

WHEN TOWER ANGELS FALL

by Elizabeth Plant

EPISODE 04 – “SUNSET UNSUNG”

TWO YEARS AGO

(An empty city street at night.)

Sol walks alone, a heavy case slung over one shoulder. It bounces with each step, making a slight rattling noise against his jacket. His phone rings – David Bowie’s “Starman” – and he answers.)

SOL *(apologetic)* Yeah? Yeah, I’m on my way... I – I know I’m a little late. You just go to bed, am almost... *(sighs)*

(He falls silent as the caller speaks, continuing to walk as the rumbling of a car engine approaches from behind.)

(weary) No, I’m sorry. Shoulda called sooner – lost track’o time. How’s uh... how is she?

(The car speeds up, and Sol looks over his shoulder to see it nearing him, a window rolled down to release a loud whoop from a late teenage girl.)

KAL *(jeering)* Hey! Heeeeey! Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!

SOL *(nervous breath)* H-Honey, I gotta go.

(He hangs up, shoves the phone in his pocket. His arm flashes up to shield his eyes as the headlights flare.)

(pained breath, hissing in)

(The car squeals to a halt, and doors open, a group of dark-clad youths hopping out with jeers.)

AIDAN *(jeering)* Hey, big guy, how’s the weather up there?

KAL *(sarcastic)* Ahh, sorry, man – lights too bright for ya?

TYLER Barely woulda seen yous otherwise, would we?

SOL *(weary, annoyed)* Look, kids, not tonight – I don’t want no trouble.

AIDAN Kids, uh?

TYLER *(sneering laugh)*

KAL *(sarcastic)* Big boy!

AIDAN How old's that make you, loser?

SOL I ain't got time for this.

KAL *(jeering, aggressive)* Woah, woah, woah – easy there! Where you goin', ey?

SOL *(cold)* To my wife. Move.

TYLER She hot?

(Sol pushes him away.)

SOL *(grunting)* Back off.

AIDAN *(mocking)* Ohhhh!

TYLER *(laughing)*

AIDAN Who you hittin' with that thing?

TYLER Man's out here baseballin' without a mitt!

AIDAN Bet she's *real* into that.

TYLER *(sniggers)*

KAL There is no 'she,' idiot – he ain't even got a ring!

SOL *(angry)* Jus' leave me alone, aight? Ain't got nothing you'd wanna take.

AIDAN That's two lies, now, biggun.

KAL Yeah, what's in the case?

SOL Move, please.

TYLER Say that again?

SOL Move.

KAL See... that's not an answer, is it, gramps?

(Kal reaches into a pocket, flicks open a pen-knife.)

(dark, commanding) Hand it over.

(Beat.)

(dark, low) Don't make me hurt you.

SOL *(angry breaths)*

AIDAN You deaf well as blind, huh? Give it here—

SOL *(furious, shouting)* SHUT UP!

(He snaps, pummelling the youth in the stomach, wheeling almost instantly to shove the other two back.)

AIDAN *(stunted cry of pain)*

TYLER *(terrified, taken off guard)* Jesus – fuck man?!

AIDAN *(coughing, trying to regain breath)*

SOL *(bellowing)* DON'T YOU DARE – DON'T YOU DARE!

KAL *(jabbing, trying to slash at Sol)* HA!

(He grabs the youth's arm, twists it backward.)

(gasp of pain)

SOL *(warning, angry)* This is why kids don't play with knives...!

KAL *(terrified, strained)* Ty – Ty, get him off me!

TYLER *(nervous breath)*

KAL *(pained, panicked)* Breakin' my fuckin' fingers, man!

SOL *(gruff)* Drop it.

TYLER *(stammering)* S-Sorry, babe!

(He turns and runs.)

(panting, frightened breaths as he runs)

KAL *(furious, terrified, then screaming with pain)* You fucking ass—ARGH!

SOL *(warning, twisting the words)* Don't make me hurt you.

KAL *(terrified breath, whimpering almost)*

(She drops the knife with a clatter.)

SOL Now, you listen to me—

(A police siren whoops from behind, a car pulling up sharply beside the trouble.)

(despairing sigh) Oh, not you...

(A pair of officers exit the car.)

KENDALL *(calling out, steely)* Nice night for it, folks.

KAL Officer, y-you gotta help—

GRAY *(firm, commanding)* Cut it, kid.

KENDALL What seems to be the problem?

KAL *(stammering, fake-frightened)* T-This guy attacked us – he’s got – i-in his case—

AIDAN *(spluttering)* Knives, sir!

KENDALL *(dry)* Knives.

KAL On the ground, see? That’s one of ‘em, I swear!

GRAY *(sighs, then grunts)*

(He bends and retrieves the fallen blade, holds it out to Kendall.)

(clears throat)

KENDALL This thing?

KAL *(nervous)* Yeah. Y-yeah.

GRAY *(amused)* Couldn’t even cut butter.

KENDALL *(cold)* Which is what we said the last time it was brought into the station.

GRAY *(small hum of laughter)*

KENDALL *(chuckling, dark)* You must think we have shit for brains.

KAL *(muttered)* Pigs do...

KENDALL *(smooth, wry)* Better than no brains at all, Kal.

AIDAN *(coughs)*

GRAY Get up.

AIDAN *(wheezing)* Can’t...

GRAY Said up!

AIDAN *(strained, hoarse)* Think he punched my spleen out...

