

THE EXPANSION PROJECT

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OVER BLACK, SUPER ON SCREEN:

Humanity is colonizing a vast and habitable region of deep space known as the Frontier

In an effort called The Expansion Project

Elite marines known as Pilots are commissioned by Earth to clear new planets for civilized colonization and, when necessary, quell the rise of profiteering rebels.

OPEN ON:

SNOWCAPPED MOUNTAINS. Colossal. Quiet. Isolated.

Carpeted in forest. Veiled in great layers of mist.

A howling wind carries snow across the striking terrain.

A voice speaks calmly from the ether --

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Swallowed by hell,
Into shattered chaos I broke.

TRACKING further through to see --

Active VOLCANOS. Plumes of smoke raging into the sky.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
As my last tears fell,
A fire awoke.

TREES. They're alien, larger than any on Earth. Skewering into a celestial sky with triplet moons.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
From ashes I crawl,
Forging the strength to stand tall.

IMAGES of staggering vistas, landscapes of the imagination, primeval, beautiful, desolate, vast and forbidding... Like time is standing still...

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Without stumble,
Without fall.

A HAND reaches into shot, over the image, swiping it, and we realize --

They're HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS on a screen.

Casting their soft light onto the face of --

PVT. ATLAS SHEPHERD, 30s.

Bits of data at the bottom of the holograms read --

Expansion Space Corps

Vessel: Epsilon

Planet: GR39

She closes the hologram and turns around, steps onto the OBSERVATION DECK of the spacecraft she's in.

Surrounded by panoramic windows, she casts her gaze onto the planet she was just inspecting.

The planet is suspended in space 400 miles below her. Orbited by its three moons.

Around her, a dizzying view of the cosmos. The cold, magnificent vista of deep space.

It's beautiful and fearfully vast.

She stares out. A lonely figure isolated in the vastness.

An uneasiness unwittingly etched across her face.

THEN

A soft CHIME sounds off in her pocket. She removes a clear TABLET displaying an image of a woman and caller ID: MOM

Her face tenses. She picks up.

ATLAS

Hi.

ATLAS' MOTHER

Hey, how was the journey? You make it alright?

ATLAS

You should see the view.

Her mother is visibly distressed.

ATLAS' MOTHER

Atlas, we're worried about you. Are you sure this was the right thing?

ATLAS

I had to do something.

A pregnant beat. Looks like she wants to say more.

An ANNOUNCEMENT blares over the speakers --

SPEAKERS

Pilots, suit up and report to your stations immediately. Prepare for planetfall.

ATLAS

Mom, I gotta go.

ATLAS' MOTHER

Just watch after yourself.

Atlas hangs up. Curbs the emotion.

Holds her gaze on GR39 for another moment, takes a breath, and wills herself out of there.

EXT. SPACECRAFT - SPACE

The ship is a speck against the large, stark planet, as it descends, hovering just above the atmosphere.

On the hull: *ESC EPSILON*

INT. ATLAS' QUARTERS - EPSILON

A black one-piece BODYSUIT is removed from the closet.

Atlas is in a sports bra and tight-fitting spandex shorts. Tone. Fit.

Her suitcase on her bed, still not fully unpacked.

She slips into the skintight suit. It molds to her body perfectly as she zips it up.

The solid skid-resistant sole grips to the floor as she takes a moment to properly stretch, loosening up as much as she can for what's to come.

Her hair is pulled back and secured into a tight military bun.

And before leaving, her eyes fall on a FRAMED PHOTO of her parents next to her suitcase.

She picks it up and stares at it. Turns it around to reveal a POEM written on the back -- *the poem from the opening*.

We catch a glimpse:

*"Swallowed by hell,
Into shattered chaos I broke.
As my last tears fell,
A fire awoke..."*

After another beat, she places the photo back down and leaves her quarters.

INT. ELEVATOR - EPSILON - SPACE

Atlas stands in the steel elevator as it descends.

A hologram on the wall plays a news stream from Earth.

NEWS STREAM

Global treaties ratified for the expansion efforts as resources continue to dwindle across planet Earth. After launching its first mission over a decade ago, Nasa now confirms the first self-sustaining colony in the Frontier. Another milestone in Nasa's Expansion Project...

The elevator arrives, stops.

The doors smoothly drift apart REVEALING --

INT. ARMORED-SUIT BAY - EPSILON - SPACE

Atlas steps out and we TRACK with her as she crosses through the suit bay.

Passing rows of other PILOTS, dressed in their respective bodysuits, getting fitted into advanced MECHSUITS: powered, tactical-assault body armor, bristling with weaponry.

The bay swells with chatter, checking gear, racking weapons, downing rations.

TECHS assist Pilots with their suits.

Unlike Atlas, most of these Pilots look battle-hardened, intense, and weathered. Some float unwelcoming looks her way as she walks past -- *she still has to prove herself.*

Atlas arrives to her suit --

The armor stands upright in its rack, tethered to the wall, wires running out of it as a TECH jabs at a tablet, running final diagnostics on it.

TECH
Recalibrating your optics and
hydros. Gimme just a sec...

Atlas surveys her suit with a mixed look of admiration and respectful fear, impressive piece of technology, the only thing between her and whatever is down there.

Her chest plate is emblazoned with a Seraph and "ESC - Pilot 571". The official 'Expansion Space Corps' emblem.

TECH (CONT'D)
Alright, she's ready.

The tech toggles another button as --

FWOOP -- the backside of the suit unseals and HISSES open like a shell, revealing the padded interior perfectly molded to Atlas' physique. Two CLIPS on the knee joints of the suit extend out.

Atlas takes a deep breath and rubs her face before stepping up onto the clips and CLIMBING into the suit. Sliding into the legs and into the boots.

Growing eight inches in height with the suit.

Her arms slide in next as her torso rests against the padded chest piece and conforms to the snug cockpit. She's in.

Sweat slicks Atlas' face as the tech hands her the helmet. She slips it on over her head and shuts the faceplate.

The back plate starts closing back up, slicing the remaining light that's spilling into the cockpit of the suit and HISS -- it seals up and locks. Covered with interlocking plates.

Atlas is fully suited.

LEDs turn on and cast soft light inside.

The LEGS bind, the ARMS seal, as every slick moving polycarbonate plate whirls into place.

Machinery hums to life. Instruments beep and chitter.

The suit's fusion plant cycles up with a rising WHINE.

Canned O2 floods her helmet. Atlas flexes her jaw to equalize the pressure in her ears and addresses her AI through her mastoid implant --

ATLAS

Identify Private Atlas Shepherd,
Alpha-Tango-Gamma-One-One-Zulu-
Five.

A flat metallic AI voice responds --

AI VOICE

Voice identification confirmed.
Initializing retinal scan.

A green light maps both of her eyes.

A moment later, her faceplate Heads Up Display, HUD, displays, and her AI named GIBSON boots up -- A semiautonomous-reasoning speaking with a gentleman's brogue:

GIBSON

Hello, Private. Biometrics and
telemetry are online. Your fusion
plant is cycling up.

SYSTEMS CHECK and green dots -- *friendlies* -- fill the HUD.

ATLAS

Morning Gibson, give me a verbal on
my weapons mix.

Gibson recites her weapons manifest like poetry --

GIBSON

All weapons systems nominal.
Shoulder Mounted Hordes-ready.
Triple-7 CAR - ready. Heavy Pistols
- ready. Striker Rifle is webbed
and ready. Ammo feeds are green and
fuel cells are fully charged.

A momentary pause and --

GIBSON (CONT'D)

All systems nominal, Atlas.

ATLAS

Copy that.

Her HUD fills with data.

The mechsuit is released from its restraints and wires. Atlas is in full control of it now. *She is the sole pilot.*

TECH
How do you feel?

ATLAS
Snug. Fixed the chaffing, I see.

TECH
Top of my list.

She smiles over mounting nervousness.

The CAPTAIN walks through with his helmet racked at his side.

CAPTAIN
Pilots, halo jump in t-minus ten!
Everyone report to the jump bay!

The tech smacks her helmet.

TECH
God speed.

Atlas' armored hand fist-bumps with him before she turns and walks out.

INT. JUMP BAY - EPSILON

Pilots fill the bay. Some are performing personal rituals. Only the drone of the ship's engines can be heard.

The Captain walks through and activates a HOLOGRAM displaying the layout of a mountain. All eyes fall on the blue map.

CAPTAIN
One more time! Primary insert here, secondary, if necessary, right here! This is strictly a special recon so mission is to get eyes on the rebel outpost, retrieve any intel we can on their operation, and catch our ride out of there! Once we've confirmed their locations, mission will send in a reaction force for phase two to wipe them out. This group is considered a tier one target. Responsible for hitting two fueling stations along with colony Tera 5, killing multiple civilians and Pilots along the way.

A grainy SAT image appears on the hologram of a rebel COMPOUND nestled under a canopy of trees.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

This is the best SAT image we could get of their base, so we'll be moving down the backside of this mountain once we touch down, which will offer us good concealment but the conditions are going to be rough. GR39 is an uncolonized planet on the fringes of the Frontier. The environment is hostile and supplies are nowhere nearby, so use your fusion wisely!

He looks at the Pilots --

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Expect heavy turrets and drones sweeping the skies so keep your eyes open and your flying sharp because nothing is safe once we break through atmosphere on GR39. IF we lose you during the jump, don't try to be a hero, there's a lot of them down there. You just get your ass back to the rally point on the other side of this mountain right here --

The Captain points to a spot on the map. Atlas takes note.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

This ship will be meeting us at this specific location. Understood?

PILOTS

Yes sir!

Atlas looks at her HUD to see the mission briefing loaded onto there as tiers of images and data scroll by.

The Captain closes the hologram and slips on his helmet.

The Pilots make final preparations, exchanging words...

PILOT 1

Buy my first drink when we're done?

PILOT 2

Buy you ten when we're done with this place.

Another Pilot SHOULDERS past Atlas.

PILOT

Don't choke, rookie. This isn't the cadets anymore. Better watch my six down there.

Atlas doesn't respond, face slick with sweat, as she keeps her nerves in check.

ATLAS

Gibson, remind me how many more days of service I have left?

GIBSON

364 days remaining in your one-year tour of duty, ma'am.

Her look -- "*great*".

Epsilon hovers through the atmosphere towards the planet.

The Captain hits a button on the wall, a GREEN LIGHT goes off and the rear bay door GLIDES OPEN.

CAPTAIN

Pilots, the light is green!

A DEAFENING blast of air pours in.

The Pilots fall into a single file formation, Atlas the last in line.

One-by-one, they dash towards the ramp and LEAP OUT OF THE SHIP.

A Pilot turns, gives Atlas a thumbs up, she nods. The Pilot takes off.

Atlas forces focus and starts running, armored boots dashing across the floor as she reaches the edge and LEAPS OUT.

EXT. FIFTY MILES ABOVE THE PLANET - DAY

Instantly, the world goes quiet. Just the peaceful whistle of thin air above the clouds.

Seven Pilots FREE-FALL FROM THE SKY. Like human rain drops.

Atlas sails down past DENSE CLOUD COVER, pregnant with storms inside, bursting through as --

GR39 draws into view below.

From Atlas' POV, sprawling snowcapped mountains and active volcanos dot the blurry landscape.

Hearing the Captain's voice in their mastoid implants --

CAPTAIN - HEADSET
Thrusters.

KAWOOSH! Thrusters ignite on the backs of their suits, blowing out WHITE AND BLUE FLAMES --

BOOSTING them forward.

Navigating them towards the impressive planet.

SOARING, flying with pinpoint accuracy at breakneck speeds, licking the sides of the mountains.

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH!

They ROCKET past, like armored human torpedoes.

Closing in on a summit.

Everything seems to be going smoothly until:

PILOT 1
Guys, you spot that?

A charged beat.

THEN

PILOT 2
Heavy turrets! Three o'clock!

Suddenly, KABOOM! KABOOM! KABOOM! The sky is dotted with BURSTS of black smoke -- anti-aircraft fire!

PILOT 3
Shit! We're spotted!

CAPTAIN
Bank left! Switch to secondary insert!

The Pilots maneuver left, careening around the summit. Atlas staying with them.

Soaring through clouds.

Blasting over a canyon.

Weaving around the air defenses.

More turret fire exploding midair.

SUDDENLY

WHITE PLASMA FIRE slashes the air!

DRONES appear. Lethal pieces of technology. Aerodynamic. Four retractable gun barrels on each.

PILOT 1

Drones!

CAPTAIN

Light em up!

The Pilots retract their shoulder cannons and start firing back.

It's a dog fight.

Flying evasive maneuvers.

The sky is lit up with energy fire.

The drones shift, dip, fast, releasing their cannons --
BRDDDDDDT!

A Pilot strafes a drone with gunfire, sending it into wild spin and crashing into the mountain -- KABLOW!

Another drone dips behind that Pilot and --

THWACK! He's hit in the suit, he's hit again, and he goes flying off course.

Atlas watches in horror as the Pilot loses control.

JUST AS

The drone dips behind her. Then a second drone flanks it.

She SPINS, evading pursuit, she checks her HUD, tracks the two drones closing from behind.

She hauls over into the clouds, the pursuing drones turning with her as she bursts out of cloud cover and --

FAST, MID-AIR COLLISION, the two drones go down!

Her mastoid chimes --

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Nice maneuver, Atlas!

BUT THEN

RAT-AT-AT-AT-AT! She's shot at by another drone and hit!

ATLAS

Ah!

She banks right, the drone follows.

She swerves left, the drone stays on her.

It fires off another barrage of cannon fire and Atlas pulls a sharp maneuver --

Dodging the tracers.

Her shoulder cannon points backwards and fires back.

The drone weaves around it.

THEN

More canon fire flies in and --

KABOOM!

Atlas is hit.

She loses control.

Her HUD flashes: DAMAGE TO ARMOR

She plunges into a violent freefall towards the planet, in a wild spin.

Feels her stomach slam into her brain.

