THE HAND THAT FEEDS

A short screenplay
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FADE IN:

1 UNKNOWN POV - NIGHT

Heavy breathing. Frantic. Female. We're rushing through scrub land. Running away from something.

Close by, we can hear the guttural squawks of some large unpleasant creatures.

We pick up our pace--

2 INT. CAVE MOUTH - NIGHT

HELENA, mids 40's, and her two teenage daughters -- DINA(13) and ALISON (16) -- burst inside. Scared for their lives, out of breath.

Helena is dressed in a high-tech work suit. She takes out a slender 8-inch silver bar and motions towards the back of the cave--

HELENA
(to her girls)
Go!

ALISON
What about you?!

HELENA
GO!

Dina ushers away a tearful Alison. The guttural squawking grows closer.

Helena snaps the silver bar into two separate compartments -- they glow blue. She plants each one on either side of the cave mouth. Two LED lights turn red and blink.

Then Helena bolts away deeper into the cave, a remote device in her fist.

3 BACK OF THE CAVE

Helena huddles in a corner with her daughters, holding each other, guttural squawking echoing through the cave.

Helena braces herself and presses the remote control button.

CUT TO:

4 POV OF SQUAWKING BEASTS

Mere meters from the cave mouth and closing.

CUT TO:

The red lights on the silver bars as they turn green.

CUT TO:

5 BACK OF THE CAVE

KABOOM! We hear a large explosion. Our trio cower as the ground shakes, small rocks and dust raining down on them.
CAVE MOUTH

Has been sealed shut by rocks. Outside, the creatures roar in frustration, picking at the barricade with God knows what.

BACK OF THE CAVE

The last of debris pitter-patters to a halt. A dead silence hangs in the air. The trio remain unmoving, Helena still shielding them under her body.

Slowly, she lifts her head, regards her daughters. They both look up. She ruffles the dust out of their hair.

HELENA
Everybody okay?

Dina sputters a cough, but manages a thumbs up. Alison squeaks 'yeah'. Helena kisses both their foreheads, cherishing them, glad they're alive.

FADE TO BLACK:
Title Card: 'Day One'

BACK OF THE CAVE

We can hear the creatures squawking outside. Helena is hunched over a futuristic communicator, trying to get a signal...

HELENA
Deep Base Rescue, please respond. My daughters and I are survivors of the Europa colony attacks trapped inside a cave somewhere in Kappa quadrant awaiting urgent evac. We have no food. I have silver-barred the entrance. The exterior is swarming with Arachna-pods. Over.

She listens for a response. Gets nothing but static.

HELENA
Deep Base Rescue, please respond...

As Helena keeps trying, we MOVE to a corner of the cave where Alison is throwing up.

Dina places a hand on her shoulder.

DINA
Are you okay--?

ALISON
(shaking her off)
Leave me alone!

Helena walks over. Tends to Alison, holds her hair back as she throws up more.

Dina peels away. She sits near a makes-shift container that collects drops of water beading off the rock surface.

She hugs her knees to her chest and watches the water accumulate.
BACK OF THE CAVE

A haggard Alison is slumped against a wall, clutching her stomach.

ALISON
I'm so hungry.

The communicator crackles alive--

VOICE (filtered)
This is Deep Base Rescue, we read you. Over.

Helena scrambles towards the communicator, picking it up--

HELENA (into comm mic)
Yes!

The two girls watch intently.

HELENA (into comm mic)
Hello? Oh, thank God. We've been trying to reach you for days! Please get us out of here!

VOICE (V.O.) (filtered)
We're clearing Kappa quadrant of A-pod activity as we speak. Sit tight and Tac Commandos should touch down shortly. Over.

Helena laughs with delirious relief.

HELENA (into comm mic)
Never thought I'd be so glad to see a Tackie. Over.

The line goes dead with static. But Helena's spirits are high and she draws an re-enthused Alison into an embrace, holding her and kissing her hair.

Dina doesn't share their rapture. She stalks off into a corner and sits down, staring off in deep consternation.

Alison's excitement dissolves. She grows fretful, looking down at her stomach.

HELENA
What's wrong?

ALISON
I should've told you earlier. (beat) I'm pregnant.

Dina snaps out of her daze, looks over to her sister with incredulity.
Helena stares at Alison, who's dreading the reaction. But Helena just breathes a smile, caresses the girl's hair.

HELENA
We'll be home soon.

FADE TO BLACK:
Title Card: 'Day Nine'

BACK OF THE CAVE
Helena looks grave, holding a sleeping Alison.

HELENA
(looking upwards)
Where are these fools?

