

HAVE WORMHOLE, WILL TRAVEL

By
Tony McFadden

Based on the novel
Have Wormhole, Will Travel
By Tony McFadden

tony@tonymcfadden.net

INT. BOARDROOM ON AN ALIEN, EARTH-LIKE, PLANET

Council members -- tall, old almost human-looking aliens in hooded robes -- sit at a circular table with empty and near-empty drinks, and plates containing scraps of food.

The COUNCIL LEADER raps bony knuckles on the table.

COUNCIL LEADER

The final vote is complete.
Majority favor action. I will
notify the control room to acquire
the target.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mission control vibe. Senior alien sitting in position of authority receives a message on a futuristic-looking display. Activates speaker. Dozens of lab-coated alien technicians sit at various consoles.

Buttons are pushed, switches are flicked.

The following scenes happen in rapid order.

EXT. TARGET PLANET, ALIEN MOTORWAY - DAY

Vehicles fly through the air, vaguely similar to earth cars. Hover bikes weave in and out of traffic.

INT. TARGET PLANET, ALIEN OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Massive thin monitors line the wall. Flight patterns of cars, motorbikes, aircraft of all sort streak across the screens.

Vaguely human-like bipedal aliens man hi-tech consoles.

EXT. TARGET PLANET, ALIEN BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Aliens with portable communications devices listen to music, send messages, all the things Earth teenagers would be doing at the beach, but with better equipment.

A CRACKLING sound is heard simultaneously on all of the devices. They look up. Green-ish bands of light flash across the sky. Communication devices fail.

INT. TARGET PLANET, ALIEN OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Alarms start, then stop. Screens go blank all at the same time. The lights drop, enveloping the room in darkness. Phones are dead. Electronic door locks seize shut. Panic ensues.

EXT. TARGET PLANET, ALIEN MOTORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Smoke rises from crashed vehicles. Cars, hover-cycles are on the ground. Planes are falling from the green-streaked sky.

SMASH TO:

EXT. THE CORSO, PEDESTRIAN MALL IN MANLY, AUSTRALIA - TWILIGHT

It's the final night of the Annual Manly Jazz festival. The Corso is packed with increasingly inebriated jazz lovers, paying more attention to each other than the music.

Two men sit at an outdoor table. They have close cropped dark hair, pale skin and are noticeably fit -- younger versions of the COUNCIL LEADER.

CALLUM, the taller of the two, picks at his dinner. His friend, JACOB sips a drink. Classic jazz is playing off screen.

A rhythmic BEEPING is heard under the music. Both Callum and Jacob reach for their pockets.

CALLUM

I'm vibrating.

Jacob squints at his phone.

JACOB

Damn. The council has done another one.

Callum holds up his phone.

CALLUM

And I've got to go back home. The big boys want to chat about something, and I quote, "of extreme importance".

Callum stands and surveys the crowd.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You going to stay?

JACOB

Yeah. Might hang out here for a bit.

Callum ducks down a walkway and Jacob spins in his seat to watch the band.

As he turns he sees SABRINA (20s, auburn-hair) in a bikini covered by a T-shirt bearing "Manly Vampire Lovers Association" across the front.

Sabrina is a block away and hasn't seen him yet

JACOB (CONT'D)

Fuck.

The chair tips over as Jacob stands and makes a run for it.

Sabrina's attention is drawn by the clatter.

SABRINA

Hey!

Sabrina runs after Jacob, mobile phone in hand. She attempts opening the camera app on her phone, bouncing off people.

Jacob looks over his shoulder and speeds up. He turns a sharp right and disappears into a parking garage.

Sabrina, puffed, turns the corner and stops, looking at the garage.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

You in there, big guy? And where's your friend?

Sabrina walks closer and stops. Holds her phone out, but doesn't go closer.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

I don't know why you keep running.
 We're not going to hurt you.
 (quietly)
 We're simpatico.

There's no response. Sabrina looks for a beat, then turns and walks away, looking at the profile shot of a running Jacob on her phone.

Behind her Jacob slips out of the parking garage and heads in the opposite direction.

EXT. MANLY BEACH - NIGHT

Sabrina sits on one of the steps leading to the beach, plugs ear buds into her head and dials a number.

SABRINA

Mandy, what are you up to?

MANDY

(filtered)
 My third glass. Why?

SABRINA

I just sent you a picture of one of them. Side on. Not a bad pic. Can you meet me at the beach?

MANDY

(filtered)
 I'm not swimming this time of night.

(beat)

Ooo. I got it. The shorter one, right? He can bite me.

SABRINA

He's around here somewhere. I want you to help me find him.

EXT. NEAR MANLY WHARF - NIGHT

Callum walks up West Esplanade from the Wharf, ducks up a one-way street to an apartment building at the top of the hill.

He enters the foyer of the building and a tabby cat HISSES at him.

CALLUM
Piss off. Damned animals.

INT. CALLUM'S APARTMENT

It's a large apartment. The furniture is high quality antique. Australian indigenous art hangs on the walls.

A full-length mirror is attached to the back of the door.

Callum places his left hand on the mirror, enters a code on what looks like a home security panel. Then he disappears, sucked into the mirror with a shimmer of light.

INT. QUARANTINE ROOM, ALIEN PLANET

The room is poorly lit. Walls are curved, no corners. On one side of the room an old, wizened ELDER sits at his desk.

A mirror similar to the one in Callum's apartment is on the wall. There is a shimmer, then:

Callum steps through. Braces against the increased gravity. Takes a deep breath and wrinkles his nose.

CALLUM
What's that smell?

The Elder sniffs, then shakes his head.

ELDER
You got the notification of the latest Council action?

CALLUM
Yeah. What'd they do?

ELDER
Faster than light travel. Broke the barrier. At that point they became a threat.

The Elder stands. He extracts a tablet from somewhere in his robes, turns it on and slowly shuffles across the room.

ELDER (CONT'D)

Let's talk about your planet. How closely have you been following the advances in physics?

CALLUM

Dark matter has been proposed and accepted, and they believe they've detected it by inference. Negative mass is still just an equation.

ELDER

The ability to manipulate dark matter changes everything.

Callum walks to the lone window and looks out. Light is dimmer on this, his planet. The area looks like a typical Earth government facility, all utility, no style. Except some of the vehicles hover.

CALLUM

They're not there yet.

Callum turns away from the view.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

We were wondering, since we're doing so well, if we could get an extension at our current location. Sydney is nice.

A wry smile flits across The Elder's face as he holds up his tablet

ELDER

I have a paper written by a Dr. Sam Sheppard. He is dangerously close to creating manageable wormholes.

The Elder smiles and Callum swallows.

ELDER (CONT'D)

What happened? You fall asleep?

Callum straightens from the wall.

CALLUM

How do you know this?

ELDER

I could ask you how you don't.
Claudio sent us the paper. First he
catches cold fusion, and now he
catches this.

Callum shrugs in acknowledgement.

CALLUM

Why didn't you get Claudio to come
back?

ELDER

Because Sheppard is in Sydney and
Claudio is in Moscow. This is your
responsibility.

CALLUM

I'll check out this professor, but
I'd bet my life that this is all
just theoretical.

ELDER

You're betting the planet's life.
Confirm that the information in the
paper this Professor published is
real, and we'll act.

Callum stares at the Elder for a beat, then turns to leave.

ELDER (CONT'D)

Hang on a moment. I'm not finished.

The Elder reaches into his robes and retrieves two
cylindrical objects, about 30 cm long and 2 cm in diameter.
He hands them to Callum.

Callum hefts them.

CALLUM

So I don't have to walk through
that damn mirror anymore?

ELDER

That bridge will remain functional.

He dismissed Callum with a wave of his hand

ELDER (CONT'D)

I expect a report back on Sheppard
as quickly as possible.

Callum stares at the Elder, pockets the wands and exits the way he came in.

INT. CALLUM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jacob sits on the sofa playing a video game. Killing aliens. There's a slight dimming of the lights as Callum steps through the mirror on the back of his wall.

The game console resets.

JACOB

Son of a bitch. You gotta do
something about that.

Callum takes a deep breath and smiles. Curtains flutter in an open window.

JACOB (CONT'D)

What did the old guy want?

Callum tosses him one of the wands.

CALLUM

Well, we got these. Finally.

Jacob presses his thumb on the end. Its body glows with an internal light.

JACOB

Very cool. That was it?

CALLUM

No such luck. Claudio picked up
that my guy is very close to
exploiting wormholes.

Jacob tosses the game controller on the floor and leans back.

JACOB

Isn't that something you should
have picked up on?

CALLUM

Yeah, I know. So, what are you doing here? I thought you were going to hang around and listen to the music.

JACOB

One of those vampire hunter twits almost caught me. Had to hide behind a van in the parking garage to avoid her. It's embarrassing.

CALLUM

Could be worse. A couple hundred years ago it was worse.

Callum sits down with his laptop and types Sheppard's name into a search engine and sits back, looking at the results.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Doctor Samuel G. Sheppard, Professor of Applied Physics at Sydney University. Hey, I know this guy. I've seen him on the beach, chasing that fitness girl around.

Callum opens a graphics program.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Any ink in the printer? I need to fake up some credentials.

EXT. NORTH STEYNE BEACH - NEXT DAY, EARLY MORNING

SAM SHEPPARD (30-ish, reedy thin) pale and sweating profusely, runs behind the slightly taller and much more fit and tanned JACKIE WILLIAMS (mid-20s).

They get to the end of the run and collapse on the sand. Sam looks at his watch.

Jackie swallows a mouthful of bottled water and pushes herself to her feet.

JACKIE

Get up. We've got to cool down. Some basic T'ai chi moves.

SAM

Nope. I've got to get to the lab.

JACKIE

Come on, Sammy. Loosen up a bit.
Enjoy life. It's not all about
work, right?

Sam shakes his head as he gets to his feet.

SAM

Right now it is, sweet-cheeks. And
I've got to run.

Jackie watches him plod through the sand to his car. He gets in and drives away without a look back.

JACKIE

Beautiful.

Jackie wipes sweat off her neck then steps through the T'ai chi on her own, alone on the beach, not happy.

INT. HALLWAY IN PHYSICS BUILDING, SYDNEY UNIVERSITY - LATER

Callum wears a suit and non-prescription glasses. He looks at a picture on his phone, then up at the man approaching him.

CALLUM

Excuse me, sir. Doctor Sheppard?

Sam looks up and barely slows his walk towards his class.

SAM

I'm busy. Talk to my secretary.

CALLUM

I'm Doctor Callum, with the Nobel
Committee. We read your recent
paper with interest. I'd like to
sit in on a couple of your
lectures, if that's okay. Maybe see
your lab?

Sam stops and smiles. Shakes Callum's hand. Callum hands him a (recently created) business card and shows him a (fake) Nobel Committee I.D. Card.

SAM

Nobel committee? That's unexpected.

CALLUM

Surely not. Your paper is ground breaking.

Sam stands a little straighter.

SAM

Follow me. Class starts in thirty minutes.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - THE CORSO, MANLY

Jackie picks at her fruit salad, drops her fork on the table and takes a sip of her grapefruit juice.

Sabrina and MANDY (mid-20s, slightly overweight with blue-tinged hair) sit across from her. They both look a little worse for wear.

Jackie's wan smile does not go unnoticed.

MANDY

Why the glum face, Jacks?

Jackie shakes her head and pushes away her bowl of fruit.

JACKIE

What gets you two up this early?

