

MARSFALL

SEASON THREE  
EPISODE FIVE

Siren Song

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ACT ONE

MAIN THEME

1.1: EXT. STONE INSTRUMENT, MARS SURFACE - DAY

This episode is from Jacki's POV. JACKI and CHIP both wear EVA suits. Jacki's voice reverberates inside her helmet as the environment filters in. Chip's voice filters in through the comms.

Winds swirl through the Martian atmosphere. They swoop downward to blow over holes carved through a monument of stone. The monument... or as they will call it:

THE INSTRUMENT.

Musical notes blow softly through it: flute-like, multiphonic whispers. They strengthen and layer over one another, like the noodling of a wind section just sat on stage.

The wind gusts in a final burst of notes -- and silences. Only the slightest breaths of two-note harmonies through the Instrument. They fade in and out with the wind.

And we're down at ground level.

JACKI's boots crunch through the regolith at a deliberate pace. CHIP catches up to her.

CHIP: Don't get too close. Remember what happened in the blizzard. You heard those chords and went a little...

CHIP makes an "off the deep end" noise.

A gust sends a flutter of notes through the Instrument: a series of almost-scales. The wind quiets, and we're back to the understated, lower-pitched harmonies.

JACKI: The music... It led us here. It's why the Sound Tunnel opened, so we could find this...

CHIP: (finishing her sentence) Mars-henge. Wait, uh, huge stone rectangle, fulla holes? We'll call it: "The Holy Tablet." Eh?

The wind sends unfinished phrases through the Instrument. Jacki crunches forward slowly: the approach of a worshiper gazing up in awe. The notes weave into more complex chords and crescendo gradually, as if drawing Jacki closer.

JACKI: The wind blows over the holes in the stone...

CHIP: ...like a big ole flute. Wei would flip over this.

JACKI: It's not a tablet. It's an Instrument!

A moment of stillness as they consider it. Then: whoosh! A gust blows a single, piercing note through the Instrument. More winds blow in, not playing mere notes or scales. No.

They're playing a Song. Alien. Beautiful, and incorrect.

Chip's voice slowly fades as the Song grows louder.

CHIP: Now, I'm no musician, but if all the wind is blowing from one direction, it should play a chord, right? One chord, not a creepy-ass song with moving notes and shit, right? Jacki?

But in JACKI's mind Chip's voice has faded to nothing. All she can hear is the Song, its hypnotic alienness, soothing despite the dissonance. A counter-melody, warm and round-toned, flows in, too: a familiar cello. It sounds like:

JACKI: Mom?

More audio crackles in, staticky as a radio between stations.

MOM & DAD: Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday dear Ja-cki...Happy birthday to you!

PAST JACKI: Ya still love me?

PAST KATIE: Always.

But the wind swishes, blasting chords off-key through Jacki's mind. The melody: *allegro*. The cello: bowed all wrong. The whole Song sounds wrong now...

Unlike the swirling memories from Season 2, these memories have a harder edge to them, and come across more glitchy.

PAST JACKI: Sh-sh-she did something to us. I c-couldn't think, I couldn't feel...

PAST FAYE: ...where all your n-nightmares come true.

PAST KEILA: Please don't kill me!

PAST JACKI: Are we... murderers?

PAST KEILA: NO!!! NO...!

Back in the present, JACKI cries out, stumbles--

CHIP: Jack--!

VIOLENT WHITE NOISE! It goes on a half-second too long. Then gets sucked back, violently, into nothing. Silence.

A barely-there breeze sends the softest harmony through the Instrument. The barest reminder that the Instrument is still there, looking down on them.

CHIP: Jacki. Jacki...!

JACKI: Hn?

CHIP: Are. You. All. Right...?!

JACKI: I'm...I'm... What happened?

CHIP: Uh, you tell me! You were staring at that... Instrument. Just staring like, "lights on, no one's home."

JACKI: Home...

CHIP: Then you screamed and fell, almost.

JACKI stands, removing herself from CHIP's supportive grip.

CHIP: Are you hurt?

JACKI: It doesn't matter.

CHIP: Uh, yeah, it does!

The wind continues blowing through the Instrument, the eerie song swirling around them, straddling the edge between reality and fantasy.

JACKI: It was... perfect. Like the waves of the Song and the waves of my mind were merging into something beyond profound. Winding together like a double helix - I slipped from reality, from myself, and...into that warm light from those stones in the cave, and I heard Katie, and my parents, and for a second, everything was right! And then it went wrong. And it got weak like in the tunnel. And it was stabbing inside my head, and everything went dark, and I was alone--

CHIP: No you weren't, Jacki. Just, are you okay?