Her suit's gyroscope kicks against the inertia and stabilizes her inner ear so she could determine which way is up in order to use her thrusters but --

She fades in and out of consciousness. Alert lights going off on her HUD.

The sounds of chaos RISING AND RISING, as she manages to scream out --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Deploy grav chute!

A chute fires out, slows her down some, rips off, as the GROUND GROWS CLOSER AND CLOSER AND --

WE SMASH TO BLACK.

A long silent beat passes.

FADE INTO...

Atlas laying in the snow ATOP A MOUNTAIN, seemingly lifeless.

No movement. The silence punctuated by a howling wind.

Mist floating.

Her HUD flashing: DAMAGES DETECTED

The armored mechsuit laying in the stark terrain, a gray speck in the vast mountainous landscape.

Plunged into desolation.

We stay here for a long beat.

Before FADING TO BLACK.

Moments later, *the image BLEEDS IN again...*

Atlas still laying there.

Unconscious.

Half of her suit covered in drift snow now.

Large gray clouds moving in. Shafts of sunlight lancing through and dotting the terrain.

Her heart rate on her HUD showing 45 BPM...

And dropping.

She is slowly dying.

And we go to black again.

More time passes...

As we fade back into...

Atlas still in the same spot.

Snow falling now.

Starting to bury her.

Ominous, gray clouds hovering above her in the sky.

Her HUD beeping now: FUSION AND OXYGEN LEVELS LOW

The beeping continues.

Slicing the silence.

BEEP... BEEP... BEEP...

THEN

ATLAS' EYES SNAP OPEN, gasping for air, breathing heavily.

Looking around, eyes wide with shock, trying to register where she is, trying to come to.

There's a light crack in her faceplate. She looks upwards, seeing the storm clouds above her, spinning in a cyclone, its sounds drowned out in her helmet, just a light RUMBLING.

She spots the three moons, knows she's crash landed here, and her reaction is a single, solitary syllable --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Shit.

Snow settles against the visor.

GIBSON

Initiating hydrophobic surface.

A thin membrane momentarily flashes across the visor repelling the water, clearing the view.

She sits up, wincing from the pain, spots some cracks in her suit. Her fusion cell sparks.

The BEEPING continues.

She adjusts the MINICOMP on her arm and the beeping stops.

She taps her mastoid implant --

ATLAS

Epsilon, do you copy??

Nothing.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Mission control, do you copy? This is Atlas Shepherd, Pilot 571 is down, I repeat, Pilot 571 is down on GR39, do you copy?!

Nothing. The comms are down.

A sinking feeling grips her. She looks around, trying to remain calm.

She jabs at her MINICOMP. The HUD chimes again: FEED TO MISSION UNAVAILABLE

She taps her faceplate, armored hand CLINKING against the clear ACRYLIC. Still the same diagnosis.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Dammit. Mission, are you there?!

Nothing.

The dread bubbling up, as her breathing starts to grow heavy. Sweat coating her face.

She hurriedly moves to stand up, LURCHING for a second --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
OW!

Her HUD flashes: FEMUR FRACTURED

Atlas grimaces, the frustration and concern mounting.

She fights the pain and straightens out, standing upright to see that she's crash-landed atop a summit of a snowy mountain.

Her head on a swivel, she sweeps her eyes around the striking terrain, revealing the beautifully desolate planet... Surrounded by colossal mountains, some carpeted in forests, some volcanic.

Fear, wonder, urgency registered on her face.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Locate recon team--

GIBSON
Guidance systems are down, ma'am.

ATLAS
Goddamnit!

A terrifying sensation sinks in.

AND SUDDENLY

She can't breath.

She claws at her helmet clamps, trying to rip it off.

But her eyes land on her HUD: CARBON LEVELS 63%

She can't remove her helmet.

Her eyes fill with panic. Fighting to resist peeling off her suit.

She struggles some more, whimpers, face knotted with discomfort...

And finally lets out a gasping SCREAM.

Her voice unable to escape her helmet. Even if it could, there's no one nearby to hear her.

She knows this, looking around, tears flowing.

Trembling, clenching her fists. Despair mixed with anger.

After another agonizing beat, she wills herself to relax.

Collecting herself.

Controlling her breathing.

Regaining focus, she looks at her HUD:

FUSION CELLS DAMAGED

18% REMAINING

She takes a moment before giving the order --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, run a systemwide scan and give me a verbal.

GIBSON

Biometrics and telemetry are online. Your fusion plant is damaged. Charge down to eighteen percent.

Bracing herself --

ATLAS

Assess damage and give me a time readout.

Her HUD flickers with numbers.

GIBSON

Twenty two hours of fusion remaining until mechsuit shutdown.

She shuts her eyes. Not what she needed to hear.

The dread threatening to kick in again, but she forces herself to remain calm.

She tries the comms again with some desperation in her voice--

ATLAS

Epsilon, do you copy? This is Atlas Shepherd, Space Corps Pilot 571, is anyone there? Captain, do you copy?!

Nothing. It's useless.

She stands there, nothing to fill the deafening silence but her labored breathing.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Give me a gravity reading.

GIBSON

Detecting hypergravity at 2.1 G's. Would you like to adjust your suit's counter-gravs?

ATLAS

Yes.

HISS -- we hear the hydraulics at work as the mechsuit adjusts its weight distribution.

Atlas looks around, trying to figure out her next move.

JUST AS

She spots a GLINT in the sky.

THEN

A second GLINT.

She magnifies her faceplate and horror washes over her face --

TWO DRONES are honing in on her from the distance.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Shit...

A charged beat.

THEN

The drones OPEN FIRE! Energy fire screams in.

Atlas TAKES OFF like a bat out of hell.

Tracers hitting the ground, geysers of snow EXPLODING around her.

She barks a command to her AI --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Shoulder cannon!

The SHOULDER CANNON retracts from her suit and SWIVELS backwards.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Missile volley!

The cannon releases a set of quick bursts, exploding around the drones in a series of explosions.

The drones managing to thread through them but the obstacle helps create some distance for Atlas.

She dashes down the summit, wincing from pain as her femur lights up on her HUD.

She uses her thrusters to move quicker as the summit levels out some and funnels into a CANYON.

Huge, tortured ROCK FORMATIONS jut out of the ground and the mountain, forming pillars and rings.

Atlas uses her HUD to put a drone in the crosshairs.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Fire!

KABLOW! A burst of energy-fire BLASTS out of the shoulder cannon --

MISSING the drone.

Atlas risks glancing back, sees the DRONES SWOOP IN, flying through the icy canyon.

She dials up her suit to "*military sprint*". Bolting it, furiously. Pushing the suit to its limits.

The drones arrive and start blasting away at her. Ice and mountain rock exploding.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Jesus!

She hops off the walls using her thrusters, evading getting lit up.

The drones dip down and weave through the various formations.

The first one CLOSES IN and she watches her HUD in horror as it starts target-locking on her --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson!

GIBSON

I'm on it --

She jumps off a wall as the AI uses the shoulder cannon to target-lock on the drone and --

FWOOSH! The cannon shoots again, but the drone pulls a sharp evasive and barely dodges the shot.

ATLAS

DAMMIT!

Atlas' HUD blares with an ALERT SIGN as the drone acquires a solid target-lock on her suit and --

LAUNCHES a hypervelocity missile at her --

It STREAKS IN, Atlas LEAPS out of the way and the missile makes contact nearby -- KABLOW!

Rocks and ice EXPLODE onto her, knocking her to the ground, burying her underneath.

Moments later, she bursts out of the rubble, and finds herself wading waist-high in rocks and ice.

She whips around, expecting to get blasted by the drone but is shocked to see --

The drone's *tail smoking*, flying past, and CRASHING into the mountain side -- KABLOW, erupting with blue flames and kinetic energy.

Confused, she looks over and spots another PILOT perched up, having shot down the drone. She quickly magnifies but can't make out who it is exactly.

She yells into her helmet --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Hey! Right here! It's me, Atlas!
Can you hear me?!

But the comms are down. No response.

Then, to her horror, she spots the second drone swoop in --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Watch out!!

BRDDDDDDT! The drone BLASTS the Pilot with a series of energy bullets and shreds him to pieces.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
NO!

Her heart drops. It's too late though. The drone doesn't skip a beat, it comes after Atlas now.

She has no time to think, still in shock, she grows angry, breaks her gaze from the Pilot's corpse.

She quickly crawls out of the detritus, and takes off again.

She sees a CLIFF in the distance to her right, a flash of contemplation before she banks right and RUNS STRAIGHT TO IT.

Removing her PULSE GUNS, she darts to the edge and LEAPS off the cliff --

And SLOW MO as she SPINS MIDAIR, aims her guns and pulls the triggers --

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Unleashing them on the incoming drone --

She CONNECTS.

KABLOW! The drone EXPLODES midair!

As she goes plummeting towards an EXPANSIVE FOREST below.

Thrusters IGNITING, barely working, faceplate reading FUSION LOW. Red ALERT signs going off.

Falling fast, bearing down on trees and rocks.

She crashes through branches and SMASH! She lands hard against the ground, suit protecting her but it hurts like shit.

She grunts in pain, breath knocked out, rolling over, fighting for air.

Her suit has a slight crack in it from the impact, FUSION CELL blinking on her HUD.

She closes her eyes.

Consciously slows her breathing. Groans.

Her heart rate on her HUD slowing down.

She finally forces herself up on all fours, blinking, and manages to clamber up onto her feet, holding herself steady against a tree.

She casts her gaze across the steep forest ahead of her. Enormous trees shrouded in snow.

She tries the comms one last time --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Mission... anyone?

She winces, it hurts to speak.

No response. It's futile, she knows this, her face pinched with distress.

Her HUD flutters with a damage assessment.

GIBSON
Direct hit on your starboard shank.
Armor down to forty five percent.

ATLAS
Fucking drones. Deploy smartmetal
to reinforce it, Gibson.

GIBSON
You'll deplete your reserves if you
do, ma'am.

She grunts in frustration.

ATLAS
Wouldn't be the case if you hadn't
missed the shot back there.

GIBSON
I seemed to have miscalculated
their maneuvering capabilities --

ATLAS
You think?

A tense beat.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Belay the smartmetal and monitor
the leg.

GIBSON

Aye, aye.

She takes a seat on the trunk of a fallen tree. Thinking.

She looks at her HUD:

CARBON LEVELS 47%

FUSION ALERT 16%

She gazes back around her surroundings on the sprawling northern peak, shrouded in ice and snow, a very steep region ahead of her.

She's stranded. And it's a game of survival now.

All we hear is a howling wind atop the long, desolate silence.

Atlas opens her leg plate and looks at her leg, it's turning blue from the femur fracture.

She presses her finger on it and recoils her hand --

ATLAS

AHH.

It hurts like shit. She closes the leg plate back up, face coated with sweat.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Give me a dose of adrenaline.

GIBSON

Warning, Atlas -- flooding your nervous system with adrenaline reduces cognitive abilities, affecting your decision making.

ATLAS

Well, good decision-making was never my thing.

There is subtext in her words, we can tell from the frustration on her face.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Proceed, Gibson.

A short hypodermic needle appears in her arm's module and sticks Atlas, the adrenaline courses through her veins, she feels it hitting her bloodstream.

Her muscles twitch for a moment, as she tries focusing herself, learning to cope under the stress.

SUDDENLY

The ground RUMBLES...

A light QUAKE hits. Rippling through.

The trees shake, snow TRICKLES down from above.

Atlas looks up, the shaken snow cascading down upon her, she quickly looks back up the hill --

Making sure an avalanche isn't about to come devour her.

A long, tense beat.

She relaxes a notch, thinks...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Do you know the rally point? Where the ship is supposed to pick us up?

GIBSON

I'm afraid it's impossible to tell with the guidance systems down.

ATLAS

Billion dollar suit and apparently nothing is fucking working.

She looks around.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

It's freezing here, gotta at least get off this mountain.

She scans the terrain, casting her gaze down the slope.

She rises, lurching again due to her fractured femur.

Fighting the pain, she starts walking, her boots CRUNCHING in the snow.

TIME CUT...

TRACKING with Atlas as she descends the snowy mountain forest like it's a minefield, her pulse gun in hand, white-knuckled. Trying to remain hyper-alert.

Wading through the snow, the wind decreasing but her breathing becoming more labored.

The trees here are a hundred meters high, massive, blocking out the sky. Intertwined with each other all over. A few shafts of sunlight lance through.

She slows to a stop to catch her breath.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

This gravity's punishing. What's the reading?

GIBSON

1.7 G's right now. Would you like me to increase your counter-gravs more?

She thinks for a beat, looks at her fusion level.

ATLAS

No, I'll be fine.

She looks around, trying to calm her breathing.

GIBSON

An increase in O2 is highly recommended though.

ATLAS

Negative, save the fusion.

GIBSON

You need oxygen, ma'am.

After another moment, she concedes.

ATLAS

Fine. Give me a single dose.

Her helmet fills with canned oxygen.

She breathes it in. Needed it badly.

She looks around, mind working...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

.4 drop in gravity from the summit to here. Make sure to map this, mission could use the intel.

GIBSON

Yes, ma'am.

She surveys the stark landscape.

THEN

Her eyes land on an OBJECT laying in the snow.

She walks over to it and spots a large TRICONE DRILL BIT. Wedge-shaped teeth milled into the steel industrial-sized bits.

Kneeling down, she brushes the snow off of it, perusing it...

There are remnants of FROZEN FUEL on the drill bit.

ATLAS

Gibson, run a scan on this.

Her HUD scans the fuel and displays data.

GIBSON

Helium 3. A non-radioactive isotope used for nuclear energy.

ATLAS

I know what Helium 3 is, Gibson.

GIBSON

My apologies.

ATLAS

This isn't just a hideout for them. They're drilling here.

She stands back up, wheels turning.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Probably where they're getting most of their funding.

She surveys the ground more --

Spots remnants of tire tracks that are mostly covered by snow.

She traces the tracks but they disappear under the snow, leading nowhere.

She looks around carefully...

Doesn't spot any activity. Just the large, snowcapped forest.

Looking back at the drill bit, she snaps photos of it with her faceplate and it stores into her HUD.

She looks back up.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

I gotta keep moving.

Her eyes land on a shaft of sunlight beaming through the trees, Atlas walks over to it and looks up through the clearing --

Spotting the three moons suspended in the celestial sky.

She thinks, running calculations in her head, and looks at the compass on her HUD.

Trusting her instincts, she deduces...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Rally point should be west of here.

She casts her gaze west.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Epsilon, you better fucking be there. They'll be there, Atlas. Why wouldn't they be?

She gathers herself and takes a breath.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Alright, let's keep moving.

She continues her trek down the mountain.

EXT. GORGE - DAY

Atlas steps across the elevated root of an enormous tree -- a horizontal trunk big as an oak.

WIDE SHOT as she crosses a DEEP GORGE. The snow and glaciers starting to melt and channel into a river that runs into --

A massive, ROARING waterfall further down below. Vines hang down a hundred feet into the gorge.

She stops to catch her breath at the crest of this behemoth mountain and gazes around... surrounded by the beauty of the mountains and glaciers.

She proceeds towards the downward flowing stream, hearing the power of the waterfall in the distance.

She looks at her HUD again:

CARBON LEVEL 8%

GIBSON
Detecting low level of carbon.

She risks it. Reaches up, pops her helmet off, her hair matted in sweat and blood.

She flexes her jaw to equalize the pressure, inhales fresh air, breath vapping.

Atlas kneels down, removes her armored glove, trying to control the SHAKING in her hand, as she dips her hand in the cold stream and slurps a bunch down, dehydrated, splashes her face, washes her head.

She removes her canteen and fills it with water, puts it back in her suit.

ATLAS

Give me a fusion readout.

GIBSON

Seventeen hours left in fusion plant.

The stress mounting.

ATLAS

Not much of a gambler, but I'd say the odds aren't in my favor, Gibson.

GIBSON

Would you like me to run a probability-assessment for survival?

ATLAS

Nope. Just keep that to yourself, alright?

GIBSON

Copy that, ma'am.

Atlas takes a breath, leans against a boulder.

She types in her minicomp and a small food compartment opens. She removes a space bar, unwraps it and starts powering through it.

THEN

She spots something in the snow.

Cautiously, she gets up and makes her way towards it...

Eyes widening with shock as she approaches a MAULED CORPSE, buried halfway in the snow.

Closer to reveal a PILOT.

Stripped of his suit. Frost-covered face, skin tinged blue, bullet holes in his head and body. Skull fragments behind his head hang out -- *they carved out the suit's neural-link chip.*

And his limbs CUT OFF. Laid out, spelling 'SOS', mockingly, as a warning to the other Pilots -- *we are hunting you.*

He wasn't just killed, he was *butchered.*

Atlas tries holding it together, but she doubles over and pukes. Heaving up the contents of the space bar she just ate.

After a long moment, she finally wipes her mouth and risks looking back over at the macabre sight.

Terror and urgency registered on her face.

Then, she hears the slightest of noises --

Looks around... nothing.

THEN

On the mountain, something appears to move. She holds a beat. More movement on the other side.

Just catches her peripheral... she shifts her gaze. Focusing.

THEN

More movement. Atlas sees it, slowly reaches for her helmet and puts it back on. Gently scanning the area of movement.

She slowly pans across the hill. Suddenly A FLASH OF SOMETHING HUMAN.

She magnifies her faceplate and sees --

A HUMAN. White camo suit complete with mask and goggles. She pans a bit more to the right. Then two more.

Atlas pans left, higher up and sees more movement.

She quietly says --

ATLAS

Gibson, switch to infrared and shop the sun.

Her vision through her faceplate quickly changes to a primary color palette dominated by phosphorous greens, with oranges and yellows and she catches on her breath --

At least a dozen heat signatures.

SHE IS SURROUNDED.

The enemies are all armed.

She takes a steady breath, trying to remain calm.

The trap tightening around her, as she surveys the hills and shields herself between the rocks.

A TREE thirty yards in front of Atlas --

A flash of white camo. Then, the glint of a rifle barrel pointed in her general direction.

She tries to remain calm, sweat creasing her brow, cycles her weapons options -- hypervelocity rifle, hand gun, pulse gun, SNIPER RIFLE -- that's the one. Sniper rifle.

She turns, posts up between the rocks, aims her carbine, toggles back to Sniper Bullet --

Slowly starts pointing her rifle in the direction of the enemy behind the distant tree and target-locks on his head in the crosshairs of her HUD's sniper scope...

Her eyes on glass, still as marble. Aimed at the tree.

Hold.

THEN

Atlas fires once. The bullet RIPS through his goggle.

An odd brief moment of silence as the head-shot rebel stumbles, still standing, still clutching his rifle. He takes three more steps towards Atlas.

Stops.

Atlas shoots again and removes what's left of the enemy's head.

The rebel starts to fall and as he hits the ground -- ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

From above and halfway down both flanks, the rebels open fire.

Screaming at each other, communicating through violent, loud bursts, moving fast down the hill. Agile, leaping boulders, fallen trees, knowing the terrain.

Shooting as they move.

Atlas dives for cover behind the large boulder, taking heavy firepower, the boulder getting hacked to pieces by the incoming bullets and energy fire.

Razor sharp stone shrapnel chunks smashing into her faceplate.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

She holsters her rifle, toggles to PULSE GUNS, has to move, uses her thrusters to LAUNCH out of the way --

Using her infrared to her advantage as BLAM BLAM! She takes out two rebels.

She UNLOADS her pulse guns at the trees above the rebels, branches explode as snow falls on top of them, forcing them to move and expose position as --

She LIGHTS THEM UP.

Energy fire RIPPING through their gear.

She hits a rebel in the knee. The rebel fires back -- PING -- deflects off her armor as Atlas' next shot takes his face clean off.

Another runs in wildly and launches a hand grenade --

Atlas aims her guns up and fires at the grenade -- KABLOW! It explodes midair!

Another rebel appears unexpectedly and fires off a salvo of rounds before disappearing. Atlas jumps out of the way.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Find it!

GIBSON

Three o'clock, behind the tree.

A ring appears on her HUD and drops behind the tree encircling a thermal blur -- SWIFTLY, she dials the pulse gun to MAXIMUM, spins around and BLAM! One shot --

BIFURCATES the tree in half, bark EXPLODES, the top half starts plummeting downwards.

SMASHING onto the ground with a thundering crash.

Atlas advances, checks the flank, skirts the tree trunk, and finds a headless mess of blood and brains splayed across the place and an intact set of teeth.

A hailstorm of energy-fire keeps pouring in though. Pinging off her armor but the sheer volume doing its damage.

More rebels appear.

She tries firing her pulse guns but nothing comes out --
CLICK CLICK --

Weapons literally red hot from repeated fire.

Her HUD blinks: FUSION CRITICAL. RECHARGING PULSE GUNS.

ATLAS

Dammit--

She quickly toggles her pulse guns and whips out her two pistols, moving fast, firing at point-blank range until her guns run dry.

She lets the clips drop free, hammers the guns into her thigh mags to quick-load them, and runs her guns dry a second time.

But there is too many of them, too much enemy fire.

She's hit again. A massive barrage of gunfire erupting from both sides.

Her legs give out for a moment, buckling, an RPG comes ROCKETING towards her and she LAUNCHES out of the way.

The missile soars past and explodes in the distance.

More gun fire, relentlessly spraying her, as she hurls herself up and over a ledge.

The pitch causing her to start falling immediately.

Bone crushing. Concussive. Violent. Suit smashing into rocks. Tearing through trees. Bouncing.

Her bones, her brain, rattling inside of the heavy armor. Crashing, bouncing, flipping.

Finally settling hard on a reasonably flat part of the cliff. 100 yards below. Near the waterfall.

Looking up the hill which is now swarming with more rebels. A dozen of them flowing down hill.

Her face bloodied, she looks up, barks an order --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Shoulder cannon!

The cannon retracts and sends TWO MORTAR ROUNDS into the hills --

KABLOW! KABLOW! Trees, rocks, ice explode, bodies fly.

Her HUD reads: FUSION CRITICAL. FEED TO CANNON EMPTY

Suddenly, another RPG comes from the left side. Hitting just short of Atlas. Blasting her backwards. Covering her with dirt, rocks, snow.

Atlas barely crawls out, struggling to her feet, dazed.

Plates, panels, circuitry are sparking and hanging off her suit.

Her HUD flashing: ARMOR HIT - 33%

The enemies are closing in.

Desperate --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
SHOCK!

GIBSON
Shock will use two percent fusion--

ATLAS
I don't care! Do it!

She holds her arm out and an BOLT OF BLUE ELECTRICITY bursts out of a side cannon --

SLICING through the trees and any rebel it touches -- she takes out four of them with one swipe.

Her suit's fusion engine spikes with heat as her HUD flashes:

FUSION CRITICAL. SHOCK FEED UNABLE TO RECHARGE

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Goddamnit!

She removes her pistols and shoots uphill. Shoots more. Crawls behind a tree. Getting sprayed. Tracers streaking in. Things looking grim.

Another RPG comes roaring, blowing into the tree.

Wood daggers and burning embers explode and rip into some of the exposed parts of Atlas' suit.

Launching her through the air again. Further into the woods. Absolutely relentless and violent.

ALERT SIGNS blaring in her HUD. Her breathing is hysteric. High-pitched wheezing and gagging.

Dazed, eyes pouring tears, looking around, desperate for some sort of respite...

Eyes landing on the waterfall in the distance.

Bleeding, spit, sweat, snot, tears as she claws her way across the mountain towards it.

A hailstorm of fire coming in.

She manages to get to her feet, running, dodging between trunks as tree bark explodes all around her.

She uses her THRUSTERS to move quicker, taking leaps, as she reaches the edge and --

DIVES OUTWARD with all her might as she flies out into open space and --

Disappears down the throat of the thundering cataract.

KAWOOSH! She torpedoes into the water, and CRACK!

She SMASHES against the rocks, her armor dents even more.

The water boils below the cataract. GEYSERS EXPLODING from the ground, bioluminescent algae floats, as Atlas is carried along by the current...

She opens her eyes and bursts through the surface, managing to grab a limb on a fallen tree.

She weakly pulls herself up, and just lies there gasping on the trunk.

Above her, on the cliff, a dozen rebels are looking down towards her.

Her HUD reads: SEVERE ARMOR DAMAGE DETECTED

But Atlas, amazed she survived, screams upwards --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Yea that's right!

And she flips them off with her armored hand.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

You want some?! Come down here and
get some!

But her celebration is short-lived as she hears a RUMBLE.

Everyone glances around.

The ground begins to shake. A dreadful, thundering sound
peals through the air.

The shaking increases, whatever it is, *it's coming towards
them.*

Up on the mountain --

A WALL OF WHITE, tumbling, roaring downwards. Bulldozing
trees without mercy. Devouring everything in its path.

Atlas' eyes widen...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Oh my God...

AN AVALANCHE.

Atlas is paralyzed for a moment, watching the tsunami of snow
and ice barreling down the mountain.

The rebels don't even have a chance to save themselves, as
the avalanche SMASHES them and the snow LAUNCHES off the
waterfall cliff.

Atlas starts running, BLASTING her thrusters, but her leg is
weak and she stumbles for a moment.

She picks back up and runs towards the CANYON, where the
river dips into.

She jumps over the edge and spins midair --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Harpoon!

She aims her arm and fires her HARPOON out of the slick side
panel as it TORPEDOES into the escarpment wall -- CLANG! It
chews into the gray rock surface and stops her fall.

She dangles just below the edge, hanging on tight as the
avalanche blows off the cliff, cascading thousands of feet
down, surrounding her like a white snowy waterfall. Immense
power.

She hangs on for dear life, but the cliff edge starts to crack under the weight and power of the avalanche.

Atlas looks up and sees this --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
No, don't break--

It THUNDERS... relentless...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Please... no, please...

KAWOOSH! The cliff side cracks and the crest of the mountain COLLAPSES INTO ITSELF.

Atlas goes falling into the collapsed canyon.

PLUMMETING into the bowels of the mountain. Getting submerged under a deluge of falling rocks and ice.

BURYING HER INSIDE.

A large piece of ice lands atop her leg and she BELLOWS.

The hole above her is covered up, casting her into complete darkness.

She coughs, winces in pain...

Coming to and realizing that --

She's buried alive. Her arms are pinned. She can barely move.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
No... no, no, please, no...

The weight of the ice is immense, as she lays in her armored coffin.

Starting to hyperventilate. Gulping for air.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Oh God... oh God, please...

Absolute fear in her eyes. Struggles some more. Screaming. Straining 'til her neck tendons threaten to snap.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
C'mon!!

It's no use. She can't move an inch.

Her lungs heave.

Her HUD blinking: FUSION CRITICAL

She barks desperate orders to her AI --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson, help me! Gibson, do something!

GIBSON
I'm detecting significant drops in your oxygen levels. Would you like to redirect fusion to oxygen supply?

ATLAS
No! Don't redirect the damn fusion! Mission!! Anyone! Please!! HELP ME!

She tries to move her leg but it hurts like shit and she lets out a small whimper.

Wordless pleas bubble from her lips.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Mission... please...

No one will come. She knows this. Knows she has to fight through this.

She squeezes her fists, fighting to control her panic. Clenches her jaw. Face knotted with extreme discomfort.

After a few long, agonizing moments... she starts to grow still.

The only movement, the steady rise and fall of her chest.

Measured breaths. Measured breaths.

She surveys the ice coffin around her.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Give me some light.

Her helmet lights flicker on.

Illuminating the shimmering, icy surface around her. Dust wafting through the shafts of light.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Give me a damage readout on my leg.

Her HUD displays a schematic of her skeletal structure. Isolating a section on her leg, blinking red.

GIBSON

A full break in your femur
detected.

ATLAS

FUCK!

She loses it again.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

FUUUUCKKK!! God damn you! I don't
want to be here! I don't want to be
here anymore!! HELP! HELP ME!!

Nothing. No one comes. Utter desolation.

Her screams die out. Just snot and tears flowing.

The only sound, her breath.

She grits her teeth from the pain.

Her HUD shows the temperature dropping.

GIBSON

Detecting extreme drop in
temperature. Activate the thermals
to avoid hypothermia, ma'am.

She looks at her fusion level -- CRITICAL.

ATLAS

Negative.

She sees her face reflected against the visor, lit by the
source of light in her helmet.

Sees the fear in her own eyes.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Dim lights.

The helmet lights dim.

And she lays there, cold, buried, frustrated.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

I hate this job, Gibson. No
offense. I hate this planet. And I
hate that I'm stuck here. Like a
FUCKING IDIOT!

Her anger coming from a deep place of resentment.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
I should have never enlisted.

She tries to move again to no avail. Isolated, losing hope.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson... how screwed am I?

GIBSON
If I understood your request
correctly, ma'am, under the current
conditions, your death is imminent.

Atlas manages a chuckle over obvious pain and fear.

GIBSON (CONT'D)
Highly recommending an increase in
oxygen.

Her sobs dry to nothing.

ATLAS
Negative.

A sense of despair sinks in as she sighs a terrible sigh.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Well, I guess that's it then. I'm
going to die here. Unbelievable.

Her eyes search the darkness, pleading for help or some
miracle that she knows won't come.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Dear mom and dad... I'm buried
under an avalanche, in a 500 pound
iron suit I have no business
operating, on a planet where no one
will ever find me. You were right,
this was a terrible idea. Love...
Atlas. P.S. if you can hear me...
Could use a hand. Or a bulldozer.

A pathetic heartbreaking chuckle...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Should have just stuck to med
school.

GIBSON
I'm detecting a spike in your heart
rate, Atlas. Would you like a set
of beta blockers?

ATLAS

Beta blockers won't help me get out of this place, Gibson.

GIBSON

That is an accurate assessment, but my function is to maintain your safety at all times. Physical and mental.

ATLAS

Sound like my therapist.

GIBSON

You're referring to the art of neurological consultation.

ATLAS

Sure.

GIBSON

My settings are not designed to experience emotion like you...

ATLAS

Lucky sonofabitch.

GIBSON

But I will do my best.

ATLAS

Huh?

GIBSON

Poor decisions seem to be something that bother you.

ATLAS

Whoa, what are you doing?

GIBSON

Offering neurological consultation.

ATLAS

That's ridiculous. Stop it.

GIBSON

What would you like me to stop precisely?

ATLAS

I'm not doing this. Not here. Not with you.

GIBSON
Data is showing a shift in your
neural bioelectrical activity.

ATLAS
Gibson--

GIBSON
Atlas, I am here to listen.

ATLAS
Gibson, you're not helping.

GIBSON
Allow me to help.

ATLAS
You can't.

GIBSON
My neural scan is showing heavy
activity in your hippocampus
region, linked directly to memory
function. Let's start there.

ATLAS
Jesus Christ...

GIBSON
Emotional reactions are also a
direct result of these glands --

ATLAS
I married the wrong guy, alright?!
Will you shut up now?!

GIBSON
I detect another spike in your
heart rate, would you like your
beta blockers now?

Atlas laughs, hysterical.

ATLAS
You're a piece of work, Gibson.

Moments later, her laughter simmers down.

And she just lays there, the memories bubbling up.

Finally decides to let it out...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Left a full ride at med school for him. Let him walk all over me and leave me high and dry. Never heard the end of it from my parents. Told me I needed to be tougher, stand up for myself more, and all that crap.

Embracing the catharsis.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

So what do I do? I join the marines. Request the toughest job in the world. In deep space. Took their advice too literally I think.

GIBSON

By definition, that is impulsive behavior rather than poor decision-making.

ATLAS

Stupid idea after stupid idea is what it is.

GIBSON

An idea is merely a strategy to accomplish a goal, otherwise it is really just a thought.

ATLAS

Whatever, dude.

GIBSON

The only way to know a good idea from a bad one is to test it against the outcome.

ATLAS

The outcome is that I'm stuck here.

GIBSON

For now.

It's hard for Atlas to believe that but she lets it sink in.

GIBSON (CONT'D)

I'm detecting a drop in heart rate.

She lets out a resigned sigh.

ATLAS

I'm sharing my feelings with a goddamn robot.

A long, silent beat passes.

She just looks upwards, nothing to fill the silence but her heavy breath.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Turn off helmet lights.

The helmet lights turn off completely. And she just lays there in darkness.

Silence. Long silence...

TIME CUT...

Atlas fading in and out of sleep... Muttering words...

Tiny flecks of crystallized ice line her lashes.

She snaps awake... doesn't know where she is for a moment, tries moving to no avail and panic strikes again...

She fights to move but she can't --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
What's happening?!

Her eyes dart around --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
HELP!!

Her chest heaves as she slowly finds her bearings...

Remembering that she's buried alive, on a distant planet, far off in the galaxy.

She closes her eyes. Consciously slows her breathing. Groans.

Opens her eyes. Shivering cold.

People, Earth, civilization never felt so far away.

She reads her HUD fusion level -- 12%.

GIBSON
Increase in suit temperature highly
recommended.

She thinks, a sad look of resignation glimmering across her face...

ATLAS
Negative.

GIBSON
Engaging auto piloting--

ATLAS
Override.

A heavy beat. She lays there, pondering it...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Decrease oxygen levels.

GIBSON
Advising against--

ATLAS
Override.

And we realize, Atlas is preparing to kill herself.

Her HUD shows her vitals...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson, activate meditation module.

Her HUD flickers and suddenly, her faceplate fills with options for various peaceful destinations.

She peruses them, deciding on...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Beach.

The HUD fills with images of a beautiful beach, bathed in warm sunlight, pink sand, and the sounds of WAVES fill her helmet.

Atlas watches it, taking her mind there, the thought of it possibly warming up her body as she continues to shiver.

Her eyes slowly start to flutter...

And they close again.

TIME CUT...

Atlas is sleeping, frost has covered her faceplate, her skin is turning pale...

She may be dead.

We see her vitals though -- her resting heart rate has slowed significantly, beeping at 30BPM...

Suddenly, a patchy transmission in her headset stitches through --

HEADSET

Pilot 571, this is mission, state your position?

Atlas stirs. Her eyes move under her lids, signs of life.

HEADSET (CONT'D)

571, this is Epsilon, we're at rally point waiting, over.

Atlas' eyes open... shivering... her voice throaty...

ATLAS

Hello?

HEADSET

Pilot 571...

Like a jolt of energy hitting her, clearing her throat --

ATLAS

Yes -- Yes!

She coughs --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

This is 571! Epsilon, I'm buried!

HEADSET

We're at rally point--

ATLAS

I'm buried alive! I need help!

HEADSET

State your position.

ATLAS

I don't know... I don't know where I am... east of the rally point, below the crest of the mountain, there's a waterfall...

She struggles with it, realizing it's a needle in a haystack...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Please... Just send someone to find me...

A long silence.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Hello...? Mission, are you there?

After another beat, there's a reply, but the voice in the headset has changed to a soft female's voice...

HEADSET - FEMALE
Atlas... Atlas, honey...

Atlas catches on her breath, looks like she's seen a ghost. We recognize the voice.

ATLAS
Mom...?

The STATIC waffles in and out.

HEADSET - ATLAS' MOTHER
Atlas, honey, it's us...

Confused, emotional, delirious...

ATLAS
Mom... Mom!

HEADSET - ATLAS' MOTHER
Atlas, we're here, dad and I...
don't ever give up... don't you
ever give up. I need you to know
that we're proud of you, honey...

ATLAS
Mom!

HEADSET - ATLAS' MOTHER
We have to go--

ATLAS
Mom, no! PLEASE! Come get me! I'm
stuck, mom please!!

The signal ebbs, losing its battle with the static...

And Atlas starts crying again...

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Don't go... please don't go. I'm
sorry... I'm so sorry...

She realizes she's in a dream and --

Atlas SNAPS AWAKE. For real this time. Gripped by the emotion of the dream.

She lays there. Wrestling her emotions down.

Her lips dry, icicles on her helmet.

She clears her throat, needing company.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson, you there?

GIBSON
Yes, ma'am.

Joking, making conversation --

ATLAS
How's that neural activity looking?

GIBSON
Fascinating. The visual cortex is especially active. A proper assessment would deduce you were experiencing a dream.

ATLAS
That's all it was, unfortunately. A dream.

She lays there, still reeling from the emotions in the dream, from everything that's happening.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
I heard my mom.

She swallows down the emotions in her throat.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
We were always close. She'd make me write these poems as a kid. To help me get through my anxiety. I never stopped writing them. To this day.

GIBSON
Your heart rate is stabilizing. I suspect you would like to share one of these poems.

She considers it.

BUT THEN

Something happens.

A flicker of determination, nearly indiscernible, breaks across her face.

And she makes a decision --

ATLAS

How about this, if I get out of here alive, I'll share one. Deal?

GIBSON

That's a deal.

She takes a breath.

ATLAS

Give me some light.

The lights switch on.

She looks at her reflection in the faceplate and searches her eyes...

Really tries to believe. Tries to pull herself together.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Increase suit temperature.

The suit releases thermal waves to warm her body.

The icicles on her faceplate melt and water drips, she opens her mouth, catches whatever she can catch, dehydrated.

She rests her head back again. In cogitative silence.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

I can do this. Atlas, you can do this.

She looks around, thinking... an idea forming...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

If I can't go up... then maybe I can go down...

She looks at her fusion level and thinks this through for another beat before giving the order.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, activate thrusters.

WHOOSH! The thrusters IGNITE on her back, BLASTING out blue flames and --

SLAMMING her upwards against the ice above her, nowhere to go, but also melting the ice beneath her.

The immense inertia causing her to strain and grit her teeth.

She slowly starts to SINK though, into the ice, creating some distance between her and the ice above her, which starts to crack but holds up for now.

Her arms and legs slowly begin to move.

The ice melts more and she sinks further down until her arms pop out from underneath the ice and she moves them.

Relieved, she chortles with joy.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Disengage.

The thrusters stop but her fusion reads 11%. A flash of concern.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Damn, used up a whole percent.

She's able to sit up now and lean against the wall.

She opens her leg plate and is horrified to see her femur bone STICKING OUT.

Her complexion drops five hues.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Oh Jesus...

She risks touching it and immediately recoils her hand from the pain.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Damn, damn, damn...

She exhales.... Exhales more... pondering something, preparing for something...

Terrified, she forces focus, sweat coating her face, as she --
PUSHES her bone back in and SCREAMS from the top of her lungs, crying in sheer pain.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
AHHH FUCK!

Out of rage, she screams again and starts pounding at the ice with her fists. Chunks flying off.

She keeps punching and punching until she has nothing left, and she sits there, her chest heaving with heavy breaths.

She closes the leg plate back up and takes a moment to calm herself.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Tighten leg armor.

HISS -- the leg plate tightens around her thigh to keep her bone in place and she cries out in pain again.

Drenched in sweat, she composes herself and embraces it, gritting her teeth, letting it go numb.

She exhales, has to fight through this.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson -- bring up heat weapon options.

Her HUD fills up with her weapons options. She cycles through them and stops on -- LASER.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
How much fusion does each laser burst use up?

GIBSON
Laser burst uses .5 percent of fusion per usage.

ATLAS
That's too much.

She thinks hard about this, surveys her surroundings.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gonna have to do this the old fashioned way.

She types on her minicomputer and the side panel on her helmet opens, releasing three tiny DISC-SHAPED DRONES.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Activate grips.

GIBSON
No grip surface detected--

ATLAS
Override.

CLING -- Tiny BRISTLES pop out around the perimeter of each drone.

She places the drones on the ice, bristle side down.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Activate.

The drones whirl to life and start SPINNING, the prongs digging into the ice like tiny little diggers.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Give me an imaging on the structure.

GIBSON

Visuals coming up now.

Atlas' HUD momentarily flickers, and then splits into two halves: the top compresses her normal field of view while the bottom half divides into three equal panels, one for each drone. Her suit's targeting computer automatically designates them, Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie.

Each screen showing nothing but ice.

The drones release red lasers, mapping the structure.

Atlas' HUD gets a real time feed of the images being sent back.

She types in her minicomp and a HOLOGRAM image forms, casting soft blue light into the darkness of the cavernous, icy chamber she's in, laying out the mountain she's stuck in.

She spins the image, getting a 360 degree view of the layout of the mountain.

She looks at the real-time image forming and suddenly --

ATLAS

Stop--

The drones stop. Bravo screen is showing darkness, *no ice*.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Give me an image on Bravo.

The image shows the ground below her EMPTYING OUT.

She zooms into the image and realizes --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

I'm on top of a cave.

She sags in anxious relief. Thinks about this for another beat.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

The whiskers, they have suicide charges, right?

GIBSON

A blast radius of five meters.

She ponders it and...

ATLAS

Sucks to have to lose these little fellas but don't have a choice.

She looks around her, getting a feel for it.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Everything could just collapse.

She looks back at the hologram, studies it... her face alive with concentration as she makes calculations.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

One blast here, another... here. And another... right here. Should open her up. *Hopefully.*

She types again and we see the tiny drones on her HUD blinking red.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Who says its the size that matters?

She activates one drone and BOOM. It explodes inside the mountain below her, everything around her RUMBLES, ice and dust trickling down upon her.

She looks around, anticipatory.

She activates the second drone and BOOM, more rumbling, the structure shifting, the roof of the cave looking like it's about to collapse on top of her.

A faultline crazes the ice surface. A crackling sound ripples through.

She takes a breath, activates the third drone and BOOM. Nothing. She looks around then --

Rumbling, cracking, the side of the mountain starting to collapse.

She covers up as ice and rock start to BREAK APART --

THEN

KAWOOSH! *Everything under her goes.*

She goes tumbling with the ice and rocks. Plummeting.

After a long drop --

SMASH! She crashes onto the cave floor.