KENDALL *(agitated, rolling his eyes)* Christ, Gray, just get him in the back.

GRAY *(heave of effort)*

AIDAN *(groan of pain, struggling to sit up)*

KENDALL And you – let her go.

SOL *(short, cold)* Yes, sir.

KAL *(gasps of relief)*

KENDALL *(commanding)* You – here – now.

KAL *(scoffs)*

(Kendall lashes a pair of cuffs out, slapping them on the girl.)

(hiss of pain) Agh – ow – fingers!

KENDALL You have the right to remain silent.

KAL No, 'cause you don't know what he—

(Kendall slams her over the bonnet of the car.)

KENDALL *(dry, cold, harsh)* Meaning shut the fuck up, please, little girl, or the next time we catch you I'll make sure your uncle can't pay you the fuck back out again, do I make myself clear?

(Beat.)

(amused, enjoying himself) Well done – we're learnin', now.

(He inclines his head.)

(dry) In the back. We'll put the seat warmer on, for old time's sake.

GRAY Where's the third?

KENDALL Not like we don't recognise the pattern.

GRAY *(scoffs)* You kids need to pick your friends better.

KENDALL *(small chuckle)*

(The door slams on her, and officers both turn to Sol, who stands rigidly in uncomfortable silence.)

GRAY You alright, sir?

SOL Mm.

(Beat.)

KENDALL *(frowning)* I know you, don't I?

SOL *(attempting calm, aggravated)* I... no. I do my best not to be no trouble, sir.

GRAY *(raising his voice, mocking)* Hear that, kids?

KAL Fuck off, greywater...

KENDALL Sure I know your face.

GRAY Just one o' those faces?

KENDALL *(agitated)* How many faces got eyes different colours?

SOL *(delicate, nervous)* I don't know, sir. Sorry, but... I need to... go. My girl's waitin'.

KENDALL *(sly)* Bit late for it. Corners aren't even lit round here.

SOL *(bristling)* We're not like that, sir.

GRAY *(apologetic)* 'Course, 'course – he wasn't suggesting—

KENDALL *(firm, cold)* Don't go putting words in my mouth, Gray. Never be too careful...

SOL *(nervous)* Sir?

(Beat.)

KENDALL *(faux-casual)* Kal's a little shit for white lyin', but she do make a point. Might not be knives in that case, but still – duty dictates, and all that.

(Beat.)

SOL *(nervous breath)*

KENDALL *(low, slightly threatening)* Man like yourself walks alone, 3am, no lights, with a big old case on his back – could be anything. Man I know I seen before... My profession, that's a little warning light, don't you think?

(Beat. Kendall shrugs, seeming to revert to casual once more.)

 It's nothin' dangerous, no trouble handing over.

SOL *(hesitant sigh)*

GRAY Thank you for cooperating.

SOL *(dry)* My job, isn't it?

GRAY *(amused)* Where d'you work then?

SOL S'complicated...

KENDALL *(sly)* Anything else complicated you wanna mention before we open this?

(Beat.)

Okay...

(He flips the two clips open, sliding up the lid. Inside is revealed to be a violin.)

GRAY (stifled laughter)

KENDALL (amused) Full of surprises, aren't ya?

GRAY (chuckling) Nah, nah, that's a serious weapon, that is, Ken.

SOL (strained, quiet) That everything?

KENDALL (suspicious, faux-casual) Not quite. What you doin' with somethin' like this, out here? Hardly the neighbourhood.

SOL It's mine. And I live here.

KENDALL And why is it yours at all, these days?

(Beat.)

SOL I believe in it. That's all.

GRAY (amused) You're a weird one, you are.

KENDALL Well. I suppose still harmless.

(Beat. He slams the lid back down.)

All yours, son.

(Sol slides the clips shut once more and slings the strap back over his shoulder. The motion dislodges his jacket somewhat, revealing a previously hidden logo.)

(firm, hasty) Hold up. I know that logo.

GRAY Huh?

KENDALL There – strap was coverin' it... Spread that jacket out, will you, sir?

SOL (resigned breath)

(The slight crinkle of fabric as Sol pulls the jacket taught, and Kendall clicks on his torch. Beat.)

KENDALL (a little awed) You're with Stormlight.

GRAY (intrigued) Is he?

KENDALL So that's how I know you. Must'a seen you from the Governor's last protection detail down there.

SOL *(flat, quiet)* I'm just an engineer.

GRAY For *Stormlight*...

(Beat.)

KENDALL *(hushed)* Well, fuck me sideways... *(small laugh)* Why's an engineer like you believe in an old violin, then?

SOL *(polite, itching to get away)* My grandmother's. I – I just wanna keep memories, sir. Long as I can.

KENDALL *(sniggers)*

GRAY *(sniggers)*

KENDALL In the wrong job for that, son!

GRAY *(still laughing)* Ah, come on, leave 'im!

SOL *(genuinely confused)* I don't...

GRAY *(reassuring, still amused)* It's just rumours.

KENDALL *(contented sigh)* And rumours are the devil. Ha. You have a good night, now.

SOL I... thank you.

(As the officers open their doors, Gray taps the roof of the car, a thought striking him.)

GRAY *(singing – Simple Minds)* Hey – hey – ha... "Don't you forget about me...!"

KENDALL *(unkind laughter)*

(TITLE.)

Fade into waves and gulls, calling meekly. Gusts of cold wind one of the only breakers of monotony.

The roof of the rig, early evening; Ezra leaning at the railing, Oscar pacing about admiring the constructions made by the runaways.)

OSCAR *(hushed, awed)* It is kind of amazing, isn't it?

EZRA Mm?

OSCAR This, just – all of it. Y’know, I’ve never seen solar panels like this...

EZRA *(meek, barely listening)* Mm.

OSCAR *(chuckling a bit to himself)* Feels like I’m an idiot, but I never knew they could... I dunno, *curve*. And they’re so massive – think half the sun could fit on ‘em, right?

EZRA Sure...

OSCAR *(thoughtful, growing in enthusiasm)* Not that those storms let much sun through, but they must if we’re still here. Same with the garden – hydroponics – but I – I guess the glass an’ LEDs make up for it. Told Fee about them, she seemed, uh, pretty impressed. I didn’t even know different colours made things grow better – like, the whole spectrum is so much more than we – honestly, it’s pretty cool – Mum was even a botanist and I didn’t—

(He catches himself, realising Ezra isn’t listening. He deflates somewhat.)

(clears throat) Sorry, I’m – doing it again, aren’t I?

EZRA *(pulling back to reality)* Mm? Yeah, uh – the panels.

(Beat.)

(realising his mistake) I don’t... Oz, it’s my bad—

OSCAR Don’t worry about it.

(He leans against the railing beside Ezra, looking out at the sea and fiddling absentmindedly with a broken button on his coat.)

(softer, a little sad) Forget it’s not just me and Fee, sometimes... Don’t have to talk for two people no more.

EZRA *(awkward, confused)* You don’t... *have* to talk for her.

OSCAR *(quick)* No, no, I know, I... *(sighs)* That came out wrong.

(Beat.)

(deep breath in and out, slow and calming)

(Beat.)

Can see why you’re up here so much. So quiet. Peaceful...

EZRA *(hushed)* Puts me on edge. Like summin’s always ‘bout to happen. Nothin’ ever does.

OSCAR *(amused)* I’m not nothing, am I?

EZRA You’re different.

OSCAR Oh, yeah?

(Beat.)

Keeps you outta trouble, I suppose. You and the plants. Panels. Too cold for anyone else.

EZRA *(distant, not paying attention)* S'pose.

OSCAR Reminds me of the city, in a weird way. My dad, he... *(swallows, bitter; the thought of his father comes unbidden, and he must push past it like a bad taste in his mouth)* Uh... He – he worked this big government building... when I was a kid. Super small, so it seemed extra big every time I saw it. He'd left mum, but I... I still wanted to see him – be like him.

(growing in sincerity and softness) So I skipped the end of school to visit, still make it home 'round normal. Only I got lost; knew he worked right at the top, like all the important people did. Ended up on the roof, and it felt so much like this – building crested the clouds, nothing but grey sea. But it was winter and the sun set early; there were no solars like here, nothing to catch it before it died... So everything was red and gold, just for a minute, and it was so... *(sighs)* I was so small. And it was like I got even smaller. I spent the whole time trying to see it all over top of the wall, but... my dad found me, took me away inside just before the sun really vanished under the cloud bank... And I just *know* that would've been the most beautiful part. The one I always miss.

(Beat.)

(soft, slightly mournful) I never knew what he actually did in that place, but I knew I couldn't go back. I've forgotten lots of things from that time in my life, or... tried to. But I can't forget that. What he made me lose.

(Beat.)

(dry laugh, trying to ease the tension) Kinda stupid, when you think about it.

EZRA It's not.

(Beat.)

(soft) Don't remember last time I saw sunset...

OSCAR *(confused)* But... you're out here every day, seems like.

EZRA *(hushed, agitated)* Don't mean I see it, though. I'm... It's not what I'm... Yeah...

(Beat.)

OSCAR *(tentative)* You're on the lookout, right? For Eden.

(Beat.)

Anyone.

(Beat.)

(soft) What were they like?

EZRA (hoarse) Eden?

OSCAR All of them.

EZRA Hard to... Um...

OSCAR Sorry. Sure it's a lot to ask.

EZRA (throat dry) No idea, mate...

(Beat.)

They were... (clears throat, still dry) Good people. All ages. Like a – a real thing, y'know? Weren't exactly friends with most – ain't trust me for a while, just showin' up on their boat – but in the end they... saw me. Tha' was enough.

OSCAR (soft, sincere) They did more than that; you're leader, aren't you? Can't imagine you'd put that on yourself, or... take it.

EZRA Jus' ceremony, innit? Most of 'em never roughed it so hard before.

OSCAR (mildly amused) Yeah. Running from reality's definitely better on paper...

EZRA (dry, dismissive) I was only one who knew 'ow to hack it. Had to teach 'em the hard way, but... guess tha's all it took. Decade o' streets is one hell of a qualification, apparently.

OSCAR (small hum of laughter, not entirely amused)

(Beat.)

And Eden?

(Beat.)

EZRA (soft, weak) Just special, weren't she? Used ta be a nurse, so she had this *fight* – this *need* to make happy – nothin' she ain't gotta put back together again. Seen it all, an' still just so... soft an' – and *light*.

(He catches Oscar raising an eyebrow at him.)

(hasty, embarrassed, laughing a little) Not that I ever – obviously – but... Used to sing up 'ere, even stormin'. Built the hydro-patch, loved the harvest an' dirt of it all, gettin' to go help cook an' get so excited about carrots. (small

laugh, despite himself) And you'd hear it, anywhere in the rig. Just this little high-pitched song. And people'd join in – jus' couldn't help it. An' it – it was... (*choked up*) closest ever got to normal, even when we started losing 'em...

(*Beat.*)

OSCAR (*sincere*) Girl like that doesn't disappear without coming back.

EZRA (*exhausted*) Oscar...

OSCAR (*hasty, sincere*) No, you know it too – I'm not winding you up. Sure me and Ophelia landing brought back that hope of who's out there.

EZRA Probably think I'm an idiot then.

OSCAR No, I don't.

EZRA (*dismissive*) You two been 'ere forever now, so—

OSCAR So we've seen what it means to give up. You're the only one who hasn't.

EZRA (*cold*) You know she's dead like I do.

OSCAR (*warning*) Ezra, don't start.

EZRA (*agitated, deep hidden anger rising*) And ya seen how people treat me cuz of it. Seen 'ow it's pushed me up 'ere, where it's nothin but white and cold and shit. Them two towers starin' back like they're laughin'— [*at me*]

OSCAR Then let me do it.

EZRA What?

OSCAR (*hasty*) Let me keep watch sometimes. We do shifts, nighttime-daytime. Give you a chance to get off the edge, wouldn't it?

EZRA Don't, I'm not worth... (*sighs*)

OSCAR (*grasping at straws*) Mean I'm doing summin more than mending nets and whatever else I keep messing up, won't it? Anybody comes by, I'll shout like hell – tell 'em to – to fuck off before Fionn gets 'em! Nothin' else, you'll get some real sleep for once. You're so pale these days.

(*Beat.*)

(*nervous, sincere*) Scares me.

EZRA How'd you...? (*beat*) We do shifts, I'll never get to see— [*you*]

(*He catches himself, seems he knows what was really about to say. Beat.*)

(*suspicious*) Look, why you so nice to me?

OSCAR I care about you.

EZRA *(suspicious)* And why d'you care?

OSCAR *(confused)* Do you want me to stop?

EZRA *(quick, defensive)* No. I mean – I just – *(groans, runs his hand through his hair)*

OSCAR Ezra?

EZRA *(defensive, angry)* N-No, you don't – get it! Ya never do!

OSCAR I'm—

EZRA *(agitated, stammering)* I like you, right? Yer a good man, good brother, and I - I like you, Oz – believe me – but... 'Ow many times can I keep doin' that to myself...? And I never even— *(he cuts himself off, holds his breath then sighs, aggravated)*

OSCAR You can *let me* be your friend. You jus' won't.

EZRA *(fragile, aggravated)* I – *can't*. And *you, ya* – ya come near me and bare ya soul, talk all this poetic shit, and I can't *do that*, man!

OSCAR Ezra.

EZRA *(angry)* Cuz maybe yer right, I won't!

OSCAR *(firmer)* Ezra.

EZRA *(agitated, word vomiting)* I will *not* do that, not since losin' *her* on top o' everything else! Tha's not who I am, who I ever fuckin' was!

OSCAR *(angry, raising his voice)* Ezra!

EZRA What?!

OSCAR Look.

(Ezra wheels about, stares frantically across the water.)

EZRA *(panicked)* Huh? Boat? D'you see a – what?!

OSCAR Look.

EZRA *(shaking breaths)*

OSCAR *(softening)* Sunset.

(Beat.)

EZRA *(deep sigh out)*

(The two stand a moment, watching the colours dance across the wave tops.)

OSCAR *(hushed, awkward)* Look, I know I'm... *soft*, 'gainst what people think I should be. And it's scary, lot of the time, knowin' it might be something to use. But I don't feel that way around you. That's all I want in a friend, Ezra. I don't need you to be something you're not.

(Beat.)

Round here, seems we could do with one.

EZRA *(weak, strained, barely audible)* I'm sorry...

OSCAR Already forgotten.

(Beat. Ezra doesn't look at Oscar, transfixed by the slowly falling light.)

EZRA *(quiet, strained)* Jus' that... I mean, more I feel people care 'bout me, more it scares me. More I'm scared day's comin' I lose 'em forever.... Hurts to - breathe, thinkin' that, sometimes...

OSCAR Yeah. Yeah...

EZRA *(shaky breaths, huffing, trying to steady himself)*

(Beat.)

OSCAR *(soft, mournful, sincere)* Feels like the edge o' the world, this place. Like oblivion's just there, one step away outta sight. But summin meaningful 'bout being here, I know it.

(Beat.)

(whispered, earnest, tender) Those towers might be laughing, Ezra, but we're laughing right back. 'Cause we're free. We can be who we want now.

EZRA *(tentative)* I don't know who I wanna be.

OSCAR *(small laugh)* Me neither. Me fucking neither...

(Fading in dreamily, Claire de Lune plays, seemingly layered over itself a thousand times.)

Eden slowly traces her glassy cage in a ring, swaying almost as if dancing. She hums along serenely.)

EDEN *(humming)*

(Emmens speaks, his voice modulated till barely recognisable through the heavy black helmet.)

AMOS *(matter-of-fact, amused)* You like to dance.

EDEN Strip the Willow...

KSENIA *(frowning)* Is there a tree?

EDEN *(almost whispered, serene)* The dance... a Ceilidh.

