

C A L L I S T O

written by

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TITLE OVER BLACK:

The 22nd century...

FADE IN:

EXT. MARS - UPPER ATMOSPHERE

Stars give way to the bright glow of the Mars atmosphere, its thin curvature holding back the blackness of space.

Jutting up from the surface of the red planet is a MASSIVE MOUNTAIN: the dormant volcano Olympus Mons.

In the lower atmosphere, a SMALL AIRCRAFT speeds toward it.

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

Behind the controls is the strong frame of ANDREW BRENNAN (30s and clean-shaven with close-cut red hair). He studies a RADAR display -- all clear. Idly stares out the window.

Finally, he glances nervously at his co-pilot.

ANDREW

What do you think?

SAOIRSE (*ser-sha*) BRENNAN (10) pushes a mess of curly red hair from her face and scoots away from Andrew. But her wide eyes betray her awe at the sight of the enormous mountain.

Andrew self-consciously shifts his hands on the controls. Tries again.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Want to see the top?

Saoirse leans forward to see the summit. Too high. She shyly glances at Andrew, a smile pulling at her lips.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(affectionate)

Better hang on, little girl.

EXT. OLYMPUS MONS - DAY

It's hard to grasp how truly big this mountain is -- the summit alone stretches to the horizon. The aircraft climbs rapidly, quivering as it crests the top, its design pushed to the limit.

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

Andrew adjusts a few controls, tilts the ship down.

SAOIRSE

Wow...

She scoots closer to her father. He hides a smile as he points at the miles-wide circular depressions atop the mountain.

ANDREW

Those are called calderas. They were magma chambers that collapsed after Olympus Mons erupted. It used to be an active volcano.

SAOIRSE

But not anymore?

ANDREW

No. Now it's at peace.

He reaches up and pulls back the sunroof cover, revealing the onyx and diamond expanse of space, the stars DAZZLING.

Andrew watches Saoirse stare at them. He tries to see the universe through her eyes, to feel her wonder...

SAOIRSE

What's it like, Dad?

ANDREW

In your mind, you know it's the coldest place you've ever been. But when you see Mars, or Phobos, glowing red against the stars, it makes you feel warm. Like you've come home.

SAOIRSE

Maybe you can take me when you come back?

ANDREW

I hope so.

He doesn't sound so sure.

EXT. OLYMPUS MONS - DAY

The ship speeds up, flies past the calderas. It quickly rounds the top of the summit and drops out of sight.

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

Lower now. Andrew levels the ship, revealing a DARK CLOUD.

SAOIRSE
Dust storm!

ANDREW
We'll go around it.

The brown dust quickly dominates the cockpit window.

SAOIRSE
Mom said the weather would be good
today.

Andrew's eyes narrow. *Something's not right.*

Then --

A retina-searing FLASH ignites within the cloud, and a HULKING BLUE AIRCRAFT, hull dotted with gunports, pierces the murk.

Andrew PULLS HARD on the controls just as THREE RED FIGHTERS burst from the cloud and pound the larger craft with projectiles, making small dents in its armored hide.

CONSORTIUM FIGHTER PILOT (OVER RADIO)
P1724, what are you doing in a combat
zone? Evacuate immediately.

EXT. MARS PLAINS - DAY

As the blue bomber roars over Andrew's ship, its gunports light up and return fire. The lead red fighter EXPLODES.

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

The small craft is peppered by cross-fire from the bomber --

ANDREW
Hold on, Saoirse!

She digs her fingernails into her seat as Andrew PULLS UP --

EXT. MARS PLAINS - DAY

Andrew's small craft DARTS UPWARD, projectile impacts sparking on its hull.

It ROLLS, barely evades the red fighters as they whip by -- but the maneuver sends the craft into a tailspin, accelerating, the ground looming closer --

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

Andrew idles the engine, rapidly works the controls --

Saoirse squeezes her eyes shut --

EXT. MARS PLAINS - DAY

The craft finally stops spinning, but IMPACT IS IMMINENT --

-- The engine BLAZES TO LIFE. Red rocks are scattered by its power as the craft levels and slowly begins to climb.

INT. AIRCRAFT COCKPIT - DAY

Andrew looks over his shoulder just as the bomber EXPLODES and a warm glow floods the cockpit. Then the cockpit falls dark as the ship enters the dust cloud.

