

THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

FADE IN:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

A COMPUTER SCREEN displays clouds in a blue sky, then in CGI animation a fighter jet banks across the screen at full afterburner.

MITKO, older and male, speaks with a Slavic accent, and ROSA is a teenage girl.

MITKO (O.C.)
People are wondering who you are.

ROSA (O.C.)
Yeah? "People," huh?

The SCREEN switches to a menu display, cycling through warplanes from various eras and their stats.

MITKO (O.C.)
The NSA has planted agents, you know, to pose as children. And it is rumored that Israeli Air Defense outsources its sim training.

ANGLE ON ROSA CALDER, age 15, as she stares raptly at an array of screens in the darkened room. Her dark hair is tied back simply, and she wears a black hoodie. She has bulky headphones over her ears and holds an elaborate, non-standard joystick controller.

ROSA
You are so full of shit, Mitko.

MITKO (O.C.)
See on the forums. Your kill videos top the highlight reels.

SONJA, Rosa's mother, enters and lifts one of the headphones.

SONJA
Hey, baby. You better get ready.

ROSA
OK, Ma.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Kitchen of a small apartment, base housing. ROSA enters, tying back her medium-long hair. She wears cargo pants and a hoodie featuring a 3-view schematic of an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter.

Her father, JAMES, looks up from a keyboard at a cluttered breakfast table. Rosa's brother LEO, age 13, holds a tablet in both hands, tilting it and tapping madly, immersed in a game, as his untouched toast turns cold. Sonja holds 2-year-old KATJA in one arm, and pours juice into a cup with the other. She puts the juice down on the counter and stares at the cup blankly.

SONJA

Leo. Did you...do your homework?

LEO

I told you I don't have any.

ROSA

Dad. You flying today? When'll you be back?

JAMES

That's classified. But--Saturday.

ROSA

Long-range. Aren't you the shit.

SONJA

Rosa. Language.

JAMES

Rosa, if you're ready in five, I'll drive you in.

LEO

What, I've got to ride the bus?

JAMES

We're making a stop. Extra credit, history class.

LEO

Whatever, nerds.

INT. CAR - DAY

James is driving, Rosa sits in the passenger seat. They stop at a razor-wired gate, James shows his ID, and the gate is

rolled back and they drive onto an airbase. Ahead, a building reads UNITED STATES AIR FORCE MUSEUM.

ROSA
So I'm ditching first period why?

JAMES
Oh, should I turn around?

ROSA
You're funny. But, the museum? You know I've been.

JAMES
I want to show you something.

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

Rosa follows her father across a section of concrete toward a Vietnam-era Huey. Without hesitating, he swings open the cockpit door.

ROSA
Dad! Can we do this?

JAMES
I don't know why, but all this week, my security clearance is a color I've never even seen before. So, I'm gonna say, yes. Hop in.

Rosa eyes him for a moment, then climbs in.

ROSA
Selfie in the pilot's seat!

JAMES
They're mothballing her--permanent exhibit. I requested her last flight.

INT. HUEY COCKPIT - DAY

James and Rosa wear helmets, visors raised. They shout over the NOISE OF THE ROTORS and the helicopter in flight.

JAMES
You ready, sweetheart?

ROSA
For what?

James nods at the co-pilot's control stick in front of her.

JAMES
Your ship!

ROSA
Dad! No way!

JAMES
Why not? When I had half your
hours, they gave me a Blackbird!

ROSA
That never happened!

JAMES
Correct! I don't exist!

He lifts his hands from his stick.

EXT. SUBURBAN SKY - CONTINUOUS

The Huey tilts forward, gains speed, buzzes a strip mall.

JAMES (V.O.)
Easy! They think it's me up here!

EXT. TARMAC - DAY

James and Rosa exit the helicopter as its rotors stop.

JAMES
(to Security Guard)
OK if we go out through the museum?

SECURITY GUARD
Don't break anything, sir.

Rosa eyes a Blackhawk helicopter parked across the tarmac.

ROSA
What else you got clearance on?

They walk into the enormous open door of a hangar. Stenciled above the door: "Air and Space Museum--Storage - Receiving."

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

James and Rosa walk past a lunar lander and the orange Bell X-1 and a B-25 Mitchell from Doolittle's raid over Tokyo.

JAMES

Because the one is a museum piece,
decommissioned, that no one cares
about, and the other--

ROSA

That's not even what I'm saying.

JAMES

--is a six million dollar modern
assault helicopter. That no one
would let any fifteen year old
girl--even you--anywhere near.
That's why not.

ROSA

I know! I'm just saying. I could. I
know you don't believe me.
Whatever.

JAMES

I believe you can do whatever's
necessary, ever, all right? You
know that.

ROSA

I could fly anything out there. Or
in here.

INT. CAR - DAY

James and Rosa pull up in front of Rosa's school.

JAMES

I know you handle a lot of the load
while I'm gone. Your
mother's...busy.

ROSA

"Busy"?

JAMES

She's trying, even if you can't see
it. She has a new prescription,
and--she just needs time. But I
appreciate you watching out for
Leo.

ROSA

What is even his problem?

James' PHONE BEGINS TO RING, with an unusually loud,
irritating alarm tone. He does not answer it.

JAMES

I should spend more time with him.
And you.

ROSA

Dad. Hey. Is that your scramble
alarm? Is that what it sounds like?
Isn't that important?

JAMES

Do you understand what I'm saying?

ROSA

(Worried)

Dad?

JAMES

Have a good day at school. I love
you.

ROSA

Wait, what's going on? When will
you be back?

JAMES

(Reaching for his phone)

Saturday. Everything's fine.
Remember, I believe that you can do
anything you need. Whatever's--

ROSA

I know. "Whatever's necessary."

JAMES

Right. Now, go to school.

Rosa opens the door and gets out, and James drives away
fast, phone to his ear.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Rosa sits at a table, texting on her phone. HANNAH, dressed
in dramatic black, sits beside her, also immersed in her
phone. Neither looks up.

ROSA

What's new, Hannah?

HANNAH

Not a thing under the sun,
sweetheart.

Rosa looks up, at a commotion in the lunch room. Two boys, CALEB and DEWEY, are horsing around, throwing a tennis ball back and forth. They're both tall and athletic; one wears a football jersey. Leo laughs loudly behind them, an appreciative sidekick.

LEO

Hey, D--Dewey? Hey, that kid from Northview? I heard you gave him a concussion!

DEWEY

I didn't hit him that hard.

LEO

You kidding? It was awesome! You could hear it! Like, crack!

CALEB

I'm not sure that's funny.

Dewey throws the ball at the edge of Caleb's reach, and Caleb lunges to catch it and jostles a table, spilling trays and falling. He comes up with a hand to his jaw, in pain. Another STUDENT rises, holding his tray, angry.

STUDENT

Nice coordination, asshole.

Leo lashes out suddenly, slamming the angry student's tray from his hands.

LEO

Sit down!

CALEB

Easy, geez. I'm sorry--he's sorry, OK?

A tall male TEACHER drops a heavy hand on Leo's shoulder.

TEACHER

Mr. Calder. Let's take a walk, shall we?

LEO

What? I didn't start it! I never start anything!

HANNAH

No offense, Rosa? But your little brother's kind of a dick.

ROSA

Oh. They're all douches, but my brother? He is destined to be their king.

At the other table, students are patting at their clothing with paper towels. A gushing GIRL hangs on Caleb, putting her hand to his jaw sympathetically.

ROSA

(about the girl)

Why?

HANNAH

I know. If that was the last guy on earth? I'm pretty sure I'd jump off a building.

ROSA

Right. And if I was the last woman? Still no.

Rosa's phone rings. She straightens, and answers in a serious tone.

ROSA

Hello?... Yes, this is Sonja Calder... Again? I'm sorry. I assure you, he will be disciplined at home... Until 4:30? I understand, but his sister will have to--OK, yes, thank you. I'm sorry again. Thank you.

The LIGHTS FLICKER, and the same teacher hurries past.

TEACHER

Listen up! Finish your lunches-- we're going back to homeroom, then dismissing early. The buses are on their way. Everybody?

There is general confusion, and mutters of "What's happening?"

HANNAH

Wow. Did your brother finally break the school?

ROSA

That'd be kind of overkill, to get out of one detention.

The LIGHTS FLICKER again.

INT. COCKPIT RC-135 - DAY

James and his COPILOT relax at the controls of an airliner-sized surveillance aircraft. There are dials and switches covering literally almost every available surface of the cockpit, but at cruising altitude right now there's not much for them to do. Outside is a featureless white expanse, possibly with the curvature of the Earth visible.

JAMES

Couple more years, we won't even have to fly these milk runs.

COPILOT

I won't mind that, sir. I'll tell you what else, I won't mind rotating back to Oklahoma either. Lee Ann's sick of Ohio.

JAMES

What does she miss? The cornfields, or the tornados?

COPILOT

I don't know.

JAMES

You want empty.
(nods at the window)
Can't beat that.

James' intercom crackles, and he listens into his headset.

JAMES

Spooks in back are awake.

COPILOT

What'd they ping? A caribou? Should I alert the Nature Channel?

JAMES

That'd be a classified carabou.

COPILOT

Sorry, forget I asked.

JAMES

No, relax! We're only flying solar flare mitigation. Space weather fried a satellite, is all.

The copilot hands James an envelope, which he opens.