AMOS Hardly the music for it.

EDEN Music?

(Beat. She stops moving.)

There's music?

KSENIA *(muttered)* Oh, perfect...

(She steps closer, now side by side with Emmens.)

AMOS *(curious)* Where did you learn to Strip the Willow?

EDEN Learn...

AMOS It's a couples' ceilidh, isn't it? Eight people...

KSENIA You know how to dance?

AMOS *(amused)* Play your cards right, Molt, and I'll teach you.

KSENIA *(small, barely amused hum)*

EDEN *(questioning herself)* Where did I... learn?

AMOS Would you teach me?

EDEN But we – we need music.

AMOS There is music, Eden. Listen...

(She pauses, listens hard. A look of quiet amazement dawns across her face.)

EDEN *(shaky breath in, raw with suppressed excitement and awe)*

AMOS *(soft)* I made this for you.

EDEN Oh, Cecilia...

AMOS *(elongated, thrown off rhythm)* I...

EDEN You came!

KSENIA *(warm)* We did.

EDEN And you...

KSENIA (kindly) Eurosia. Yours.

EDEN (thrilled) What a storm of music! It is a ceilidh, indeed!

(She begins spinning again, giggling – quiet but giddy. Emmens snaps off his helmet, his muttered anxious voice returned to normal.)

(giggling to herself)

AMOS (whispered) Who the fuck is Cecilia?

KSENIA (hissing, quick) Patron saint – put your helmet back on.

AMOS (confused) You know the Bible?

KSENIA (quick) Not the Bible – on!

(He replaces the helmet, his voice modulating once more as he does so.)

AMOS Suppose you got the cooler one, did you?

KSENIA (disdainful) Please, all female saints are broken women...

AMOS (dry, quiet) Makes three of us, then.

EDEN (sudden gasp, as if struck with an idea)

(She turns, runs toward the two but seems to know exactly where to stop before she hits the glass. She slams her hands against it, like a child at a zoo.)

You taught me to dance! Didn't – (she inhales, her voice falters, as if remembering something) Didn't you...

(Beat.)

AMOS Eden—

KSENIA (soft, warning) Hold.

(Beat.)

EDEN *(slipping toward an Irish accent, reciting - trying to remember)* One, two, eight – bars, yes. Spin, eight, first couple. F-First lady turns second man with left hand, then partner with right hand. Working down the line - third man... partner, fourth man, partner again...! *(small giggle)* Men, with me – left shoulder facing the band – ah, but, we don't have a band, Sol will have to do... *(breaks away into giggling)*

KSENIA (whispered) Sol?

EDEN *(returning to normal accent)* Yes! O-Oh, but don't worry, dear Eurosia – he's not of the captain! Quite the opposite – he built me the garden, builds many things!

KSENIA *(mildly smug)* That is good of him.

EDEN Used to build towers, so he said!

(She catches herself, almost awed suddenly.)

(reverent) You don't think... he met the Angel too, do you?

KSENIA It was Angels who helped Solomon build the Temple, was it not? Why not a tower too?

EDEN *(awed breath out)*

(Beat. She seems almost defeated, sinking to her knees.)

(sad, frowning) He never... told me...

AMOS *(curious)* And why should he? What was he to you?

EDEN My... friend.

KSENIA Nothing more?

EDEN *(slowly entering Irish accent again)* No. Never. Nothing of the sort. Not – no. No. No.

KSENIA I see.

EDEN *(still Irish, growing angry)* No, you don't – you only see watcha wanna see, don't ya? Well, I'm not that kinda man, you 'ear me?

KSENIA *(growing harsh)* Then what are you?

(She presses a button, crackling and whirring beginning to thrum with activity... warming up...)

EDEN *(Irish, cold)* She's nothin' – absolutely *nothin'* to me, you understand?

KSENIA You protest too much.

EDEN *(Irish, furious)* She's a shadow, she's nothin' – she's got no *light!*

KSENIA Then show me.

EDEN *(Irish)* Not much I do see, but I *know* I see you.

KSENIA And what are you?

EDEN *(Irish)* I'm yours, Eden.

KSENIA *(dry)* Good.

(She pulls a lever and the all-too-familiar white light flares throughout the room.)

EDEN *(agonised scream)*

AMOS *(sighs, weary and unaffected)*

(The lever cranks back into place as Eden slumps onto the floor, unconscious.)

EDEN *(weak whimper, grunting as she falls unconscious)*

(Ksenia removes her helmet, seeming entirely unaffected, as the electrical whirs fade.)

KSENIA *(cold, voice raised)* Can we cut that shit out, please?

(The music immediately fizzles and dies. Ksenia sinks unconcernedly at her desk, beginning to type the session's report.)

(relieved) Jesus wept... right? Take her to the Nest, Emmens. She's earned a little recharge.

AMOS *(uncomfortable)* Was that... strictly necessary?

KSENIA *(matter-of-fact)* She needed to be blanked; slipping something like that can't have any chance of being remembered. *(softening)* And... well done on the music... *thing*. Say the helmets played as much role as anything, but I'm glad we didn't have to waste time finding out. Should learn to be more patient with you.

(She presses another button, and a tightly sealed glass door slides opens upon the cage, hissing with air.)

In you go.

AMOS *(sighs)*

(He enters, bends and scoops Eden up into his arms.)

(slightly sad) She's getting lighter.

