

"S A N C T U A R Y 77"

written by

Adam J. Nadworniak

Address
Phone
E-mail

FADE IN:

A WHITE LEADER COUNTDOWN.

THE FLICKER OF FILM GRAIN, SCRATCHES, BURN-DOTS.

ARCHIVAL TITLE CARD (SUPER 8MM, CHEERFUL FONT):

PROJECT SANCTUARY

Department of Civil Defense / 1977

Light, almost bouncy library music plays – flutes,
vibraphone, gentle marching snare.
The kind of music that lies to you.

INT. GOVERNMENT TRAINING FILM – DAY (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE)

A narrator speaks in a calm, confident, classroom tone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

(warm, reassuring)

During times of uncertainty, the
American spirit stands strong.
In the event of a national
emergency, the Department of Civil
Defense is proud to introduce a new
solution: Sanctuary Protocol 77.

CUT TO:

A clean model diorama – a detailed, miniature underground
bunker, cross-sectioned like a dollhouse.
Tiny plastic people smile inside it.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Seventy-seven volunteers have
bravely stepped forward to
participate in a six-month closed-
environment resilience study.
Their purpose: to learn, adapt, and
flourish underground – so that
America may always endure.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT TEST FACILITY - DAY (ARCHIVAL)

A bus arrives. Model is unmistakably 70s government issue: sun-faded, institutional, ugly in an honest way.

Volunteers disembark, waving, smiling for the camera.

Freeze-frames identify each one, as if they're joining a game show:

RICHARD "DICK" CALDWELL - 35 - TEACHER
 JANET MOSS - 28 - NURSE
 ARNOLD KEATING - 42 - ENGINEER
 STEPHANIE HAWKINS - 19 - STUDENT
 ...
 The music is proud. Hopeful. Naive.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS (ARCHIVAL)

The volunteers walk deeper - laughing, chatting.
 They believe they will be studied, filmed, remembered.

A steel blast door looms ahead.

A PROJECT SUPERVISOR (50s, smiling like a guidance counselor) stands beside a microphone.

PROJECT SUPERVISOR
 You'll have everything you need:
 food, power, fresh air, and each
 other.
 Six months of cooperation,
 resilience, and community spirit.

He gestures like a host unveiling a prize showcase.

PROJECT SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
 The future may be uncertain - but
 we face it together.

The volunteers APPLAUD.

The blast door begins to lower.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Remember: sanctuary is not merely a
 place.
 It is a promise.

As the door seals, the camera lingers on their faces - smiling, brave, unaware.

The final sliver of daylight disappears.

CLANG.
LOCKS ENGAGE.

The music cuts out mid-note.

Film grain worsens.
Audio warps.
Something is wrong in the texture of the image now.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

SILENCE.

TITLE CARD (PLAIN WHITE TEXT ON BLACK):

FIFTY YEARS LATER

Hold.

Long.

Longer than comfortable.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - DAWN (PRESENT DAY)

Wind.
Cold.
A pale horizon.

A lone helicopter cuts across the sky.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

DR. MARA PAULSEN (42) sits rigid, unblinking, hands clasped tightly in her lap.
Smart. Composed. Hollowed-out in quiet ways.

Across from her, CAPTAIN ROSS HALE (50s) watches her.
Old scars. Sleepless eyes.
A man who trusts nothing, especially hope.

Between them:

Maps. LIDAR scans. A dossier labeled:

SANCTUARY 77

UNEXPECTED ACCESS EVENT - DOOR UNSEALED

The rotors thunder.
No one speaks.

Not yet.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Close on Mara's hands — a cheap pink beaded bracelet on her wrist.
Handmade.
The kind a child would make.

She turns it slowly with her thumb — not sentimentally, but like someone reminding herself of a promise she keeps forgetting.

HALE notices.

HALE
How old's the kid?

Mara doesn't look up.

MARA
Twelve.

Beat.
She doesn't elaborate.

Hale waits, expecting more.
It doesn't come.

HALE
She with her dad?

MARA
No.
She's with my sister.
She's... happy.

She says "happy" like it's a thing she has read about.

Hale studies her — not judgmental, just tired enough to recognize the shape of regret in others.

HALE
You'll see her when you're back.

Mara keeps her eyes on the bracelet.

MARA
(very softly)
Maybe.

Silence returns — but now we know what fills it.

EXT. DESERT BASIN - LATER

The helicopter touches down on an empty expanse of sand and salt.
No buildings.
No markers.

Just the wind.

A cluster of temporary floodlights stands around a single concrete structure, half-buried — a blast hatch, decades old, now thawed open at the seam.

The air around it shimmers with heat and humidity where none should be.

EXT. BUNKER SITE - CONTINUOUS

The team disembarks:

Mara

Hale

Rafferty (28, wire-thin, technical genius with socially backward confidence)

Lian Wu (40, environmental scientist, steady, careful eyes)

Rafferty crouches by the hatch, pointing at the re-lock mechanism.

RAFFERTY
It shouldn't be open.
Even with power failure, the manual
locks would hold unless someone
inside—

He stops himself.

LIAN
 (finish the thought)
 —wanted it open.

Hale checks his weapon. Not flashy. Just procedural.

HALE
 Let's keep expectations clear.
 Best case — somebody survived.
 Worst case — we find bones.

MARA
 There are worse things than bones.

She's looking at the warm condensation gathered along the steel edges of the hatch.

Alive air.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - ENTRY CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

They descend.

The corridor walls are not metal-gray anymore.
 They're softened — covered in something like:

woven fabric, layered over decades

hand-patched quilts

stretched skin-like membranes

waxy, polished fungal growth that looks tended, not wild

It is not decayed.
 It is lived-in.

The corridor breathes warmth.
 The air has the mild salt-sweet smell of bodies sleeping close together.

They move slowly.
 Footsteps dull on the dampened floor.

The only sound:

A faint, steady human breathing, far away but everywhere.

Like the bunker itself is alive.

Rafferty whispers:

RAFFERTY

There's oxygen cycling.
Stable.
Someone has been maintaining the
system.

Hale signals: stay close.

Mara's face, however—

Softens.

Not with comfort.
With recognition.

Like she's walking into a memory she never made.

A SHAPE appears at the far end of the corridor.

Not approaching — simply present.

A man.

Barefoot.