SABRINA

I know you don't believe in this, but we've been tracking a vampire guy. All night.

Sabrina shows Jackie Jacob's picture on her phone and then sends it to her.

Jackie snorts.

JACKIE

I've seen him around. You think he's a nocturnal blood-sucker who lives forever? In Manly, by the beach? Except sun turns him to dust?

SABRINA

Scoff all you want. I saw him last night.

MANDY

They're very sexy. He can bite me any time.

Jackie smiles and cocks her head

JACKIE

You guys know vampires aren't mathematically possible, right?

MANDY

I hate maths. How?

JACKIE

If they need to feed on non-vampires to live, and everyone who gets bitten becomes a vampire, then if they only bite once a month, the entire population of Earth would be blood-suckers in less than three years.

MANDY

No way.

Sabrina opens the calculator app on her phone and starts multiplying by 2. Repeatedly.

She looks up with confused surprise on her face.

SABRINA

She's right. Over eight and a half billion in thirty-four months. Damn.

(beat)

So what are they then?

MANDY

Aliens?

JACKIE

Aliens.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

(to Mandy)

You think so, too?

MANDY

Maybe. What other options do you have?

Mandy taps Sabrina on the arm.

MANDY (CONT'D)

We're going to have to change the name of the club. Manly Alien Lovers Association? Doesn't matter. They're still hot. I wouldn't mind getting probed by them.

Jackie laughs and stands.

JACKIE

Thanks, girls. I needed the laugh. Since you're both up and around, why don't you pop by my spin class at the Uni this afternoon? My treat.

MANDY

You saying I'm fat?

JACKIE

(smiles)

Never. But a good bike ride never hurt anyone.

Mandy holds her head in her hands.

MANDY

Not today. Tomorrow, maybe. I need sleep.

Sabrina nudges Mandy in the ribs.

SABRINA

It's on campus. Hot guys.

MANDY

No. I'd puke all over them today. But definitely tomorrow.

INT. CLASSROOM, SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Sam holds court over half a dozen students working on their Masters Degree. Callum sits quietly in the back.

Sam acknowledges the sole female in the room.

SAM

Lady and gentlemen.

He looks at each student one at a time, then to the back, at Callum.

SAM (CONT'D)

String theory. The fundamental --
truly fundamental -- building
blocks of the entire universe. I
know you all know the theory and
the relationships in quantum
mechanics. I'm confident you all
will do well in your written exams.
But where do you go from here?

A student in the front puts up his hand. He's a stereotypical, shaggy haired, be-speckled geek. His name is BOB.

SAM (CONT'D)

Yes George? What's next for you?
Who's footsteps will you follow?

BOB

The name's Bob. Crew Chief at
McDonalds, if I'm lucky. Not much
work in this field.

Sam shakes his head.

SAM

You're embarrassing yourself.
Wormholes. You know that the
Einstein-Rosen bridge, popular with
Thor, actually isn't stable.

Sam makes sure Callum is listening.

SAM (CONT'D)

We should be calling it the Morris-Thorne bridge because those guys were the ones who theorized the existence of a sphere of exotic material necessary to keep the bridge open.

Callum leans forward. Sam notices.

SAM (CONT'D)

Negative mass strings - superstrings - push the idea along farther. There are threads, if you'll excuse the pun, which tie all of this together. We are much closer than you think. I have --

Sam stops pacing in front of class and smiles.

SAM (CONT'D)

I have a feeling you all should do some more reading. We'll pick it up later. See you all tomorrow.

Sam walks to the back of the class as the students file out, talking among themselves. He watches them leave, then addresses Callum.

SAM (CONT'D)

Is there anything specifically you'd like to discuss?

CALLUM

You really made a breakthrough?
Where have you been doing the work?

SAM

What do you mean?

CALLUM

If you're as advanced as I think you are, you need to produce a huge amount of energy. Or are you still just at the theory stage?

Sam walks Callum to the front of the class.

SAM

Wait until after my next lecture.
I've got something to show you.

Sam fishes through his desk and pulls out a visitor's card on a lanyard.

SAM (CONT'D)

This will let you walk around
mostly uncontested. I'll catch you
later.

CALLUM

Thanks, Professor. I'll find
something to keep me busy.

INT. PHYSICS BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Callum stands outside an office. "Dr S. Sheppard" name plate on the door. He jiggles the handle. It's locked.

Callum looks up and down the hall. Clear. He grabs the doorknob and squeezes it. Twists hard and the door pops open.

INT. SHEPPARD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Equation-filled white boards line one wall. Callum looks at the equations, concerned. He follows a couple of them with his finger, scowling.

The thin layer of dust covers files and folders littering the desktop and tabletops. Callum wipes a finger through the dust. Frowns. Something else, somewhere else.

He spots a door at the back of the room. It's solid steel with a small wire-meshed window.

Callum looks through. The view is restricted, but he sees machinery and what looks like a large number of high-voltage feeder lines.

A noise in the hall interrupts his prying. Callum slips back out of the office, pulling the door shut behind him. He slides his phone out of his pocket and calls a number.

CALLUM

Jacob, find your way to Sydney University. There's a cafe by the Physics Building. Ralph's, I think. Meet me there as soon as you can.

EXT. SYDNEY UNI'S "THE SQUARE" - LUNCH TIME

Callum and Jacob leave Ralph's and walk outside with sandwiches and drinks and sit on the ground, their backs against the trunk of a large tree.

The open area is littered with people, mostly couples, on blankets or towels having make-shift picnics or studying. Spring is in the air.

JACOB

What's this about?

Callum looks around, checking that they have some measure of privacy.

CALLUM

Sheppard made some cryptic comments to his grad class about wormholes. Seemed to have a very good grasp of what was required.

JACOB

Bullshit. He's just --

Callum shakes his head and holds up a finger.

CALLUM

I'm not finished. I broke into his office. Had a look around. He's been going at this on his own. And advancing very rapidly.

JACOB

So what's the plan?

CALLUM

What we always do. Discredit the research, make the scientific community ostracise young Professor Sam Sheppard. Make him look like an idiot.

Jacob taps Callum's arm and points across The Square.

JACOB

That's him, right?

Callum watches Sam and Jackie sitting down for their lunch. Callum closes his eyes, a look of concentration on his face.

CALLUM

Shhh. I'm listening.

OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Jackie walks behind Sam, bag lunch in her hand. She rolls her cold drink across the back of her neck. Tension between them is thick.

JACKIE

Hot for October. Summer's going to be a bitch.

Sam drops onto the ground and leans against the fence.

SAM

Pull up a chair.

Sam pats the ground beside him and gives her a smug, self-satisfied smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't think we're going to be here in the summer.

Jackie eases down beside him and opens her drink.

JACKIE

We've got a good life here. Why would we leave?

SAM

This is something so huge you won't have a choice but to come with me.

Jackie looks at Sam like he's just suggested a three-way with the Queen.

JACKIE

We all have a choice. And I'll make my choice based on what's best for me.

She unwraps her sandwich and takes a bite. She uses the time chewing to think about what her response should be. She clearly wishes she was somewhere else.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I can't imagine anything you've done that would make me want to go anywhere with you. Not the way you've been treating me lately.

Sam scratches his head. Looks at her with his head cocked to one side.

SAM

I was never good at relationships. You know that. But this is so much bigger than petty arguments.

JACKIE

Petty? You've been treating me like shit. Not cool.

SAM

Seriously. This is brain-breaking stuff. You've heard about wormholes? Not science fiction any more. Science fact. I've got --

JACKIE

I don't care. Really. You could have invented time travel and I wouldn't care.

SAM

Well --

JACKIE

It's not the job. Don't you get it?

SAM

Back to the time travel --

JACKIE

No. Stop interrupting me. This relationship, if it was ever going to work, needed us to care more about each other than we care about our jobs. And it's not happening.

SAM

The money I'm talking about will stagger you. I'll be able to afford anything I want.

JACKIE

You really don't get it. I've got to go before I hit you.

Jackie pushes herself up and grabs her drink. She walks away, stiff-gait, not happy.

Sam lurches to his feet and scrambles after her.

SAM

Come on. Seriously? Jesus.

BACK ON CALLUM'S SIDE OF THE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

CALLUM

You heard that?

JACOB

Yeah. She's definitely pissed. And hot.

CALLUM

I think he's done it. Son of a bitch.

Callum looks at his watch and leans his head against the tree.

JACOB

You're going to let the council know about this, right?

CALLUM

I don't know. I like it here. Seriously like it here.

(MORE)

CALLUM (CONT'D)

And I want to stay here. But I
can't do that if the council toasts
the place.

Callum stands and brushes off leaves and dirt. He sees Sam notice him and waves back. Sam starts walking toward them.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here. I don't want
to talk to him right now.

EXT. BACK OF THE PHYSICS BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

CALLUM

I'm not going to tell the old guy
anything definitive, just that I'm
going to take care of it. If you're
asked, stick to that story, okay?

JACOB

You're playing with fire, Cal.
You're going to get burned.

CALLUM

I'll take my chances.

Callum takes the wand out of his pocket and looks around. Nobody else is back there.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

So how's this thing supposed to
work again?

INT. QUARANTINE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Callum steps into the middle of the quarantine room and puts the wand in his pocket. He walks around the room twice, slowly, before the door opens with a hiss of air.

The robed Elder shuffles in and sits at his desk and points at the chair across from him.

ELDER

So, do we fry the planet?

Callum sits across from the Elder.

CALLUM

Professor Sheppard talks a good story, but he hasn't harnessed it yet. I don't believe he's a threat.

The Elder looks at Callum and slowly sits up straight.

ELDER

You don't believe he's a threat?
And if you're wrong?

Callum scrubs his face with his hands. Shakes his head and clenches a fist at his side.

CALLUM

I'm not. I can influence his work. It'll be a junk science before he knows what hit him.

ELDER

For this, this, sub-standard species to have reached the point that they appear to have reached, they would have had to have been working on it for a long time. And you had no idea.

The Elder shuffles back and forth.

ELDER (CONT'D)

You have placed us in a very untenable position.

CALLUM

But --

ELDER

Shut up. How long have you been on that rock again?

CALLUM

About four hun--

ELDER

It was a rhetorical question. A species of mind-numbingly stupid, incredibly xenophobic and violent beings now have, or very soon will have, the technology to reach us.

(MORE)

ELDER (CONT'D)

I will recall the others and we will get rid of the species.

CALLUM

Get rid of? Wait. The guidelines say the response is to "eliminate the technological threat". Not eradicate the species.

ELDER

They'll no longer be a threat, trust me.

Callum stands and takes the wand out of his pocket.

CALLUM

The scientist is an asshole. It's highly likely he is just making this up. That's a flimsy reason to wipe out an entire planet.

ELDER

That is not my problem.

CALLUM

I'm going back. If he's anywhere near developing the technology, I'll terminate it. The technology. Not the people.

Callum presses his thumb on the end of the wand.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Give me the time.

The Elder looks at Callum, then at the wand. He shakes his head.

ELDER

My mind is made up. Council meeting and decision today.

CALLUM

You won't do it while I'm there.

ELDER

Don't bet on it.

Callum twists the business end of the wand, feels the familiar internal tug and steps into:

INT. CALLUM'S LIVING ROOM, MANLY - NIGHT

Callum appears in the middle of his living room.

Jacob looks up from his video game. Destroying aliens again.

JACOB

Hey. The game didn't reset this time. So, it went well, then?