KSENIA 'Course she is, she doesn't eat. None of them do...

AMOS *(slightly awed, uncomfortable)* Amazing how that thing keeps them... *alive*.

KSENIA *(offhand)* "Land of milk and honey."

AMOS Huh?

KSENIA Nothing. Go on. I need to run reports to find this 'Sol.'

(She pauses riffling through papers, lays them down.)

(clearing throat, faux casual) I'll... catch up, actually. Buy you a drink, if, uh – if you don't mind. Could do with one...

AMOS *(amused)* Shirking responsibilities, Ms. Moltenore?

KSENIA (*amused*) I'm hardly taking you out dancing, Emmens.

AMOS Shame. I've a wicked two-step.

KSENIA (*chuckling*) Save it for next session, Cecilia.

AMOS Yes, ma'am.

KSENIA (*small appreciative hum, amused and strangely light-hearted*)

(He exits, disappearing down an adjoining corridor to the cage, a heavy metallic door clanking into place behind him.)

Ksenia scribbles some final notes continues to type. Then stops.

She knocks a final button, opening up a call line. Her voice is cold and to the point once more, eerily different to the casual way she just left Amos.)

KSENIA I trust you're content with progress, Mr. Amherst, sir.

AMHERST (*smooth*) Quite. He shows promise. And easily swayed.

KSENIA (*amused*) Then again, virgins always are.

AMHERST (*amused*) Now, that's no way to talk of a saint.

KSENIA Of course.

AMHERST Make sure you *do* have that drink. Two knocks at the bar, they'll know.

KSENIA (*wry*) Three's more my style, sir.

AMHERST So be it.

KSENIA (*thoughtful*) Permission to... engage with the catalyst?

AMHERST Experimental, but... granted.

KSENIA (*cool*) You want them broken down, you go straight for the foundation.

AMHERST And you're certain that... *rift* is wise?

KSENIA Wise? No. But I believe I've studied enough to have a foreseeable route in place. I can't have my partner growing complacent, sir.

AMHERST Indeed. Say no more, here. We'll discuss further in my office.

KSENIA Now that *is* wise.

AMHERST (*amused hum*)

(Beat.)

KSENIA *(hushed, tentative)* Do you suppose... any of this has actually jogged *anything*?

AMHERST *(firm, stern)* It will. Just get Retrieval on the name, and perhaps any... *residual* affairs can be brought in for questioning. Got to be at least one witness we can find.

KSENIA Already sent off the request.

AMHERST Best for a reason.

KSENIA *(gracious)* Sir.

(Beat.)

And Eden?

AMHERST Keep going. It's a couples' dance, after all.

KSENIA Understood.

AMHERST And when you're done?

KSENIA Mm?

AMHERST *(cold)* Burn that fucking record. I never want to hear that song again.

(He chimes off the call, leaving only static. Ksenia removes her finger slowly from the button, leaving only silence.)

Beat.)

KSENIA *(dark, low)* My sentiments exactly, sir...

(Distantly, the four strings of a violin are plucked...)

A magpie trills, echoes, fades... underwater currents tug and stir at the edges of memory, then...

The drone of a phone call, waiting anxiously to connect. The ambience of city outskirts at night, hand-made windchimes clanking beyond threadbare curtains...

TWO YEARS AGO.

A small, rather untidy house. A woman sits alone by the kitchen door, tapping her fingers on the table. The motion is only part impatience, but is rather more rhythmic, tracing invisible keys on the tabletop – piano-like...

David Bowie's "As The World Falls Down" plays on a crackling stereo in the corner.

You have reached the voicemail box of—*The woman drops the phone on the table before her, hands flying to her face in weary aggravation.*)

CARA *(agitated sigh, heavy with fatigue)*

(Keys jangle and the door opens, and she looks up.)

Sol?

SOL *(taken aback)* You're up.

CARA *(dry, annoyed)* Yeah, well – needed feeding, didn't she? 'Sides...

(She rises to her feet, eyes him imperiously before turning to the kitchen sink.)

(accusatory) Worrying out your *mind* doesn't exactly make for beauty sleep.
Funny that.

(She begins angrily scrubbing at plates and cutlery. Sol shrugs off the case on his back, slides it onto a cabinet carefully.)

SOL *(soft, slightly strained)* Told you I'd be late.

CARA *(angry)* 'Late' is 10pm, Sol, not three-forty-fucking-five! Ain't even reach your damn phone till—

SOL Can't help that, can I – takin' out all the radio towers, Cara, seen it yourself!

CARA Alright, fine – you still hung up on me soon as!

SOL I had to.

CARA *(scoffs, angry)* 'Had to.'

SOL Needed my hands free.

CARA For *what*? 'Cause, to me, sounded like a girl was callin' you right before you switched me off, Sol.

SOL Yeah, and she was a piece o' shit kid who tried to knife me. Think I want you hearin' that?

CARA I—

(Beat.)

(defensive, fast) Well, when you put it that way!

(She ceases her abuse of cutlery, buries her face in a tea towel a moment.)

(groans, exhausted and annoyed)

(She drops the towel, stares at Sol with a more apologetic softness.)

And you're okay...?

SOL *(amused)* Ain't stabbed.

CARA *(meek laugh, more a huff than anything)*

SOL Jus'... shook, is all.

CARA *(slightly breathless)* Yeah. God, this city's such a roach nest... Barely feel safe even workin' out there anymore.

