containers. These bodies creep her out more than the one
already marked by death. Ice covers and protects them.

Almost twenty of them. On the front side is glass, from the
belly and over the head. The person is visible, but the
reason which brought them in there is not.

ISLA

They're alive right?

JUSTIN

-- They have been frozen alive
because they have a disease incurable
with today's technology. Hopefully,
in the near future, we will have the
knowledge to unfreeze and cure them.

Isla walks down the row of the first five. She passes an
older gentleman and halts by a beautiful woman.

ISLA

And they are just going to stay here
until who knows when?

Justin refuses to look at the bodies and answer.

A blanket covers up one of the containers. It cloaks
whatever hides inside.

ISLA (cont'd)

What about this one?

JUSTIN

It malfunctioned a couple of weeks
ago so... she's, uh...

ISLA

Certified dead?

JUSTIN

-- Right.

In the corner, the generator softly buzzes and keeps the bodies "alive". Isla focuses on the two desks.

ISLA

Whose desks are these?

JUSTIN

This desk is mine and the other one
is Jeffrey's.

Justin's desk stands before the containers. Neat and spotless. Jeffrey's desk is in the corner. Ransacked without an attempt to cover it up. Half-open drawers. Pens and paper on the ground. Turned on computer waiting instructions.

ISLA

Somebody was looking for something.

Isla moves her palm through the mess. Sighs.

ISLA (cont'd)

Could you open the door for me?