Dina sits separate to them, appearing malnourished.

DINA
Even if they take out all the
A-pods - which they won't - there
are over 132 caves in this quadrant
alone.

Helena throws Dina an annoyed look, but then softens upon seeing her vulnerable little face.

CAVE MOUTH
We hear the turbines of a spacecraft landing outside.

BACK OF THE CAVE
Dina and Helena have heard it too, straining their ears to listen.

Helena cracks a relieved smile and--

HELENA
Wake up!

--jostles Alison awake.

CAVE MOUTH
The trio near the rock barricade, listening to...

TAC COMMANDO #1 (O.S.)
We've cleared the remaining A-pods.
Just a matter of setting up geo-
razors and cutting you outta there.

HELENA
Loud and clear, soldier.

TAC COMMANDO #2 (O.S.)
(in horror)
Oh my God! Look! There's hundreds
of them!

Our trio listens with mounting dread as angry squawking fills the air. Then an orgy of gunfire erupts.
But the rat-a-tat-tat is short lived. It's replaced by a far worse sound: the soul-rattling cries of human suffering.

Our trio turns numb, hearing TAC commandos holler as their flesh is being ripped apart.

ALISON
They- They would've called in their position. Right? I mean, there'll be others on the way. Right?

But neither Helena nor Dina can answer this.

HELENA
Let's get out of here.

Helena guides her girls away from the barricade when--

A man's SCREAMING face appears at a ground-level crevice--

TAC COMMANDO #1
HELP ME!

Helena rushes to the crevice. But it's only the size of a Frisbee. Yet, the man sticks his hand inside, trying to claw his way in, trying to survive.

Helena grabs his arm, tries to help. There's a horrible squawk. Very close. Then the wet crack of rupturing flesh.

The commando shrieks in pain as he's dragged away into oblivion.

Helena falls backwards with his severed arm.

The girls shake in terror.

CUT TO BLACK:

Title Card: 'Day Thirteen'

The sound of distressed mewling filters in.

BACK OF THE CAVE

Helena grasps a distraught Alison's hand, cradling the girl across her lap as she shakes with sobs.

Her legs are splayed and inside her dress, a pale Dina is holding something to Alison's crotch, not wanting to look.

ALISON
I don't want to lose it.

Helena hushes her, trying to calm the girl.

Dina removes her hands, holding a white rag SODDEN CRIMSON WITH BLOOD.

Alison cries fresh tears at the sight.

ALISON
Oh, God. We're gonna die out here.

Helena holds her tight, forcing back her own tears.

She looks to the corner. Dina follows Helena's gaze.
The TAC commander's severed arm is sealed in plastic.

FADE TO BLACK:

15 BACK OF THE CAVE

Helena is hunched over, sharpening something. She rubs down a rock, shaping it into a cutting tool.

Dina watches on numbly, cradling a sleeping Alison, who's looks wan, a large patch of dried blood on the crotch of her dress.

Title Card: 'Day Fifteen'

16 BACK OF THE CAVE

Dina sobs profusely into Helena chest...

DINA
I don't want to...

Helena comforts the girl...

HELENA
We have to, baby.

...holding her, rocking back and forth.

17 LATER

Helena, Alison, and Dina sit facing each other, sobering stares directed at something on the ground.

The severed arm lies between them. A little pallid, but otherwise well-preserved.

HELENA
I'll cut.

She holds the sharpened rock. Dina has to look away as Helena starts sawing away at the skin.

Alison stares in a daze, looking emaciated and ill.

Helena holds up a slice of flesh in her trembling fingers.

HELENA
Here goes...

She pops it in her mouth. Dina winces. Helena gags, every fiber of her being crying out in disgust, but she forces herself on, pegs her nose and gulps it down.

She scoops up a bit of water into her mouth, washes it around her mouth, about to spit it out - but water is scarce, so she makes herself swallow it.

She buckles over panting, holding her stomach. Dina sniffles a sob.

Alison's face hardens. She grabs a piece of flesh and stuffs it into her mouth. Gulping it down.

ALISON
There. It's done.
Alison gets up and marches off to the corner, flumping herself down, glumly facing the wall.

Helena looks to Dina, who tearfully shakes her head.

Helena cuts another bit of flesh, places it in Dina's palm, gives the girl a reassuring look.

Dina stares down at the piece of meat in her palm, her soul leaving her body.

She steels herself and takes the piece into her mouth, slowly swallowing.

18 CAVE MOUTH

Dina's cries of disgust echo throughout the cave.