(Sol approaches her, rubs a hand soothingly up and down her arm.)

(long sniff, as if clearing her head, then exhaling)

(She looks closer at him, frowns.)

(nervous) Face is... Seen a ghost or summin'...

SOL Nah. It was... *(short sigh)* Cops broke it up, but—

(She immediately stiffens, grips at his jacket.)

CARA *(rigid, afraid)* Oh, honey, are you—

SOL *(dismissive)* Fine. Fine.

CARA They didn't...?

SOL Might've, but... saw my jacket. Ain't gonna touch that.

CARA *(whispered, relieved)* Christ...

(She slumps back, deflated almost.)

Well, thank fuck for Stormlight. Pigs'll try anythin', these days. *(humourless laugh)* God... *(deep breath, steadying herself)* I'm just glad you're safe.

SOL Sorry if I scared you.

CARA *(laughing, incredulous)* If!

(She slumps into a chair, the relief finally catching up.)

SOL *(amused)* Aight – sorry I scared you.

CARA Better. Now get down here, you big tall bastard.

(Sol sinks to his knees beside her. She wraps her arms round his neck and pulls him in to kiss.)

(soft sigh out) Oof... mama's tired.

(She reaches a hand out to switch off the stereo.)

SOL *(soft)* Want me to carry you up?

CARA *(flirty)* Mmm... tempting. I could stay a while longer.

SOL Maybe you, but this floor's hell on my knees, babe.

(She bats at his shoulder playfully.)

CARA Now you know how I feel.

SOL *(amused hum)*

CARA *(indignant)* I mean, look!

(She holds her hands out before his face, twists them agitatedly.)

(disgusted, annoyed) Look at these hands, Sol! An' I thought yours were rough...

SOL Still perfect.

CARA *(disgusted)* Ugh, how dare you. You go cleaning streets all day, see how perfect your skin stays!

SOL *(chuckling)* Same hands since the day I saw 'em.

CARA Pervert.

SOL Minx.

CARA *(laughs, but then trails away)*

(She spots the case on the floor.)

(confused, frowning) What's that?

SOL Hm?

CARA *(frowning)* Weird case thing.

SOL Oh. Uh...

(He gets to his feet, approaches it.)

You might... 'member my grandma?

CARA Irma?

SOL Other one.

CARA *(with realisation)* Weird one!

SOL Yeah.

CARA S'pose.

SOL (*hesitant*) So I finally tracked where they sold her things – whole other side o' the city.

CARA (*suspicious, hesitant*) Okaaay...

(*Sol stands beside the case, pats it with a slightly nervous hand.*)

SOL An' you know, uh, how – how special music was to 'er—

CARA (*realising, defeated*) Oh no...

SOL (*firm, defensive*) To **both of us**—

CARA (*warning, disbelieving*) No – no, no, no...!

SOL And you, Cara—

CARA (*anger and voice rising*) No, Sol. No!

(*She forces herself up and out of the chair, begins pacing with sheer frustration.*)

SOL Cara.

CARA (*genuinely furious*) NO! No, you can't keep doing this to – and you – you said it was important!

SOL It is important—

CARA You make me think every horrible thing possible, *all night*, and you spend – what, how much?! – on—

SOL This violin made us meet!

CARA A violin! A *vio-fucking-lin*, Sol!

SOL (*angry, defensive*) Yeah! Yeah, I did!

CARA *How - much?* You know the mark-up on those things is fucking *transcendent* after that legislation!

SOL Don't matter how much—

CARA (*incredulous, raging*) Doesn't matter?! Are you – I mean, do you *hear* yourself right now?!

SOL (*warning*) You don't 'ave to yell.

CARA (*furious, shouting*) Oh, fuck off, it's not like she'll hear me!

SOL (*angry, defensive*) Look, money isn't anythin' – *this* is real.

CARA (*derisive*) Ha!

(*She spreads out her arms, spins wide and gestures the whole room.*)

(*angry, spiteful*) No, Sol, this – *this* is real! Poverty line's bang above the clouds, and we're still feet stuck in the mud down here, honey! There's a *reason* they shut down unnecessary – there's no money in music, there never was even before all this shit!

SOL (*firm, resolute*) This isn't about *playing*, this is about *memories*, Cara.

CARA (*furious*) And where are they going, huh? I still got a head, you still got a head – 'cept I think it's flying the fuck away, if you think this is a choice worth defending right now!

SOL You'll see.

CARA (*mocking*) Oh, I'll see, will I? Long as I see a way to keep eatin' next month, maybe I'll let it brush off, yeah? (*huffs angrily*)

(*She reaches for a bottle of liquor on a shelf, pulls out the cork. She upends the bottle, head fully back, holding it in her mouth a while.*)

(*swigs deeply, chokes a little*)

SOL (*weary, apologetic*) Cara...

CARA (*furious, as if to say no, zip it*) Mm!

(*She swigs, lowers the bottle, sways a tad.*)

(*deep breath, hissing out a little*)

(*She replaces the bottle with a heavy rattle, turns back to him.*)

(*cold*) Did they see you with it?

SOL Did—

CARA (*firmer*) The police, did they **see you** with it?

(*Beat.*)

(*disgusted, dry*) Great. That's just great...

SOL Kendall said it was harmless.

CARA (*incredulous, humourless laughter*) Kendall! 'Course it was him – **fuck's sake!**

SOL (*suspicious*) What about him?