She looks up and sees the ice plunging towards her, she rolls out of the way not to get crushed.

Ice and rocks crash down, settling into a large heap behind her.

Atlas COUGHS, clambering up in pain and looking around, it's dark...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Beams.

On her helmet, two halogens FLICKER on, beaming through the dark cavernous chamber.

She removes a glow stick and LIGHTS IT, holds it up and surveys her surroundings.

She starts walking through the ice tunnel and finds herself LIMPING.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Shift hydraulic to broken leg.

The suit HISSES and Atlas feels its weight shifting, allowing her to straighten out her gait some as she continues through the cave...

INT. ICE CAVE - DAY

TRACKING with Atlas as she crosses through a maze of tunnels, her helmet lights guiding the way...

The corridor leads into several large chambers...

She enters through a chamber, which opens up to a MASSIVE CAVERN. Partially covered in ice. Most of it melting away beyond this point.

The cavern is bejeweled and SHIMMERING with minerals, gems, enormous limestones, shales, and sandstones.

Broad valleys and large channels are carved out by the streams, enormous naturally-formed caverns and columns hang from the ceilings with bioluminescent rocks.

She takes a moment to marvel at it.

ATLAS

Wow.

Sure beats the fake meditation module screen.

She looks down over at a powerful STREAM OF WATER, pouring into a connecting tunnel that slopes steeply down into further darkness.

The faint sound of a waterfall spills out from the dark abyss. She decides to follow it.

Arriving to the tunnel --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Spikes.

SPIKES jut out of the bottom of her boots and punch into the rock flooring --

Allowing Atlas to step into the furious rush of water in order to traverse down the steep tunnel.

The surging water BREAKING against Atlas' armored legs like surf on rock as she descends further in.

In the far distance, a slight shimmering of sunlight begins to spill into the tunnel, the SOUND of the waterfall grows.

She continues treading in... Seeing an OPENING in the distance, where the stream drops off.

Light spills in from it, the sound of the waterfall grows...

Along with NOISES... *HUMAN ACTIVITY.*

Atlas turns off her helmet beams, continues on.

She arrives to the cave exit, and leans out over the deluge of water to see --

A REBEL OUTPOST.

Concealed under a canopy of trees. Veiled in light mist. A hundred feet below.

Atlas is stunned.

It's pockmarked with satellites, crates, heavy defense turrets, trucks and an enclosed COMMAND BUILDING.

Like a proper military operation.

Teeming with activity. The rebels are without masks. Her HUD reading: CARBON LEVELS LOW

Atlas types into her minicomp and the SAT image of the base that was projected during the mission briefing appears on her HUD.

They seem to match.

She looks back down onto the base, surveying the layout. Eyes landing on the central-command building.

She zooms in with her faceplate to get a better look but it's mostly blocked by trees.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, can you X-ray the building?

GIBSON

I'm afraid not. Something is disrupting the imaging camera.

ATLAS

That's their central command. Probably full of operations intel.

GIBSON

There's a high probability of that.

Her expression is full of contemplation -- whether or not to go down.

She keeps looking around and spots CARGO TRUCKS pulling in, full of barrels.

She follows their tire tracks as far out as her faceplate can see, up into the mountains.

ATLAS

Must be coming from the mining bases.

From the lead truck, a Rebel steps out -- rugged features with a scar running from scalp to jaw. His right hand is an advanced anthropomorphic robotic prosthetic.

He smacks the truck and they're driven into the compound. This Rebel clearly carries authority. He's their LEADER.

Atlas' gaze follows him as he walks over to a --

BURIAL SITE

The corpses of three Pilots lay inside of a grave that's dug into the dirt.

A Pilot who's still alive is dragged over. Stripped naked, beaten, humiliated, caked in blood and grime.

Atlas zooms in more and recognizes him --

It's the Captain.

Horrified, she watches as the Rebel Leader pulls a gun out and without fanfare, puts a bullet in the Captain's skull, execution style.

The Captain falls to the dirt.

Atlas tries to hold it together.

Two rebels toss his body into the grave and start covering it with dirt.

THEN

The Rebel Leader looks up -- either sensing a presence or just surveying the skies.

Atlas quickly leans back into the cave, pressed up against the wall, hiding.

Moments later, she risks looking back down and spots the Leader walking into the compound.

She sees her colleagues get buried. Glowers.

Atlas hesitates, looks back through the tunnel, casts her gaze across the forest...

Weighing her options. She can escape or she can go in.

She looks down at the outpost and thinks...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, probability of surviving a solo infiltration with over three dozen rebels?

Her HUD beeps and chitters, surveying the threats, highlighting the number of enemy reds and weapons.

Numbers and data scroll by, calculations are made.

GIBSON

In similar simulations during your combat training, you scored in the top five percentile. You survived fifty-three percent of your trials.

ATLAS

Fifty-three. So stick to the training, hope for a miracle, and I may not get a bullet in the head.

GIBSON

In most cases, your simulation deaths were either caused by human error or mechanical failure, not enemy efforts. This increases your probability by four percent.

ATLAS

(remembering, concerned)

I froze up the first six runs, and this isn't a simulation.

GIBSON

In combat, adrenaline floods your nervous system, which makes it harder for you to think. Your basic fight-or-flight instincts can easily take over. Precisely where your training comes in. Ensuring that your body keeps going until your mind catches up with it.

ATLAS

Lucky me.

Atlas takes another beat to think this through. And in a moment of bravado...

She takes a step forward and JUMPS OUT.

Igniting her thrusters and using them to hover downwards.

She lands in the nearby woods, scurries over to a tree and hides behind it.

Looking around to make sure nobody saw or heard her. She has a better vantage now, not blocked by the trees.

There's a buzz of activity on the base. Dozens of rebels.

She fixes her eyes on the nearest crate, where two rebels are chatting.

Atlas glares at them. Gripped with a newfound intensity, she decides to pad over to the crate and hide behind it.

She quietly unsheathes her force blade and circles the crate.

In one swift move, SLASH! SLICE! She CUTS both of them down. Noiseless. With a fierceness we didn't see in her before.

She hides their bodies behind the crate. Blood pooling out, staining the ground in arterial red.

She looks around, makes sure the other rebels in the distance didn't see.

She counts out the number of heavy turrets aiming their cannons into the sky -- FIVE of them.

She types into her minicomp and her faceplate CAPTURES PHOTOS of the turrets.

The photos minimize and drop into the HUD's database.

She scans the base and takes more photos -- the layout, the satellites, their perimeter fence, the command building, the number of trucks, their cargo, the fuel crates, and the rebels -- including the ones burying the Pilots.

All of the photos storing into her HUD.

A SEARCH JEEP with specialized all-terrain wheels pulls in, hauling cargo. *But not fuel barrels...*

Atlas zooms in and spots a broken down DRONE in the back, as the jeep drives to the rear side of the compound and pulls into the bay doors.

An idea swirls in her head. She sweeps her eyes around the command building, it's swarming with rebels.

THEN

She makes moves. Gliding from crate to crate, tree to tree, she manages to make it to the east side of the compound --

Jumping behind a concrete wall and hiding.

The bay doors are close by, the all-terrain jeep drives back out and passes by. No more drone in the back.

NOISES

Atlas presses up against the wall, as --

A rebel steps out from the side door, covered in grease and oil, lighting up a cigarette with his greasy hands.

He takes a drag, exhales a plume of smoke as --

A pair of mechsuit gloves PALM his head from behind and CRACK! Twist his neck a full 180.

He collapses.

Atlas takes one look back towards the receding jeep, turns and enters through the side door into the building.

INT. COMMAND BUILDING - DAY

She enters a dim corridor and removes her rifle.

The walls are concrete and covered in dust. Steel pipes run the length of the hall, far past the throw of her rifle laser.

She starts moving through. Hyper alert, rifle in hand...

Further into the compound. Hearing noises. HAMMERING noises. WELDING noises.

She slows her gait and approaches a door, looks into an --

ARMORY

Stored with hordes of weapons. Including some drones.

And two MECHSUITS. Laid out across a table in the REPAIR BAY of the armory.

A handful of rebels hover over the mechsuits working on them.

Cigarette smoke rising. Welding flames sparking as they try to open the suits up. Guts and circuitry hanging out.

She spots the newly arrived broken drone, labeled numerically -- *Drone 004* -- as a rebel removes a piece of fried circuitry from it and takes a look at it.

Atlas clocks their positions in her HUD, three RED enemy dots.

THEN

She steps in and BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Three single rifle shots drops them dead.

She looks back down the corridor to make sure no one is nearby before holstering her rifle and stepping over to the mechsuits.

She quickly opens a panel on a suit and rips out the comm unit from the CPU.

She removes two specific CHIPS and stores it in her suit compartment.

NOISES

Rebels approaching.

Atlas starts dragging the dead bodies behind a crate and hides them.

Blood streaking across the floor.

Moments later, a rebel, who's holding a tablet in his hand, enters the room and freezes in his tracks when he doesn't see the others.

His eyes drift downwards to the BLOOD.

He turns around to run as --

SMASH! Atlas' armored fist CRACKS his skull.

Dropping him to the floor, his tablet falling out of his hand and cracking.

Atlas hovers over him, hulking in her suit.

She looks back, goes over to the door, looking down the hall towards the distant command room.

Thinks...

ATLAS

Gibson, how much fusion does the cloak use up?

GIBSON

One percent per thirty seconds.

ATLAS

Fuck, that's a lot.

She looks back down the other side of the corridor towards the bay doors -- *a clean escape if she wants* -- heavily pondering her next move.

THEN

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Gibson, activate cloak.

A HUMMING sound activates...

Her suit FLICKERS, a veil of energy envelops it and bends light around the armor, shielding it, conforming to its form and rendering Atlas almost invisible.

She doesn't waste any time --

She leaves the armory and heads down the corridors, weaving through rebels that are streaming past, right under their noses.

Her fusion already drops to 10%.

Sweating bullets, she continues to glide through, bends a corner and arrives to the --

INT. COMMAND ROOM - DAY

A wall of monitoring SCREENS.

Numerous HOLOGRAMS with Techs posted at their respective stations.

A proper military-like control room.

Atlas, still invisible, glides over to one of the empty stations.

She types in her minicomp and a DATA STICK appears from a compartment.

She inserts the stick into the computer module.

ATLAS
Gibson --

GIBSON
I'm on it.

Her onboard computer accesses their database.

Everything that's on the hologram replicates on her HUD.

Tiers of holographic data and folders appear:

Weapons purchase logs

Pictures and coordinates of mining bases

Other outposts

Ranks, titles, positions of the rebels

The colonies and space stations they're targeting

Their entire operations manifold.

AND THEN

Buyers - fuel

ATLAS

Alright, here we go... a list of
all the assholes buying their shit.

She clicks UPLOAD and everything begins uploading onto her HUD.

Atlas looks around.

Spots the Rebel Leader in the distance, hovering over a map with fellow rebels.

Her fusion drops to 9%.

Atlas looks back at the hologram. Hordes of data being uploaded.

A rebel walks right past her and senses a presence --

Looks directly at her.

She freezes. Scared shitless.

A long, tense beat.

Fusion drops to 8%.

The rebel looks away and she sags with anxious relief. Looks back at the screen.

It finishes uploading onto her HUD and she yanks the data stick out.

But suddenly, her CLOAK DISAPPEARS --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, what the hell--

GIBSON

Fusion is critical, I was unable to support the cloak while running energy to the suit--

The rebel whips his head over. SHE'S SPOTTED. They lock eyes.

AS BLAM! BLAM! She DRAWS fast, shoots the rebel down.
Surprising herself with her reaction time.

ALL EYES FALL ON HER.

She looks around and sees over thirty rebels staring at her.
Her HUD painted with red dots everywhere. Like a doe
surrounded by a herd of lions.

FUCK

Atlas puts on a brave face though...

Glances at her fusion once more before whipping out her pulse
guns and falling into action --

BRDDDDDDDT! She jackhammers shorts bursts of energy fire as
stations EXPLODE, holograms distort, and she dives behind a
computer station.

PANDEMONIUM ENSUES

Rebels start coming at her from every direction.

She has to think quick --

She removes a sticky grenade and SLAPS it onto a wall. Sets
the timer to 1:00 and activates it --

00:59... 00:58...

Rebels close in around her.

She removes SMOKE GRENADES and tosses them --

They EXPLODE. Gushing torrents of dense yellow smoke inside
the compound.

Allowing her to TAKE OFF through the smoke.

She bursts into the nearest corridor. Hightails it through.

Chased. Shot at. Yelling. Commotion behind her.

She reaches an exit door and bursts --

OUTSIDE

And is immediately engulfed in enemy fire. Dozens of enemy
weapons open up simultaneously.

Her suit is hit. THWACK! THWACK!

She dives behind a crate.

She toggles and quickly removes a TRI-BARREL energy rifle --

She jumps out from the crate, RUNNING to another one, arm extended with the tri-barrel --

RAT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT! Automatic rounds blasting out of the gun at hyperspeed.

Insane amount of tracer fire flying across at each other.

She takes out half a dozen with the freak gun -- BRDDDDT! It runs out of ammo.

Her HUD flashes: TRI BARREL CELLS EMPTY

THWACK! THWACK! Her suit takes heavy fire.

RAT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT! Energy fire screaming in.

REBEL

Watch out for the fuel barrels!

Too late -- KABLOW! One of the barrels explodes!

The shards splinter into rebels, knocking some off their feet, impaling others. Dirt explodes. Dust hangs.

Atlas toggles, removes the pulse guns and lights up the rebels around her with efficient, SINGLE SHOTS to save on fusion. Getting better, more confident.

She takes one down -- a center-mass shot. Another goes down -- head shot. Another rips through the armor of a rebel and severs his spine.

She spots the distant trucks and the all-terrain jeep --

TAKES OFF towards them!

Running in a blur, shooting -- BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM!

She runs through a solid wall of enemy fire that drops her to her knees, she hits the deck, rolls and SPRINGS FORWARD in one fluid stride and continues firing -- BRDDDDT!

CLICK! She empties her cells.

She grunts as pulser fire rips through the armor on her thigh and causes her to stumble.

Her knee joint freezes as a rebel SMASHES her helmet with a metal rod.

She grits her teeth and SWINGS back at the rebel, crushing his skull with her armored fist, her eyes ablaze with fury.

The tolls of battle leaving their marks on her without mercy.

A hailstorm of energy fire tears into her suit. She stumbles. More rebels run at her, shooting. It's overwhelming, her suit is getting FUCKED UP.

Atlas falls and crawls behind another crate.

She pops her faceplate and wipes the stinging sweat from her eyes, unable to see through the flames and yelling everywhere.

She closes her faceplate back up, blinks, looks at the countdown in her HUD --

5...4...3...2...1...

Covers up, as --

KABOOM! An EXPLOSION rips through the command building.

The flames engulfing nearby rebels. SCREAMS. CHAOS.

Atlas takes in the sight, fires dancing across her faceplate.

She looks back at the trucks and jeeps, steels herself, pistols in hand, and takes off towards them.

DASHING through smoke. Through gunfire. Jumping over crates, over dead bodies.

Firing her pistols at close range as rebels appear. POP! POP! POP!

Running her mags dry, Atlas drops one gun and uses the other as a hammer, cracks the face of a rebel.

She engages in hand-to-hand combat. Snapping a neck, crushing a collar, spinning around and executing a roundhouse.

Atlas is morphing into a fucking warrior.

She's almost at the jeep, takes the final dash as --

THWACK! A burst of ELECTRIC FIRE SPARKS as a rod smashes into her chest plate -- ZZAAPP -- and puts her on the floor --

Writhing, blue arcs of electricity dancing down the length of her suit.

She grunts in pain, looks up to see a ROBOTIC HAND -- a scarred face -- the Rebel Leader.

Holding the rod, looking down at her, BLUE ARC OF ELECTRICITY dancing up and down the rod.

He swings it down on her again and she rolls out of the way.

ZAP! It hits the floor, sparks.

She springs back up, the rod swings in again and she parries the next blow.

She spins and fires off her remaining pistol --

But we see a small DEVICE gripped in the Rebel Leader's other hand, which he quickly presses -- it's a DEFLECTOR -- activating an ENERGY SHIELD to neutralize the bullets.

She unloads another THREE rounds -- KABLOW KABLOW KABLOW -- he blocks them again, violently deflected, but the force of the shots are enough to send him stumbling, like being shot in the chest wearing a bulletproof vest.

He launches himself at her, she meets him midair -- SMASH! Their FISTS collide -- armored hand versus robotic hand -- we hear metal and steel crunch.

Both stumble backwards, lock eyes and step back in again -- engaging in hand to hand --

In an awesome sequence of martial arts kicks and punches. 500 pounds of metal and steel FLASHING by, as --

SMASH, she connects with his face, armored-hand meeting jaw, sending his head whipping sideways, as --

SHE DRIVES HER BOOT into his chest and sends him flying into a truck -- SMASH!

Bloodied, Atlas limps over to the all-terrain jeep. Hops in.

The jeep roars to life and she PUNCHES the gas. Driving off into the woods, the base in flames behind her.

The Rebel Leader appears from the smoke, trashed and bloodied, and sees her driving off.

A truck arrives and picks him up. A FLEET of them take off after her.

ON ATLAS -- roaring out of there.

A chase ensues through the forest.

A moment later, they start LIGHTNING Atlas up. Cannon fire erupting all around her.

The Leader with twenty fighters. Firing down hill. Ordering his men down the sides to flank her.

Rebels take the big .50 heavy machine guns atop some of the jeeps and let them rip --

RAT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT! Chopping down rows of trees. Gun fire and tracers streaking in after her.

She tries her shoulder cannon -- It's dead.

Her HUD reading: FUSION CRITICAL 5%

The forest starts to become shrouded in a VEIL OF MIST the further she drives into it.

Bright energy fire FLASHES around her, blazing in.

The woods start to drop away as the ground slopes downwards and Atlas finds herself barreling into a --

RAVINE

Reaching the bottom of the hill, she cuts across the dried-up stream and roars across the ravine, flanked by hills on both sides.

Driving over rough surface area that was once a sea-bed. Sprawling. Dry. Tortured rock formations jutting out.

The sky overhead growing darker.

She weaves through the multitude of rock formations. The jeep rattling, suspension taking a beating.

Leading her further and further into the wastelands.

The rebels still in hot pursuit, roaring down the hills, dust kicking up, flanking her.

Tracers start flying in towards her again.

BLAM! A bullet hits her, PIERCING her armor. She does her best to keep hold of the wheel.

Her HUD flashing: ARMOR PIERCING BULLETS DETECTED

THEN

What appears to be a METEOR streaks across the darkening sky, leaving a trail of flame and white smoke.

Atlas magnifies on her faceplate and traces the source...

SPOTTING

A massive ELECTRICAL STORM in the distance.

A beat of heavy contemplation. And in a moment of insane bravado --

ATLAS

Can't believe I'm doing this--

She cranks her wheel and starts heading towards the storm.

The fleet follows her with an air of hesitation, all exchanging looks. The rebels slip on their masks and goggles.

Atlas' faceplate REFLECTING the storm.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Prepare shoulder cannon missile volley!

GIBSON

There's inadequate fusion for missile volley.

ATLAS

Redirect every weapon to one volley!

GIBSON

Aye, aye.

The schematics in her HUD begin fluttering, every weapons system shutting down.

The only system remaining, blinking red, is the:

SHOULDER CANNON MISSILE VOLLEY

Atlas' gaze fixed straight ahead. Steeling herself. The rumbling growing louder and louder.

The jeep starts to shake. She hangs on to the wheel.

A wall of dust and darkness ahead. Racing to meet Atlas.

MOMENTS LATER --

WHOOSH! The jeep enters the behemoth storm.

Dust, blinding lightning, thunder RAGING. Clusters of debris smashing down, COLLIDING with each other, exploding into more debris. Tornadoes swirling.

Scared shitless, Atlas stays the course, driving wildly. Dodging flames and burning debris.

She weaves through as best as she can, barely evading getting smashed, roaring around craters, flames, and massive GEYSERS of rocks exploding...

A few of the rebels are crazy enough to follow her in.

ATLAS
FIRE MISSILES!!

A series of missiles burst out of the shoulder cannon --
Exploding the rocks and debris that are flying down at her.
Allowing Atlas to barely edge through.

Leaving a trail of fiery debris in her wake, which CRUSHES the two rebel jeeps on her tail.

Atlas looks back, sees this.

Light begins to breach through on the other end of the storm.

She looks back, about to clear it when --

A rock touches down in front of her, exploding, debris flying, SMASHING against the jeep --

LAUNCHING HER OUT. She flies through the air.

CRASHES hard. Rolls. Bone crushing. Concussive. Violent beyond words.

ALERT signs going off on her HUD, as she finally rolls to a stop outside of the storm.

Not moving.

A piece of metal from the jeep dug into her stomach through her suit. Blood drips out from the side.

Her HUD displays her heart rate as BEEEEEP... it FLAT LINES.

GIBSON
Heart beat not detected, preparing
countershock.

The suit delivers a countershock to her heart. Her chest jolts. She's still flat lining.

It delivers another electric current. Nothing.

The suit increases the charge.

BLAST. The third charge hits her hard. And moments later, the flat line starts BEEPING and Atlas GASPS for air.

Eyes wild, lungs heaving. Like the first breath of a newborn child, it burns her lungs but reclaims life.

She starts to come to... shell shocked...

GIBSON (CONT'D)
Welcome back, Atlas.

She looks down, groaning in pain, and sees the metal shard pierced into her stomach through the suit. Blood runs down her face and drips off her chin.

Fusion blinking at: 2%

She bellows in pain as she pulls herself into sitting position and leans against a rock.

She starts to calm her breathing. Finding her bearings. Sitting for a few long, simmering moments.

In immense pain, through a cracked faceplate, she looks down at her wound again...

Looks back at the storm and can't believe she made it through.

ATLAS
Give me a systemwide damage report.

Damage reports flow across her screen. Blinking red with critical and irreparable wounds. Isolating the wound in her stomach, a skull fracture along with the clean break in her right femur. We see --

Engineering-2 and Fusion-2: destroyed

Engineering-1: destroyed

Fusion-1: offline

Missile numbers 2-11 and 14: destroyed

Forward armor: down to 6 percent...

GIBSON

Your portside armor is down to ten percent. The feed to your pulse rifle is damaged. Rifle cells are dry. Energy feed is offline.

Although concerned, Atlas just grunts in acknowledgement, possibly not as fazed anymore.

She types into her minicomp and the data she stole from the compound shows up on her HUD.

A look of relief. She closes it back up and just sits there for a beat.

She looks down at the shard again.

ATLAS

Medical.

A small compartment opens revealing a med kit. She pulls out a smashed capsule and looks at it...

GIBSON

I'm afraid your painkillers are destroyed.

She puts the capsule aside, and rests her head back.

ATLAS

Prefer whiskey anyway.

GIBSON

Although proven to be an effective form of pain relief, alcoholic contents do not come standard with your mechsuits, as it is also proven to impair judgement.

ATLAS

It was rhetorical, Gibson. Nevermind.

She looks down, knows she has to do this, she has to remove it.

Atlas closes her eyes for a moment, mentally preparing herself.

Opening her eyes back up, she opens her suit's chest plate to reveal her tight-fitting bodysuit underneath. She looks down, sees the metal piece piercing through her bodysuit and into her stomach, blood soaked around it.

She unzips her bodysuit leaving in her just her sports bra, tone body glistening in sweat.

Her body is riddled with welts, and blood is generously seeping out of the wound.

She forces focus, controlling her breathing, scared.

She reaches down and grips the shard, distorted in her broken faceplate. She grits her teeth, steels herself and PULLS it out of her stomach, SCREAMING in pain.

Tears pour down her cheeks. She fights it, quickly grabbing the gauze and patching it over the wound.

She takes a moment to catch her breath... gulping for air...

GIBSON

You must consume less oxygen,
Atlas.

She shuts her eyes, in pain, trying to breath easier.

The diagnostic locates the armor-piercing bullet in her stomach as well.

Atlas manages a chuckle through obvious pain, shaking her head.

She reaches into her medical compartment and removes magnetic pliers, along with a laser stitching device. Trying to calm the shaking in her hands.

After another beat, she grabs the pliers and DIGS into her wound.

Sweating, gritting her teeth, she pushes the pliers deeper and bellows, breathing heavily...

ATLAS

This sucks... this FUCKING SUCKS...
Breath, Atlas... breath, it's
almost over...

She finally manages to remove the bullet, looks at it for a moment and places it down.

She picks up the laser stitcher. Holds it over her wounds as a series of FLASHES produce tissue across them.

She sits there, drenched in sweat, getting stitched up.

Waiting for it to finish, Atlas glances around again, making sure no one is coming.

The stitching finishes and she zips her bodysuit back up, resting her head back for a moment.

Gazing up at the celestial sky, the triplet moons.

She looks at her HUD: FUSION 2%

She reaches into her compartment again and removes the two CHIPS she boosted off of the suit.

She opens the CPU panel in her suit pack, replaces the broken chips.

Her HUD flutters and displays: GUIDANCE SYSTEM BACK ONLINE

Finally, a small victory.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Triangulate rally point.

The HUD hones in on a GPS map and triangulates on a blinking red dot.

Atlas studies it, looks back at her fusion reading 2%.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
I should make it. Barely, but I should make it.

An air of anxious relief. She clammers to her feet, burying the obvious pain.

Starts walking, staggering, busted up. The expansive terrain sprawled out before her...

EXT. ROCKY REGION - RALLY POINT - DAY

Atlas arrives to a region with brown and copper-colored plateaus and buttes. Layers of sandstones. Reminiscent of a Martian landscape.

She crests a hill... anticipatory...

But as the view opens up, her heart drops because she sees --

NOTHING. There is no ship.

ATLAS
What the...

Atlas is in state of confusion.

She quickly checks her guidance systems. Double checks it. She's in the right place.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Where's the ship?!

She spins around, nothing. Panic gripping her.

THEN

She spots a pillar of SMOKE in the distance...

Magnifying with her faceplate, she sees something that resembles a ship, fear washes over, as she makes haste towards that direction...

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

Atlas arrives and her worst nightmare comes true -- sees the ship, Epsilon, SHOT DOWN.

The crash site is a graveyard of flesh and metal. Pieces of the ship and bodies strewn everywhere. Swimming in fuel and flames. Embers and ash carried by the light wind.

She digests.

A tittering laugh escapes her lips. Manic denial. Her lip quivers. Surrounded by red mountains. Desolate, uninhabitable, lonely, being hunted.

She drops to her knees and her angst hardens into rage.

She SCREAMS. There is no one to hear her. To rescue her. She will die here.

Atlas looks back up, her eyes burning, anguished.

Forcing herself up, she lumbers towards the ship.

INT. EPSILON - DAY

She enters to see everyone slaughtered. SPARKS dripping from the ceiling, destruction everywhere, some floodlights on, red alarms silently flashing.

She pops her helmet and takes it off. Her hair matted in blood and sweat. Sweeping her eyes around the detritus.

She makes her way through the ship...

In a series of quick cuts --

Atlas checks the different rooms, checks the dead bodies...

Panic gripping her...

Hardly anything left that's working...

ATLAS

No... this isn't happening... This
isn't happening...

She HURLS her helmet across the room... Defeated.

EXT. DOOR - CORRIDOR - EPSILON - DAY

Atlas arrives to a familiar door --

Opens it to reveal her quarters.

She enters it, everything uprooted, in shambles.

Sticking out of the detritus is the framed poem we saw in the beginning. The family photo on which it's written sticking out of the broken frame.

She picks it up, looks at it for a moment and takes a seat on what used to be her bed.

She just sits there, caked in blood and grime, suit nearly destroyed, nothing left but her dead stare.

And her breathing. A soft, catatonic breathing.

She feels something breaking inside her head -- a terrifying sensation.

The walls seem to warp, closing in on her. She braces herself like she's falling.

And she just cups her ears, fighting the PANIC. Sobbing.

She collapses against the wall. CURLS UP in the corner like a child, quivering from tears that won't come. It goes on and on.

UNTIL

A NOISE.

She freezes.

Listens.

Something is inside the ship.

Atlas stores the poem in her suit and rises, slowly approaches her door.

Peeking out, she hears a HUMMING sound...

THEN

She sees it --

A DRONE. Scanning the ship. Searching for her. We recognize it: *Drone 004*. The one that was being worked on at the base earlier.

It starts to fly towards her direction and she hides behind her door, leaving it cracked open.

The humming grows LOUDER, arriving right outside of her door.

Atlas remains quiet, tense.

The door pushes open and the drone enters her quarters.

A charged beat.

THEN

The drone whips around and --

No Atlas.

INT. CORRIDOR - EPSILON

Atlas quietly makes her way through, having snuck away, she looks back and sees --

The drone leave the bedroom and enter the corridor.

She jumps behind a dark alcove and enters the reactor room.

Moments later, the humming sound grows closer and the drone slowly drifts by.

She remains there until no more humming.

Cautiously, Atlas steps out and makes her way to the observation deck to see --

The drone flying away.

She relaxes. Stands there for a beat, looking out of the deck onto the planet.

THEN

A flash of realization washes over her. She starts to remember something...

Atlas turns and rushes out of the room...

INT. POD BAY - EPSILON - DAY

Atlas bursts into the ship's ESCAPE POD bay.

She frantically looks around, eyes landing on --

A ROW OF ESCAPE PODS.

Two of them are missing.

A glimmer of hope.

She runs to the pod's control pad and jabs some keys -- a patchy hologram appears with a key code request.

She types in a code and suddenly --

A recording appears in the hologram. It's the SUIT TECH from the beginning, yelling hastily into the screen, chaos occurring behind him --

TECH - HOLOGRAM

We've been shot down! I managed to deploy two rescue pods! The pods have launch systems, they can get you off the planet once you activate --

A HORRIBLE crash! The tech is launched backwards, objects fly across the hologram before it DISTORTS and the screen collapses.

Atlas quickly types in the panel again and another screen appears displaying --

POD 2 DEPLOYED.

She types: ACCESS POD 2 TRACKER.

A map appears and she tracks the pod. BLINKING RED with coordinates.

MORE HOPE

Atlas looks at the map, routes the best way to get there. Uploads the map to her HUD and makes haste out of there.

EXT. EPSILON - ROCKY REGION - DAY

Atlas cautiously steps off the ship to leave.

She looks around, making sure the coast is clear, takes her first few steps and --

BRDDDDDDT! The ground around her explodes with gunfire.

She covers up, looks around.

Drone 004 appears again. Having stalked her. Pointing all four gun barrels at her.

Catching her off guard.

ATLAS

Shit...

The drone holds her prisoner there as...

Atlas looks over and spots --

A jeep appearing in the distance through the shimmering heat, dust kicking up behind it.

Her momentary hope starts to fade. A look of disappointment in herself etched across her face.

The jeep arrives.

From it, the Rebel Leader and three of his crewmen step out, masks on.

Sauntering over towards Atlas and surrounding her.

Tight on the Leader's necklace with five Pilot Dog Tags hanging from it like human scalps.

We move across the masks of the other rebels, faceless, goggles staring back at Atlas.

The Rebel Leader puts a hand on the drone like a pet --

REBEL LEADER

Good girl.

The drone retracts its canons. The Rebel Leader looks back over at Atlas.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

Going somewhere?

He removes his baton and without fanfare or hesitation --

SMASHES the side of Atlas' helmet, we hear a CRACK, her brain rattles inside of it.

Sending her crashing onto the ground.

She's not dead. Close. The Leader and his men staring over her as she struggles back to her knees. Staring up at him through blood soaked eyes, broken, dying. Defiant.

Atlas refusing to go gently now... she's becoming a different person.

Her right hand fumbling for her flip knife in her front compartment.

He just stares at her broken mangled armored fingers trying to open the knife. Drops it.

Atlas looks down past her knife -- the poem has fallen out. Blood stained.

The Rebel looks at it... Reading it...

His faceless mask looks back at her.

He slowly lifts his foot, pushes against her chest. Pushes her back down flat on her back.

He looks at her chest plate -- "*ESC - Pilot 571*"

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

571. I've killed plenty of Pilots like you. With your fancy fucking suits. Cruel sending you all the way out here. It's a life wasted if you ask me, especially for a young, pretty girl like you.

Atlas tries to move but he keeps his boot planted firmly on her chest.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

You're fighting a battle you can't win. You know that. Don't let them tell you this world will be any different than the last. Humans, we leave one place and find another to destroy, that's how we survive. Like a fucking disease.

We hear him laugh under his mask.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

We are a violent species, 571. We take that violence with us wherever we go. Can't escape it.

Tight on Atlas dying, staring up at triplet moons hanging above her through her cracked faceplate. Something particularly calm, picturesque, exquisitely beautiful about it.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

Twenty other rebel outfits just like us out there. Come a long way from home. For opportunity. New start. Stop spoiling the fun.

He removes a GUN. Kneels down, hovering over her.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

Thing is I don't even have to shoot you.

He TAPS on her faceplate with the gun.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

I take this off and the air will kill you.

He looks up into the sky.

REBEL LEADER (CONT'D)

'Least you get to die with a nice view. Don't get this on Earth.

He looks back down at Atlas' eyes through the clear acrylic faceplate.

Unbeknownst to him, that from the inside, Atlas is reading her HUD, which says:

FUSION 1.5%

ALL SYSTEMS DISENGAGED

Except for one *blinking system* -- SUIT PANEL RELEASE.

She holds a beat, steels herself --

THEN

ATLAS

Engage.

The suit's BODY PANELS, including her chest plate, BLAST OFF-- flying outwards -- instant ejection.

The chest plate SMASHES the Rebel Leader in the face and sends him to the ground, allowing Atlas to --

Remove a trigger and activate it. A PLASMA BLADE that's millimeters thin and nearly invisible unsheathes from it.

She digs deep, forces herself up and WOOSH! The blade FLASHES. Her muscled right arm swings with the full and practiced extension of a trained swordsman, SLICING off a rebel's head.

The others run towards her, she spins and CUTS a second one down.

Brings her arms together and swings the blade downward into the shoulder and out the right hip of the third. His two halves fall apart like a piece of trimmed meat.

The drone whips over, gun barrels rolling out, trying to get a target-lock on her through the blur.

The Rebel Leader reaches for his gun but she lunges towards him and THRUSTS the blade through his stomach --

Using him as a body shield against the drone's fire, plasma perforating and scorching his body as she removes his gun and FIRES BACK!

Strafing the drone with energy fire and sending it into a wild spin.

The drone jerks around and goes crashing onto the dirt ground.

Unbeknownst to Atlas, that its basic electronics are still humming, cycling.

Atlas releases the Rebel Leader as he slides down and collapses, blood pooling out from underneath him.

With the protective armored-shell of her suit gone, only the bare, steel skeletal frame, weapons compartments, and detailed circuitry remain entombing Atlas.

She stumbles backwards and barely holds herself up against the ship, trying to keep herself standing because if she goes down this time, she's not getting up.

She finds her bearings, conserving what few ounces of energy she has left, running on fumes, as she surveys the four bodies around her.

Her eyes fix on the jeep that the rebels arrived in. Not wasting any time, she limps over to it, climbs in and drives off.

And her final journey takes us into a harrowing SEQUENCE to the pod...

...Tracking with Atlas... continuing to drive... growing increasingly weak and pale... across the rugged terrain... past rich brown craters, small lakes, steaming hot springs...

...she lifts her canteen to her mouth while driving and nothing comes out... no stream or river nearby, no water to drink...

...Atlas crossing through obsidian mountains, mysterious black sand dunes... Glancing around for rebels...

... Ashes start to float through the air... massive plumes of smoke billowing into the sky, entering a region that's surrounded by VOLCANIC MOUNTAINS...

...The clouds growing darker... the region hostile, the ground rumbling...

She continues driving... fighting the weakness, the injuries, the hunger, the thirst... determined to get the fuck off this planet.

Her fusion at 1%, blinking RED.

BUT THEN

She starts to slow her jeep, coming to a gradual stop, her heart sinking... Looking straight ahead at --

EXT. LAVA LAKE - BASE OF VOLCANO - DAY

A fiery LAKE OF LAVA.

Supplied by the large serpent of orange magma slithering down the volcanic mountain and into the lake.

Exploding with geysers. Immense heat. With only small, distant ROCKS connecting one side to the other.

Atlas can't believe it, seething with frustration. She looks around. No way around it, not enough time.

Worry in her eyes. She climbs out of the jeep.

ATLAS

Gibson, how many thrusts do I have left?

GIBSON

Calculating possibility of five thrusts remaining.

ATLAS

Five...

Atlas takes a breath... counting the rock formations jutting out of the lava... planning out her path...

She steels herself, this is it, there is no other choice, she's almost there.

A CHARGED BEAT.

THEN

She hits the THRUSTER and launches over the lava to one of the rocks.

Boots hit rock, LANDING, almost falling over, balancing herself.

She breathes, surrounded by fiery molten rock.

She looks towards the second rock, THRUSTS, hovers over to it.

LANDS. Smoother this time, balances herself. Takes a beat. The heat severe. Magma exploding around her.

Her HUD flashing: TEMPERATURE CRITICAL

Atlas is drenched in sweat.

Another THRUST carries her over to the third rock.

Lands it. Almost there.

She takes a breath, hits her thruster again but nothing happens -- CLICK.

She's out.

She tries again -- CLICK CLICK.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

No, no... C'mon, please...

Tries again -- CLICK.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

NO!

Her HUD reads FUSION at 0.5%.

GIBSON

Thrusters are disengaged, ma'am.

ATLAS

You said FIVE thrusts!

GIBSON

I said the *possibility* of five thrusts, ma'am. I apologize if my semantics were not clear.

Atlas isn't amused.

GIBSON (CONT'D)

Your increased use of oxygen and energy exerted for hydraulics changed the calculations. I do apologize.

ATLAS

Son of a bitch! Try auxiliary power.

GIBSON

Negative, not enough in auxiliary for thrusters. I'm sorry, Atlas.

Atlas sinks.

ALL HOPE DRAINS FROM HER FACE.

She's stuck on this fucking rock. After all of this.

Too numb to even comprehend tears.

Feeling just pure nausea hitting her.

She doesn't scream or thrash. She just stands there.

Frozen in a hopeless stupor.

Her hollowed eyes look utterly broken.

Gazing out over the fiery lake. Flares of orange exploding out of the lava.

The world just blurs. She zones out.

For a moment, it looks like she's going to give up and just let her body plunge into the lake. End her misery.

The cauldron of fiery lava below her flowing, swirling, dancing for her... tantalizing her...

Her boot inches forward to the edge, rocks chip off and fall into the lake.

WHOOSH. WHOOSH. Incinerating. Bright flashes.

She's leaning over now. One baby step away from going over.

Her face shrink-wrapped with anguish. As she contemplates it.

Another inch forward. If the rock breaks, she's gone.

Her leg is trembling.

A solitary tear rolls down her cheek.

The lava below her now SNARLING. GROWLING. ROARING.

A fire-breathing beast. Wanting to devour her.

And just as she's about to fall --

And give in to the fiery beast. To her demons. And make the wrong choice again --

Her face morphs, eyes shifting like the cloudy membranes of a shark in "hunter mode"...

And she steps back.

Fuck you.

She will not fall prey. She will not be its next victim.

She will show fortitude. There is still hope. There is still fight.

Looking back up, she fixes her eyes on the distant ROCK FORMATIONS at the edge of the land.

She knows what she has to do. No choice. No time.

She shakes her head to clear the fog.

Takes a breath. Aims her arm towards the rock, TILTS it upwards some, and --

ATLAS

Harpoon.

THWAP! The harpoon BLASTS out of the slick side panel and TORPEDOES towards the rock, wire spooling out --

CLANG! It chews into the distant rock and the wire goes taut.

Atlas removes the harpoon's panel from her suit and wedges it into the rock she's standing on.

She looks at her HUD: WEAPONS SYSTEMS DOWN

She dumps the rest of her weapons -- rifle, shoulder cannon, pulse guns, pistols. Stripping the suit. Unloading weight. The weapons falling into the molten lava and vaporizing.

Here goes.

She wraps her armored hands around the wire, in pain, and starts putting one hand in front of the other.

Moving along the wire, straining with each forward movement...

Hanging just a few feet above the lava.

KAWOOSH! A geyser ERUPTS, the exploding lava almost blasts her.

Small globs of lava landing on her suit and melting through it, hitting skin.

Atlas SCREAMS, barely hanging on to the wire.

She keeps going though, pure grit at this point. Breathing heavily.

GIBSON
Oxygen level is critical.

She tries to control her breathing.

Halfway through...

She stops, needing a break, her arms can barely take it anymore.

She looks down, angry red lava below her.

She looks back up, sees the end, so close.

She starts moving again and SLIP!

Her hand goes and she barely hangs on with the other. One sudden move away from falling.

ATLAS

Oh fuck... oh fuck...

She hangs on, manages to get her hand up on the rope again and continue climbing.

After a few more agonizing climbs, she makes it to the end.

Releases the rope and lands on her boots -- THOOP!

Her legs nearly give out, as she holds herself up against the rock, catching her breath.

She looks over to a HILL in the distance, freedom lies on the other side.

FLASHING RED LIGHTS fill her HUD. Lighting up with a giant O2 indicator deep in the red zone.

OXYGEN REMAINING: 2 MINUTES

A countdown begins... 2:00... 1:59... 1:58...

She leans against the rock, laughing at the absurdity. Having come this far only to run out of oxygen by a couple of minutes.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna make it in two minutes, Gibson.

Her laughter turns into tears.

BEEP... BEEP... BEEP... The countdown continues. It doesn't care about her feelings.

It's all on her.

She reels her sobs back in and pulls herself together for one last run.

Remaining calm, she just closes her eyes for a moment. In the face of certain death, against all odds, she finds focus.

The beeping countdown continuing, filling the silence.

Atlas searching for something within her she didn't know was there before. Something that's only forged under the greatest of pressures.

Not ready to resign to her fate just yet, she takes calm, measured breaths...

She opens her eyes back up, and although beaten to the brink of death, things suddenly seem more vivid. Time seems to have slowed for a moment and she can think clearer. Colors are brighter, sounds more perceptible, as though the whole universe has suddenly come into focus.

Gripped with purpose, eyes burning with the fierce will to survive, the desire to live, to fight --

She digs... As deep as she can dig. For that final push.

Looking at the direction she has to go, up the hill...

She thinks...

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Gibson, how much fusion do the hydraulics and med systems use up?

GIBSON

Eighteen percent, depending on extremity of usage.

ATLAS

Reroute all the fusion to the O2 tanks.

GIBSON

Given bodily damaged received, advising highly against this--

ATLAS

Thanks for the concern, Gibson but right now I need you to shut up and follow my instructions, do you copy?

GIBSON

Copy that, Atlas.

Atlas INHALES and holds her breath, as she removes her helmet, her hair matted in sweat and blood, face looking like she went twelve rounds with a prize fighter, fingers mangled and bloody...

Full warrior mode.

She starts rigging the suit. Rips out the O2 tank from the backside panel and manually runs a fusion wire into it from the Central Processing Unit.

Holding her breath, miserable, but her will unshakeable right now.

Her hand shaking, she splices the CPU fusion wire with her teeth, opens the O2 junction panel and fuses the wires together.

She quickly puts her helmet back on and GASPS for air. After sucking down some much needed air, she falls back into action.

ATLAS

Disable everything. Weapons, meds, hydraulics, thrusters, neural link, everything, and redirect them all to the O2 unit.

GIBSON

Disengaging hydraulics will result in--

ATLAS

I know! I'll hold it up! Just do it!

Her HUD flickers, and her suit SHUTS DOWN completely, the hydraulics giving out.

The weight of the remainder of the suit immediately BEARING DOWN on Atlas.

She STRAINS. Veins rippling as she somehow finds the strength to hold up three hundred pounds of steel exoskeleton while the fusion redirects.

Putting her mind elsewhere. An extraordinary feat of strength. *Realizing she doesn't need the suit to be superhuman.*

Her HUD flickers, we see a layout of her suit showing all of the suit's remaining fusion redirecting to the O2 tank on her back.

ATLAS (CONT'D)

(straining)

Redirect all remaining CPU functions to O2 tanks!

The O2 level on her HUD begins to increase. All the fusion gets transferred to the oxygen tanks.

GIBSON

Transfer complete.

ATLAS

Disengage suit!

POP -- HISS -- the skeleton disengages as the binds, seals, and plates open up --

Allowing Atlas to step out of her shell and --

EXHALE, gripping the rock to hold herself steady as the suit collapses to the ground.

Leaving her in just her ripped and blood-soaked bodysuit, helmet, and O2 pack.

She looks at her HUD:

OXYGEN: .23% 11 MINUTES

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Eleven minutes. I can do this.
Gibson, confirm we still have the
stolen data.

Tiers of data flow across her HUD -- the rebel operations manifolds from the compound.

GIBSON
Everything is still here, Atlas.

ATLAS
Good.

She unzips her suit to take a look at her leg --

It's blueish-black from the femur break. She rips a piece of her bodysuit off and wraps it tightly around her leg to keep the bone in place.

Excruciating pain, almost collapsing, tears in her eyes, she holds herself steady and zips her bodysuit back up.

She reaches down to her suit and undoes one of the HYDRAULIC PISTONS from the leg frame --

Using it as a makeshift WALKING STICK.

She sees the bloodied poem on the ground, covered in dust, holds her gaze there for a moment...

Doesn't need it anymore. As she turns and starts limping away as quickly as she can...

Atlas treks it. Holding herself up with her walking stick, braving it through the harsh conditions.

It's a matter of absolute will power. Her face focused on the mission at hand, on survival...

EXT. HILL - DAY

Atlas slugs it uphill, legs wobbly, arms shaking, blood and tears in her eyes and face. Something preternatural keeping her going.

Receding from the volcanic region as a storm looms in the sky ahead of her. The hue of the terrain becoming vibrant beneath the darkened sky.

Her HUD flashing red again: OXYGEN CRITICAL: 4 MINUTES

Although only a few meters to go, the hill might as well be a mountain. It doesn't look like she's going to make it.

She keeps pushing, keeps straining, groaning with each step, white-knuckling the walking stick, fingers digging into it, desperately holding on.

Her oxygen level flashes: 2 MINUTES

And the countdown begins again... 2:00... 1:59... 1:58...

Atlas starts crying from the pain, it's absolutely unbearable.

Taking baby steps at this point, INCHING forward... GASPING for each breath...

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Atlas' thrashed body appears from behind the rise...

Blood seeping out of her wounds. Her vision turning blurry.

Only seconds to go... The countdown BEEPING: 00:30... 00:29... 00:28...

Breath wheezing. Her bodysuit singed, melted, ripped. At the very edge of death.

As she finally crests the hill and drops to one knee, barely holding herself up with the walking stick, lungs heaving for air...

Seeing it. Her rescue. Her salvation...

THE POD.

A small laugh escapes her breath.

The countdown at... 00:20... 00:19...

She has to hurry... She forces herself up and starts her trek down the hill --

BUT THEN

The faintest humming sound carries through the air...

It sends chills down her spine. As she cranes her head back and sees --

A GLINT.

Instantly knowing what it is. THE FUCKING DRONE.

She magnifies her faceplate to confirm it: *Drone 004*. It's metal frame singed with the plasma fire Atlas hit it with, two of its gun barrels broken off but it's still running.

She looks back over towards the pod -- just 20 yards away. Might as well be 20 miles.

Harnessing every last bit of energy she has left, she makes haste, limping towards the pod.

Her leg gives out and she FALLS to the ground.

The countdown reaches... 00:10... 00:09... 00:08...

Bleeding, spit, sweat, snot, tears as she claws her way across the burning ground.

Crawling on all fours towards the pod.

Her arms and hands struggle to support her and she collapses again. Fighting for air, fighting to keep her eyes open.

The countdown hits 00:03... 00:02...

And Atlas SUCKS IN the largest breath she can in her weakened state and holds her breath as her HUD flashes RED:

WARNING OXYGEN OUT! WARNING OXYGEN OUT!

Holding her breath, she conjures the strength and pushes herself up again, starts crawling again.

One hand in front of the other. Arms shaking wildly. Like a baby animal's first steps.

Her face is tinged blue from the lack of oxygen. Starting to succumb to the asphyxiation.

Every agonizing second feeling like an eternity.

Atlas finally reaches the pod, managing to grab the handles with her mangled hands and use all her might to drag herself up.

Completely out of air, the slow painful death has begun.

But she opens the main panel, pushes the screen, engaging the doors --

HISS -- they open.

She weakly drags herself inside of it. Eyes beginning to fade.

The pod door SHUTS, she reaches up, barely managing to pop her helmet off and --

GASP FOR AIR.

She coughs. LUNGS BURNING. Refilling with oxygen.

Her hair matted in blood. She looks out of the window and sees the drone getting closer.

No time to waste, chest still pumping for air, she grabs the straps, locks herself in.

She looks at her surroundings, taking in the hardware.

She speaks into her mastoid implant, her voice throaty...

ATLAS

Gibson, I'm hooking you in. Help me fly this thing.

Atlas removes a DATA CHIP from her helmet and inserts it into the POD's Command Module.

GIBSON

I'm online, Atlas.

ATLAS

Initiating thrusters.

She reaches up and uses all her strength to PULL a red lever.

The thrusters ignite, ROARING.

She sees the drone getting closer. Thinking to herself --

ATLAS (CONT'D)

Drone can't follow me out of atmosphere.

A pregnant beat.

THEN

LIFTOFF.

Atlas is SLAMMED back into the acceleration couch.

The pod begins to rise into the air. Launching upward with incredible force.

Rocketing towards the heavens. The stormy sky directly above her.

The drone PULLS UP and follows her.

The pod shaking. Violent. Chaotic. Punishing.

Atlas is shaken, mumbling words to herself that we can't hear. It looks like she's rambling.

RAT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT-AT! The pod is raked with DRONE FIRE. Drone 004 is right on her and firing.

The pod gets tossed around, shaking violently, and Atlas hangs on.

She looks at the holographic control panel.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Activating plasma shield!

She reaches over and jabs a few buttons.

The outside of the pod is veiled in a plasma shield. The energy fire collides against it but is unable to penetrate through, SPARKS showering upon each impact.

She glances out for a moment, sees the drone on her ass.

The pod is halfway up, blasting towards the storm in the sky.

Atlas hangs on tight. The force of the inertia is rough and it jerks her around.

On the ceiling, condensation begins to form.

Some LIGHTS GO OFF. Atlas steels herself. Restrained against her seat, white-knuckling the handles.

The cabin vibrates with a loud rumble and suddenly --

BOOM! The pod is jerked violently -- Canon fire rocks the pod.

Drone 004 is unleashing its cannon. SMASH! More canon-fire collides with the pod, breaking off a blaster, tossing Atlas around.

An ALARM BLARES. The screen reads "Plasma shield failure"...

GIBSON
Activate additional thrusters.

Atlas toggles the screen but SMASH!

Another missile hits the pod and destroys two more blasters, throwing it off its course. The nose turning away from the sky.

The impact is felt inside and a panel falls off. A small smoke trail is formed around the wires.

ATLAS
SON OF A BITCH!

GIBSON
Redirect starboard thrusters.

Atlas tries to focus inside the shaking, spinning pod. Tries to refrain from puking or passing out as she peruses the screen and redirects the blasters.

The pod stabilizes some.

MALFUNCTION SIGNS start going off. Atlas sees the drone still in pursuit.

ATLAS
I need to go faster!

GIBSON
Activate the escape boost, Atlas.

She barely lifts her hand and finds the button on the screen.

GIBSON (CONT'D)
Hang on tight. This may hurt.

She steels herself and presses it.

A small controlled EXPLOSION erupts on the rear thrusters, CATAPULTING the pod forward -- KAWOOOOOSH!!

SLAMMING Atlas back against her seat.

It ROCKETS ahead at tremendous speed for several moments.

The G force restrains Atlas, she clenches her jaw, almost unbearable.

Her eyes drift from terrified to serene as she fades, barely staying conscious.

Breaking away from the drone, which is slowing down, struggling to follow the pod much higher.

The initial boost wears down, leaving the vessel to continue flying at the achieved speed away from the planet, away from drone fire.

GIBSON (CONT'D)
Are you conscious, Atlas?

ATLAS
I think I broke some ribs.

GIBSON
I'm sorry. Activate super hydro blasters.

Atlas looks back at the screen, finds it and activates it.

Ten slick side panels open around the pod like wings, revealing hydro blasters. They ROAR to life and FIRE OFF white-blue flames, maintaining the speed set by the escape boost.

The contrails from the hydro blasters spiraling into the sky from the spin. Pushing the pod out. Leaving the planet.

Keeping Atlas tense in her seat, condensation drops fall from the ceiling as she gets closer to the storm.

The drone starts to fall back.

Relief washes over Atlas...

ATLAS
It's working, Gibson... It's working...

She hangs on, spinning, watching GR39 receding.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Exiting atmosphere!

The pod enters the storm.

EVERYTHING IS SHAKING.

Atlas closes her eyes. Clenching her jaw. Doing her best to stay conscious.

And finally --

KAWOOSH!

She bursts through the storm, breaks through atmosphere and into --

SPACE

Silence.

Atlas opens her eyes.

A million stars. The Milky Way pours through it all like a river of light.

Her tiny pod floating through it.

SPECTACULAR

Atlas' eyes wet with tears. Still in shock that she made it through.

She activates the communication panel and speaks --

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Mission control, this is Pilot 571,
do you copy?

A long, pregnant beat.

Nothing.

ATLAS (CONT'D)
Mission, this is Pilot 571, Atlas
Shepherd, do you copy?

Again nothing. Her hope sinking.

THEN

The faintest thread of a radio transmission stitches its way through the rumbling silence --

COMMS
571, this is mission control, state
your location--

An overwhelming wave of joy consumes Atlas, as she begins to cry.

ATLAS

I'm in a rescue pod inside the Kora system, exiting GR39 atmosphere, requesting an intercept.

A tense beat.

COMMS - MISSION CONTROL

Copy that, 571, we'll set an airship rendezvous.

Tight on Atlas. Wiping the tears coursing down her cheeks.

She made it.

Her face a portrait of raw emotion.

Although a lonely, tiny pod floating through deep space, a sense of profound comfort finding her... Like a bud must feel at the exact moment when light pierces its petals open...

Shedding her past. Her fears. Experiencing rebirth.

She digests. Grateful.

ATLAS

I promised you a poem.

GIBSON

You did.

She takes a moment. The stars reflected in her glassy eyes.

ATLAS

Swallowed by hell,
Into shattered chaos I broke.
As my last tears fell,
A fire awoke.
From ashes I crawl,
Forging the strength to stand tall.
Without stumble,
Without fall.

A silent beat.

THEN

GIBSON

That's quite beautiful, Atlas.

A smile.

GIBSON (CONT'D)

Would you like to activate the
meditation module until arrival?

Atlas keeps her gaze fixed straight ahead...

ATLAS

Negative... Got a pretty nice view
right here, Gibson.

As she sits back, relaxing her shoulders some, gazing out to--

The universe spread out before her. Clouds of colorful
interstellar gas and dust brush-stroked across deep space.

Absolute quiet. She can hear her own breathing. Starting to
feel at home up here.

As she continues to soar. Towards freedom. Towards a new
start.

FADE OUT.