JACKI: Yeah, I'm...no. I *miss* it.

Notes through the Instrument: low and legato.

CHIP: We're getting out of here, now.

Because JACKI's jogging up to the Instrument. CHIP follows.

CHIP: No! -- argh -- Don't touch it!

Too late. Jacki runs her gloved fingers over the rock face. Here, its breathy, low-pitched harmonies sound almost human.

JACKI: The holes... They're eroded.

CHIP pulls JACKI's hand off of the rock.

CHIP: Wind'll do that.

JACKI: (big gasp) That's why it sounds wrong. The Instrument's out of tune!

A sharp gust blows some fluttering, not-quite-right high notes through the Instrument. It's creepy.

CHIP: Cool, uh, remember how we were leaving?

JACKI: I'm supposed to be here. I was led here. To the cave, to the wolf paw, to--

CHIP: To Olympus Mons, okay! I trust ya, Jacki; I already followed you through a freaking wormhole, but you keep saying, "I was led here, it's pulling me." What's leading you? Who's pulling you?

JACKI: I felt something. In the Song. Comforting me...

CHIP: An invisible being that merges with your brainwaves, alters your perception of reality...? Where have we heard this before?

JACKI: This is different; it *feels* different. It's not her.

Music circles her: the Song, and variations of the Song, braiding over one another.

Chip's voice slowly fades out.

CHIP: Look, we're this-close to fixing the buggy. We can come back here later, listen to more rock music. Wait, does it count as rock music if it's through a wind instrument?

JACKI barely hears a word; to her there's nothing but the Song.

Her mom's cello playing "Happy Birthday" flows in over it, and voices too: old radio transmissions, overlapping.

MOM & DAD: --ppy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birth...

LITTLE JACKI: This was the best day ever. Let's do this every year.

PAST KATIE: I'm Katie. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

PAST JACKI: I could live here forever.

PAST KATIE: In my bed?

MOM & DAD: Are ya one? Are ya two? Are ya three..?

The wind gusts, and the cellos slash, bowing brutally across JACKI's mind. The sounds of reality swell up.

JACKI shrieks. CHIP grabs her before she falls.

CHIP: I gotcha.

The wind and Song die down some.

JACKI gasps.

CHIP: C'mon, we're going.

JACKI: (breathless) I have to go back. I can open it.

CHIP: Open what?

Chip gets his answer in the form of a sizzle and crack of energy. A shimmer of sound: the sound of a wormhole opening in front of them.

CHIP: HOLY--! Is that the Sound Tunnel?!

JACKI: (feral) I... I can... control...!

But JACKI can't.

The music and sounds overtake her, a tumult:

MOM & DAD: Are ya are ya are ya are ya?

PAST KATIE: No way out--I know you tried Jacki--

Burst of white noise.

PAST KATIE: I wish I could see you one more time--

White noise.

POP SONG: Miss you, miss you. I want you here, beside m--

PAST JACKI: What happened in that life doesn't matter anymore.

WHITE NOISE-- stutters--

PAST JACKI: Let's just...

PAST JACKI AND FAYE: Focus on the future.

PAST KEILA: Jacki, please--

PAST FAYE: The future--the future--

PAST KEILA: This is barbaric!

PAST JACKI: Then you'll be me.

LITTLE JACKI: Mommy? I had a nightmare.

PAST JACKI AND FAYE: I used to be so sweet. What happened to make me do this?

PAST KEILA: Please don't kill me! NO!!!

FAYE and JACKI's voices merge in a wild, glitchy laugh...

MOM & DAD: Are ya three? Are ya two? Are ya one--

FEEDBACK. The shimmering widens, loudens, wobbles. A massive CRACK of energy as the Sound Tunnel collapses. And so does Jacki. Chip catches her, as his voice fades in and the Sound Tunnel fades away.

CHIP: Oh shit! Shit, shit! Don't pass out on me.

JACKI: M'awake...

CHIP: The tunnel collapsed!

CHIP tries to rouse JACKI.

CHIP: Hey, hey, c'mon. You need sleep.

JACKI: Sleep...okay.

JACKI lies down in the snow. CHIP bends down to grab her.

CHIP: Wh- no, not here! Back to the buggy, okay?

JACKI mumbles assent.

CHIP hefts her further upright and helps her stagger away, back toward the buggy that pretends to be home.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

2.1: INT. BUGGY - NIGHT.

Both Jacki and Chip have suits off. JACKI wears small headphones, filtering in the sound of her music app. Sounds from within the buggy are muffled.