FADE TO BLACK:

Title Card: 'Day Twenty-Nine'

BACK OF THE CAVE

The severed arm is now all but skeletal.

Helena cradles Alison across her lap; the girl's in a real bad state, near death. Dina is sat by her side, distraught.

Alison manages a tiny smile, an ethereal acceptance in her eyes. She reaches up and touches Dina's face.

ALISON

You're so pretty. I'm sorry I yelled at you.

Dina becomes emotional, clasps her sister's hand. Alison then looks at Helena.

ALISON

When I die...

HELENA

No...

ALISON

When I die... you have to feed her.

(beat)

You have my permission. After all... it's only flesh.

Helena choking back a delirious chuckle. She draws Dina closer and holds both her daughters, maybe for the last time.

FADE TO BLACK:

Title Card: 'Day Thirty-Five'

BACK OF THE CAVE

Alison's body lies dead in a corner. Untouched.

Nearby, a severely weakened Dina and Helena huddle close together, emaciated and light-headed, staring at the body, barely enough energy to move their lips.
DINA
She was your favorite.

HELENA
What?

DINA
It's okay...

HELENA
I love you.

DINA
...it's okay. Remember when the doctors told you... I would never have a baby... from that day on... you looked at me different... different from Alison.

Helena bursts into tears.

DINA
It's okay...

Dina cradles her mother's head across her lap, soothing her, caressing her hair.

DINA
...it's okay.

Helena whimpers, allowing herself to be consoled, letting her eyelids fall shut.

CUT TO:

21 LATER

Helena wakes with a start, her head now on the ground.

She sits up and looks around, blinking the sleep out of her eyes, trying to find Dina.

HELENA
Baby?

Helena squints to make out the back of Dina, sat near Alison's body.

HELENA
Baby...

Dina's head slowly turns. And Helena's jaw falls open in horror--

HELENA
BABY!

--because inside Dina's mouth is her sister's flesh, her hand foraging inside Alison's torso for more.

A tearful Helena scrambles on hands and knees towards Dina. Pulls the girl away into her arms, holding her tight...

HELENA
No, no, no... baby, no.
Dina is nearly catatonic, the flesh falling out of her mouth.

CUT TO BLACK:
Title Card: 'Day Forty'

BACK OF THE CAVE

Helena sobs as she lays Dina's dead body down next to Alison. Dina's eyes are still open, hellishly frozen in horror.

FADE TO BLACK:
Title Card: 'Day Forty-Five'

BACK OF THE CAVE

Alison has started to decompose dramatically.

A miserable Helena despairs in the corner, near death herself... And then she hears it. A few meters away.

Her communicator crackles to life, a female voice on the other end...

VOICE
(via communicator)
This is Deep Base Rescue, do you read?

Helena chuckles stupidly, crawling towards the communicator.

She raises it to her mouth, struggling to form words...

HELENA
Rescue... they're dead. Everybody's dead. I don't know... how much longer I can--

VOICE
This message is to the trapped colonists in Kappa quadrant. If you are still reading this know that we are aggressively clearing all A-pod activity. We estimate a rescue time frame of three days. Do you have enough supplies?

Helena laughs deliriously, eyeing the bodies of her daughters.

HELENA
(into comm mic)
To last... a life time.

VOICE
(repeating)
This message is to the trapped...
(etc.)

Apparently the other end can't hear her, merely repeating the entire message.

Helena lets the communicator drop out of her hand.
HELENA
Three days...
She crawls towards the bodies.

HELENA
...three days...
She picks up the rock she sharpened, clutching it in her fist, staring at her daughters' bodies.

HELENA
...three days...
She holds out Dina's arm and raises the rock high.

CAVE MOUTH
We can hear those damn creatures squawking again.
But then Helena's cry of unimaginable agony echoes through the cave, drowning out all other sound.

FADE TO BLACK:
Title Card: 'Day Forty-Six'

CAVE MOUTH
On the other side we can hear some sort of cutting tool working away at the barricade from the other side.

BACK OF THE CAVE
Dust rains down from the ceiling as we hear the barricade giving way.

CAVE MOUTH
Two masked TAC Commandos enter, swinging their pulse rifles. TAC #1 signals 'clear' and they move deeper into the cave.

BACK OF THE CAVE
The commandos slow to a stop, there eyes fixed on something disturbing. They pull off their masks and stare in horror...

Between Alison and Dina's bodies, Helena lies dead. Her hand still clutching the sharpened rock, her other wrist savagely slashed, a lake of dried blood under it.

Her lips are frozen in a tiny smile; her eyes are open and alive, as if she saw heaven.

FADE OUT: