

MARSFALL

SEASON THREE
EPISODE SIX

Ad Venture

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PROLOGUE

P.1: INT. BUGGY - DAY.

This episode starts from Jacki's POV.

CHIP drives the Buggy while JACKI sits in the back. After a few moments, they hit something with a BANG!

CHIP: D'ah! Damn it.

CHIP drops gears and slows the buggy to a stop.

JACKI: Everything okay?

CHIP: Probably, but I'm not taking any chances. I'm gonna go check it out real quick.

CHIP gets his suit on and heads out the door.

JACKI: You don't need a hand?

Chip's voice filters through the external suit speakers.

CHIP: Nah, I got this. Back in a sec.

CHIP heads out the door, closing it behind him. JACKI sits for a moment, then grabs her personal recorder. She clicks it on.

JACKI: Jacki O'Rania, personal log. (BEAT) We're closer to the base of the volcano than ever before. It's still cloudy, and I bet we're missing some incredible views, but something tells me we're going to be here for a while.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.2: EXT. MARTIAN SURFACE - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Chip's POV. His voice reverberates inside his helmet, as the environmental sounds filter in from outside.

Outside there's a light breeze, but it's otherwise still. CHIP tightens a screw.

CHIP: That should hold for a while.

CHIP clicks his suit recorder on.

CHIP: (clear throat) Chip Heddleston, Command- uhh, ha ha no. Wow. Old habits, new titles... I don't know why I'm recording this, Jacki's so much better at it. But I guess it feels...normal. Even though I'm not used to "normal" anymore, it's kinda nice...hm. You take what you can get I guess. With all that's happened, and everything we've been through so far...sometimes it feels too much to take in.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.3: INT. BUGGY - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Jacki's POV.

JACKI: I'm sure we'll have plenty of time to take it all in. Terraformation altered the landscape differently out here. Toward the cliffs are growths of violet glades and darkened indigo groves, so these plants must retain water all winter. It looks like Mars will bloom again. I know it's been said that nothing can compare to the sight of Earth from orbit, but...those people shouldn't discount how truly stunning a terraformed Mars can be! It never fails to take my worries away, even if only for a moment.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.4: EXT. MARTIAN SURFACE - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Chip's POV.

CHIP starts to pack up his tools.

CHIP: What I worry about though...well, it's the new normal. The new normal of nightmares, the new normal of only one person to talk to, the new normal with ANDI...gone. I'm worried I'll get used to that. That I'll stop being worried about it. That it'll become my life. And I'll be forced to move on. Or not. (Laughs) Jeez, everything was so much simpler when I only had to deal with mutinous military officials and gettin' Chip Pox. That seems so long ago. So much earlier.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.5: INT. BUGGY - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Jacki's POV.

JACKI: Earlier I saw a group of these enormous trees, covered in a pale, thistle-colored bark, all twisted together, spiraling upward. As the wind blew, it shook bright little periwinkle flowers off the branches - the petals flying through the sky, moving in flourishes and swirls before being carried away, off toward the sun, to places I'll probably never see. (BEAT) Huh. If every part of this planet is so vivid, we're going to run out of words for different shades of purple. Hmmm...lavender. Uh...oh, heliotrope...Ooh, black raspberry! Gotta remember that one.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.6: EXT. MARTIAN SURFACE - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Chip's POV.

CHIP walks toward the buggy.

CHIP: What I gotta remember though, is I've felt like this before. I've been to the point of death and back, more than once. Still the fear never goes away, despite everything I've been through.

CROSS FADE TO:

P.7: INT. BUGGY - CONTINUOUS.

Switch to Jacki's POV.

JACKI: Despite all the beauty, though, I'm still feeling...dread. Not like the common anxiety I'm used to dealing with. Something worse. Something more sinister, still beautiful, but familiar somehow...

Merge both environments and POVs. Chip continues to speak inside his helmet.

CHIP stops walking in front of the buggy door.

CHIP: I don't know.

JACKI: I don't know.

JACKI and CHIP both click off their recorders. CHIP opens the door to the buggy with a hiss. The wind blows a bit stronger,

and all other sounds melt away but the omnipresent wind. It blows for 4-8 seconds before fading into:

CUT TO: MAIN THEME

ACT ONE, Scene 1 (1.1): INT. BUGGY - NIGHT.

Act One is from Chip's POV. CHIP and JACKI are no longer wearing their EVA suits.

CHIP clicks a few buttons on the panel and turns the wheel. The engine drops gears as the buggy slows down. JACKI walks up to the window.

JACKI: See that cliff rising on the horizon?

CHIP: Yeah, I do.

JACKI: *That's* the edge of Olympus Mons.

CHIP: (amazed) Wow! We've come a long way.

JACKI: We did. Like, the width of an entire North America.

CHIP: Yeah. Except there's a supervolcano on the edge of the American prairie. Wild.

JACKI: Wild and beautiful. Johann's nav log says there's a power source somewhere in this area.

CHIP unfurls his Mars map and moves his finger on it, tracking down where they are now.

CHIP: If we're approaching from the southeast, and the edge of Olympus Mons is still about sixty kilometers away...

JACKI: Did you make a map?

CHIP: Yeah, while you were sleeping. My dad always said to pack a paper map, so this is the next best thing.

JACKI: Oh. It's not that bad of a drawing, actually.

CHIP: Thanks. I had to draw some of it from memory, trying to match the bot's-

JACKI clears her throat.

CHIP: Johann's maps as best I could.

JACKI: Thank you.

CHIP: So that big crescent moonish rock over there, should be the (struggles pronouncing it) Sulci Gordii.*

*CHIP pronounces this word like Sull-see-gore-dee or səl-si gor-di in IPA.

*JACKI pronounces it like Sull-kigh-gore-dee-eye or səl-kai gor-di-ai in IPA.

JACKI:It's Sulci Gordii. It means a sub-parallel grouping of ridges, like the grey matter of your brain.

CHIP: Gross.

JACKI: This rock's named after the gordius though, a type of parasitic worm or eel, all clustered together-

CHIP: Ugh, double gross.

JACKI: I think the name originates from the Gordian Knot of legend, you know, with Alexander the Great?

CHIP: Better him than killer worms that eat our brains.

JACKI laughs.

The console and JOHANN both chime.

CHIP: We must be close. Hopefully there's something underneath all this snow.

JACKI: There's gotta be something here. Let's suit up, and get out there.

JACKI and CHIP get on their suits. They open the buggy doors and climb out.

CONTINUE TO:

ACT ONE, SCENE 2 (1.2): EXT. RED VENTURE RUINS - DAY.

JACKI and CHIP are both wearing EVA suits. Chip's voice reverberates inside his helmet. The outside environment sounds filter in through the external suit speakers and Jacki's voice comes in over the comms.

The wind is low, and a very faint whisper of a whistling chord can be heard.

JACKI and CHIP step down and the buggy doors close with a hiss. They walk across the regolith, but unlike the crunch of the desert jungle, their feet slap the frozen ground here, banging off the rock and snowpack.

JACKI: Johann came from this spot. See anything?

CHIP: Nope. Just more rocks, but it looks like there's some moss, maybe? I wonder how long it's been here.

JACKI bends down and scratches a rock.

JACKI: I think it's still alive, which means there should be water around here.

CHIP: Definitely another Erin question.

JACKI stands up.

CHIP: Maybe they were drilling for it, or never planned to be here during terraformation.

JACKI: Yeah, maybe.

CHIP: Hey, ya know, if our little buddy was a builder sent in advance, we might find a colony here.

JACKI: What about that hill over there?

CHIP: Might be something.

JACKI: I assume that outcropping would provide some protection from the elements on a windy, dusty Mars.

CHIP: Now that sounds like a Wei question.

JACKI: Oh my God, can you just imagine Wei seeing this place?
(laughs) She'd lose her damn mind.

CHIP: Yeah! I wish she was here - I love it when she goes into hyper-nerd mode! (laughs)

JACKI: Me too, it's super cute. But I bet she's pretty pissed at me now.

JACKI starts pacing.

JACKI: (breathing faster) I don't blame her though. I mean, she supported me before we left, believed in me coming out here, and now that we found a giant rock carving, she can't even see it.

JACKI rubs her neck.

CHIP: I'm sorry, Jacki.

JACKI: (exhale) It's fine.

CHIP: How are you feeling?

JACKI: Nervous. But you know, excited.

CHIP: Not tight? You were rubbing your neck again and I just...

JACKI stops rubbing her neck.

JACKI: Oh, I didn't notice-

CHIP: I dunno. Just wondering if you were feeling *it* again.

JACKI: No...but this place does feel...special(?) somehow...

JACKI and CHIP ease their way down the slope, boots sliding on the icy hardpack.

JACKI: Watch your step, it's kind of slick.

CHIP: I got it-

CHIP stumbles forward and bumps hard into one of the rocks. His suit makes a metallic clink against it.

CHIP: Oof!

JACKI: You all right?

JACKI stumbles over to him. She bumps the same large rock and her suit makes a metallic clink against it.

CHIP: Yeah. Did you hear that?

JACKI: I did.

JACKI leans in and paws at the snow.

JACKI: What the heck? It's like, a - is there a wall here?
CHIP digs beside her and runs his hand along the smooth surface.

CHIP: Oh shit, you're right! It's a flat surface.

JACKI's hand brushes away some snow.

JACKI: And there's another one, going this way!

CHIP: I think we've got some walls, which means this was definitely a colony!

JACKI and CHIP walk next to the wall. CHIP kicks at the snow lying on top of the foundation.

CHIP: Hey! I can break through the snow over here. Might be a doorway.

JACKI: Pretty wide for a door.

CHIP: There's a panel here, I think...Too rusted to know for sure.

JACKI and CHIP walk through the snow and into a circular area surrounded by three to five foot snow banks formed around half-built walls.

JACKI: Maybe this room was the colony's Habitation.

CHIP: It sure is big enough.

JACKI turns around and looks left and right.

JACKI: So if this is the doorway, I can kinda make out the hallways. The rest of the colony must be that way.

CHIP: Let's check it out.

JACKI and CHIP walk down the hallways.

CHIP: Gotta say, walking down this "hallway" feels really weird to me.

JACKI: Weirder than nearly being assimilated by an AI?

CHIP: (awkward laugh) Nothing will be as weird as that. I only meant, this place feels oddly familiar. Even without all the walls. I dunno, maybe the sunlight reflecting off the snow is messing with me.

JACKI: No, I'm with you, this is definitely creepy. And the glare does make it look like we're in some sort of washed-out maze.

The wind whips by them, swelling the near-constant drone from the tower nearby.

CHIP: It's that whistling wind again...

JACKI: Sounds like it's coming from behind that rise over there. Do you think- it's gotta be the wind blowing through another one of those rock formations.

CHIP: You don't see any wormholes, do you?

JACKI: (laughs) No.

CHIP: (deadly serious) What about shadows?

JACKI (beat) No. I don't.

CHIP: Good.

JACKI and CHIP keep walking as the wind makes an eerie howling chord, slightly discordant and echoey.

CHIP: This place might've been more of a research facility, probably with rotating crews.

They hurry over the regolith and JACKI scales the small rise, sending some rocks down the slope. CHIP follows.

JACKI: (breathing faster) Oh! We're almost at that tall, skinny rock!

CHIP: (breathing faster) Is that a rock, or more of the colony, 'cause my HUD's showing it glowing hot.

JACKI: Mine too. Could it be the reactor?

CHIP: Those are usually buried under ground, so I don't think so. Could be a vent though.

JACKI: The wind sounds different somehow. More, well, on pitch, if that makes any sense.

CHIP: If you say so.

JACKI and CHIP walk up to the spire.

The wind howls through it, creating a solid chord of sound. Unlike the disorienting compression of the rock wind, this one sounds like a strong foundation. Intense, but supportive.

JACKI: This thing looks just like the Instrument. If we can compare the size of these holes to the eroded rocks we might find out when those carvings were originally made. Still, we'd definitely need Wei's help-

CHIP slams his hand on it and a big piece of hardpack snow crumbles off and shatters on the ground.

JACKI: Careful! We don't usually hit things when excavating.

CHIP: Oh right, I forgot you got your degree in archaeology after that one dig.

JACKI: One more than you.

CHIP: (laugh) We'll be lucky to find anything substantial underneath all of this snow, but sure, I'll be more gentle.

JACKI and CHIP scrape some snow off the surface.

JACKI: Here! I see something shiny.

JACKI wedges her gloved fingers into a small hole and pushes away some dry and crumbling regolith.

CHIP: Let me help you dig it out.

CHIP scrapes the regolith away from the metal. A chunk of rock falls and clanks into the side of the mound. It makes a dull, resonating thud.

CHIP: Well, it's definitely metal.

JACKI: Thanks for the confirmation. Is it hollow?

CHIP: I don't know...This is the weirdest building I've ever seen.

More snow falls away as they both dig.

JACKI: Oh! Look down there! A handle!

CHIP: I think there's a door here.

JACKI: Ah, maybe, I see a shape...? Where've I seen this before?

CHIP: I think it's a company logo?

JACKI: Oh yeah. Must've had good branding then.

CHIP: (playful): Not if you don't remember what it is.

JACKI tries the handle but it's frozen stiff.

JACKI: (straining) Door's stuck. Help me push it-

JACKI and CHIP push on the door. It creaks until opening with a BANG!

The wind blows quicker, shifting the pitch of the drone a bit, forming a new chord before it lifts back up to its original harmony.

CHIP: So, uh...should we go inside?

JACKI: After you, Commander Heddleston.

CHIP: (sigh) Dammit.

JACKI and CHIP walk inside.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1 (2.1): INT. THE HOLOGRAPH WELL - DAY.

Act Two is from Jacki's POV. Jacki's voice reverberates inside her helmet as Chip's voice is now filtered through the comms. The windy drone from the artificial Instrument is less present, but somehow more oppressive while inside the structure. JACKI and CHIP's boots clank on the metal floor with a dull thud as they walk.

JACKI: What is this place?

CHIP: Doesn't seem like a reactor to me.

JACKI: Turn your lights on.

They each turn their suit lights on with a click and whine.

JACKI: The roof's caving in over there.

CHIP: I think there's a console over here. Let me see if it still has power.

JACKI: Cool, uh, I'll check out the rubble.

JACKI walks toward the rubble as CHIP heads in the other direction toward the console.

JACKI: Oh wow, a lot of snow came in.

CHIP: See those lines running across the ground, buried under the snow?

JACKI: Yeah.

CHIP: Well, they look sorta like power lines, but thicker.

JACKI stops walking and looks around.

JACKI: Then what are all of these lumps?

CHIP stops walking and brushes off the console.

CHIP: Can't tell with everything snowed over. Gotta dig it out.

CHIP bends down and fidgets with the console.

JACKI: I'm on it.

JACKI starts digging in the snow.

CHIP: You know, we might get power to this thing after all.

JACKI: Oh yeah? Is the console working?

JACKI stops digging as CHIP stands up.

CHIP: It did at some point. But these scorch marks on it here...Wow, that must've been a massive blow out. Maybe it's a water extractor, but why would it need that much power...?

JACKI: Hm. I wonder...how much did you know about the new Investor that came to Sequoia?

CHIP: I know she fired all my friends before Juarez and Geoff changed nearly everything we were doing. I've never worked so hard to un-fuck a situation just to accommodate some special projects.

JACKI: But what did you know about those special projects?

JACKI starts digging through the snow again.

CHIP: Something to do with gravity, and the fractal tech that powers ANDI. Tech bros love to keep their secrets.

JACKI: Tech people.

CHIP: Eh, I'm not that wrong. Not endorsing, but- (clear throat) Why do you ask?

JACKI: Well, it's just something Geoff said about the Loop. They were going to power it by harnessing the energy from this planet.

CHIP: Harness it with what, untested tech? Hammond would never fund a long shot like that.

JACKI: He supposedly funded this whole mission so I could look at some cave paintings, so yeah, I think he would.

CHIP: Yeah, but it's not like those paintings and Geoff's Loop are connected.

JACKI: You weren't at the caves. When we saw the paintings, assuming it was a map of Mars, Geoff said the lines followed the same trajectory as the Loop leading to Olympus Mons. Think about how close we are to it, and I kept feeling pulled here. If all of that, and this structure, if they all have something to do with the Sound Tunnel...

CHIP: I guess that makes sense.

JACKI: I don't know. It's just a feeling, but-

JACKI's glove slips on a slick, smooth surface. She stops digging.

JACKI: Ugh, whatever's under here is frozen, but it feels like-ugh!! Oh God!

JACKI scrambles away from the snow pile.

CHIP: What?!

JACKI: It's- it's a- body - it's a body!

CHIP: *Body?*!

JACKI: These are all people! Or, (regaining some composure) Or they...were. The snow mummified them.

CHIP: Okay, well, that's a wrap for me. This place is way too creepy.

JACKI (exhale) Yeah...

CHIP walks toward JACKI.

CHIP: Sorry. Are you okay?

JACKI: I'm fine. They look like they've been here for centuries.

CHIP: I really don't feel good about this.

JACKI: Hang on. These cables run from the console underground, and there's a kind of large panel over there...

JACKI walks across the room to the floor panel.

JACKI: Maybe they were trying to get down there or something?

JACKI scrapes some snow off a small door, forcing open the panel.

CHIP: Jacki, I think it's time we went back to the Buggy.

The panel opens with a squeak.

JACKI: No, look, look, there's a switch!

JACKI flips the switch with a clack.

JACKI: Try the console again.

CHIP: (sigh) Okay, but then let's go, yeah?

JACKI: Sure.

CHIP flips several switches and the console HUMS and lights up.

CHIP: This machine's still getting power...somehow.

A light turns on with a soft buzz and the console chimes.

JACKI: I see a light down there!

CHIP: Hey, the screen's booting up n-

CHIP abruptly stops speaking.

JACKI: What's it say? (Beat) Chip?

JACKI walks over to him.

JACKI: Chip? What's it say...?

JACKI stops walking and reads the console.

JACKI: (quietly) Red. Red...Venture...?

CHIP: (overwhelmed): No. No, Faye made Red Venture, but sh-she's gone, right?

JACKI: Yes-

CHIP: I killed her!

JACKI: You did-

CHIP: So what is this place?!

JACKI: It- It must be the ruins of Red Venture, th-the real one.

CHIP: But it can't be real, it was a *digital* colony! Their launch was sabotaged!

JACKI: Faye still could've modeled her digital world on the plans for the real thing.

CHIP: Unless...unless we're still inside her simulation-

JACKI: No. Stop that.

CHIP: She *knows* all of us, and Sequoia.

JACKI: (forcefully) Listen. Chip. We're not. We can't be. You and ANDI shut her down. Remember that.

CHIP: I killed her...

JACKI: Chip, look at me-

CHIP: (pseudo-hyperventilating) This, this isn't right! I don't like this, I, I- I don't like feeling like this-

JACKI: We can go-

CHIP: (panicking) No, no, I can't! I can't. I can't live like this anymore, Jacki. The lying, the nightmares, the wind, all these bodies- it never ends!

JACKI: Come on Chip! Come on Chip.

CHIP (murmuring) No, no, no, no, no, no...

JACKI: Faye is gone-

CHIP: It's still too much.

JACKI: (deep breath) It's okay. I'm gonna get you out of here. Come on. All right. Here we go.

JACKI hoists CHIP up on her shoulder and stumbles out of the structure. She mutters encouragement to CHIP as they walk.

CROSS FADE TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE 2 (2.2): INT. BUGGY - LATER.

The buggy doors hiss open and shut as JACKI and CHIP climb inside. They unsnap their helmets and let them fall to the floor.

Jacki and Chip no longer wear their suits.

CHIP breathes deeply.

CHIP: (quietly) I never want to go back inside there.

JACKI: I understand...but we can't just ignore th-

CHIP: No! We can't ever go back to that place - How exactly are you so calm right now?!

JACKI: (laughs) Oh, I'll freak out later. But it won't do us any good for me to lose my shit right now. Besides, you helped me enough when the buggy wasn't working and I was the one freaking out.

CHIP: (anxious) Feels like ages ago, just like Red Venture. Jacki...I can't believe it's really here.

JACKI: I...can. I know we've been to so many strange places, and I still don't know exactly where we are, but I believe this is reality.

CHIP: (shivers) I hate reality.

JACKI: You're shaking. Did you take your meds?

CHIP: Yeah, I'm fine. Just exhausted.

JACKI: Then you should sleep. I'll take care of everything, okay?

CHIP: Yeah. Okay, yeah. Okay...

The wind gusts, whistling loud over the buggy.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE 1 (E.1): EXT. RED VENTURE RUINS - NEXT MORNING.

Jacki wears her EVA suit. Her voice reverberates inside her helmet as the environment filters in from outside.

JACKI opens the buggy, and walks toward Red Venture. The drone of the whistling wind envelops JACKI. JACKI clicks on her recorder.

JACKI: (to herself) We're camping outside Red Venture right now. The real one. Chip is...still recovering from the shock of fantasy and reality colliding. I think he had it worse than most people when Faye...when she violated him. Well, we all know what it was like. (BEAT) She...both Faye, and Keila, talked about the Holograph being at Olympus Mons. I think this is it, or something like it, because even though it overloaded, those power lines were leading somewhere down, beneath the regolith!

JACKI opens the door and walks inside the Holograph structure.

CONTINUE TO:

EPILOGUE 2 (E.2): INT. HOLOGRAPH - MORNING.

JACKI walks slowly through the hollow structure, toward the glowing terminal.

JACKI: I know I probably shouldn't do this without Chip, but...I'm feeling that pull again. I have to know what's down there.

JACKI lifts the panel up as the music swells.

END EPISODE.