Clanks of tools as CHIP performs his repairs.

JACKI taps at a music app on her tablet. Its digital keyboard plays a note at her touch; we hear it tinny through her headphones. Jacki's sung note and the keyboard note are nearly the same -- nearly, but not near enough.

JACKI hums the note again and tries a new pitch on her keyboard. Also close-but-no-cigar.

JACKI drags her finger across the screen, warping the note's frequency. Then: CRASH.

CHIP: Ow!

Because CHIP dropped part of the scavenged robot on his foot.

JACKI removes her headphones. Environmental sounds are no longer muffled.

JACKI: You okay?

CHIP: Yeah...never better. Can't say the same about Johann though.

JACKI: I'm gonna miss him.

CHIP stretches with a yawn.

CHIP strolls toward his cot.

CHIP: Two more hours of repairs, and we'll be back on the road. Two more hours...(yawn)...tomorrow. With any luck we'll find ANDI and--

CHIP stops walking abruptly.

CHIP: What are you doing?

JACKI: Enjoying your monologue?

CHIP: With your tablet? Are you composing? Lemme see!

CHIP grabs at the tablet, but JACKI snatches it away.

JACKI: You'll hear it later! At (drama) karaoke.

CHIP: Oho! Is it Queen?

JACKI: Maybe.

CHIP: Bowie! "Life on Mars"!

JACKI: Maaaybe?

CHIP: How does that start again? Oh, I know. Like this!

JACKI: Hey!

But CHIP pecks the tablet screen with his finger, too fast for JACKI to stop him.

The app plays back her composition: similar to, but not quite the same as, the Song that opened the Sound Tunnel.

CHIP: That's the song from the Instrument.

JACKI: So?

CHIP: So, you were trying to play it!

JACKI: And I shouldn't?

CHIP: No! You're Dreyfussing!

JACKI: What?!

CHIP: Close Encounters of the Third Kind. You're *obsessed* with an alien song to the point of abandoning your fami-- me!

JACKI: I am not obsessed.

CHIP: (mocking fake-Jacki voice) "I'm just trying to open the Sound Tunnel."

JACKI: I am! To get to Olympus Mons, which is w--

CHIP: We don't need it! We have the buggy!

JACKI: The *buggy* would go *faster* through the *Sound Tunnel*!

CHIP: I don't *trust* the Sound Tunnel! The last time we used it, we lost ANDI!

JACKI: So bring him back! You're the tech guy.

CHIP: You're right! I am in charge of tech. Which means I'm in charge of the tablet.

JACKI: No--!

But CHIP wrenches it away from her. They struggle for a moment, but JACKI can't break CHIP's firm grip on the tablet. He forces her to let go, hugs it tight, and jaunts over to his cot and shoves it under the pillow. He climbs into bed.

CHIP: I'm sleeping with this under my pillow, so don't even try. Turning out the light now!

CHIP clicks off the lights.

Wind outside, and a chord from the Instrument in the distance. Hard to know if it's real or in JACKI's imagination.

When JACKI speaks her voice is small.

JACKI: ...Chip?

CHIP: ...Yeah?

JACKI: Give me the tablet, please.

Sheets rustle as CHIP hugs the tablet closer.

JACKI: I need it. I need it, Chip. ...Chip!

CHIP: What.

JACKI: I just. I-I need it.

CHIP sighs, hard.

CHIP shoots up from his cot and stalks to Jacki's cot while swiping the tablet screen.

CHIP: Look. Look at the screen. What do you see?

JACKI: My face. On the camera.

CHIP: You know what I see? An addict. Personification of "strung out."

JACKI: I'm tired. You know I don't sleep.

CHIP: You said "need," you need it. Not your tablet. The Song. That warm light in your head. It made everything right again. Then the light went away, and you missed it. Now look at yourself, you're jonesin'. I've seen it a hundred times. I've been it a hundred times.

JACKI: Wow. Dad was right. Recovering alcoholics think everyone's an alcoholic.

CHIP: (scoffs) Nice.

JACKI: I know I can do it. I can tune the Instrument and open the tunnel. Let me try, one more time!

CHIP: "I can stop whenever I want!"

JACKI: I can control it!

CHIP: What if it's controlling you? This magical, comforting... whatever. I'm not knockin' comfort; big fan of comfort here! But whatever it was, it was killing you.

JACKI: I'm fine.

CHIP: You're not. You've been a wreck since you were... since Faye, and Keila. Of course you want to slip from reality, you've been running from reality since Sol One: to the cave paintings, to Olympus Mons, I get it. When I merged with ANDI, there's... there's nothin' like it. And now he's gone, and I'm just... me. Livin' on Planet PTSD. (catching his breath) Maybe deep down part of you wishes Faye had taken it all away, assimilated you for good. And now you have a second chance.