CARA *(angry, stammering, word vomiting)* He's a prick, what else d'you think?! *Wears the uniform, for one thing...* He just... ugh, he's a nightmare at work. Some reason, his route always takes him where I'm at – any district, *he's there*, other prick at his side. Hits on me like I'm some kinda... I dunno, but it don't exactly feel good when you're sittin' in chemicals like a dog out there, Sol. And I – I'd push back, throw the shit in his face if I could, but that ain't how this goes. I keep my head down, take the money and I don't look for who gives it, because I got my daughter to feed. Why can't you?

(He steps toward her, suddenly rattled.)

SOL *(angry)* You think I don't? Hell, I took on *Stormlight* for you and Ziggy – you know that!

CARA *(furious, incredulous)* Why ain't they pay you yet?! It's been months, Sol!

SOL *(furious)* Cuz I keep my head down, dammit! Think any o' us know what the hell we even buildin'? No! Ask questions, you out – tha's all it is.

CARA Then they're *using you!* You just won't—

SOL They promised extra, I can't leave.

CARA They— *(she catches herself, breaths shakily)*

(Beat.)

(soft, suspicious) How much extra?

SOL Couple thousand. A day.

CARA *(whispered, fearful)* What? Sol, what the fuck are you *doing* out there?

(He approaches her, takes her by the shoulders – trying to reassure, but not convinced himself.)

SOL *(stammering, uneasy)* I don't know. I – I don't know, I just... don't. Some guy, proper suit and blueprints, called me in, said he knew my thesis – knew I'd build anythin' if ya gave me parts. An' he wants this... *cage*, I dunno. Modulator inside, somethin' big on waves and light. Wants to see what I can do to help.

CARA *(soft)* The fuck...?

SOL S'a machine, tha's all I know. Some facility way down off the coast. Ain't know what'd happen I say no, seein' those prints.

CARA *(low, nervous)* I... I don't know, love.

SOL S'too late for that. Signed the contract, went straight to get that violin 'fore I started thinkin' straight again.

CARA But what if—

SOL (firm) Keep my head down an' build, tha's it. They pay me, we're set; no more street, no more Kendall. Buy that ring you always wanted. Nice house, the three of us. Give Ziggy life she deserves.

CARA (sighs, resigned and still afraid)

SOL (hopeful) Even... buy you back a piano.

CARA (empty) Sol... I don't even... remember how to play.

SOL Learn again. Both will.

(He kisses her softly on the forehead.)

CARA (soft, sad) I just wish we could play for her.

SOL You been singin'?

CARA (dry, evasive) Hardly see the point if she can't hear.

SOL It's the vibrations – in ya chest, they're soothin'.

CARA (doubtful) Are they, though?

SOL (firm) C'mon, we just gotta keep makin' the effort.

CARA (agitated) Which she can't see either!

SOL (warning, weary) Cara...

CARA (agitated) I know, I know – I just – can't shake *thinkin'* it sometimes! (sighs)

(Beat.)

(cold, mournful) It's not... *right*, what we did. Hard enough for a kid ta find joy, just survive, here, let alone one who can't even...

(She trails away, tearing up.)

SOL (firm) She got as much right to live as we do.

CARA (sniffs, wiping her eyes)

SOL (firm, quietly angry) And she gon' be twice as happy – stop *lyin'* to yourself.

(Beat)

(calming himself, reassuring) Cara. She's the best thing in our life.

CARA (despairing) And she doesn't even know where she is, who we even are!

SOL She knows. She *knows*...

(From overhead, the sound of a baby startling awake... beginning to cry...)

CARA *(sniffing)* Funny way of showin' it.

SOL *(soft)* S'alright. I'll take care of it.

CARA *(agitated)* She's – can't be hungry, just been—

SOL It's okay. Really.

(Sol ascends the stairs and makes his way to a small baby's room. He scoops the crying infant into his arms, cradles her with more softness than his massive frame seems to permit.)

(cooing, voice filled with warmth and love) Hey, little Ziggy. Little star girl.
Shhhh.... Shhhh.... Come on, now... let's get you right here, right on daddy's
chest... Ohh, you're getting big! *(chuckles)*

(The baby burbles, easing its cries, as Sol begins to softly sing...)

Hush, little baby, don't say a word
Papa's going to buy you a mockingbird

And if that mockingbird won't sing
Papa's going to buy you a diamond ring

And if that diamond ring turns brass
Papa's going to buy you a looking glass

And if that looking glass gets broke
Papa's gonna buy you a billy goat

And if that billy goat don't pull
Papa's gonna buy you a cart and bull

(Eventually, Sol's voice fades away too, into a vast, echoey silence...)

WHEN TOWER ANGELS FALL // a Nettle Hunt Production © 2023

with the voice talents of

Anthony O'Neil Kelly Jr. as Sol

Alan Heriberto Tena Fuentes as Oscar

Alex Cain as Ezra

Lauren Tucker as Eden

Chelsea Krause as Moltenore

David Purkey as Emmens

Jason Rosette as Director Amherst

Sarah Kate Ford as Cara

and additional performances by Lance Ian Barlow, Ryan Gaiser, Nick Chang, Vivian Thane,
and William Nunn

Written and Directed by Elizabeth Plant

Music Composed by David Fesliyan, Kevin Teasley & Synth of Insomnia

and art by Gelatoria