Clothed in dyed cloth wraps, layered like ceremonial warmth.

Skin pale as ivory.
Hair shaved.
Eyes gloss-black, pupils blown wide, reflecting firelight
that isn't there.

He is beautiful in the deeply wrong way things in dreams are
beautiful.

He does not raise his hands.
He does not smile.

He speaks like breathing taught to speak:

ELIAS

You came back.

Hale raises his gun immediately.

Mara lifts a hand — not to stop Hale —

To listen.

Elias looks at Mara — and only Mara.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
You were so lonely up there.

Silence.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(gentle, welcoming,
inevitable)
Come.
The Mother is waiting.

He turns and walks deeper into the warmth.

He expects them to follow.

And Mara —
already is.

HOLD ON:

Mara's face as she steps forward.

Not fear.

Recognition.

As if something in her already knew this place was real.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - COMMUNAL SLEEP HALL

The corridor opens into a vast, low-ceilinged chamber, lit not by bulbs but by warm, amber bioluminescent panels — soft and dim, like late evening light that never ends.

The air is humid.
Not swampy — human.
The air of bodies breathing together, exhaling warmth into one enclosed world.

The floor is layered with thick woven mats, quilt-like, mended over decades — soft, indented, lived-in.

And upon them:

Dozens of bodies are sleeping together.

Not spread out.

Not separate.

They lie in gentle contact:

a hand resting on another's ribs, rising and falling together

foreheads touching

backs curved to nest into another's back

legs loosely interwoven

hairless heads resting against chests, shoulders, arms

They are not tangled.

They are arranged, unconsciously, with the instinctive geometry of closeness.

Every breath is shared.

The sound in the room is not snoring – it is a single organism breathing.

One slow, warm, deep breath.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

The rhythm is so consistent that the longer the team stands there, the more their own breathing begins to sync.

Mara realizes it first.

Her breath catches.

Then settles into the rhythm.

She doesn't think about it.

Her body just knows.

Hale stiffens – like he just touched something hot.

HALE

(low, controlled)

Nobody gets separated. We stay
together. Understand?

Rafferty nods, but his eyes are wide, reverent.

RAFFERTY

They're... okay.
 They're not starving. They're not
 sick.
 Look at them. Their muscle tone.
 Their skin condition.
 They're—
 (struggling for a word)
 —thriving.

LIAN

 (soft, whispering,
 unsettled)
 No one thrives underground for
 fifty years.

ELIAS steps forward, barefoot, leaving no sound in his
 movement.

He gestures open-palmed to the sleeping bodies — not
 presenting them, joining them.

ELIAS

They rest in Union.
 Where one sleeps, all sleep.
 Where one breathes, all breathe.
 Where loneliness ends —
 (a slight inhale)
 —life continues.

Mara swallows, throat tight — not with fear. Recognition.

MARA

They don't... sleep alone.

ELIAS

 (gentle, almost surprised)
 Would you?

He says it not as judgment — but as if the question itself is
 strange.

Mara looks down at the pink beaded bracelet on her wrist —
 the one made by the daughter she doesn't know how to hold.

Her hand trembles.

Hale sees this.

He steps closer to her, voice low — steady, the way soldiers
 speak to the wounded.

HALE

Don't let it in.

Mara doesn't answer.
She can't.

Because her body is already breathing with them.

All around her, the Sanctuarians shift in sleep, subtly, like
a field of wheat touched by wind – the smallest drifting
movement passing across intertwined limbs.

Not one wakes.

Yet they all move together.

Mara's breath catches again – then slows – syncing – matching
– falling into their tide.

ELIAS watches her, expression serene.
Not triumphant.
Not manipulative.

Just certain.

ELIAS
(softly, to Mara alone)
You have been carrying yourself for
a long time.

Mara's eyes shine – not with tears – with understanding she
does not want to admit.

MARA
(barely audible)
Yes.

The word leaves her like surrender.

Hale closes his eyes in dread.

He knows that tone.

He's heard it in war.

When a soldier sees something that looks like peace.

CUT TO:

A soft rustling, deeper in the hall.

A shift in the breathing.

Something awakening.

A cluster of bodies slowly rises together, like one organism lifting its head.

Their eyes open—

Black.
Reflective.
Calm.

Not looking at the intruders.

Looking into them.

HOLD.

DO NOT CUT.

Let the silence breathe.

The dread comes from the stillness.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - QUIET PASSAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Elias leads Mara down a narrow corridor, away from Hale, Lian, and Rafferty.
He does not touch her — but moves in a way that makes following feel natural.

The passage walls are textured — layers of handwoven cloth, softened by decades of skin and warmth.
The air is hushed.
The sound of communal breathing fades into a soft heartbeat-like hum deep in the infrastructure.

Mara's footsteps slow.
Her breath is still synced with the Sleep Hall —
unconsciously, inevitably.

Elias walks just ahead of her, hands clasped loosely at his chest.

No tension.
No threat.
Just presence.

They stop in a small alcove — a place clearly meant for conversation, sitting, sharing warmth.

There are no chairs.
Just floor mats — soft, dented where bodies have rested,
always touching.

Mara does not sit.
Elias does.

He looks up at her – eyes calm, unwavering, not searching,
just seeing.

ELIAS
You are tired.

Not a question.

MARA
(almost defensive)
I'm not—
(stops. She is.)
Yes.

Elias nods with the simplicity of someone who has never had
to negotiate emotional truth.

ELIAS
The surface takes much to live.
You carry your body alone.
Your thoughts alone.
Your heart alone.

MARA
(a whisper)
I didn't want to.

The words escape her before she can think.

Elias does not react with triumph – only understanding.

ELIAS
No one chooses loneliness.
Loneliness is something done to
you.

This hits her like a memory returning with teeth.

Mara swallows.
Her voice comes small, barely audible.

MARA
I have a daughter.

Elias tilts his head – not surprised, not confused – simply
receiving.

ELIAS
Does she know you?

Mara doesn't answer.

Her silence is the answer.

A long stillness.

Elias gestures to the floor beside him.

No pressure.

Only invitation.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

Come rest.

Just rest.

Not forever.

Just a moment where you do not have
to hold yourself up.

Mara wants to.

Her body wants to.

Her hand twitches — reaching before she realizes.

Then—

A sound behind her.