CALLUM

Not so much. The old dude is adamant. Zap. Reboot Earth.

JACOB

Gamma rays?

CALLUM

That's the usual method.

JACOB

They realize that the people on this planet won't survive that?

CALLUM

He knows. I don't think the Council cares.

Jacob drops his controller on the sofa. Looks up at Callum.

JACOB

Damn. We better get out of here.

CALLUM

Not yet.

JACOB

You have a suicide wish?

CALLUM

They won't do it. Not while we're here.

Jacob groans and closes his eyes.

JACOB

Really? I don't know about this.

Callum frowns and lets out a slow breath.

CALLUM

I'm going to take a walk. I'll be back in a little. I need to get some fresh air and think.

EXT. MANLY HARBOUR BEACH - NIGHT

The water laps around Callum's feet. Sailboats bob in the cove. The lights from the ferry reflect off the water in counterpoint to the moon's reflections.

Jackie walks down the beach and stands near him.

JACKIE

Nice, isn't it?

CALLUM

Calming. What are you doing down here?

JACKIE

Probably the same as you. Wanted to clear my head.

CALLUM

You okay? You're not your usual vivacious self.

JACKIE

You know me that well?

CALLUM

I see you down here every morning, laughing and making a fool of Sam.

Callum catches the look on her face.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have mentioned him?

JACKIE

It's not working out between us.

Jackie takes a couple of steps closer. Stands beside him.

CALLUM

Well, you know, just between us, I never knew what you two had in common. He's the brain and you're the brawn, right? Or you're the beauty and he's the beast?

JACKIE

Let's go with beauty/beast. It was always going to take a bit of work, but I guess neither one of us worked at it hard enough.

Jackie takes a deep breath of the sea air and visibly relaxes.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I see you around a lot, too, you know. Strange characters, you and your pale friend. I thought you two were gay.

CALLUM

Not that there's anything wrong with that, but no, we're not. So, you come here often?

Jackie laughs and elbows him in the ribs. She stops and feels the muscles in his arm.

JACKIE

Wow. Why is it I never see you in a gym, yet you're solid like a rock?

CALLUM

Good genes.

Jackie shakes her head and looks up at the stars.

JACKIE

I've been watching you and your not gay friend a fair bit lately.

CALLUM

Stalker?

JACKIE

Tall, fit, just like surfer dudes,
except you're as pale as ghosts.
And only out at night, usually.

Callum looks at the color of his arm, a half-smile on his face.

CALLUM

We don't like the sun. Melanomas,
and all that.

JACKIE

So you choose to live by the beach?
I don't think so.

Jackie looks up at Callum, embarrassed smile. She leans a little closer.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

My girlfriends and I have a theory.
You're going to think I'm nuts.

CALLUM

Try me.

JACKIE

You're both aliens.

CALLUM

Yeah, you're nuts.

He smiles and looks down at her looking up at him.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Certifiable.

JACKIE

Maybe. Maybe not. At first my
friends thought you two were
vampires. Surely aliens isn't as
ridiculous as that.

Callum cocks an eyebrow and smiles at her.

CALLUM

You've got a point there.

Callum and Jackie stand silent, watching the small boats putter around Manly Cove.

JACKIE

This is the most relaxed I've been in days, Callum. Thanks for listening.

CALLUM

You hardly talked.

JACKIE

Yet still you listened. I've got to go. We should catch up later, when I've finally told Sam to bugger off. I think I need a drink. You should stop by my place some time. I'm up at the end of the cove.

Jackie smiles at Callum and walks off up the beach, the streetlights reflecting off her blonde hair. Callum watches as she disappears around a bend.

CALLUM

(quietly)

Maybe I'll take you up on that someday.

INT. SAM'S PHYSICS LAB - NIGHT

Sam hears noise in the hallway. He quickly covers the notes on his desk and checks the door. He sees a student turning at the end of the hall.

He locks the door and makes a phone call.

SAM

Dean Vernon? Dr. Sheppard here. Big favor to ask.

DEAN

(filtered)

It's late, Sam. Can it wait until morning?

Sam walks to the door, cracks it open and looks down the hall. Clear.

SAM

Most definitely not. I need security.

DEAN

(filtered)

What, like a bodyguard?

SAM

No.

(beat)

Well, that would be cool. No, no. Building security. There are people snooping around. I think my office was broken into earlier.

Sam returns to his desk and slumps in his chair.

DEAN

(filtered)

It's late. We'll talk about this in the morning.

Sam leans forward, intense.

SAM

Seriously? I just saw someone lurking in the halls. For all you know, they were from Macquarie Uni, trying to steal my work. Our work.

DEAN

(filtered)

Jesus, fine. Call campus security and tell them I approved a couple of people stationed at the doors.

SAM

Not those assholes. They couldn't secure a day-care. Real security.

DEAN

(filtered)

I'll call someone. Tonight only. They leave in the morning. We'll talk more about this tomorrow.

INT. CALLUM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Callum walks in with some purpose.

CALLUM

Coming? We're going to break into Sheppard's lab.

Jacob holds out his hand, palm up.

JACOB

Can I get some money so I can bail you out when the time comes?

CALLUM

We'll be fine.

EXT. MANLY FERRY, BOW - NIGHT

The stars sparkle and the moon reflects off the bow wash. Callum leans back on the railing and looks up.

CALLUM

You ever try to find it?

JACOB

It? What?

CALLUM

Our Star. Our home. The place we haven't been, other than that sterile quarantine room, for far too long.

JACOB

And the place about to rain hell-fire on Earth.

CALLUM

I don't think Sheppard's close enough that we should be panicked yet.

JACOB

You know the history of this planet. We've lived a lot of it.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

The Mongols, the Romans, the British, Portuguese, Spanish, recently the Americans. They, to a kind, have absolutely no qualms about invading and taking whatever they want, whenever they want, to hell with whatever indigenous life is already there.

Jacob shook his head.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Nah, they don't deserve the right to travel off this rock.

Callum leans back on the railing again, looking at the sky. He takes a deep breath of the sea air.

CALLUM

I'm not sure I want to leave this place quite yet.

JACOB

The old dude already knows there's something going on.

CALLUM

I'll tell him the scientist was just trying to impress his girlfriend.

A huge grin breaks out on Jacob's face and he punches Callum on the shoulder.

JACOB

You like her, don't you?

CALLUM

There is something about her that is appealing.

JACOB

Yeah, her tits. Don't waste your time with her. It's time to head back to our home. Our real one.

The ferry passes Garden Island. The lit Harbour Bridge, the Opera House, the sparkling lights of Sydney's waterfront spread in front of them.

Callum points at the display of lights.

CALLUM

You really think something as beautiful as this should be wiped out?

JACOB

Oh, the shiny stuff will still be here. It's the people who will go away.

Callum shakes his head and puts his arm around Jacob's shoulder.

CALLUM

None of it has to go away.

EXT. SYDNEY UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

Callum and Jacob walk across The Square to the Physics Building and come face to face with a large, uniformed GUARD on the front steps.

CALLUM

What's going on?

GUARD

No idea, mate. Just placed here half an hour ago. Orders not to let anyone in who's not authorised to go in.

CALLUM

Who's authorised?

The guard looks between Jacob and Callum and crosses his arms.

GUARD

They wasn't clear on that.

Callum smiles and leans in close.

CALLUM

So how do you know who to keep out?

GUARD

I keep everyone out.

CALLUM

But what if they're authorised to go in and you don't let them?

GUARD

You're running around in fucking circles, mate. Nobody gets in.

CALLUM

Hope you don't make a mistake. Wouldn't be good.

Callum holds out his visitor's card and mocked up Nobel credentials.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I need to get in there. I'm working with Sheppard on some top secret stuff that I really can't discuss --

Callum leans forward and speaks conspiratorially

CALLUM (CONT'D)

-- or I'd have to kill you.

Callum pauses and smiles. The guard scowls and stands straighter.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Just kidding on that last part.

The security guard inspects the identification.

GUARD

Well, Sheppard's one of the boffins in there. So, like the Nobel Peace prize?

CALLUM

Something like that.

Callum jabs his thumb over his shoulder at Jacob.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

And he's with me.

GUARD
(to Jacob)
Your I.D. please.

Jacob pats his pockets, searching for something he doesn't have.

JACOB
Seems to have left it at home.

GUARD
Sorry, can't let you in then.

Callum pushes past the guard and opens the door.

CALLUM
You're doing a bang-up job, Sarge.
Jacob, remember your I.D. next
time. Wait here. I'll try not to be
too long.

Callum enters the building. The door closes and the guard resumes his position.

GUARD
I'm not a Sergeant.

JACOB
What's that?

Jacob scans the outside of the building, looking for another way in.

GUARD
We don't have ranks like that.
Really sorry that I can't let you
in, but orders are orders.

JACOB
And god knows, you've got to follow
orders.

GUARD
Thanks for understanding. So,
between you and me, what's going on
here?

JACOB

Between you and me? No idea. You should really let me in so I can help him.

GUARD

No can do, man. You gonna make a scene? If you gonna make a scene I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

Jacob raises his hands in surrender.

JACOB

No need. I'll find a coffee shop somewhere and chill.

Jacob circles the building to the back. Guards there, too. He nods at them, waves an index finger salute and continues walking.

Without slowing his walk Jacob takes his phone out and calls Callum.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Mate, what the fuck's going on in there? This place is locked up like Fort Knox.

CALLUM

Head back to the apartment. It's going to be a long one. I've got to go. Don't call me back.

Jacob terminates the call and slides his hands in his pockets, walking slowly back to the front of the building

JACOB

Wasted trip. Gotta be a bar around here somewhere.

INT. SAM'S LAB - EARLY MORNING

Sam sits at his desk, tired. He dry scrubs his face. His fingers are dirty with dry-erase marker and some of it transfers to his face.

Callum sits at a smaller desk working on something.

SAM

Callum, why don't you look like
shit? It's been a very long night.

CALLUM

Lucky, I guess. Good genetics. I
don't need much sleep. Never really
did.

Callum points to some calculations on a sheet of paper in
front of him.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You've got a power problem, if I
did my math right. This stuff
you're working on looks very much
like elements of m-theory
actualization.

SAM

How would you know that?

CALLUM

But the segments lend themselves to
moving something massive by brute-
forcing a hole. Right?

Sam puts his paperwork down and stands.

SAM

"Brute forcing" a hole? That
implies there's a non-"brute force"
method. What's this?

Sam reaches over and grabs the paper off Callum's desk.

CALLUM

Just doodling. Forget about it.

Callum tries unsuccessfully to grab the page back from Sam.

SAM

Hey, hey, hey. Back it up, bud. I
said this looks interesting.

Sam looks from the paper to Callum and sits back at his desk,
concern showing on his face.

SAM (CONT'D)

You didn't tell me how you got past security last night. Or why.

CALLUM

I showed them the temporary I.D. you gave me and my Nobel credentials. Told them I had some work with you.

SAM

But you didn't. Why were you here?

Callum looks at the calculations on the whiteboard and points:

CALLUM

Hoping I'd bump into you. This is an extraordinary find. It excites me.

Sam looks at him for a beat, then sits back down looking at Callum's calculations.

SAM

You really shouldn't have been allowed in. Security are a bunch of idiots.

CALLUM

You are making a wormhole, right?

SAM

Nobody's ever done that.

CALLUM

So you're the first.

SAM

That would put this place on the map. Wouldn't it? I could name my price. Couldn't I?

Sam looks at Callum for a second, then makes a decision.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm going to show you something that will blow your mind. It'll be public in a day or so anyway.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ALIEN PLANET

A formal meeting is not in session. The Elder is talking to some of his colleagues.

ELDER

We have another planet on our radar. Third from a star in an outer band of a galaxy some 6 galactic units from here.

COLLEAGUE #1

So soon? What infraction?

ELDER

M-theory actualization.

The Elder slowly stands and gathers his robes.

ELDER (CONT'D)

We almost missed it.

COLLEAGUE #2

So we call council together right now and vote. This isn't something we delay.

ELDER

Agreed.

COLLEAGUE #1

How many do we have on that planet?

ELDER

Almost 400.

COLLEAGUE #2

Four hundred and none of them picked this up before now?

The elder shakes his head and starts a slow walk toward the door.

ELDER

There will be a disciplinary hearing for the contact that missed this, of course, but we need to shut down the problem first.

(MORE)

ELDER (CONT'D)
I'll call a council meeting for
sundown. Please tell your
colleagues.

INT. SAM'S LAB

Sam continues to work on the math while Callum watches. White boards are filled with calculations. Both of them look ruffled.

Sam scrubs his hair with his fingertips and stands.

SAM
Enough paperwork. Watch this.

Sam picks up a yellow toy car and places it on a grid of very fine lines etched on a table on the far side of the lab.

SAM (CONT'D)
This is the starting point. I
energise...

Sam activates a bank of switches and the lights dim as an electronic hum fills the room,

SAM (CONT'D)
...and we're set to go.

Callum stands and walks closer to the car. He witnesses a slight distortion of light around the toy.

It looks very similar to the distortion around his mirror just before a jump.

CALLUM
This is a helluva lot of power to
move a toy car.

SAM
Still brute force. I think I can
rejig this to do the elegant thing
within twenty-four hours.

Callum clenches his jaw muscles.

CALLUM
The elegant thing? That fast? Fuck.

SAM

Keep an eye on the car.

Sam pauses.

SAM (CONT'D)

Every time I do this it costs the university something in the order of \$3,000. The power requirements are massive.

CALLUM

Maybe you shouldn't, then.

SAM

Oh, you're a very important man. If I can't demo for the Nobel Committee, who can I demo it for?

Sam cranks the dial. There is very faint crackling noise, like a transformer frying, and the car appears the table on the other side of the lab.

CALLUM

Impressive.

SAM

Thanks. And this will be Mickey Mouse in a day or two. Hang around, okay? I've got a big demo later today.

EXT. "THE SQUARE" - DAY

Jacob sits under a tree, in the shade, sunglasses on and reading something on his Kindle. He unscrews the top of a bottle of water just as --

Sabrina and Mandy appear in front of him, catching him off guard. Sabrina holds up her phone and takes a picture of him face on.

Jacob lurches to his feet, spilling water on his pants.

JACOB

What in the hell? You're dangerous, you know that lady?

Jacob looks down at his groin.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Great. Nobody's going to believe that's not an inside job. What are you doing?

MANDY

I am absolutely honoured to meet you. What's it like living as an alien on Earth?

Jacob shakes his head and takes off his sunglasses.

JACOB

Nut cases. The both of you. If you knew how many times --

He's interrupted by Sabrina taking a closer shot of his face, her flash going off in the shade of the tree.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Sonuvabitch.

Jacob shields his eyes, then shoves his sunglasses back on his face.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Not cool. I've got something pressing to do. Somewhere.

Jacob takes one last look at them and walks away from them, toward Ralph's cafe.

MANDY

Look at those tight buns.

SABRINA

Are you ever not horny?

MANDY

I'm a vibrant, live, human female. And why aren't we following him?

SABRINA

Because we need to go to the library.

INT. SAM'S LAB — LATE MORNING

University functionaries and military uniforms sit in a row of seven chairs facing two cages suspended from the ceiling. The wormhole apparatus is off to their left.

Sam hands Callum his mobile phone.

SAM

Record the video. From here, facing the guests and keep the apparatus in frame.

CALLUM

Starting when?

SAM

Now.

Sam turns and looks at his audience. He rubs his hands together, takes a deep breath, and starts.

SAM (CONT'D)

Thank you very much for coming. The folders you have contain the scientific background of the tests I am performing today, but the math is dry and boring. Put them to one side and focus on these cages.

Sam paces in front of his audience, hands out, palms up using every body language trick he knows.

SAM (CONT'D)

My biggest limitation is power. What I have, right now, is enough to push one small mouse through a warped space and deposit it, unharmed, we hope, in that cage over there.

A man raises his hand. GENERAL FAULKNER, (middle-aged, shaved bald head and very, very fit). He runs Army R&D, based at Holsworthy Military Base.

GENERAL FAULKNER

I've seen magic tricks like this at Vegas. And on the Gold Coast.

(MORE)

GENERAL FAULKNER (CONT'D)

How can you assure me that this is really doing what you say it is?

SAM

Well, for one thing, you can trust me. Do you have any idea how I'm doing this?

GENERAL FAULKNER

None. And that's my problem.

SAM

It's said that any technology advanced enough is indistinguishable from magic. So maybe this is magic. Do you really care how I do it if I can?

GENERAL FAULKNER

Frankly, Professor Sheppard, if all you can do is move a mouse a few metres, I'm not sure what I'm doing here. Seems like a monumental waste of time and money.

SAM

This is proof of concept. Very soon I will be able to move a man from here to the moon. Easily. With the right corporate and, well, government sponsorship, the universe is the limit.

GENERAL FAULKNER

How soon?

SAM

A week at most. If pressed, twenty-four hours. The software change is really fairly trivial.

Sam laughs at the look on the General's face.

SAM (CONT'D)

The advantages of working outside the government, gentlemen, is the ability to proceed at a healthy pace. Now if you're ready.

Sam pokes a couple of keys on his laptop. A shimmer, faint and brief, at the cage holding the mouse is followed by a SNICK and a similar shimmer at the other cage.

SAM (CONT'D)

Done.

Sam reaches inside the second cage and extracts the mouse. It squirms so he cups it with his other hand and brings it over to the General.

SAM (CONT'D)

Success.

GENERAL FAULKNER

You say.

SAM

I do.

GENERAL FAULKNER

You could just have multiple mice and false bottoms or something.

SAM

Fuck, you're a hard sell.

Sam places the mouse back in it's cage and takes the general's tie-clip.

SAM (CONT'D)

This is unique, no?

GENERAL FAULKNER

What are you doing with that? My wife gave it to me.

SAM

I'll place it in this cage, and you can watch it move across the room to the other cage. Or I could land it on this table in front of you, if I wanted to.

GENERAL FAULKNER

So send it to the table.

Sam places the tie clip inside one of the cages and measures the precise distance to the table.

Callum fishes his phone out of his pocket. He sends a message to Jacob:

Sam is way ahead of where I thought he was. This is as bad as you said. Meet me for lunch in about thirty minutes. Ralph's again.

SAM

Okay, gentlemen, operation Tie Clip is ready, if you are. Callum, are you still recording?

CALLUM

Go for it, Professor.

SAM

If everyone is ready --

Sam pokes a button in his keyboard. The tie-clip shimmers and then appears half an inch above the table and clatters to its surface.

The general stares at it for a second, then picks it up and carefully examines it. He hands it to the man beside him and points at the engraving on it.

GENERAL FAULKNER

That's my tie clip. That was impressive.

SAM

Today's demonstration effectively hammered its way through the multiverse. My new method will create a much larger tunnel for much, much less power.

GENERAL FAULKNER

So, tomorrow?

Sam blinks and looks at the General. It's a challenge, but he can't say "no". Not in front of this audience. Not after he bragged about how fast he was.

SAM

Sure. Yes. In fact, I'll transport me from this room to a secure location on one of your military facilities. You pick the place.

EXT. OUTDOOR TABLE AT RALPH'S CAFE - LUNCH

Jacob is already sitting at a table when Callum arrives.

CALLUM

The prof really has actualized wormhole travel. Biomass, too.

JACOB

What? You saw it?

CALLUM

I video-recorded his demo. The guy is smart. Very smart. This is light years ahead of where I thought they were.

(beat)

And he zapped the General's tie clip across the room. And the General is completely convinced.

JACOB

Military?

CALLUM

It would appear so.

Callum adjusts his chair and looks out over The Square. Small impromptu games of football, students studying, couples kissing, all unaware of impending doom.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I think I've got a way to sabotage it, and avoid the whole human eradication thing.

JACOB

But it's past the point of no return, buddy boy.

CALLUM

I can torpedo it. I need to get some things done first and I'm going to need your help.

JACOB

No way. Council's going to fry the place. I'm getting out of here while I can. You've got to --

Callum puts up his hand, stopping Jacob from talking. Sabrina and Mandy make themselves comfortable at Callum and Jacob's table.

MANDY

Both of you. At the same place.
This is awesome.

JACOB

You two don't give up, do you?

Sabrina slides three pages of pictures across the table.

SABRINA

How old are you guys?

CALLUM

Sorry, ladies. You're interrupting
a very important discussion.

Sabrina pokes at one of the pictures.

SABRINA

This is the two of you outside the
Physics Building, twenty years ago.
You don't look any different.

She pushes another one forward.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

NYU. Nineteen-twenty-seven. Both of
you and the rest of the faculty at
some dedication ceremony.

Jacob opens his mouth to say something and Sabrina holds up an index finger. She picks up a picture and holds it in front of them.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

What about this one? Unless I'm
mistaken that you, Jacob, in Lennon
glasses, Callum with a hideous
moustache and Bram Stoker. And some
other dude. This was taken in
eighteen-eighty-seven in London,
England.

CALLUM

Excellent photo manipulation,
ladies. Now I've really got to ask
you to give us some privacy.

Sabrina gathers up the papers and folds them into a wad and
stuffs them in her back pocket.

SABRINA

Let's go, Mandy. I know what I
know. These guys can deny it all
they want. We'll find something
they can't deny.

Sabrina and Mandy get up from the table and leave, but not
before Mandy gives Jacob a wink.

Callum waits for them to get out of sight, then turns back to
Jacob.

CALLUM

How'd they find a picture of us
with Stoker? Damn. Where were we?

JACOB

You want me to help you with
something and I'll be damned if I
know why I will.

CALLUM

Because you're a hell of a nice
guy. This wand. I need to know how
to do a remote tunnel with it.

Callum points to a student walking across the Square.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

See that guy walking with his head
buried in his phone? I'd like to
set up a tunnel that would pop him
into the girl's change room. For
example.

JACOB

That's pretty juvenile.

CALLUM

I need to use this thing to move
something other than me.

Jacob pushes his chair back, symbolically distancing himself from Callum.

JACOB

Why am I going along with you? This place is as good as toast.

Callum moves closer, closing the gap. He can't do this without Jacob's help.

CALLUM

You're going to do it for me because we've been on this planet, as partners in crime, for a very long time. Find a way to make that thing work for me, okay? I'll meet you back at the apartment tonight.

INT. FITNESS CENTRE - AFTERNOON

Jackie enters the fitness centre to start a spin class when Callum sees her.

CALLUM

Jackie. I need a minute.

JACKIE

I've got to get ready for a class. Sorry. Maybe later?

CALLUM

It'll just be a minute.

JACKIE

I'm running late. You want to spin along side me, we can talk then.

Callum grabs a bike and places it beside Jackie, who looks at the bike and then at Callum, surprised.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

That weighs almost a hundred k's

CALLUM

I lift. What are we supposed to do here?

JACKIE
(smiles)
You do as I say.

Mandy bursts through the door in a tracksuit with a towel around her neck.

MANDY
Don't start without me, Jacks.

Mandy sees Callum and smiles.

MANDY (CONT'D)
Hey, if I knew he took your class
I'd come to a lot more of them.

JACKIE
Hurry up Mandy. Let's go people. I
want to see your eyeballs sweat.

CALLUM
I'm concerned about some of the
tests your boyfriend is doing.

JACKIE
What's he up to now?

CALLUM
He's playing with fire.

The pre-programmed resistance kicks in, simulating a steep incline. Callum takes the resistance in stride while the rest of the class strains.

CALLUM (CONT'D)
If he's not careful, he's gonna
cause a really big mess.

Mandy looks at Callum, in his street clothes.

MANDY
Why isn't Callum sweating? Didn't
you program his bike?

JACKIE
Are we talking chemical weapons
release, massive explosion or a
horrible embarrassment for the uni?

Callum makes an explosion motion with his hands then replaces them on his handlebars.

CALLUM

Ka-boom. I'll try talking to him again, but if you could find out what military facility he's going to be visiting tomorrow I'd really appreciate it.

Mandy hops off and leans over the side of Callum's bike, looking at the cardio display.

MANDY

Are you kidding me?

CALLUM

What?

MANDY

Your pulse. It's like 25. Are you dead or something?

Callum smiles at Mandy and hops off the bike. He ruffles her hair and smiles at her annoyance.

CALLUM

Cute. But you're barking up the wrong tree. I've got to go, Jackie. Try your luck with Sam. Please. Let me know how it goes.

EXT. STEPS OF FITNESS CENTRE

Callum shakes his head and slowly walks down the stairs. He walks across the road to the Physics Building and sits on the steps.

Mandy follows him out of the fitness centre and sits beside him.

CALLUM

You don't give up, do you? Shouldn't you be in with your friend, sweating off those pounds?

MANDY

Are you saying I'm fat?

CALLUM

Objectively speaking, you have stored fat, but subjectively speaking, I have never understood the obsession you guys have with that.

MANDY

You guys, as in Earthlings?

Callum sighs. He takes a deep breath and pushes on.

CALLUM

"You guys" as in females. I've seen grubby skinny people and hot and sexy not so skinny people. Body fat is rarely an issue.

MANDY

Oh, I don't care what planet you're from. I think I love you
(she takes him by the arm.)
And you're so strong.

CALLUM

You are a certifiable lunatic. I'm human. As human as you are.

She looks into his eyes and shakes her head, a smile on her face.

MANDY

You don't lie very well. Your skin temperature is cool to touch, even after that workout, and your pulse is less than 20 beats per minute. And since when could you feel pulse here, on the back of your forearm?

Callum cocks an eyebrow, patient smile on his face.

CALLUM

Who's going to believe that we've hung out here for twenty years, after coming from another planet, and have done nothing?

MANDY

You've been here longer than twenty years. You saw the pictures. Hundreds of years. Where are you going after here? Sydney, I mean.

CALLUM

I'm not going anywhere.
(he sees Jacob approaching)
You should go now. I've got to get back to work.

Mandy looks over at Jacob approaching and nods. She gives his arm one more squeeze before she stands.

MANDY

Okay, I can tell you want to say more, but you're afraid. When you want to talk you can come to any one of the three of us.

Jacob arrives and sits on the step beside him, watching Mandy walk away.

JACOB

Thought I'd find you here. Cracked it.

CALLUM

Already? Excellent. Show me.

Jacob smiles at him and slips the wand out of his pocket.

JACOB

Ridiculously easy. Take him.

Jacob points at a student on the far right side of the Square, oblivious to his surroundings, talking on his phone.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Let's fuck him up.

Jacob presses his thumb on the end of his wand and adjusts the ending point until it's located just in front of a tree.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Now, the fun part.

He slides his thumb to the other end and makes an adjustment

JACOB (CONT'D)

Watch this.

The guy steps into the "tunnel" and instantly appears two steps in front of the tree on the other side of The Square.

And promptly walks into the tree.

He steps back, a confused look on his face. He looks back over his shoulder, shakes his head and bends to pick his phone off the ground.

CALLUM

You're an asshole, Jacob. But that was hilarious.

JACOB

I know. Why'd you want to know how to do this?

CALLUM

Something I'm working on. Hopefully we won't have to go back.

JACOB

Yeah, well, I think you're fighting a lost cause. I'll see you later. Be careful.

Callum watches Jacob walk off. Jackie comes from the fitness centre and sits beside him.

CALLUM

What are you doing here?

JACKIE

Was looking for Sam, like you wanted, but since I've found you, I want to ask you why this is so important to you.

CALLUM

I'm genuinely worried about what he's doing. He's heading somewhere tomorrow morning and I need to know exactly where he goes.

JACKIE

So why are you enlisting my help?
He loses me three words into any
conversation about what he does for
a living. Quantum something or
other. Quarks and quark screws.
Dark matter. All of it way the hell
over my head.

CALLUM

I don't need you to find out what
he's doing. I need you to find out
where he's doing it. I'm counting
on your feminine wiles.

JACKIE

I have wiles?

Callum barks out a laugh.

CALLUM

From my -- years of observation
it's become very apparent to me
that the females of your species
are exceptionally adept at
outwitting the males of your
species. You've drawn that art to a
very fine point have wiles.

Jackie leans in and kisses him on the cheek.

JACKIE

Thank you very much for trusting
me. It means a lot. How do I
contact you?

Callum takes out his phone and hands it to her. She uses it
to send herself a text message and hands it back.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Done. I'll call you when I know
something.

INT. PHYSICS BUILDING

Jackie leans on the door frame and knocks on it.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You need to take a break once in a while.

Sam doesn't look up. He is hard at work preparing for the big demo.

SAM

I'm busy. Really busy. Maybe we can catch up tomorrow for dinner.

JACKIE

What are you doing?

Sam sighs and drops his pen on his desk. He rubs his face and sees Jackie for the first time. She's wearing tight black yoga pants and a loose T-shirt.

He leans back and shakes his head.

SAM

I have a demonstration tomorrow afternoon for the military. I will use a wormhole -- yes, they exist -- to transport myself to Duntroon.

JACKIE

The military college? You going to land yourself on one of the cannons at the front gate?

Sam looks at her and shakes his head.

SAM

I'm heading there tomorrow at the crack of dawn to sort out the other end.

JACKIE

So, no breakfast with me, I take it. Again.

SAM

Editing, Jackie. I've got to edit my life. Way too much going on to fit in one day.

JACKIE

Screw you and your editing.

Jackie walks out of the Physics building, texting Callum while she walks:

Sam is heading to Duntroon tomorrow morning. Couldn't get anything more specific out of him. Sorry.

She looks at her phone and smiles at the incoming message:

Thanks for trying. Can you meet me in the morning where you are always training? 5:30 too early?

EXT. CALLUM'S ROOF. NIGHT

Callum sits on the roof under a warm spring night sky. He flips the wand in his hand, end for end.

The neighbor's tabby cat hops onto a branch of the tree adjacent to Callum's building. It hunkers down and starts a slow creep.

A young possum sits on the other end of the branch, oblivious to the approaching predator.

CALLUM

Fucking cat.

He creates a tunnel to the branch below and waits.

Three short steps later the cat jumps for the possum and there's a shimmer as it ENTERS THE WORMHOLE, transported to the branch below.

The cat scrambles to keep its footing, arches its back and hisses.

The cat stiff-legs along the branch until it reaches the trunk. Callum quickly sets up another tunnel.

The cat digs in its claws and runs up the trunk and as it reaches the branch with its prey, the cat shimmers and enters the new wormhole, instantly transported back to its beginning point.

The cat stops. All the hair on its body stands straight. It tries again with the same result. After the third time landing back where it started, the cat turns tail and disappears down the tree.

CALLUM (CONT'D)
Mission accomplished.

Callum leans back on his elbows and watches the oblivious possum eating.

JACOB
That was downright mean.

Callum starts and looks at his partner.

CALLUM
A little warning next time,
asshole. The little shit deserved
it. How long have you been here?

JACOB
Long enough.

CALLUM
Where have you been?

JACOB
Popping by some of the others on
planet to discuss the current
situation. It's dire. At least
that's the opinion of most.

CALLUM
I'm less than a day away from
killing this off completely.

JACOB
Most of the guys, and girls, agree
with me that you don't have a day.
Except maybe Claudio. He thinks you
might find away around it. But he's
leaving anyway.

CALLUM
He still in Moscow?

JACOB
Yeah. It's starting to get cold
there again.

CALLUM
There isn't going to be a recall.

JACOB

There sure as hell will.

CALLUM

You talked to more than just the others on the planet, did you?

JACOB

The Elders are meeting shortly to make a decision. I'm heading back now. Be smart. Don't stay any longer.

Jacob takes out his wand and makes the necessary adjustments.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Hope to see you soon pal. You're running out of time.

He shimmers and disappears.

EXT. NORTH STEYNE BEACH. PRE-DAWN THE NEXT DAY

Jackie is stretching on the beach. Callum approaches and she stops and waves.

CALLUM

So, Duntroon Military College?

JACKIE

He's heading there this morning to finalise the location. What is actually going on?

CALLUM

Your buddy Sam is going to transport himself to Duntroon this afternoon to convince some military types that his wormhole works. I've got to sabotage him so he and his science lose credibility.

JACKIE

But wormholes -- that's amazing, right? Why sabotage?

Callum runs his fingers through his hair.

CALLUM

The people on my planet will do anything to stop your people from reaching my home planet. Anything. I don't have much time. I'm – we're – seriously running out of time.

Jackie takes a step backward.

JACKIE

What do you mean by "do anything"?

CALLUM

Beyond what you can comprehend. A prolonged blast of gamma rays. Not many will survive.

Jackie's face goes ashen.

JACKIE

I don't believe it. Your people would do this?

Callum crosses his arms and looks at his feet.

CALLUM

It'll happen whether you believe it or not.

JACKIE

So, what, we're the only people who can save the planet? How am I supposed to be able to help?

CALLUM

Can you secrete your mobile phone on him somewhere? I need his exact destination at Duntroon.

JACKIE

I can get it in his briefcase. If I can catch him before he leaves. Hang on.

Jackie dials Sam's number and attempts sounding normal.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Sam, honey, I need to see you before you go. I was harsh last night. I want to apologize.

SAM

(filtered)

So apologize.

JACKIE

Not on the phone. Face to face. Hugs?

SAM

(filtered)

I'm grabbing a quick breakfast at Hum Cafe. I leave at 6:00.

JACKIE

Great. See you in a few.

She terminates the call and looks at the phone. Takes a deep breath and shakes her head.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You know Hum's?

CALLUM

Yeah. Across from the library. Let's go.

Callum and Jackie walk up The Corso, then cut across Sydney Road to Market Lane. Callum waits outside the cafe, in the early morning shadows.

INT. HUM CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Jackie sits at a small window table across from Sam. Sam's bag is between the table and the window, on the floor.

SAM

What's this about, Jacks? I'm in a hurry. Leaving in fifteen.

JACKIE

I know. Wanted to make sure you're okay

(MORE)

JACKIE (CONT'D)
(to waitress)
Can I get a long black, please?