JACKI: Ha. You think what happened to me was like Faye? Like drinking? It was more than that, more than anything you've been through, anything you can imagine.

CHIP: (flat) Beyond profound?

JACKI: Like being in the past and infinity all at once. It's peace, like being held, like the universe is holding you in its hand. And maybe you can't trust yourself, but you trust this. And it's not assimilation; it's *communion*, and it feels like...

CHIP: Like..?

JACKI: ...like home.

JACKI lies back on her pillow. CHIP sits down on his cot.

CHIP: (sigh) I don't care about infinity. I care about this sol: right here, right now, on Mars. And right now, you look like a fucking zombie. "Peace?" "Peace." Well there's plenty of peace when you're dead I guess.

CHIP throws himself back on his pillow.

JACKI: I'm sorry, Chip.

CHIP: Yeah. Sleep well, Jacki.

JACKI: Whatever.

The wind blows through the Instrument again, creating what sounds like a ghostly dischord of flutes.

CROSS FADE TO:

2.2: INT. BUGGY - LATER.

This scene is from Chip's POV.

Wind gushes in through the open buggy door. Chords in the far distance.

CHIP wakes in his bed, shivering.

CHIP: (shivering) Jacki?

CHIP looks around. She's nowhere to be found.

CHIP: ...Ah, Shit.

CHIP races to the open door. His screams echo into the wilderness:

CHIP: JACKI!!! JA-CKI!!!

CHIP slips into his suit and snaps on his helmet as the wind blows across the tundra.

CROSS FADE TO:

2.3: EXT. THE INSTRUMENT - NIGHT

The rest of the episode returns to Jacki's POV. Both JACKI and CHIP are wearing EVA suits. Jacki's voice reverberates inside her helmet as the outside environment filters in. Chip's voice filters through the comms.

JACKI has climbed the rock instrument and is slapping putty into the hole. She taps musical notes on her tablet.

CHIP runs up to her. He stops, seeing Jacki on top of the Instrument.

CHIP: (winded) JACKI! What are you doing up there?!

JACKI: Tuning the Instrument!

CHIP: You'll fall!

JACKI: Martian gravity, remember? Don't worry, I'll climb down in a minute! All I have to do is putty these last two holes to undo the erosion, that'll tune the Song so I can open the Sound Tunnel.

CHIP: Which will kill you!

JACKI: No! Once my mind and the Song are in sync, I'll have total control of the tunnel! The Song transmits the frequencies, I'm the antenna, and the control switch!

CHIP: Control?! You're not in control!

JACKI: I'll open the tunnel, bring us to Olympus Mons. Trap the Shadows inside, send them halfway across the planet! (gasp) Into outer space!

CHIP: Don't bullshit me! This isn't about the shadows and you know it! (Frustrated noise) Can't you just bottle up your feelings like a normal person?

Metal scrapes on stone as JACKI spackles the two last holes.

JACKI: Coming down!

CHIP: Be caref-- No - Ah...!

JACKI jumps from the Instrument. She lands easily.

JACKI: See?

CHIP: Martian gravity.

JACKI: Toldja.

CHIP: Well, the wind's calm for now.

Chip's voice slowly fades out.

CHIP: We gotta get out of here before... Shit. Jacki. Jacki, don't listen to it! Don't let it into your head--

Chip's voice is gone under the Song. There's no dissonance this time, no screeching bowstrings. It is heavenly, immaculate. The cello flows in.

JACKI: Perfect...

Memories crackle in again:

SUSIE O'RANIA sings to the tune of Brahms Lullaby.

MOM: And the goon, from the moon, will haunt you tonight!

MOM AND LITTLE JACKI: Sleep tight! Don't let the robots bite!

LITTLE JACKI: I love you, Mommy.

MOM: Love you, Jackster...

But Chip's voice brings JACKI halfway back to reality. He's closer to her than before. She must have fallen again; he's holding her. A soft sizzle of energy on the air.

CHIP: No, Jacki, stay with me. Focus on my voice.

JACKI: (weak) My...face feels weird.

CHIP: You're crying.

JACKI: No, it's... it's the Song. I'm- I'm holding it inside -- the tunnel's trying to open through me.

CHIP: Then cut the connection!! God, your face... You're grey. It's sucking the life out of you!

JACKI: But I wanna go... back...

CHIP: No, stay, stay awake. Look, Jacki, you can mind-meld with the Song, trip through the magic tunnel and lose yourself in infinity, and everything will be fine -- for a *minute*. And then you'll *die*! Please. Don't leave me.

But the Song is so beautiful, so perfect... And Chip's voice is so far away... A soft shimmer in the air... The cello...

DAD: Hey, Jackster! You running off before opening your presents?

JACKI: Presents... Chip needs me in the present...

LITTLE JACKI: NO! NO! It's bad there. I'm bad.

Chip's voice sounds more distant as JACKI fights to keep control.

CHIP: It's trying to open! Jacki! Cut the connection!

PAST KATIE: Don't run away again. Stay with me.

CHIP: You're not breathing...

JACKI: Chip. (BEAT) Chip -- I have to go. I don't want to...!

MOM: This will always be your home. We'll be here when you come back.

PAST JACKI: I'll be a different person.

MOM: Yep. That's how time works. But whatever happens out there, you'll always be our little star.

JACKI: (pseudo-relief) Thank you. Whatever you are. I'd forgotten what it feels like...

CHIP: Wake up...

JACKI: ...to feel safe.

JACKI sighs a breath, heavy with finality. It echoes as all other sounds are sucked back into the Aether. And then--

Nothing. Quiet. Everywhere. A soft breeze, but the harmonies, the Song, the memories... they've stopped.

CHIP: Jacki. Say something.

JACKI: 'M. On Mars.

CHIP: Yeah you are.

JACKI: L-last sol was my birthday. I'm thirty-six. I'm me.

CHIP: Yeah, yeah...

JACKI stands with CHIP's help. She takes a couple of halting steps toward the Instrument.

CHIP: Easy, easy...

JACKI: It's gone. The Song. There's still wind, but... It's gone.

CHIP: How do you feel?

JACKI: Lonely. And guilty. And scared.

CHIP: I wish I had a cure for that. This is all I got.

CHIP hugs JACKI tight.

JACKI: Not bad. Who needs closure when you have hugs?

CHIP: Right?

Another second and then CHIP and JACKI separate.

JACKI: Can we go to bed now? 'Cause I'm really, really tired.

CHIP: (laugh) Yeah....yeah.

CHIP and JACKI limp back together, the way they came.

FADE OUT.

2.4: INT. BUGGY - NIGHT

JACKI and CHIP climb into the buggy, closing the door behind them.

JACKI removes her helmet; a sigh of relief that she's free of it. CHIP sheds his suit and flings himself onto his cot.

JACKI and CHIP no longer wear suits.

CHIP: Home sweet home. Well. Not home-home.

JACKI: Not Sequoia. Should we head back there? So I can "face the music?"

CHIP: Absolutely. But after Olympus Mons.

JACKI: (laughs) Still runnin' from our problems, huh?

CHIP: For a minute. We've come this far. I gotta know what's out there.

JACKI: Me too.

CHIP: Although, what if there's more of that music on the volcano, trying to siphon out your life force?

JACKI: I'm gonna try and find that wormhole again, Chip. I'm going to open the Sound Tunnel.

CHIP: (warning) Jacki...

JACKI: Not now. I wasn't ready for it. But I will be. There's something in there I need to find. I won't get lost in there, not again.

CHIP: You might though.

JACKI: Then I'll find my way back again. Follow the dulcet tones of your voice.

CHIP scoffs.

JACKI: You'll be there with me, won't you?

CHIP: 'Course I will. I trust ya, Jacki.

JACKI: Good. So do I.

FADE OUT.

2.5: INT. BUGGY - DAY.

CHIP turns the ignition. Rumbles from the buggy. The engine idles.

CHIP: Yes! Moment of truth. Seat belts, everyone.

JACKI and CHIP buckle in.

CHIP: And listen, if you're still jonesin' for a transcendent musical experience, a profound connection with an awesome musical force, why not merge with me in the greatest karaoke duet of all time:

JACKI: "Under Pressure"!

CHIP: "A Whole New World"!

BOTH: WHAT?

JACKI: Disney? *That's* better than Queen? Than Bowie?!

CHIP: "For you and meeeeeeeeeee!" ...Yeah, let's put on some real music.

CHIP does: something electronic and propulsive.

CHIP: (old-timey plane captain voice) We, uh, have ignition. Three...

BOTH: Two...One...Liftoff!

CHIP cranks up the volume and puts pedal to the metal. The buggy zooms off, racing through the Martian desert. JACKI and CHIP cheer.

CHIP: Martian Twins!

JACKI: We're comin' for you, Olympus!

MUSIC fades out.

END EPISODE.