Hale's boots in the corridor.

Purposeful.

Protective.

Pulling gravity back to the surface.

Mara's hand falls back to her side.

She stays standing.

Elias does not show disappointment.

Only patience.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

(soft, certain)

You will rest when you are ready.

He rises, slow, fluid.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

Come.

They are waking.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - COMMUNAL SLEEP HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Sleep Hall is no longer still.

The bodies are sitting up – not all at once, not synchronized, but with the natural flow of something stirring as one organism reacts to presence.

Eyes open in the low amber light.

Dozens of black, reflective eyes.
Not staring.
Not threatening.

Greeting.

As Mara and Elias step back into the hall, a soft murmur of breath shifts across the bodies, like wind in tall grass.

Some rise to their knees.
Some stand.
Some simply lift their faces, calm and welcoming.

Their movements are slow, warm, unhurried – the opposite of panic or mob.

They are waking into presence, not alertness.

A young woman – maybe 20 – approaches Mara first.

She has no fear of her.
Her expression is open, gentle, curious without hunger.

She places her hand lightly – lightly – on Mara's forearm.

No grabbing.
No pulling.
Just contact.

Mara freezes.

Not out of fear.

Because the touch is warm.
Steady.
Human in a way Mara hasn't felt in years.

YOUNG WOMAN
(soft, breath-synced)
We are glad you came back.

Mara's lips part.

Her breath slips back into their rhythm.

Hale steps forward, sharp – hand on weapon.

HALE
That's enough.

The young woman does not withdraw.

She simply looks at him, eyes calm, unbroken.

YOUNG WOMAN
You are frightened.
That is allowed.
We will not take anything from you.

Hale's face changes — because he hears no threat in her.

Just clarity.

Elias stands beside Mara — not touching her — but close enough she can feel the warmth of him.

ELIAS
This is Welcome.
No binding.
No merging.
No change.

Just presence.

He looks to Mara — only Mara.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
To be seen without being divided.

Mara's breath catches — and syncs fully.

Her shoulders lower.
Her spine softens.
Something in her releases.

A slow exhale.

A beginning.

HOLD ON MARA.

She is letting herself feel it.

The first crack in the shell of identity.

The first step toward Union.

She does not know it yet.

But we do.

CUT TO BLACK.

The sound:
Breathing. One. Single. Breath.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - OBSERVATION QUARTERS - NIGHT

A small, bare room set aside for the outsiders.
Cots. Metal walls softened only by the cloth lining the
Sanctuarrians have added over the years.

The others sleep lightly - or pretend to.

Mara lies awake.

She stares at the ceiling - but she is not looking at it.

She is listening.

The distant sound of communal breathing - dozens of lungs
rising and falling together - is faint, but constant.

A living tide.

Her breath keeps trying to match it.

She keeps stopping it.
Restarting.
Trying to reassert her own rhythm.

It doesn't hold.

The silence of her own body feels wrong.

A beat.

Her eyes open wider - not fear.

Recognition.

She sits up.

No one speaks.

No one stops her.

She stands.

Bare feet on soft floor.

She leaves the room.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Soft amber light.
No footsteps.
Just her breath.

The closer she gets to the Sleep Hall, the more her body remembers the rhythm.

She does not force it.

She returns to it.

Like water finding its level.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - COMMUNAL SLEEP HALL - CONTINUOUS

They are still sleeping.

But now Mara sees:

They are not piled.

They are arranged the way roots interlace. Like a nest. Like a heart muscle.

She stands at the threshold.

Not entering.

Just absorbing it.

Someone stirs gently – a young man – and without fully waking, he lifts an arm, creating a space for her among them.

The invitation is wordless.
Unremarkable to them.

For them, this is like someone shifting their blankets in sleep.

Mara's breath catches – and she steps forward.

She lowers herself slowly between two bodies.

Their warmth surrounds her.

Not sexual.
Not possessive.

Just shared gravity.

Her cheek rests on someone's shoulder.
An arm drapes over her ribs.

Her spine relaxes so deeply it feels like surrender.

Her breath synchronizes.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

And this time —

She does not stop it.

CUT TO BLACK.

B. MORNING — THE NORMALIZATION

INT. SANCTUARY 77 — COMMUNAL HALL — MORNING

A soft warm area — somewhere between kitchen, garden, and nesting place.

The Sanctuarians prepare the morning meal:

Root vegetables grown in hydroponic beds

Mushroom loaves

Soft fermented broth with a faint sweetness

Every movement is collaborative. No one gives orders. Tasks pass between hands fluidly, without speech.

It is not efficient.

It is peaceful.

Mara sits among them now — not pressed close — but not separate.

They do not stare at her. They simply include her.

A bowl is passed into her hands without eye contact, as if she has always been part of this chain.

Hale watches from the side of the room – jaw tight – untouched food in front of him.

Rafferty eats enthusiastically.
Lian eats carefully.
Hale doesn't eat at all.

Elias sits across from Mara.

He doesn't speak.

He just eats – slowly – match-breathing with her.

Mara breaks the silence:

MARA How... how do you decide who does what?

Elias looks up.

ELIAS There is no deciding.
There is need.
And someone answers.

MARA
But what if two people want to do
the same thing?

Elias genuinely doesn't understand the question.

ELIAS
Why would we want the same thing?

Mara blinks – realizing the entire concept of competition is foreign here.

Hale jumps in – brittle, breaking:

HALE
Because people do.

Elias looks at him with soft sadness, not judgment.

ELIAS
On the surface, yes.
Because each person lives inside
their own mind.
You do not hear each other.
You do not feel each other.
You think that is normal.

(beat)
We remember when it hurt.

The room stays quiet.

Not tense.

Just true.

Someone else – older, maybe 40s – places a warm bowl in front of Hale, one hand lightly touching his shoulder.

The contact is gentle.
Allowed.
Not forced.

Hale flinches hard.

He stands, nearly knocking the bowl.

HALE
Don't touch me.

The room does not react.
No fear.
No anger.

Just stillness.

The older Sanctuarian lowers her hand slowly.

Elias turns to Mara – voice almost the faintest whisper.

ELIAS
Separation scars.
It does not make him wrong.

Mara looks at Hale – and for the first time, she sees pain instead of authority.

Her breath stays in the Sanctuarian rhythm.

Hale sees that.

And that scares him more than anything.

HOLD ON MARA.
Watching Hale.
Feeling herself drift.
Not pulling back.

CUT TO BLACK.

Breath, again, as one.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - COMMUNAL HALL (LATER THAT MORNING)

The meal has ended.

The adults move quietly, fluidly, tending to tasks.

Mara sits still – bowl empty in her lap – her breath still synced with the room without meaning to.

A small child – maybe six – watches her from a few feet away.

The child is hairless, like the others, but the eyes are wide, reflective, curious – not eerie in the way adults' are.

Children's faces make the eyes look bright, not void.

The child approaches her, tiny bare feet silent on the soft mats.

Mara's posture stiffens – not in fear, but in the sudden awareness of being seen with no defense.

The child stops in front of her.

Just stands there.

Mara doesn't speak.

The child lifts both hands, very slowly – palms open – asking wordlessly, May I?

Mara nods.

The child climbs into her lap.
Light. Warm. Trusting.

No hesitation.

Mara freezes – eyes full – because she does not remember the last time someone trusted her body without hesitation.

The child rests forehead to her chest – listening to her heartbeat.

Then –

The child breathes with her.

Not copying.

Matching.

Their breaths sync within seconds.

Mara's eyes close.

Not in bliss.

In recognition.

This is something she has wanted for years
and never allowed herself to want.

She opens her eyes.

Another child has come closer.

And another.

Three now.

They press gently against her arms, sides, legs – not piling
– just being near.

Not claiming.
Not demanding.

Just belonging.

One child looks up at her – voice soft, unformed but sure:

FIRST CHILD
(small, sincere)
You were so alone.

Mara's throat breaks.

Not crying.

Just a sound – a shuddering inhale that's been waiting years
to escape.

She tries to speak, but the voice fails.

The child simply wraps small arms around her – and Mara lets
herself fold – just slightly – around them.

Not an embrace.

A release.

Hale sees this from across the room.

His face changes.

Not anger.

Fear.

The kind of fear that knows he is losing someone in real time.

He steps forward.

HALE

Mara—

She doesn't look at him.

She can't.

Her breath is with theirs.

The children stay close, calm, warm.

Elias stands nearby.

He does not intervene. He does not encourage.

He simply witnesses.

He says — quietly, not for Hale:

ELIAS

A child's body remembers the truth
first.
The skin knows what the mind has
forgotten.

Hale's jaw tightens — panic, grief, fury all held in place by discipline.

He turns sharply and walks out.

Because he cannot watch.

Because he understands what just happened.

Lian watches him go — face tense with concern that is not yet spoken.

Rafferty watches Mara — envious, longing.

Mara holds the children.

Breath...

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

Her first step toward Union is already done.

And she didn't notice herself take it.

CUT TO:

Soft amber light dims toward evening cycle.

The communal hall shifts to rest state.

The Sanctuarians begin preparing for the Evening Breathing Chorus.

This will be the first formal step in Mara's dissolution — the ritual of shared breath, identity softening, boundary unmaking.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - BREATHING CHAMBER - EVENING

Not a chapel.

Not a throne room.

Just a wide, circular room with soft amber light, warm walls, and no hard angles.

The Sanctuarians gather, barefoot, sitting close — not touching, but ready to.

Mara sits among them now — not in the center, not placed — she simply ended up where they were.

She is not being converted.

She is being allowed.

The child from earlier rests against her side — small hand on her forearm.

Elias sits across from her, legs folded, posture open.

The Mother-of-Many is carried in by two attendants — not because she is frail, but because movement is shared for her. Her presence is not grand. It is soft.

She settles.

A silence passes.

Everyone waits — not for permission — but for breath to align.

At first, they breathe as individuals.

In.

Out.

Mara watches the rise and fall of ribcages.

Her own breath tries to match.
She resists.

A beat.

Then –
The Mother inhales.

Slow.
Long.
Deep.

The room follows.

Not instantly – like a wave rolling outward, traveling body
to body until the chamber is one lung.

Mara's breath syncs without her noticing.

She realizes too late –
her breathing is not hers anymore.

But it feels...

good.

The child's head rises and falls against her arm in the same
rhythm as her chest.

Elias watches her in the half-light – not controlling, not
waiting to pounce – simply witnessing her arrival.

The breath deepens.

In...

Out...

In...

Out...

The peace is total.

The room feels like the womb of the world.

The part of Mara that has been holding herself up alone for years
finally stops gripping.

Her shoulders lower.

Her jaw loosens.

Her eyes soften.

And for the first time, she is not performing being alive.

She is simply alive.

There is a stillness that feels like belonging.

And then –
the shift.

Not abrupt.
Not dramatic.

Just...

Something in the breathing becomes too perfect.

Too unified.

The breath is no longer calming.

It is claiming.

Her chest moves –

but she is no longer sure she is the one deciding to breathe.

Something in her awareness flickers:

A question of self.

Her gaze drifts – unfocused – like a candle flame flattening
in wind.

Elias sees it.

He doesn't stop it.

He just speaks – barely above the breath.

ELIAS
(soft)
Do not be afraid.
You are still here.

Mara's voice emerges from the center of her softening self – thin, exposed, small:

MARA

Am I?

The room continues to breathe.

Steady.

Unbroken.

The Mother opens her eyes – the slow, patient eyes of someone who has seen many selves dissolve.

MOTHER-OF-MANY

(barely audible)

You are.

But you do not have to be only you.

Mara's breath catches – the smallest stutter – the body remembering individuality.

The room adjusts to hold her.

The breath waits.

No pressure.

Just inevitability.

And Mara –

lets go again.

Her breath returns to the rhythm.

Her identity takes one step back.

Not erased.

Just...

loosened.

The danger does not come from violence.

The danger comes from how much this feels like relief.

CUT TO:

Hale

standing at the edge of the chamber, outside the circle of warmth.

He watches Mara's face.

He watches her breathing with them.

He watches her become part of something else.

And for the first time in the film —

Hale looks truly afraid.

Not for himself.

For her.

For the loss that is beginning.

And because he knows:

She is not coming back from this unchanged.

HOLD ON MARA.

Breathing.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

One organism.

Mara is still Mara.

But the membrane between her and the whole has thinned.

FADE TO BLACK.

sound: breathing

but now

you cannot tell which breath is hers.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - SUPPLY CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The amber lights are dimmed for the night cycle.
The halls feel alive, warm, like the space between lungs.

Hale moves with calculated silence — trained.
His steps are measured.
His breathing controlled.
He keeps his body small, minimizing sound.

He knows how to move through occupied structures.

His hand rests lightly on the grip of his sidearm — not drawn
— because drawing a weapon is commitment he does not yet want
to cross.

He rounds a corner.

Pauses.

Listens.

Nothing but distant, slow breathing.

He continues.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - AIR-FILTRATION CHAMBER

Rows of organic filter membranes and fungal growth
purification beds — but behind them, Hale sees what he's
looking for:

The maintenance shaft — a vertical climb leading toward the
surface access tunnels.

Metal rungs.

Old.

Rust softened by humidity.

A way out.

He tests the first rung.

It holds.

He begins to climb.

Slow.
Quiet.

Halfway up, the lighting shifts – a gentle dimming glow, not triggered by motion, but by awareness.

Hale freezes.

He looks down.

Someone is standing at the bottom of the ladder.

Still.

Silent.

Not blocking.
Just present.

A man – maybe mid-30s – lean, calm expression, eyes black and unblinking.

SANCTUARIAN MAN
(soft, not a whisper –
just steady)
It is dark up there.

Hale doesn't answer.

He climbs one rung higher.

The man does not move.

SANCTUARIAN MAN (CONT'D)
There is no air.
No warmth.
No one.
You will be alone.

Hale pauses.

His voice comes out cold.
Controlled.
Military.

HALE
I've been alone before.

The Sanctuarian nods – not arguing – agreeing.

SANCTUARIAN MAN
We know.

This hits harder than any threat would.

Hale climbs another rung.

The Sanctuarian does not raise his voice.

SANCTUARIAN MAN (CONT'D)
You fight because you think the
self is all you have.

Beat.

SANCTUARIAN MAN (CONT'D)
We are not here to take it from
you.
We are here to show you that it is
the wound.

Hale's breath catches — for just a second.

Not because he is persuaded.

Because the words are accurate.

He keeps climbing.

The Sanctuarian speaks one last time — not pleading — simply
describing reality.

SANCTUARIAN MAN (CONT'D)
Your body will remember us when you
sleep.
And when it does, you will come
back.
Everyone does.

Hale stops.

His jaw tightens.

His voice drops to a quiet, lethal register — the voice of a
man who has killed before, and will again.

HALE
Not me.

The Sanctuarian smiles.

Not mocking.

Just knowing.

A quiet, easy smile.

SANCTUARIAN MAN
(gentle)
You already have.

Hale's grip falters.

He realizes — with cold, rising dread —
he is breathing in their rhythm.

He clamps down — forces his breath back into a sharp,
military inhale/exhale pattern.

His whole body shudders — the way a person shakes when they
remember what pain is.

He climbs again.

This time fast.

Desperate.

INT. MAINTENANCE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Hale reaches the upper hatch.

He pushes.

It does not move.

He pushes harder.

Metal groans.

He slams his shoulder into it.

The hatch does not give.

It is not locked.

It is held.

From the other side.

Not mechanically.

By hands.

We hear it:

The quiet strength of many bodies, braced.

No struggle.

Just stillness.

A wall of calm resistance.

Hale's breath stops.

He understands:

They knew he would try this.

They let him try this.

They waited for this moment.

To show him:

THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM WHAT HAS ALREADY ENTERED YOUR
BREATH.

Hale presses his forehead to the cold metal.

Not giving up.

Recalculating.

His voice is quiet, but full of violence that has not yet
been unleashed.

HALE
(to himself)
Okay.

Okay.

We do this another way.

He descends the ladder.

Slow.

Controlled.

Becoming something dangerous.

INT. AIR-FILTRATION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The Sanctuarian man is still there.

Still calm.

Still present.

Hale steps past him.

No words.

No clash.

The war has begun.

And no one raised a weapon.

MATCH CUT TO:

MARA

sleeping among the others.

Breathing in their rhythm.

Not knowing Hale is already planning to burn the nest to save the world.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - WARM POOL CHAMBER - NIGHT

A small room.

Rounded walls.

Amber biolight reflecting off still, warm water — the color of steeped tea.

Humidity gathers in soft drops along smooth surfaces.

The chamber feels like a womb carved into the earth.

Mara stands at the edge of the pool.

Steam rises.

The water is not deep — waist-high — meant for floating, not swimming.

Elias stands beside her.

No one else.

Not the children. Not Mother. Not the others.

This is private.

A beginning.

Elias steps into the pool first.

No ceremony.

No words.

The water ripples in slow, wide rings.

He turns and extends his hand just into the air – not reaching for her – offering space for her decision.

Mara steps forward.

Her boots are already off.
She doesn't remember deciding to remove them.

The water touches her skin.

It is warm.
Not bath-warm – body-warm.
As if the water itself is alive with shared heat.

She inhales.

Her breath tries to match the room.

She lets it.

She steps deeper.

The water reaches her ribs.

Her body feels weightless, but not unsupported – like hands are holding her, though nothing touches her.

Elias moves closer – slowly, as though guided by the tide rather than intention.

He raises his hand – open palm – hovering near hers, not touching.

The space between their skin feels like a current.

ELIAS

(soft)

Let the water carry what you have
been carrying alone.

Mara's throat tightens – something old and brittle inside her fractures.

She exhales –
and her breath aligns with his.

Not copied.

Matched.

Their breathing becomes one tidal rhythm, rising and falling through their chests, into the air, into the water, into the room.

Mara's eyes close.

Her body begins to float.

Elias shifts closer – guiding her not by touch, but by breath
– the two of them drifting in gentle orbit.

The water amplifies the sound of their lungs.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

Seconds stretch.

Identity loosens.

Elias finally touches her.

But not hand to hand.

His forehead lowers to hers – gently, slowly – barely.

Contact.

Their breaths merge.

Not metaphorically.

Truly.

For a moment, Mara cannot tell whose lungs are moving.

Her fingertips go numb.

Her chest feels open.

Her pulse slows to match his.

This is not seduction.

This is the end of loneliness.

Her voice emerges – fragile – like something born underwater:

MARA
(almost crying)
It feels like... being held.

Elias whispers – not to persuade – but because it is true:

ELIAS

It is the first time you have not
been alone in your body.

Her breath breaks.

But she does not pull away.

She lets herself float into him — forehead to forehead — the
water carrying the rest.

The camera holds.

Still.

Silent.

The moment lasts long enough to become real.

CUT TO:

Hale — alone in a dark hallway — breathing sharp, isolated,
rhythmless.

He is the only person in this entire structure who is
breathing alone.

And his face shows — for the first time — that he knows it.

FADE OUT.

Sound:

Two lungs.

One breath.

Water moving softly like sleep.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - SMALL GATHERING CHAMBER - LATER THAT
NIGHT

Not a ceremonial hall.

Not grand.

Just a soft circular room woven with cloth, warm and dim.

A few Sanctuarrians sit in a loose circle.

Mara sits among them — hair damp, skin still glowing faintly
from the warm pool.

Elias sits at her right.

The child from before sits at her left, leaning lightly against her arm.

The Mother-of-Many is present.
Not elevated.
Not enthroned.
Just there — the quiet center of gravity.

The chamber hums with slow shared breath, familiar now.

Mara no longer resists matching it.

She breathes with them.

Elias speaks softly, to the group, but his eyes are on Mara:

ELIAS

Names are how the surface keeps you
apart.
Names are edges.
Walls.
Distance.

The child beside Mara lifts her head and looks up at her.

CHILD

Names are what hurt.

Mara's eyes flicker.
Because she knows this is true.
She just didn't have the words for it before.

The Mother leans slightly toward Mara — not imposing — simply close enough to be heard without volume.

MOTHER-OF-MANY

We do not take your name.
We only say the one you have
carried without speaking.

Mara goes very still.

Her breath trembles —

the room softens with her.

The Mother looks at her with patience older than disappointment.

MOTHER-OF-MANY (CONT'D)

You are the one who stands outside
the window.
Watching.

(MORE)

MOTHER-OF-MANY (CONT'D)

Wanting warmth.
Unable to knock.

Mara's face cracks — just a fracture of expression — but it is enough.

Her breath stumbles.

Elias reaches out — not touching her, just letting his presence be there.

The Mother says the name:

MOTHER-OF-MANY (CONT'D)

Your name is The One Who Waits To
Be Asked In.

Silence.

Not dramatic.

Just true.

Mara's eyes fill.

Not with sudden tears — but the slow, unpreventable kind that rise from recognition, not sadness.

Her voice is a whisper that breaks halfway through:

MARA

(barely audible,
shattered)

Yes.

The Mother nods once — a gesture of completion, not confirmation.

The room exhales — every chest falling together.

The child rests her head back against Mara's side.

Mara does not move away.

She cannot.

Because the name fits.

Her breath syncs again.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

And this time, she does not catch herself losing the boundaries of her self.

It simply happens.

Softly.

Like sleep.

Elias watches her — not triumphant — just present with her becoming.

CUT TO:

INT. MAINTENANCE ACCESS ROOM - SAME TIME

Hale kneels in front of the primary oxygen recirculation manifold.

He places a small shaped charge at the junction point where the system splits to feed the inner chambers.

Not enough to blow the structure.

Enough to starve it.

To force evacuation.

A controlled collapse.

A soldier's solution.

His breathing is ragged — not synced — not even steady.

He is working against the rhythm of the place.

He whispers, not praying — but remembering the shape of prayer:

HALE

You don't get to take her.

His hands shake.

Not from fear.

From being alone in his body.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GATHERING CHAMBER

Mara sits in stillness.

Her new name hangs in the air like a truth finally spoken aloud.

The group breathes as one.

Mara closes her eyes and lets her forehead rest lightly against the child's.

She doesn't try to hold herself apart anymore.

She doesn't remember the moment when trying ended.

She just breathes.

One breath.

Shared.

Whole.

FADE TO BLACK.

Sound:

One heartbeat.

Not singular.

Not plural.

Unified.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - UNION CHAMBER - NIGHT

A smaller, more intimate space than the sleeping hall.
Circular.

Walls quilted in layered, hand-mended cloth.
Light is low, amber - warmth without flame.

A small circle of Sanctuarians sit cross-legged, leaving
space for Mara in the center.

Not many.

Six.

Seven.

Enough to hold a ritual, not to display it.

Elias kneels across from the center – not leading – simply anchoring.

The Mother-of-Many is present, watching, silent.

Mara enters.

She is calm.

Not entranced.

Not taken.

Just quiet.

She sits at the center.

Her breathing matches the room without effort.

Mara is not aware she is matching them.

Elias speaks – softly, like describing something already happening:

ELIAS

Union begins where the body holds
its loneliness.

He lifts his right hand – palm open, very slow – allowing her to see every inch of motion.

Mara mirrors him.

Not because she's told to.

Because her body recognizes the invitation before her mind does.

Their fingertips hover apart –

a breath's width.

The air between them feels charged – like two magnets waiting to be allowed to meet.

A Sanctuarian woman (early 30s, serene) shifts beside them with a small bowl of warm herbal resin – thick, golden, glistening like honey.

She dips two fingertips and touches the resin to Mara's sternum – gently – just beneath the collarbones.

A single point.

A place where breath begins.

Then she applies the same mark to Elias, in the same place.

The resin is warm.

Mara inhales.

The scent is strange—
Faintly sweet.
Faintly human.
Like skin warmed by sleep.

Elias breathes once — deep, slow — and Mara's chest responds automatically.

She breathes with him.

The room matches.

A single, slow inhale.

A single, slow exhale.

The ritual is not a chant.

It is a shared nervous system.

The Sanctuarians place their hands — lightly, gently — on one another's spines and ribs, forming a ring of support around the two at the center.

Not touching Mara.

Supporting the room.

Elias leans forward.

Forehead to forehead.

Contact.

Not pressure.

Just presence.

Their breaths synchronize immediately.

Mara's eyes flutter.

Her voice emerges — small, fearful, awed:

MARA
 (barely audible)
 I don't want to disappear.

Elias whispers – his tone is not soothing – it is true:

ELIAS
 You will not disappear.
 You will expand.

A breath moves through the circle – the kind that passes through bodies, not over them.

The Sanctuarian woman begins tracing a thin, resin-marked line from Mara's sternum outward – a slow curve across the collarbone toward the shoulder.

Not cutting.
 Not marking.
 Just mapping where loneliness lives.

She does the same to Elias.

The patterns match.

Mirror images.

Mara sees the symmetry.

She realizes:

Their bodies are being prepared to align.

Her breath catches.

Not in fear.

In recognition.

Her voice, breaking:

MARA
 (realizing)
 You're not taking anything away
 from me.

ELIAS
 (softly)
 No.
 We are making space.

Their marked chests rise and fall together.

The circle breathes with them.

The entire chamber becomes:

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

A single lung.

A single organism.

Mara does not break the breath this time.

She lets go of the impulse to be separate.

Her shoulders soften.

Her spine releases tension she's held for years.

Her forehead rests fully to his.

Her eyes close.

And she lets herself belong.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPPLY CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Hale walks, slowly, deliberately — breath forced into sharp, individual, self-defining inhales and exhales.

He is holding onto his identity like a weapon.

He carries a detonator.

He isn't shaking now.

He is certain.

He whispers — not to pray — but to remind himself who he is:

HALE

I stay me.

His jaw sets.

He is ready.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. UNION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The resin has dried.
Thin golden lines marking where two bodies will one day join.

This is only the beginning.

A promise, not a taking.

The room breathes.

Mara breathes.

Elias breathes.

It is one breath.

Her body has already begun to remember less where she ends.

FADE OUT.

Sound:

Breathing.
Beautiful.
Then slightly too synchronized.
Slightly too complete.

Like a tide that does not break.

INT. SANCTUARY 77 - UNION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The chamber is still.
The breathing circle steady.
Mara and Elias remain forehead to forehead, resin lines
drying on their skin.

Then—

A low, metallic groan reverberates through the walls.

Not loud.

Not urgent.

But wrong.

The Sanctuarians freeze.

Not in fear.

In recognition.

They have heard this sound before.

A lifetime ago.

When they still remembered the world that sealed them inside.

A slow, heavy thud echoes somewhere deep in the structure – the sound of pressure shifting, metal straining against change.

The breath breaks.

Just for a second.

The room exhales unevenly – the rhythm damaged.

Mara feels it.

Her body, which had felt weightless, suddenly feels held in gravity again.

She opens her eyes.

Elias is already looking at her.

Not panicked.

Just present.

ELIAS

Something is happening.

The Mother-of-Many's eyes open – slow, ancient, patient.

MOTHER-OF-MANY

(soft, to the group)

The outside is pushing.

Another deep groan, louder this time – the sound of metal flexing, bolts shifting, concrete remembering its age.

A distant alarm chirps somewhere in the infrastructure – a soft, outdated beeping, almost apologetic.

Not a siren.

A reminder of a world they no longer belong to.

The Sanctuarians begin to stand – slowly, not rushing, not frantic.

Their movements are graceful even now.

Elias rises with them – then reaches a hand toward Mara.

Not to pull.

To invite.

ELIAS

Come.

This is a moment of change.

We will face it together.

Mara almost takes the hand–

–but Hale’s voice cuts into the chamber like a blade of cold air.

HALE (O.S.)

Nobody moves.

The Sanctuarians turn – slowly – to the entrance.

Hale stands there.

Suit damp with humidity.

Hands steady.

Eyes clear with military certainty.

He holds the detonator in one hand.

His breathing is his own.

Sharp.

Controlled.

Separate.

A single body against the many.

HALE

This ends now.

Elias does not recoil.

He does not look afraid.

He only sighs – the way someone sighs at a memory returning.

ELIAS
You cannot stop what you are.

Hale takes a step forward.

HALE
I am not you.

The Sanctuarians don't move.

They don't flinch.

They don't prepare to defend themselves.

They accept him — even now.

MOTHER-OF-MANY
(gentle, almost sad)
We never asked you to be.

Hale lifts the detonator higher.

Mara stands, chest rising unevenly — torn between two worlds
inside her own skin.

Her voice is barely more than air:

MARA
Hale... please—

Her breath is out of rhythm now — choking, strained — the
separation hurts.

Hale sees this — and the pain in his eyes is real.

Not because he loves her.

Because he knows:

She is already half gone.

HALE
Mara.
Look at me.

She does.

And suddenly there are two breaths in the room.

One rhythm.

And one refusal.

The tension is silent.

Elias speaks – not to persuade – but with certainty:

ELIAS

You will not destroy us.
You will only open the door sooner.

Hale's jaw goes tight.

He presses the detonator.

CLICK.

Silence.

Then:

A deep, structural rumbling shakes the floor – not explosive
– tectonic.

Something heavy shifts above.

The blast hatch.

The surface.

The door is being forced open from pressure imbalance –
Hale's sabotage is undoing the seal.

The womb is opening.

The Sanctuarians do not panic.

They smile.

Elias turns to Mara.

Not triumphant.

Not manipulative.

Just inevitable.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

The Cold Sky is waiting.
And it is lonely.

Mara's breath stops –

–and restarts in their rhythm.

Fully.

Without hesitation.

The choice has already been made.

But Hale—

He sees it.

And he breaks.

A lifetime of discipline, walls, structure cracks at the edges.

He whispers — barely audible — a plea to the universe, not to them:

HALE
I stay me.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAWN

The blast hatch begins to open.
Warm, moist air pours upward.
Cold desert light pours downward.

Two worlds collide.

The surface is about to meet them.

FADE OUT.

Sound:

Breathing.
But now—

It is no longer only inside the bunker.

EXT. DESERT HATCH - DAWN

The blast hatch yawns open.
Warm, humid air rises into cool blue dawn.

The Sanctuarions emerge barefoot, walking in soft formation,
not military, not parade — like tidewater.

Mara walks among them.

Her face is calm.

Hale follows at a distance.

Not part of them.
Not separate, either.
The last boundary.

1. THE GAS STATION

EXT. GAS STATION - JUST PAST DAWN

A lonely desert gas station.
Fluorescent lights buzzing.
The quiet of morning too early for tourists.

Inside, A CLERK (50s) counts cigarettes behind the counter,
bored into numbness.

He looks up at the glass door as a group of barefoot figures
approach.

Not running.
Not rushing.

Just approaching.

The bell does not ring when they enter – the door opens in
silence.

Mara is first to step inside.

The clerk stares at her.

He sees:

No threat.

No urgency.

No need.

Just peace.

His jaw trembles without understanding.

CLERK
...you okay?

Mara nods once.

MARA
Yes.

Her voice is warm now.

A Sanctuarian woman steps forward – places her hand, very gently, on the clerk's forearm.

Not claiming.

Not pushing.

Just contact.

The clerk's breath catches.

He tries to pull away.

He can't.

Not because he's held.

Because he recognizes the feeling:

The first time someone has touched him without wanting anything in years.

His eyes fill.

His breath syncs.

He drops the cigarettes.

A tear slides down his cheek.

He doesn't wipe it.

2. THE BUS STOP

EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING

A yellow school bus sits with headlights on.
A group of children wait in a loose cluster.
Backpacks. Sleepy. Half-awake.

They see the Sanctuarians walking along the roadside.

They do not scream.

They do not run.

They just watch.

Children recognize belonging before identity.

One girl – maybe eight – steps forward.

She approaches the Sanctuarian child who was with Mara underground.

Their eyes meet.

They breathe together.

The girl drops her backpack.

She steps into the group as if she was always meant to be there.

Her breathing changes.

A boy follows.

Another.

The bus driver watches from the doorway – frozen – unable to comprehend what is happening.

Not violence.

Not kidnapping.

Just children leaving loneliness.

He tries to speak, voice breaking:

BUS DRIVER

Sweetheart–

Come back.

Honey, come back to the bus–

The girl looks at him with infinite peace.

She is already gone.

Not dead.

Just joined.

3. THE CHURCH

INT. SMALL TOWN CHURCH – LATE MORNING

A small rural congregation.

Wood pews. Hymn books. Old carpet.

A pastor giving an earnest sermon about community and fellowship.

The doors open mid-sentence.

The Sanctuarians enter without spectacle.

Not interrupting.
Not intruding.

Just arriving.

The congregation turns, slowly, as though waking into a dream.

The children from the bus stop walk ahead of the adults now.

They approach the front pew.

The pastor stops speaking.

His voice fails him, not from fear – from recognition.

He sees what they are.

He sees what they are offering.

PASTOR
(soft, broken)
We prayed for unity.

Elias steps forward.

He bows his head – a gesture of respect, not dominance.

ELIAS
Unity is here.

The pastor's eyes fill.

He steps down from the pulpit.

He does not kneel.

He joins.

The first touch is forehead to forehead.

A woman in the front pew watches her pastor – and then she rises and follows.

Then another.

Then a family of three.

No screaming.

No frenzy.

Just belonging.

The congregation becomes one organism of shared breath.

The choir begins to hum.

Not hymn melody.

Just breathing.

The church becomes a womb of voices, rising and falling in one living lung.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Hale stands outside the doors.

He watches through stained glass:

Multiple bodies breathing as one.
Mara among them.

His face is stone.

He whispers to himself — not prayer — identity:

HALE

I am Hale.
I am Hale.
I am Hale.

His breath is off-rhythm.
Alone.
Separate.

The last soldier of the self.

A tear slips down his cheek.

He does not wipe it.

FADE OUT.

Sound:
The breathing of a town.

Not many voices.

One.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Hale stands alone outside the church.
The stained glass shimmers with warm amber, flickering in the
sunlight as the breathing inside stays steady.

The door is open behind him.

No one is forcing him in.

He is alone.

Completely.

His breathing is sharp.
Unmatched.
Unheld.

And he feels it now.

For the first time from the outside.

His breaths come faster.

Not panic — resistance.

He presses his back to the church wall, slides down to a
seated position, hands on his knees, jaw clenched.

His voice is low, quiet, controlled — a mantra built from
years of war and self-preservation:

HALE

I stay me.
I stay me.
I stay me.

But it doesn't work the way it used to.

His breath stutters.

He tries again — harder — louder:

HALE (CONT'D)

I stay— I stay—

His voice breaks.

A door opens softly beside him.

Not Mara.

The child from Sanctuary.

The same child who sat with Mara.

The child sits down beside Hale.

Not touching.

Not pressing.

Just presence.

The silence is unbearable.

The child speaks without expectation:

CHILD

You are hurting.

Hale closes his eyes tightly.

His breath shakes.

HALE

...You don't know anything about
me.

CHILD

I know you are alone in your body.

The words land like a quiet blow.

Hale's breath leaves him.

Not violently.

Quietly.

Like surrender.

He looks at the child — finally looks.

His voice is barely audible:

HALE

It's all I ever was.

The child nods.

Not pitying.

Just acknowledging truth.

The child reaches out — slow — placing one small hand on
Hale's sternum, right over the heart.

Not claiming.

Not pulling.

Just present.

Hale breaks.

Not dramatically.

Not loudly.

He just... lets go.

His shoulders drop.

His jaw unclenches.

His breath matches the child's — first by accident—

then by need.

The rhythm syncs.

Hale's eyes fill — not with fear — but with the grief of a lifetime of walls finally collapsing.

HALE (CONT'D)

(barely a whisper)

I don't want to be alone anymore.

The child climbs into his lap — just like the children did with Mara.

Hale holds the child.

Like something fragile
he has wanted to hold
his entire life.

His breathing syncs fully.

He does not notice.

He does not resist.

His voice is almost nothing:

HALE (CONT'D)

Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The Sanctuarians are breathing together – slowly, warmly – a single organism.

Mara stands among them, eyes closed.

Elias steps forward.

The child leads Hale inside.

Hale steps into the circle.

The Sanctuarians make space – instantly – gracefully.

Mara opens her eyes.

She sees Hale.

She does not smile.

She understands.

Hale steps forward.

Not drawn.

Not compelled.

He chooses.

He lowers his forehead to Mara's.

Their breaths align.

One breath.

One body.

One name.

Union.

EXT. TOWN - WIDE SHOT - LATE DAY

We see people walking across open fields and roads, barefoot, peacefully, in small groups.

No violence.

No struggle.

No command.

Just joining.

A world that had forgotten how to belong has been reminded.

CLOSE ON MARA

Calm.

Her chest rising and falling in the tide of the new world.

She opens her eyes.

They are still hers.

Just not only hers.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE SOUND OF BREATHING.

But now — it is the sound of the
world.

THE END