

LISTENERS

Steve Meredith

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EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE - NIGHT

After a moment of silence, a car is heard, and a pair of headlights shine on the roadway from a distance, illuminating an approaching intersection with a sign that reads "RESTRICTED ACCESS."

The car turns on to the restricted roadway and continues to gate, where a SECURITY GUARD, late twenties, dressed in uniform, waits.

The car window rolls down, revealing DR. STEVE CULVER, 30, hair graying at the temples, dressed in slacks and a collared shirt. Steve holds out his credential.

The Guard examines the credential, looks at Steve, and presses a button to lift the gate.

STEVE:
(to GUARD)
Have a good one.

The Security Guard waves goodbye and Steve drives onward, down a tunnel and into...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

...a mostly empty parking garage. There's only one car already parked there, and Steve parks right next to it.

Steve gets out, locks the car, and rides an elevator up to...

INT. LISTENING LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

...the Deep Space Signals Intelligence Laboratory, where Steve's colleague, DR. AMY FITCH, 30, brunette, wearing khakis and a blue top, sits at a computer, concern on her face.

STEVE:
(not noticing Amy's
expression)
Hey, how are you?

AMY:
(eyes still glued to the
computer, expression
unchanged)
Good, and you?

STEVE:
Can't complain. You have a pot of
(MORE)

STEVE: (CONT'D)
coffee on?

AMY:
Yup.

Steve goes over to the coffee pot, pours himself a cup, and turns back to Amy, noticing her expression as he sips.

STEVE:
What do you have?

AMY:
Something I don't understand.

Steve walks over, grabs a rolling desk chair, and sits next to Amy. His expression slowly turns to concern.

STEVE:
When did these pings start showing up?

AMY:
About ten minutes after I came into work tonight.

STEVE:
Those signals, they don't seem like they're--

AMY:
Man made? I know.

STEVE:
I'm gonna get NASA on the phone.

Steve rolls his chair over to an adjacent desk and picks up a phone, dialing a number as he does.

STEVE:
(into phone)
Good evening, this is Dr. Steve Culver. I need to speak to the Flight Director on duty.

(a beat)
Sure, it's X-Ray, Delta, Alpha Romeo, Tango.

(a beat)
Dan, it's Steve over at the Signal Intel Lab. Question for you; do we have any space junk flying around

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

the edge of the Milky Way?

(to Amy)

How far apart are the pings coming in?

AMY:

We've picked up five so far, about 10 minutes apart.

STEVE:

(into phone)

They're about 10 minutes apart. Based on the readings we're getting, it doesn't seem to be man-made.

(a beat)

Okay, call me back when you know. Thanks.

Steve hangs up the phone.

STEVE:

(to Amy)

Dan's gonna check, but he doesn't think we have anything out that far.

AMY:

What about other countries? They got assets out there?

STEVE:

Not sure. Guess we cross that bridge when we come to it.

AMY:

If we're just now getting pings ten minutes apart, whatever this thing is, had to start sending these signals hours, if not days ago.

STEVE:

That's what I'm thinking too.

AMY:

Do you think it's non-human?

STEVE:

Honestly, no. I think Dan's going
(MORE)

STEVE: (CONT'D)

to call back and we're going to find a deep space asset that's run its course and losing juice. We'll end up logging it like everything else.

AMY:

Yeah, but still...

The phone rings. Steve answers.

STEVE:

(into phone)

This is Dr. Culver.

(a beat)

Hey Dan, what did you find?

(a beat)

Uh huh, and you're sure?

(a beat)

Any chance it's anything else?

(a beat)

Okay, thanks.

Steve hangs up.

STEVE: (CONT'D)

(to Amy)

Dan says it's not a NASA asset.

Amy doesn't respond. Her look of concern has changed to shock and fear.

STEVE: (CONT'D)

I'm still not convinced though, maybe we should check--

Steve notices Amy's expression.

STEVE: (CONT'D)

What is it?

AMY:

If NASA doesn't have an asset out that far, no one else will, but we've got bigger problems right now, and we need to get the DOD on the phone.

STEVE:
What bigger problems?

AMY:
The time and distance between the
pings is changing.

(a beat)
Whatever it is...it's getting
closer.

Steve and Amy both look at the computer, eyes growing wide.

THE END.