Andrew pries Saoirse's left hand from her seat, and she grasps his with both hands. Small fingers covering large ones.

ANDREW

It's okay. We're okay.

As the dust cloud thins, Saoirse opens her eyes. Still clutching her father's hand, she cautiously leans forward.

Her eyes WIDEN IN HORROR.

EXT. DESTROYED TOWN - DAY

Shards of a protective glass dome are scattered over what used to be a settlement, now a HEAP OF DEBRIS inside a crater.

Buildings charred and ripped. Cultivated land made barren by bombs and atmosphere. Bodies in the streets. PURE DEVASTATION.

CUT TO:

INT. BRENNAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

A dim room lit by eleven candles atop a colorful CAKE.

ANDREW

Make a wish!

Saoirse blows out the candles -- but one stubbornly stays lit. Andrew playfully leans forward to blow it out, but Saoirse quickly finishes the job and giggles.

There's a small cheer, and the lights come on:

Saoirse, Andrew, and GRACE BRENNAN (30s, with brown hair and a brave face) sit around a rough-hewn STONE TABLE at the center of the rustic kitchen, a mix of frontier and high-tech.

GRACE

Happy birthday!

She kisses her daughter's head and sets a piece of cake in front of her. Saoirse digs in.

Andrew produces a METAL BOX wrapped in a green bow. Saoirse swallows a mouthful of cake and takes the box. She looks up.

ANDREW

Open it.

He puts his arm around Grace, but she gently pulls away. Saoirse excitedly unties the bow and slides open the lid:

Inside is a beautiful ANTIQUE HAMMER with steel head and thick wood handle. A true craftsman's tool.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

For your creations.

She lifts the hammer, feels its weight, traces the wood grain of the handle with her fingers -- STARTS at the feel of it.

SAOIRSE

Is this real wood?

He smiles at her, nods. Saoirse BEAMS back at him.

INT. BRENNAN HOUSE - SAOIRSE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beneath a shelf of simple IRON SCULPTURES, Saoirse is in bed and nearly asleep, new hammer clutched in her hand.

Andrew sits beside her, watches as her eyes gently flutter closed. He studies her face a moment longer. Yearning to stay.

But he carefully rises and softly pulls the door shut.

INT. BRENNAN HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

SUN LAMPS hang over ROWS OF PLANTS: greens, barley, potatoes. The staples of life, growing in Martian soil.

Grace kneels, pruning a strawberry bush. Behind her, the AIRLOCK DOOR opens and Andrew enters in a red flight suit. Grace doesn't look up.

ANDREW

She fell right asleep. She's okay.

(beat)

New Syracuse is gone. There were bodies everywhere.

GRACE

Monsters.

She stands and looks at Andrew with hard, uncompromising eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Don't ever do that again.

ANDREW

It was going to be a quick trip--

GRACE

You took her into a war zone.

ANDREW

The whole planet is a war zone. I wanted to do something special for her birthday.

GRACE

Then why don't you stay?

ANDREW

I'm out there so that she'll have a future.

GRACE

She needs you now, Andrew. It's been six months! Coming home for twenty-four hours doesn't make everything okay.

She turns back to her plants.

ANDREW

We're all making sacrifices. When we win this war--

Grace spins around, fire in her eyes.

GRACE

If we do ever win, your daughter
won't even know you.

(firm)

There are other ways to fight than
in a cockpit out in space.

Andrew softens.

ANDREW

I'm a pilot, Grace. It's what I'm
good at. I want Saoirse to grow up
free. And if we all do our part, we
will beat Earth.

He steps forward and pulls her close. They kiss, then part,
eyes full of desperate hope and the fear of tomorrow.

INT. BRENNAN HOUSE - SAOIRSE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An engine starts up outside, and Saoirse's eyes POP OPEN.
Hammer held tight, she jumps up and runs to the window --

-- Just in time to see Andrew's aircraft flying away. Tears
fill her eyes, her face SCREWED TIGHT WITH EMOTION.

Over the sound of Saoirse's breathing, a SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Andrew being closed up in a fighter cockpit

-- Saoirse glancing down at the metal box her hammer came in

-- Andrew's fighter entering a FRENZIED BATTLE in space

-- Saoirse raising the hammer above her head

-- A MISSILE striking Andrew's fighter, a FIERY EXPLOSION--

-- Saoirse BRINGING THE HAMMER DOWN--

CUT TO:

INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - MORNING

BANG! The same hammer strikes RED-HOT IRON, beating it into
shape. The blacksmith stops to wipe sweat from her brow,
pushing aside her mess of curly red hair:

Saoirse (early 30s), now tall and strong, with a rugged beauty born of good stock and hard work.

Her meticulously tidy shop could easily be from the 19th-century: traditional tools, a forge of hot coals, an anvil, even a few paper books.

Saoirse plunges the iron into water, then picks up a glass and takes a long drink.

INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - LATER

Saoirse finishes assembling a small DISPLAY CASE, glass inlaid into stained wood doors. She screws a decorative IRON HINGE into the frame with manual tools. The hard way.

INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The display case is set carefully upon a stone table. Saoirse steps back, proud.

She then gently lays the case in a PLASTIC SHIPPING BOX.

EXT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - MORNING

Dawn. The weather-beaten AIRLOCK opens and Saoirse steps out, her environmental suit stained in patches of red and black.

She carries the shipping box to a tarp-covered object, sets it down. She pulls off the tarp, revealing a DRONE. She steps back and presses a button on her WRIST DISPLAY.

The drone comes to life, rises slightly, and wraps its spider-like legs around the box. Then it flies straight up, Saoirse watching as it becomes lost against the dim sky.

MOMENTS LATER

The risen sun floods Saoirse in golden light as she sits atop her flat-roofed home and shop, legs dangling over the side.

It's our first good look at where she lives: the house is alone. Barren rocky land surrounds it, an ancient riverbed that serves as a road leading to the hills on the horizon.

Saoirse surveys the landscape. Calm.

Until a two-seater PERSONNEL TRANSPORT drops down, kicking up dust like a whirlwind. It lands a dozen yards from her shop.

Saoirse clenches her jaw and jumps down.

The transport is high-tech and luxurious, with a huge glass windshield, the dust kept off its sleek exterior by thousands of tiny bladeless fans. An aircraft from a more refined world.

There's a slight HISS as it depressurizes, a PILOT in a spotless pressure suit emerging.

Saoirse curtly gestures for him to follow her to the airlock.

INT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Saoirse removes her helmet, and the man does the same: he's clean-cut and confident, with a pleasant smile and curious eyes. This is WILL GLENN (late 20s).

Saoirse couldn't care less.

SAOIRSE
(impatient)
Yes?

WILL
My name is Will Glenn. I'm on the staff of the Earth ambassador. I'd like to discuss a custom order.

SAOIRSE
You can place custom orders remotely.

WILL
The Mars Consortium monitors all communications from the embassy. We wanted this to be a surprise.

SAOIRSE
Very well. Proceed.

She moves to her FORGE, pulls out a piece of iron, takes it to the anvil.

Will takes in the warm room with a quiet smile. The orange glow of the coals adds to the palpable nostalgia of the place.

BANG! Saoirse's work at the anvil jolts him back to business.

WILL
We're currently in talks with President Farrell, and noticed that he likes traditional crafts. We thought that a gift might...

As he considers, the hammering stops, and Saoirse looks up.

WILL (CONT'D)

...That it might be appreciated.

SAOIRSE

You want to bribe him. Typical Earth tactic. Though I'm sure he'll gladly take it.

WILL

I know. Politics. But at least I was able to convince them to go with something handmade.

More BANGS.

WILL (CONT'D)

I understand you're the best ironworker on Mars. Your shop, these pieces -- I've never seen anything like them on Earth.

SAOIRSE

Earth traded craftsmanship for convenience long ago.

She stops, turns to Will.

SAOIRSE (CONT'D)

What is it you want.

WILL

An old-style horseshoe, with the phrase "*Ad astra per aspera*" engraved on it.

SAOIRSE

"Through hardship to the stars."

WILL

(surprised)

Yes. Your ancestors tamed a planet. We'd like to honor that.

Saoirse stares at the hammer in her hand, her mind elsewhere.

SAOIRSE

We paid for it in blood.

Will looks away, fidgets with his helmet.