SAM
I'm just fine. Still a bit
confused. You've been chilly
lately. Is this a thaw?

The waitress places a cup of coffee in front of Jackie, who reaches for the sugar and drops a couple of packets on the floor.

JACKIE
Not a thaw. Just concerned.

Jackie reaches down to pick up the packets and slides her phone in the outside pocket of Sam's bag.

SAM
Concerned about what?

Sam looks at his watch, holds up his hands and shakes his head.

SAM (CONT'D)
No, look, Jackie, I realize I
haven't been fair to you. We should
go our separate ways. I'm not going
to have time for much of a social
life in the foreseeable future.

Jackie stands and smiles tightly.

JACKIE
Hey, if you've got it all figured
out then I guess I've wasted my
time. Good luck.

Jackie nods at the waitress and walks out.

EXT. MANLY, NEAR HUM CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Jackie walks up to the corner behind which Callum is standing. Her smile is still fixed.

Callum pulls her around the corner and out of sight of the cafe.

JACKIE

Done. It should work, right?

CALLUM

It should. Come with me to the university, I'll buy you breakfast, then I can show you what his gadget looks like.

JACKIE

Traffic is going to start getting really messy soon. We better hustle.

CALLUM

I don't think traffic is going to be a problem. Let's get into the parking garage and out of sight.

They walk into the Whistler Street parking garage. Callum presses his thumb on the end of the wand, takes Jackie's hand, and steps forward --

INT. SAM'S PHYSICS LAB - CONTINUOUS

-- and into the lab. Jackie staggers, off balance, grabs Callum's arm.

JACKIE

What was that? Where are we? Is this Sam's lab? Just like that?

CALLUM

Just like that.

JACKIE

And you guys want to stop him from building this for Earth? That was awesome.

CALLUM

I don't, particularly, but most on my planet do.

JACKIE

So what's the plan? I still don't get it.

CALLUM

We eat, then we track your phone
and figure out where Sam goes, and
I make his experiment not work.

Callum and Jackie leave the lab, locking the door behind them.

INT. PHYSICS LAB - LATE AFTERNOON

Callum stands in front of the laptop that controls Sam's wormhole apparatus. He takes his wand out and lays it along side the computer.

Sam mingles with the General and his staff, slowly ushering them to their seats.

Once they're seated, Sam stands in front of them and points to a large flat-screen display on the wall. An empty auditorium fills the screen.

SAM

That, gentlemen, is a lecture
theatre at the Royal Military
College, Duntroon.

Sam nods to General Faulkner, sitting up front.

SAM (CONT'D)

When I energise, I will create a
warp in the space-time continuum,
step through that warp and
instantly appear on that monitor.
In Canberra.

(to Callum)

If you're ready?

Callum nods at Sam, then surreptitiously presses the end of his wand with his thumb.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay then, on my mark: three - two -
one - now.

Callum activates Sam's machine and Sam steps forward. He looks distorted, blurred and vibrating, for about a second, then Sam's tunnel closes and he stands right where he started.

SAM (CONT'D)

Argghhhh. Fuck. What in the hell was that?

GENERAL FAULKNER

Professor? When is this supposed to happen? Aren't you supposed to be in Duntroon?

SAM

We're going to try this again. On my mark.

The same exercise, the same results, except a more annoyed General and an even more disturbed professor.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sh-sh-sh-shit. Ungh. I don't understand. It should work. Callum, what changes did you make?

CALLUM

I haven't touched anything on your machine other than the button you asked me to touch.

GENERAL FAULKNER

Professor, we'll be leaving now.

SAM

Something must be wrong with the machine.

GENERAL FAULKNER

Clearly something is.

The General stands and leads his contingent to the door, a frantic Sam following him.

SAM

Give me five minutes. I can make this work.

Sam pushes Callum to one side and reviews the programming. He's frantic. Sweat beads his furrowed brow.

Callum releases the end of his wand and slides it in his pocket.

CALLUM

I'm going to leave you now, Sam.
Looks like you've got some problems
to sort out. We'll talk again,
okay?

SAM

Back to the fucking drawing board.
I swear, it felt like I was in a
washing machine. I'm going to be
here all night working on this.

EXT. PHYSICS BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Callum runs down the physics building steps and meets Jackie
leaving the fitness centre. He hands her phone back.

JACKIE

How'd it go?

CALLUM

Like we planned it. The military
abandoned him. And Sam was whipped
back and forth between here and
Duntroon a thousand times, or more.
Twice. That's gotta mess up your
head.

Callum rests his hand on Jackie's shoulder.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Thanks you. I've got to go talk to
some guys about this and start
spreading the word that we're
actively quashing the technology.
Meet me later?

JACKIE

Call me. I want to know how this
ends.

Callum watches her walk off, her taking a quick look at him
over her shoulder, then Callum scrolls through the contacts
in his phone.

CALLUM

Time to start spreading
misinformation.

INT. PHYSICS LAB IN MOSCOW – MID-AUTUMN

CLAUDIO looks much like Callum and Jacob - tall, pale and very fit. His head is shaved and he sports a goatee. He shreds papers, ignoring the mobile phone ringing on his desk.

Beside the phone is a wand, identical to Callum's.

He stares at the phone until it stops ringing, then returns to his shredding.

It starts ringing again. Claudio grabs it.

CLAUDIO
Son of the bitch. What?

CALLUM
(filtered)
Claudio? Good. You're still here.

CLAUDIO
Here? Here, where?

CALLUM
(filtered)
Moscow. I'm only a few minutes away. It feels like you're going to have a cold winter this year.

CLAUDIO
You are in Russia? When did you leave Australia?

CALLUM
(filtered)
I'm just outside the school now. Has the lab moved in the last few decades?

CLAUDIO
Same place. It's still here.
(beat)
Five minutes. Then I'm gone.

A knock on the door proceeds Callum's entry.

CALLUM
It'll take less than two.

Claudio hangs up his phone and jabs Callum in the chest.

CLAUDIO

I'm seriously pissed at you, comrade. I was getting very used to this place. Moscow is a beautiful city, and in my position, I wield a lot of influence.

CALLUM

When Sam demonstrated his tunnelling, I fucked him up. I set up a reverse tunnel originating at his destination and terminating at his origin. Whipped him like a snake.

Callum nods at Claudio's smile.

CLAUDIO

Brilliant.

CALLUM

He damn near shook to death. The military was very unimpressed. It's dead. Claudio, with your help I can convince the Council that there's nothing to worry about.

CLAUDIO

Sorry, buddy. No dice. It took months to shut down cold fusion convincingly and as a technology it wasn't a direct threat. Wormholes -- that's something else all together. I'm out of here.

Claudio picks up the wand and fiddles with the controls.

CALLUM

There's no way I can convince you?

CLAUDIO

To stay here and starve to death with you? No way in hell. Which is what this place is going to resemble very soon. If you're smart you'll get off this rock, too.

CALLUM

Are you and I the last ones left?

CLAUDIO

And very shortly it will be just you. Don't delay any longer, comrade. When they do this, and it will be very soon, there will be no warning, just a blast from hell.

Callum watches Claudio press his thumb on the end of the wand.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)

See ya, pal.

Claudio shimmers and disappears.

Callum looks around the empty lab.

CALLUM

Well, shit. Last man standing.

Callum squeezes the end of his wand, shimmers and he disappears to:

EXT. CALLUM'S ROOF - CONTINUOUS.

Jackie is sitting on the roof, enjoying the fresh air. The hair on her arms stand up and Callum appears beside her out of a shimmer.

JACKIE

Jesus. A bit of warning next time. Any luck?

CALLUM

Nope. You got any bright ideas?

JACKIE

What's supposed to happen?

CALLUM

Focused gamma ray. It could be single source or multiple. Either way, the end result will be final. I need to talk to them face to face before it's too late.

Jackie hugs her knees to her chest.

JACKIE
You're going back?

CALLUM
I can't let them do what they're
going to do.

JACKIE
I can't believe an intelligent
being or beings would willingly
wipe out an entire planet.

CALLUM
Oh, we've done it before. Recently.
I need to go back and convince them
to hold off for a couple of weeks,
at least.

JACKIE
And if you can't?

CALLUM
I will. I'm very persuasive.

JACKIE
I'd like to go with you.

Callum sits on the roof beside her and takes her hand in his.
He rubs her hand gently while considering their options.

CALLUM
You wouldn't like it. The air is
much thinner and higher in nitrogen
content. Gravity is almost eight
times that of Earth.

He gives her hand a light squeeze and pats it.

CALLUM (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm pretty sure we've
got time to get enough evidence
before the council to stop them
from doing what they're going to
do. We better go inside to do this.

He leads her into his apartment from the fire escape.

INT. CALLUM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jackie walks around his apartment, looking at the artefacts.

JACKIE

You've got some amazing pieces here. Artwork. First edition books. Some of this furniture.

CALLUM

Kind of unavoidable when you live as long as we do. You don't seem as concerned as you should be.

Jackie picks up a book.

JACKIE

Bram Stoker's Dracula? Really?

CALLUM

Man, what a pain in the ass he turned out to be. Used our likeness as a template for his Count. Caused us no end of grief. If the fat fuck wasn't already dead I'd kill him myself.

Callum sees the shocked look on Jackie's face and grimaces.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Figuratively speaking, of course. You okay?

JACKIE

This whole thing doesn't seem real. And maybe I think, when push comes to shove, you'll take me away from this before anything bad happens.

CALLUM

Told you, you're not going to like it on my planet.

JACKIE

I'd be alive. Sabby and Mandy could come too?

CALLUM

They'd hate it just as much. And you'd all be alive, but eight billion won't be. And it doesn't have to be that way.

JACKIE

What can you do?

CALLUM

I don't know, yet. But you won't be happy living where I'm from.

Callum watches Jackie slowly walking around his apartment.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Are you listening?

JACKIE

Yeah, yeah. This place is paradise. I won't be happy at your place.

CALLUM

What's wrong?

JACKIE

You didn't answer me. Does that stick have enough juice to take both of us, and Sabs and Mandy to your planet?

CALLUM

It's supposed to be a personal device, but in a pinch it could do the both Jacob and I. You three don't weigh as much as him. We don't need to use this, though. We can use the mirror.

Callum walks to the mirror on the back of the door.

JACKIE

You just walk into it?

CALLUM

Not quite. Like this. Place your hand on the glass and --

Callum stops talking, a confused look on his face.

JACKIE

What?

He removes his hand and places it on the mirror again.

CALLUM

Weird.

He enters a code in the keypad by the door. Then enters it again and slaps the glass.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Fuck.

JACKIE

What's wrong?

CALLUM

It's not working.

He takes the wand from his pocket and presses his thumb on the end.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Nothing. Shit.

JACKIE

Broken?

CALLUM

Totally cut off. I can't
communicate back to the council.
And I certainly can't whisk you and
your friends to safety.

Jackie drops in a chair.

JACKIE

So we're dead.

CALLUM

Oh, I hope not. Stay here. I won't
be long.

INT. SAM'S LAB - AFTERNOON

Callum makes final adjustments to Sam's equipment as the door slams open.

SAM

What the hell are you doing? How did you get in? What's this text message mean? Why do you want me here?

Callum makes a final entry on the keyboard and turns to Sam.

CALLUM

I'm going to need your help to go back to my home planet and convince them to not blow this one up. I need your toy to do it.

SAM

You're full of shit. "Home planet"? You're an alien? Right. What have you done here?

CALLUM

Call me Mork. I've set up a tunnel. The step off point is the "X" on the floor. The other end is my apartment.

SAM

What's that supposed to prove?

CALLUM

I don't have time. Step in here and step out at my place. That should prove to you that it works. Then you can help me with the big thing.

SAM

The "big thing"?

CALLUM

I'll explain later. You don't trust me?

SAM

Not as far as I can spit.

Callum leans past Sam and presses a key on the keyboard. Gauges on Sam's laptop display deflect and a transformer hum fills the lab.

CALLUM

Spitting is rude. We're set.
Because this is bidirectional, it's
important that you step past the
exit, okay? Just walk into the "X"
and keep moving.

SAM

What in the hell are you doing?

CALLUM

Let's do this, then I can tell you
how you can help me.

INT. CALLUM'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jackie sits on the sofa, scrolling through something on her phone when a shimmer introduces Sam and Callum in the middle of the living room.

SAM

Fuck. It worked. And you tanked it?

CALLUM

I had to. Or I thought I did.

SAM

Thanks for proving that my tool
works. Again. Or still. Whatever.
I've got to talk to Faulkner.

JACKIE

No, Sam, you've got to help Callum.

SAM

Screw that. I've got things to do.

Sam steps into the space where they arrived and stops, vibrating like he did on the Duntroon trip.

CALLUM

Ah, crap. I told him to walk
through. He's oscillating. If this
doesn't piss him off, nothing will.

Callum takes a deep breath and barges Sam through the tunnel.

INT. SAM'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Sam appears, shoved by Callum. They both land in a heap on the floor.

Jackie appears seconds later and almost trips over them.

SAM

Son of a bitch. You asshole. You screwed up my Duntroon trip.

Sam grabs Callum by the arms, frowning and squeezing when he feels the muscles. He lets go and backs off a step.

SAM (CONT'D)

Set up the fold to Duntroon.

CALLUM

Too dangerous. There's no way of knowing who or what might be in that lecture theatre.

SAM

The parade ground.

CALLUM

Same problem. You're missing the point, prof. If I don't get back home to call off the attack, your career will be the least of your problems. I need more power.

JACKIE

What about your wand? Is the battery still charged, or whatever it is you call it?

CALLUM

Smart. You are really smart. You underestimated her, Sammy.

Callum twists the clear end off the wand. There's a click and a hiss of compressed air. The end cap hangs from a couple of wires.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Sam, can you hook this up to your toy?

(MORE)

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Jackie, can you press your thumb on the end? I need to dial in the location.

SAM

If this can provide the power you need, the wires will never take it.

CALLUM

Not metal. Superconducting material from my planet. Jackie? Thumb?

Jackie takes the wand from Sam and presses her thumb on the end.

JACKIE

Like this?

CALLUM

I'm not getting anything. Your thumb is --

(closes his eyes)

Shit. The wand is keyed to me.

Callum takes the wand from Jackie and presses his thumb on the end. The interior glows and the screen on Sam's display flickers.

JACKIE

Well, that sucks. Can one of us go?

CALLUM

It's got to be me. Sam, I need some cloth and a pair of wire cutters.

SAM

What?

CALLUM

Just get them.

Callum closes his eyes and takes deep breaths. He opens them when the cutters clatter on the table. He picks up the wire cutters in his left hand, takes a breath and opens its jaws.

JACKIE

What are you doing?

Callum slides his thumb between the blades and closes his eyes. He inhales through his nose again and as he blows out the air he closes the blades and cuts his thumb off at the joint.

It drops on the table.

CALLUM

Ah, crap. That hurt. More than I expected.

Callum drops the cutters on the table and holds himself up. A purple gel oozes from the joint. He grabs the cloth and wraps it around his hand.

SAM

What the hell, man?

CALLUM

No choice.

Callum looks at Jackie. She is pale and unsteady on her feet. He picks his thumb up from the table, still dripping ooze.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I need you to do this. You're stronger than he is. Press it on the end and hold it there. I'll be as fast as I can, and I need to leave now.

Jackie winces and picks up the thumb. She grabs some paper towel and wraps the end. She holds it delicately between her finger and thumb.

JACKIE

To keep the ooze away from me, okay?

CALLUM

Yeah, fine. Press it. Now.

The wand glows and Sam's device hums to life. Callum makes a minute adjustment to the landing zone and turns to Jackie.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

If I'm not back in forty-five minutes, collapse the tunnel and make your peace with the world.

JACKIE

Cal?

CALLUM

I'll be back. Really. Wish me luck.

He kisses Jackie on the cheek, tightens the cloth around his hand and steps into the fold and disappears

SAM

Screw this. It works. I need to let people know.

EXT. HOLSWORTHY MILITARY BASE, GUARD SHACK

Sam presents his university credentials to the guard at the front gate of Holsworthy Military base and is escorted to General Faulkner's office.

INT. GENERAL'S OFFICE

General Faulkner stands to one side as Sam enters his office. Faulkner closes the door behind them.

GENERAL FAULKNER

I can give you five minutes.

SAM

That experimental trip to Duntroon actually worked. I was sabotaged by the guy who was helping. You met him. The tall guy, Callum.

FAULKNER

Why are you wasting my time?

SAM

I'm serious. This technology works. I just folded from my lab to that same person's apartment in Manly. Just think of the possibilities. You can deploy troops instantly. And equipment. Airplanes, ships --

FAULKNER

Your demo was a train wreck. Work on it for another year or so and let me know how far you've developed the technology. It shows promise.

SAM

There doesn't need to be more development. It's already there.

GENERAL

Sorry, I can't help you. Go practice good science. We'll talk after you've developed it more.

Sam shakes his head and cannons down the hallway and out the doors. He signs out at the guard's hut and gets in his car and deflates.

The guard watches him warily.

SAM

Son of a bitch. Mother-humping, fox-fucking asshole bitch Callum. I'm going to fucking kill him.

Sam starts the car and leaves with a spray of gravel from the shoulder of the road.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm going to pulverize him.

INT. QUARANTINE ROOM

An Elder sits at desk making notes. He stops when Callum's shoes scuff the floor, and sits up straight and turns.

ELDER

So you've come to your senses and returned.

(beat)

That confuses me, since we have disabled your device. Both devices.

The Elder looks at the rag wrapped around Callum's hand.

ELDER (CONT'D)

You injured yourself?

CALLUM

Earth presents no threat to you.
The technology is in the hands of
one man. I can shut him down,
destroy all of his research.

ELDER

It is too late. Far too late.

Callum clenches his fist and squeezes hard in frustration.

CALLUM

It's like talking to a brick wall.
Look, I can propose in the right
circles an alternative quantum
mechanics solution that appears
plausible, and takes the best minds
down the wrong path for a couple of
decades.

ELDER

The decision is final. We'll find a
place for you here. Not a very nice
place, but a place.

Their discussion is interrupted by a banging on the door.

JACOB (O.S.)

Is that my good buddy in there?

The door flies open and Jacob bursts in, followed by a couple
of security guards.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Cal, old pal. You finally saw the
light.

He claps Callum on the shoulders with both hands and leans in
close.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I'm bored as fuck here. I should
have stayed in Sydney.

The two security catch up to him and grab him by the arms. He
struggles against them.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Didn't realize how weak I got on Earth. Hey, let me go, will you? I'm not a threat. I just want to talk to my friend.

The Elder motions with his hand and the guards release Jacob's arms.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(beat)

Hang on a second, Cal. How did you get here?

Callum unwraps his hand and shows Jacob his thumb stump.

CALLUM

Keyed only to my biometrics, right?

JACOB

You hacked Sam's machine? Holy shit.

Jacob stops laughing and realizes what Callum has done.

JACOB (CONT'D)

She's still down there? With your thumb?

Jacob slides his hands in his pockets and takes a half step back.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You're serious about her, aren't you? I'm impressed. You were always a loner.

Jacob grabs Callum's good hand and shakes it. Callum feels a piece of paper pressed into his palm. Jacob winks at him and releases.

ELDER

May I interrupt your touching reunion? Both of you will be placed back into quarantine until we decide what to do with you.

CALLUM
I'm heading back.

JACOB
We both are. I think I'd rather
take my chances with Callum.

CALLUM
Ready?

JACOB
Let's go, partner.

The Elder motions to the guards who grab Jacob and Callum.
The guard in front of Callum grabs him by the wrists.

Callum resists and gets a hand free. He hits the guard hard
under the chin with his elbow, putting all of his
considerable weight behind the blow.

Callum punches Jacob's guard in the side of the neck. The
guard reels and Jacob frees himself.

Callum smacks Jacob on the shoulder.

CALLUM
Jacob, buddy, we've got to run.

Callum grabs his friend's arm and pulls him away from the
guards. He runs through the exit spot, Jacob close on his
heels.

INT. SAM'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Callum and Jacob appear through a shimmer, moving fast.

CALLUM
Cut it, Jackie!

Jackie pulls Callum's thumb from the wand just as a guard
makes his way through. A stretched leg from a second guard
appears, followed by a scream.

The guard through loses his balance and stumbles, rolling
onto his shoulder. Jacob jumps on him and pins him to the
ground.

JACOB

Cal, buddy, I need a hand here.

Jackie steps over and kicks the guard under the chin with her heel.

JACKIE

No need to over think it, guys. I need some rope. Welcome back, Jacob. Was it voluntary?

Sam fronts up to Callum, a chihuahua in front of a bull mastiff.

SAM

I'm going to fucking kill you, you son of a bitch.

JACKIE

Not now, you idiot. Haven't you been listening to him? Later.

Callum looks at Sam a beat, then takes the piece of paper Jacob had given him and unfolds it.

CALLUM

What's this?

JACOB

Information on the impending destruction of Earth. Coordinates and timing. What are you going to do about it?

Callum checks the time and does some mental calculations.

CALLUM

Tonight. Shit. That asshole said four of our days.

JACKIE

What are you going to do with our tied up security friend?

CALLUM

I'm going to use him as a warning.

A piercing whistle drowns out the conversation. Jacob, Callum and Jackie turn and look at Sam.

SAM

I'm still in the dark here. I have no fucking idea what's going on. Either I'm in a coma and having one of the worst sci-fi dreams I've ever had, or you two really are aliens and all of this is true. Neither is acceptable to me.

Callum glances at the time on his phone.

CALLUM

Less than 24 hours until all hell breaks loose, Sam. No time for explanations.

JACKIE

You have a plan? Tell me you have a plan.

CALLUM

I have a plan.

JACKIE

Okay. So what do we do first?

Callum grabs a trolley, wheeling it over to beside the trussed alien. He rams it into the alien's head a little harder than necessary.

CALLUM

Jacob and Jackie, lift this guy onto the trolley. Sam, help me set up a fold.

SAM

From here to where?

CALLUM

The quarantine room back home. Jacob, leave a message on the guard. Use "karma" in it.

JACOB

I like the way you think.

Jacob grabs the alien's tablet and quickly types a message.

CALLUM

Ready to go?

JACOB

Say the word.

Callum presses his remaining thumb against the end of the wand. He types the command, double-checks the destination.

CALLUM

Do it, Jacob.

Jacob launches the trolley, most of the alien draped over it, into the center of the lab. The trolley, alien and message disappears in a shimmer.

SAM

Fuck. That's what it looks like.

CALLUM

That should wake the old fart up.

Sam pockets his phone and slips out the door without anybody noticing.

INT. QUARANTINE ROOM

The Elder's reading is interrupted by a clatter as the trolley suddenly manifests itself in the middle of his quarantine room.

He retrieves the personal tablet from the guard's shirt pocket, swipes the screen to unlock it and open a notepad app.

The Elder drops into his seat, reading the message.

ELDER

Karma? What is this karma?

INT. SAM'S LAB

Jacob scribbles figures on the whiteboard, rubs a couple of numbers out and goes at it again.

JACOB

No way you've got enough power in your wand and mine to do what you want to do. My calculations say we'll need six of 'em. At least.

Callum scratches the back of his head for a second, looking around the lab.

CALLUM

Have to resurrect cold fusion. We've got all of the materials we need. Except water, and I know where there's an ocean full.

Callum scribbles notes on a pad of paper, making a list.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Jackie, you've got space in your backyard, right?

JACKIE

By the beach? Sure.

Callum nods and enters data in the laptop. He refers to the list of equipment and makes some calculations.

CALLUM

How long is the beach front?

JACKIE

Twenty-five, maybe thirty metres.

CALLUM

That'll work.

JACKIE

Do you want me to get a truck or something?

CALLUM

We'll tunnel there. Inside and outside of the wormhole simultaneously.

JACKIE

Whatever you say. Where's Sam?

JACOB

Don't know. But he's not here, so
he's going to have to catch up.

EXT. OUTSIDE PHYSICS BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Sam steps out of the lab into the late afternoon light. He fumbles the General's card from his wallet and calls as he walks across the Square.

RECEPTIONIST

(filtered)

General Faulkner's office.

SAM

This is Professor Sam Sheppard from
Sydney University. I have video
evidence of my m-theory -- wormhole
machine -- working. It is of vital
importance that I --

An explosion rips through the campus. The grounds shakes as car alarms, screeching cockatoos and smashing glass fight for dominance.

Sam ducks a spray of glass.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fuck! What in the hell...

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BY THE BEACH - LATER THAT NIGHT

A cab stops on the street and Sam runs into the back yard, hair a mess, eyes wild.

SAM

Jesus, what in the hell did you do
to my lab?

CALLUM

An unfortunate by-product of our
fold to here. We had to take the
equipment with us and the back
twist got kinda dramatic as the
space-time wrinkle straightened
itself out.

Sam tries to push past Callum, and is stopped like a fly on a windshield.

SAM

Move. I've got to get my apparatus.

CALLUM

No, Sam, you can't have it. But I could use your assistance. I need an incredibly smart man to help me keep Earth from becoming a roasted marshmallow in the next two hours.

Sam dry scrubs his face and resigns himself to losing this argument.

SAM

Roasted, how?

CALLUM

A gamma source strong enough to wipe out all electronics -- and life.

Sam smiles and shakes his head.

SAM

There are no gamma sources anywhere around us with even close to enough power required to do that.

CALLUM

They'll use a wormhole. Tunnel from the source to us.

Sam considers this for a second. Pinches the bridge of his nose.

SAM

Okay. If you're right and I say "piss off" and try and stop you, we may all be dead within two hours. Very dangerous mistake.

Sam looks at the pile of equipment on the beach.

SAM (CONT'D)

If you're wrong, but I help you anyway, the worst that can happen is that I waste two hours of my life.

(beat)

So what do you want me to do?

CALLUM

Gotta get this thing fired up, and fast.

Sam looks at the cold fusion tower Callum has built.

SAM

This is supposed to work? This -- this -- pile of misappropriated crap? This kinda sorta looks like the setup that Pons and Fleischmann used in eighty-nine, but larger. And it didn't work.

CALLUM

Actually, the first time those two fired it up, it did. I've added a direct conversion to electricity. We're running out of time, Sam. Jacob, we need to flash this up.

Callum double checks the coordinates and places his thumb on the end of the wand. Jacob follows suit.

Sam's equipment fires up, the cold fusion rig providing power and shaking the ground. A web of heavy-duty collection wires connect it to Sam's device.

INT. CONTROL ROOM ON GLIESE 581D

A senior alien sitting in position of authority receives a message on her display. She double-checks the instructions and activates a speaker.

Dozens of lab-coated alien techs sit at various consoles waiting for instructions.

LEAD TECH

Mission is a go. Activate tunnel.
Confirm gamma source.

LAB-COAT TECH #1
Confirmed. Pulsar 12.56 galactic
units away. Locked on.

LEAD TECH
Destination?

LAB-COAT TECH #2
Confirmed. Third planet from small
star at 11.563034 ascension,
43.42009 declination, distance
5.63678 galactic units. Single
source at its lunar orbit. Target
locked in. Ready to engage.

LEAD TECH
Engage tunnel at will. Duration one
full rotation of destination
planet.

Buttons are pushed, switches are flicked

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BY THE BEACH - NIGHT

Callum and Jacob furiously type one-handed at their laptops.
Sam watches, unsure what to do.

JACKIE
How do you know it's working? Is
there a light or something?

SAM
The display on the laptop will show
how much power we're deflecting.
It'll go off the --

A blast of light spins across the sky. Green bands, orange
and blue tendrils reflect off of the ocean.

The web of wires to the tunnelling device start smoking.

SAM (CONT'D)
Too much, Callum. It's going to
light up. We're overcooking it.

CALLUM
No choice.

Callum squints against the smoke from the burning rubber insulation and makes minute adjustments with his free, thumbless hand.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Get the hell back. I don't know how long this is going to hold. It's getting too hot.

JACKIE

How long will they blast us?

JACOB

It's usually a full revolution. Twenty-four hours. But this isn't going to last that long. It's going to smoke any minute now.

INT. QUARANTINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The lights in the quarantine room shut off, the air cleansing units go quiet. The Elder looks up from his work.

The Elder shuffles over to the dim light spilling in through the only window in the room. The scene unfolding before him is chaos. All vehicles are stopped. Flying craft are falling from the sky.

The Elder tries to enter the unlock code for the door and stops. The keypad is black.

ELDER

No.

The Elder rests his head on the door and sighs.

ELDER (CONT'D)

Karma. Now I understand.

EXT. JACKIE'S BACKYARD BY BEACH - NIGHT

SAM

You're going to wreck it, Callum. Turn it off.

CALLUM

Necessary sacrifice, mate.

The insulation is completely burned off of the wires, the core glowing a bright orange. The wormhole generator produces a deep thrumming rumble, shaking the ground.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I need to keep this going as long
as I can.

A fire starts at the base of the cold fusion tower.

SAM

Son of a bitch.

He runs toward his equipment, holding his arm up to protect his face from the heat.

Callum tries to stop him, but needs to keep his thumb on the end of his wand attached to Sam's device.

CALLUM

Sam, for Christ's sake, look out.
Somebody stop him.

Jackie curses and runs past Callum, trying to shield herself from the heat.

JACKIE

Get away from that, Sam.

SAM

It's going to blow.

JACKIE

Exactly.

Jackie grabs him by the arm and pulls him away.

SAM

Fuck off and let me go.

Sam wrenches his arm free and tries to get to the source of power.

Jackie kicks him in the back of the knee. Sam falls forward, cracking his head on a rock, concussing him.

JACKIE

Oh, shit.

Jackie lifts him over her shoulder in a fireman's carry and runs away from the fire.

Jackie grunts under the weight. An explosion at the base of the cold fusion tower drives her face first into the ground.

Callum lets go of his wand and grabs her with one hand and Sam with the other and back-pedals away from the machinery. A second explosion takes out the wormhole machine.

CALLUM

Well, that was interesting.

Jacob stands with his hands on his hips, looking up at the sky.

JACOB

Did it go for long enough?

CALLUM

It would appear so. We're going to have some company soon. I hear sirens.

JACOB

Barbecue gone bad?

CALLUM

We'll think of something.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BY THE BEACH - LATER

Callum lies back on the sand and laces his fingers behind his head. Jacob drops beside him.

JACOB

You thinking what I'm thinking?

CALLUM

Knowing you? Probably not.

JACOB

I'm thinking the Council is mighty pissed off right now.

CALLUM

They'll know what happened.

JACOB

It's not like they can reach out and touch us anymore. It was the right decision.

Jacob pauses and takes a deep breath.

JACOB (CONT'D)

The air didn't smell like it does here. That's what I missed the most. Do you think the Earthlings will ever recognise the massive gift of continued life you just gave them?

CALLUM

A couple do. Nobody else will believe us.

INT. JACKIE'S LOUNGE ROOM - LATER

Jackie, Jacob and Callum stand in the lounge room, watching the nightly news on the television.

TELEVISION

"Astronomical Societies around the world have reported an extensive display of aurora australis and, in the northern hemisphere, aurora borealis that cannot be explained. The display lasted almost ten minutes, and ended as quickly as it started. Scientists have reported that during the display, a noticeable increase in gamma radiation was detected, although a source for the radiation has not yet been determined."

JACKIE

(clicks off TV)

Was that expected?

CALLUM

The coordinates were a teeny bit off, mate.

JACOB

No harm, no foul. Gave the locals a nice show. It hasn't sunk in yet.

Sam walks in from the kitchen with an ice pack on his forehead.

SAM

Think about the money I could have made with that thing. Actually, I don't want to think about it. It hurts.

CALLUM

Was never going to happen.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BY THE BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Callum follows Sam out of the house into the backyard.

CALLUM

You okay, Sam?

The professor stands in front of the burned out remains of the apparatus he'd spent a career building, and sighs.

SAM

Nope. Not at all. I can't believe you did that thing with the gamma rays, saving us all.

He cocks his head and looks at Callum.

SAM (CONT'D)

At the expense of your planet. Why? That kind of sacrifice is beyond anything I could possibly imagine.

Callum drops onto the beach and pats the ground beside him.

CALLUM

Killing everyone here would have been a stupid, stupid thing to do. There's so much more that can happen here, for the good. I couldn't let them do it.

Callum looks at Sam and smiles.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Technology on my home planet has been reduced to rubble, but the living things continued living. Most of them, anyway.

SAM

I've got so many questions.

CALLUM

Let's park wormholes for a while. We'll have fun showing the world how cold fusion is supposed to work.

He looks up at the patio and Jackie.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

But I gotta go talk to a lady first.

He runs over to the patio and takes Jackie by the hand.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Come and walk with me.

He leads her down the beach, away from the smouldering remains.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Hell of a light show, wasn't it?

JACKIE

Is it all over?

Callum crosses his fingers.

CALLUM

Surely is.

He slows his walk and stops, looking out over the ocean.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I've been putting this off until all of this other mess has been sorted out. I want to make sure you understand what we're getting into.

JACKIE

We're getting into? What are we getting into?

CALLUM

I'm not an idiot, and you're not an idiot. There's an attraction we have for each other. Can't be explained. Doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but it's real. We'd be stupid to deny it.

He looks down at her as she looks across the ocean.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I'm not imagining it, am I?

She smiles and turns to him, taking his other hand in hers.

JACKIE

You're not. And you're correct. But are you sure about this? There's a lot different between us.

CALLUM

Vive la difference. As long as you're willing to give it a shot, I am.

JACKIE

You'll outlive me.

CALLUM

That's a long way away. We'll work things out as they come up. So, you up for this?

JACKIE

Absolutely. And as soon as possible.

She looks back up at the patio and Sam.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What about poor Sam? He's going to be upset.

CALLUM

Sam's going to be richer than he's ever imagined. He's not going to have any time for you.

JACKIE

Good. I want you all to myself. For the rest of my life.

FADE OUT: