

WORLDS AFTER

Written by

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Homestead on the Corner - Story 8

EXT. DECISION POINT, ALASKA - DAY

A still and quiet beach scene. Calm waves crash over the sands, seagulls cry... but there are no human voices. Then...

A radio dial turns, tuning through channels. Snippets of a million different voices, including some familiar ones.

The sounds start one by one, then begin to layer over one another. The chorus turns to cacophony, growing louder and louder until....

POP. Static overrides all of them, then gradually fades to silence. Only the waves and the wind and the birds... and a crash of thunder.

OPENING THEME

EXT. OUTSKIRTS - HOLY CROSS, ALASKA - EVENING

The cold, muffled world of heavy snowfall. A persistent wind throws it into the air, hissing as it scrapes along the banks.

BILL
(English accent)
Figure this storm will let up soon?

TONY
(annoyed)
I wouldn't count on it.

BILL
Bugger.

TONY
You don't have to stay out here if you're just going to complain the whole time.

BILL
But then it wouldn't be any fun!

TONY
Who said it's supposed to...

A little ways off, footsteps crunch through the snow.

TONY (CONT'D)
What the hell is that?

BILL
 (dryly)
 It sounds like someone coming
 through the snow towards us.

TONY
 I know that! Who would be on the
 road on a night like this?

BILL
 You mean besides you and I?

The footsteps grow louder until they're right in front of the
 guards. The guards raise their weapons.

TONY
 Hold it right there!

The footsteps stop.

DOC
 (heavy Russian accent)
 Good evening, gentlemen.

BILL
 (slightly sarcastic)
 Out for a bit of a stroll, are we?

DOC
 (puzzled)
Angliski? Strani.

TONY
 What's he saying?

DOC
 (disappointed)
 Ah. *Amerikanski.* Should've guessed
 from the gun.

Tony raises his rifle.

TONY
 (angrily)
 Show a little respect, *comrade* --
 last time I checked, this land
 belonged to the U S of A.

DOC
 (CHUCKLING)
 Yes. *Belonged.*

BILL
(VOICE CRACKS)
What...
(COUGHS)
Ahem. What's your business in Holy
Cross, stranger?

DOC
(irritated)
Absolutely no concern of yours.

TONY
Well we're *making* it our concern.

BILL
(worried)
Tony...

DOC
(amused)
Hmm. Any particular reason for such
personal interest?

TONY
Well let's see -- you're wandering
into town in the middle of a
blizzard so no one will see you.
The last time I heard Russian
accents was during the channel
invasion of '44, and oh! Your
backpack looks like it's holding
enough supplies to make the person
who confiscates it a very rich man.

DOC
(academic tone)
Hmm. All very good reasons. Very
cogent argument. My compliments.

TONY
So?

DOC
(confused)
So what?

TONY
You have any explanation for
yourself, *comrade*?

DOC
Oh. Well, no.

TONY
(incredulous)
No!?

DOC
I mean, I'm sure I could come up
with one if I really tried, but
there seems little point in wasting
my time doing so.

TONY
I'll show you what the point is...

He cocks his rifle.

BILL
Tony!

TONY
Stay out of this!

BILL
Not a bloody chance! We're supposed
to scare people off, not...

Doc CHUCKLES to himself. Both guards turn towards Doc.

TONY
Something funny, old man?

DOC
You two are adorable.

TONY
Excuse me?

DOC
Your friend wants to protect me.
You want to shoot me. Problem is
you can't... and he really
shouldn't.

BILL
(confused)
Beg your pardon?

Doc flicks a switch, and electricity arcs across the space.
The two guards CRY OUT, then collapse as the energy cuts out.

Doc walks over to the two unconscious soldiers, picking up
both their rifles. He cocks one experimentally.

DOC
 (TUTS)
Amerikanskiy. They never learn.

He tosses the weapons aside, then starts dragging one of the soldiers along.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Best get you both inside... it's going to be cold tonight.

He opens the door of a small shed, GRUNTS as he pulls one in, and then goes back for the other.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Any chance either of you knows where the Tavern is?

Bill GROANS QUIETLY in his sleep.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Ah. Well I'm sure I can find it on my own. Gentlemen.

Doc slams the door of the shed behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLY CROSS TAVERN - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

A small but rowdy crowd has gathered at the only drinking establishment in town. JEERS and CHEERS fill the thick, smoky air as a giant fire crackles in the middle of the room. A six-string guitar plays slightly out of tune on the far side.

BARTENDER
 (yelling over crowd)
 Yes, yes, I heard you, I heard you!
 Pint of Aleshine coming right up...
 Oy! Oy! Teller! Keep yer mangy paws off Harper unless yer payin'! Yeah, that's what I thought...

All those sounds fade down. Doc is delicately tinkering with some device in a (relatively) quiet booth at the back of the tavern. Quiet footsteps approach him.

DOC
 (muttering to himself)
Pizdets...

HARPER
(salaciously)
Well hello there...

DOC
(not even looking up)
No, I don't want another drink,
thank you.

HARPER
(LAUGHING)
I'm not the waitress!

DOC
Niet?
(pause, looks up)
Hmm. No you're not.

Doc turns back to his work. Not one to be shut down, Harper pulls up a chair. It takes Doc a moment to notice.

DOC (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
May I help you?

HARPER
(double entendre)
I was hoping I could help you.

DOC
(forced to play along)
What with?

HARPER
(practiced seduction)
Well, it's going to be rather cold
tonight.

DOC
(disinterested)
Indeed.

HARPER
(really trying to win him
over)
I just thought you might like
someone to help keep your bed warm.

Doc stops, SIGHS, and sets his tools aside.

DOC

I know what you're trying to do. I can't say I approve, but even if I did, I wouldn't be interested. Please, go away.

Doc turns back to his work, attaching a component.

HARPER

(hurt)

Jeez, talk about a cold shoulder. With a personality like that, I'd take what I could get, *friend*.

DOC

(confused by her remark)

Excuse me?

HARPER

Well, it's not like anyone else is... *propositioning* you tonight.

Doc thinks about that a moment.

DOC

I think you've misunderstood me, miss...

HARPER

Harper.

DOC

Miss Harper. It's not that I don't want to pay you for your... work. I'm just not interested. Period.

HARPER

Oh. Well if you're looking for another guy, then I think Sal will be in later...

DOC

Niet, niet... no. I'm not interested. In anyone. Ever. Am I... am I being clear?

HARPER

(realizing)

Oh my god, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize... I mean, I didn't think...

DOC
It's... fine. I know I'm...
unusual.

HARPER
Well, you could've just told me you
were ace. That would've helped.

DOC
(surprised)
I... didn't think you'd know what
that meant.

HARPER
(slightly annoyed)
What, because I'm some ignorant
little prostitute in a backwater
shit-hole?

DOC
(backtracking)
No, because a lot of the smartest
people I know didn't know what it
meant either.

HARPER
(warming a little)
Well, at least I'm in good company.

An awkward silence falls between them.

DOC
(sheepish)
I... believe we've begun on the
wrong foot. I apologize.

HARPER
(LAUGHING)
Takes two to tango, friend. So what
brings you to the Tavern, if not
the drinks or the... company?

DOC
(suddenly shutting off)
Umm... Just business.

HARPER
And what's that then? You a...
tinker?

DOC
(worried)
Well... you could say that.

HARPER

(LAUGHING)

Oh come on! You know what I do. I'm sure your business can't be any more *private* than mine.

DOC

You... you do make a point.

(pause)

I'm a scientist. Engineer, actually. I'm in town to buy some parts.

HARPER

(pointing)

For that thing?

DOC

What? Oh no, this is only a small component of what I'm working on.

HARPER

(genuinely curious)

And what are you working on?

DOC

(trying not to answer)

It... it...

(notices someone)

Okhuyet', what's he doing here?

HARPER

Who?

(turns in chair)

Oh, shit.

DOC

(surprised)

You know who that is?

HARPER

(nodding)

Proctor Howell. Our very own resident holier-than-thou.

DOC

(hurried)

I need to hire the use of your bedroom.

HARPER

(taken aback)

Excuse me?

DOC
(desperate)
I need a place to hide for the
night. If the proctor finds me
here...

HARPER
You? I thought he was here for me.
Again.

DOC
Either way, we both need a reason
to disappear discretely, *da?*

HARPER
(business mode)
You willing to pay?

DOC
Pay? There's no time for...

HARPER
There's also no time to be cheap.
Can. You. Pay?

DOC
(mind spinning)
I have some components in my bag I
can give you... Transistors,
Radios...

HARPER
Seriously? Radio? What kind of
idiot do you take me for?

DOC
Radi boga... fine, fine, I have a
fuel cell heater in my bag. High-
efficiency. You won't need to buy
firewood for the next ten years, at
least. Deal?

HARPER
(pleased)
Huh. I think we have a deal. Step
into my office, Doc.

Doc picks up his stuff and follows her through the thickest
part of the crowd.

FADE TO:

INT. HOLY CROSS TAVERN - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A creaky wooden door swings open, and two fairly rushed sets of footsteps tumble in.

DOC

(irritated)

Was it really necessary for you to kiss me? I already told you I'm not interested in...

HARPER

Stuff it, doc.

(shuts door behind her and listens)

The proctor saw us on the stairs. How else would you suggest I hide your face?

DOC

(angry, then realizing)

I...! Oh. That's... rather ingenious, actually.

HARPER

Well, I'd be lying if I said that was the first time I tried that trick. Besides, seeing people having a good time is the one thing the proctor can't stand. I like to twist that knife in every once in a while.

Harper crosses the room, strikes a match, and lights a kerosene lamp. She twists the knob, and the flame whooshes up.

DOC

(trying to be friendly)

That's a very nice lamp, Miss Harper. Plenty of lumens.

HARPER

(sarcastic)

Thanks. Perks of working night shifts.

DOC

(distracted)

And quite a collection of books, as well.

Doc crosses the room, examining a bookshelf

HARPER
(suddenly shy)
Really just.. Decoration. Make the
room feel classy for the clients.

DOC
(focused on the books)
I doubt that.

HARPER
(worried)
Excuse me?

DOC
Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two
Cities*. Unabridged. With a bookmark
about halfway through.

HARPER
It just came like that...

Doc pulls the book off the shelf and flips it open.

DOC
Hmm. Not unless the previous owner
was also named *Harper* by some
enormous coincidence...

Harper snatches the book out of his hands and throws it back
on the shelf.

HARPER
(venomous)
Don't. Touch.

DOC
I'm only saying...

HARPER
(furious)
You keep your hands off my things,
understand? You can use the chair
or sleep in the bed if you really
have to, but if you touch anything
else, I'll go straight to Proctor
Howell myself, understand?

DOC
(taken aback)
I... *Da*... yes, I understand.

HARPER
 And it's payment up front. In full.
 (beat)
 That means *now*, Doc.

DOC
 Oh. Right.

Doc turns and rummages in his bag for a moment. As he does, Harper takes A DEEP, SHAKING BREATH, trying to keep control of her emotions.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Here it is. Should keep this room warm for the better part of a decade -- longer, if you manage to find a working hydrogen cell to replace...
 (notices something)
 Miss Harper? Are you alright?

HARPER
 I...
 (SNIFFS)
 Fine. Just peachy.

DOC
 (realizing he's hit a nerve)
 Those books mean a lot to you, don't they?

HARPER
 (angrily)
 Why does it matter to you?

DOC
 Because it matters to you. And if we're going to be spending the evening in one other's company, I'd prefer not to spend it with a stranger.

HARPER
 (dismissive)
 Why not? I do it all the time.

DOC
 (giving up)
 If you'd rather not talk about it, that's alright as well.

HARPER
 (sarcastic)
 I think I'd rather not, Doc.

DOC
 (shrugging)
 Your choice. Here.

Doc noisily drops the heater into Harper's hands.

HARPER
 How do you turn it on?

DOC
 Power switch on the top.
 Temperature regulator's just below
 it.

Harper switches it on, and it begins emitting a low, pleasant hum, almost like the roar of a small fire. She sets it on the mantle.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Where should I put my bag?

HARPER
 (distracted)
 What? Oh. Anywhere's fine.

Doc crosses the room. There's a moment of silence as he sets his backpack down, fussing with it a little.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (reluctantly)
 May I ask you a question, Doc?

DOC
 (dad-joke)
 Only if you want an answer.

HARPER
 (ignoring it)
 Why's the Proctor after you?

DOC
 Hmm?

HARPER
 I mean, I know he's after me
 because I'm a depraved whore and
 all that, but why would the church
 be interested in a traveling
 tinker?

DOC
 (nervous)
 Oh. *Tipa*, I... well, it's more of
 a... difference in values, I
 suppose you could say. And like you
 said, he's a bit of a...

HARPER
 (stop bullshitting)
 Doc.

DOC
 (SIGHS)
 Let's just say that the Proctor
 disapproves of my work for the same
 reason he disapproves of yours.

HARPER
 He's got a stick up his ass?

DOC
 (CHUCKLES)
 He doesn't understand it. Nor does
 he want to.
 (smiling)
 Not everyone can accept people's
 differences the way you do.

There's a brief pause between them.

HARPER
 (out of nowhere)
 They were my mom's.

DOC
Chto?

HARPER
 The books. They were my mom's. From
 before the Storm.

DOC
 (knowingly)
 Ah. I see. And now they're yours.

HARPER
 Yes.

DOC
 And your mother?

HARPER
 Gone. Long time ago.

DOC

Oh. I'm sorry.

HARPER

It's not your fault. It's not anyone's fault.

(lost in her memories)

She wanted me to love reading as much as she did. She used to hide books she thought I'd like in the bottom of my backpack, just so I'd have something to read at recess. The library was all digital by then, but it still had a nook by the window that was perfect for reading and writing.

DOC

(delighted)

You're a writer?

HARPER

(souring)

I'm a tavern-girl.

(pause, sheepish)

But yes, I write. When I can find the time.

DOC

I would love to read your work sometime.

HARPER

(CHUCKLES)

I doubt that.

DOC

No really, I would! I've tried to write, but I've never been able to. The words, they're... *Difficult* for me.

HARPER

(LAUGHING)

They're hard for everyone, Doc. It's about getting over yourself and writing anyway.

DOC

Oh. Perhaps you're right.

HARPER

(brightly)

I usually am. Except when I'm not.

They both fall silent. From downstairs, they can hear the faint sounds of the crowd.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I'm going to sneak a look out. See if the Proctor's still down there.

DOC

Oh. *Spasibo*.

HARPER

You're welcome, Doc. Hang tight.

DOC

To what?

Harper's already out the door. Doc fidgets on the bed for a moment, then pulls out a device and switches it on. The hum of the electrical weapon he used earlier rises.

DOC (CONT'D)

(muttering to himself)

Slight loss of cell integrity from the cold... should re-insulate the battery compartment when I get the...

HARPER

(from outside)

Hey! Let me go!

DOC

(calling to her)

Harper?

HARPER

Ow!

Doc jumps up and rushes out the door.

INT. HOLY CROSS TAVERN - HALL - CONTINUOUS

Doc rounds the corner and stops.

DOC

Proctor!?

PROCTOR HOWELL

(struggling to hold Harper)

Ah, Doctor. I see you've met miss Harper. Shouldn't be surprised...

(MORE)

PROCTOR HOWELL (CONT'D)
 Degenerates of a feather flock
 together.

DOC
 Let her go! She isn't involved!

HARPER
 (struggling to get free)
 Involved with what?

PROCTOR HOWELL
 Perhaps she wasn't. Now she is. I
 should thank you, Doctor... I never
 could convince Mayor Wilkins to
 criminalise her detestable
 profession, but protecting a known
 felon -- that's a hanging offense.

HARPER
 What?

PROCTOR HOWELL
 Shush darling, the menfolk are
 talking. Now, Doctor, if you'll
 just... OW!

A small, sharp knife is drawn and stabbed into Howell's thigh
 as he speaks. Harper kicks free of his grip.

DOC
 (surprised)
 Harper!

PROCTOR HOWELL
 (in agony)
 What the *fuck*, Harper?

HARPER
 You're not the first pig who's
 tried and grab me from behind.
 Consider yourself lucky -- I was
 taught to aim for the femoral
 artery.

PROCTOR HOWELL
 CLERICS! To Arms!

The general hum of conversation turns to cries of confusion
 and the sound of loading weapons. Footsteps rush up the
 stairs.

PROCTOR HOWELL (CONT'D)

(panting)

I have seven men downstairs, all armed and waiting for you to try and escape.

DOC

(sarcastic)

Really pulling out all the stops, aren't you, Proctor? That must be the town's whole contingent.

PROCTOR HOWELL

A worthy investment, if it means catching you.

HARPER

Hold on... what exactly is going on here?

PROCTOR HOWELL

Oh? Did he neglect to tell you? The doc's insane. He's building a superweapon down by Passage Sound to kill us all off. The whole province has been on high-alert for the last six years.

HARPER

(uncertain)

You... you said you were here to get parts for something. Is it...

DOC

(desperate)

Harper, please, you must believe me: I'm not building a weapon.

HARPER

(assured)

He says he's not building a weapon.

PROCTOR HOWELL

He's lying.

HARPER

(unimpressed)

And the pot calls the kettle black. Why should I believe you and not him?

PROCTOR HOWELL

One reason Harper: he's one of the scientists who created the Storm.

A moment of stunned silence passes between the three.

HARPER
(horrified)
Oh god...

Doc draws the device from his pocket, depressing the firing switch.

PROCTOR HOWELL
Harper! Get back...!

Electricity arcs through the air, filling the hall. Harper, the proctor, and the clerics cry out, then fall.

Doc shuts down the device, panting. After a moment, he steps forward, picks up Harper, and walks down the hallway.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAIN - CARRIAGE - NIGHT

An old train car rattles and shakes. Harper stirs, GROANS WITH A HEADACHE, then sits up.

HARPER
(pained)
Oh *fuck*, my head...

She tries to stand, but a chain catches her.

HARPER (CONT'D)
What the hell...

She moves her arm, and a pair of handcuffs rattle and catch on the chair she's in.

HARPER (CONT'D)
No. No! Godamnit, no!

She pulls hard at the chain, STRAINING against it before a sliding door opens at the front of the train and she stops.

DOC
(too friendly)
Good morning Harper. Feeling well?

HARPER
(feral)
You fucking bastard!

DOC
 (cheerful)
 I'll take that as a yes. Hungry?

HARPER
 (gaining some control)
 Where I am?

DOC
 (cheerful)
 My home away from home, Miss
 Harper. My Nautilus on rails.

HARPER
 (stop bullshitting)
 Doc...!

DOC
 (SIGHS)
 If you really must know, you're on
 the old Alaskan line, North of
 Anchorage.

HARPER
 Bullshit. The rails are frozen
 over. No one's used them since the
 Storm.

DOC
 (CHUCKLING)
 Yes, I worked very hard to make it
 look that way. It does slow down my
 travel quite a bit, but... secrecy
 is its own reward.

HARPER
 (getting to the point)
 Why am I here?

DOC
 Like I said: Secrecy. Besides --
 the Proctor would've directed his
 anger against you. I didn't want
 your blood on my hands.

HARPER
 (sarcastic)
 Wow. I'm touched. Now let me out of
 here.

DOC
 (stunned)
 What? Why would you want to go
 back?

HARPER

(furious)

Because I don't take kindly to being kidnapped, that's why.

DOC

Kidnapped? Why would you think I kidnapped you?

Harper rattles the handcuffs demonstratively.

HARPER

Hello? Most people don't handcuff guests to a chair. Unless they're into that sort of thing.

DOC

(uncomfortable)

What? No, I just... I needed to tend the engine, and I couldn't have you wandering off. This train's a bit of an old deathtrap until you know your way around.

HARPER

(pissed off)

Oh, so you were protecting me, huh? My fucking hero.

DOC

For goodness sake, Harper, you don't need to make this any harder than it needs to be...

HARPER

Let me off this train right now, or I swear I'm going to...!

DOC

(paternal)

I'm not having this discussion. You are safe here, and that is that.

Before she can reply, he turns and marches off.

HARPER

(yelling after him)

Like having the last word, don't you!?

The door slides shut.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (muttering to herself)
 Prick.

Harper shifts in her seat and draws her knife slowly from its sheath. Carefully, she slips it into the lock on her handcuffs.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
 Now if I'm very lucky, these locks
 are as cheap and old as they
 look...

The lock clicks open, and the cuffs clatter to the ground.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (pleased with herself)
 ...Aaaand I'm still as good as I
 think.

Harper stands slowly, creeping towards the door Doc just went through. The train lurches and rattles.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (hyping herself up)
 Here we go. Here we go. Let's see
 you talk your way out of this one,
 Doc...

The brakes suddenly screech, and the train rattles to a halt.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (annoyed)
 Shit!

As the train stops, Harper rushes back to the chair, grabs the handcuffs, and slips them over her wrists. The moment they click, the sliding door opens again.

DOC
 Ah good, you're still there.

HARPER
 And where exactly would I go?

DOC
 Oh. Right. All the same, I'd
 appreciate it if you didn't try to
 escape while I'm off the train.
 We're in the middle of some rather
 hostile terrain.

HARPER
(unable to hide her
excitement)
You're leaving?

DOC
(not hearing her tone)
Just for a moment. Holy Cross
wasn't my last stop, after all.

Doc turns, opens the door behind him, and steps out into the driving wind. As soon as the door closes, Harper pops the handcuffs off and stands.

HARPER
Oh don't worry Doc, I won't wander
off -- I'm just going to take your
train and go home.

She rushes to the sliding door, pushes it open, and crosses into the engine.

INT. TRAIN - ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The machinery ticks and hisses as it cools. Whatever the train runs on, it sounds old and worn down.

HARPER
(annoyed)
Jeez Mom, why didn't you hide any
books about trains in my backpack?

She experimentally pulls a few levers, resulting in loud a whoosh of steam.

HARPER (CONT'D)
(just burnt her hand)
Ah! Damn it!

She pushes it back, and the steam stops.

HARPER (CONT'D)
(calculating)
Okay. Okay. New plan. Catch the
doc, and then make him drive me
back. Yeah. That'll work.

She turns and walks out of the engine room.

EXT. ALASKAN WILDERNESS - CONTINUOUS

Harper crunches through the snow after Doc, talking to herself. Her voice can barely be heard over the wind.

HARPER

(muttering)

If I just get up behind him with my knife, it shouldn't be too hard to convince him to take me back. He can't finish his machine if he's dead, so...

VOICES, carried on the wind, drift over to Harper. She GASPS and stops in her tracks, listening.

CHIEF TEAGAN

As you can see, me and the boys got nothin' but the very best parts for ya.

DOC

Hmm. Only if you consider secondhand scrap "the best." Most of this is garbage.

CHIEF TEAGAN

You won't find anything better in the province, I can promise you that!

DOC

I *did* find better. In Holy Cross.

CHIEF TEAGAN

(SPITS)

Civie Scum. If you'd rather deal with them...

As they speak, Harper sneaks closer. The voices grow louder.

DOC

I tried. The Proctor tried to arrest me.

CHIEF TEAGAN

Ha! See, boys, that's exactly what you get with Reformers. Shiny shit and a swift kick in the goolies when they decide you ain't 'civilized' 'nough for 'em.

Several gruff voices CHUCKLE along with that statement.

HARPER
 (whispered)
 Shit, that's a lot of them.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Better to deal with us, doc. Scum
 of the earth, we is.

DOC
Salt of the Earth.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Eh?

DOC
 Never mind. I don't see what I
 requested here. Did you forget to
 bring it?

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Of course not! Boys?

Two goons crunch through the snow, then set down a heavy
 metal container on a rough table.

DOC
 (worried)
 Easy! Easy...

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Take it easy, boss, it's all there,
 just like you asked: 5 kilograms of
 pure, enriched Uranium, still in
 its original packaging. Mint
 condition. Breaks m'heart just to
 part with it.

HARPER
 (whispered)
 Oh my god...

Doc pulls out a small Geiger counter, which immediately
 starts clicking.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Satisfied?

DOC
 (smiling)
 Absolutely.

Doc pulls the case off the table. A dozen guns cock around
 him.

CHIEF TEAGAN
(still friendly)
Ah ah ah, Doctor: Payment first.

DOC
Oh yes, of course... you must
forgive an old man, sometimes I
forget things.

Doc sets the case down in the snow, then sets his backpack
down.

DOC (CONT'D)
What was the amount we agreed on,
again?

CHIEF TEAGAN
(starting to get annoyed)
2,000. Uncut.

DOC
Right, of course. Let me see if I
have it here...

Doc suddenly shifts, raises something, and presses a button.
His electrical weapon sparks, then shorts out.

DOC (CONT'D)
No, no, no -- not now you piece
of...

Doc hits it a few times, but it just dies completely.

CHIEF TEAGAN
What the hell was that, Doc?

DOC
Um... It was...

CHIEF TEAGAN
(darkly)
Because that looks an awful lot
like a weapon. And you look awfully
guilty for someone just doin'
honest business.

DOC
(finally in over his head)
There is a perfectly good
explanation for all of this, I
swear. It's a funny story,
actually...

CHIEF TEAGAN
Gentlemen, shoot this sorry waste
a' skin, will you?

DOC
WAIT, WAIT!

CHIEF TEAGAN
(sarcastic)
What doc? Changed your mind?

DOC
I... I don't have what you want...

CHIEF TEAGAN
Obviously.

DOC
...But I do have something more
valuable. Something I'm sure you'll
want.

There's a moment of tense silence.

CHIEF TEAGAN
Go on.

DOC
(hesitant)
I... I know how to get into Holy
Cross. Their defenses. Their
contingent. Their weaknesses.

CHIEF TEAGAN
Bullshit. No raider's every gotten
within half a mile of those walls
without being shot.

DOC
I have. Several times, actually.
With the Proctor gunning for me, no
less.

CHIEF TEAGAN
And I suppose you want the uranium
for that info, huh?

DOC
Da. And my life as well, but yes,
the Uranium.

CHIEF TEAGAN

(amused)

You'd sell out the civies to save your own hide -- men, women, and children all.

DOC

(uncertain)

Well...

CHIEF TEAGAN

You do know what we're going to do to that place when we take it, right?

DOC

(squeamish)

I think I'd rather not know, actually.

CHIEF TEAGAN

Oh, you'll know. 'cause we're takin' you with us on the attack.

DOC

(terrified)

What? That won't be necessary, the information I provide will be more than enough to get you...

CHIEF TEAGAN

(to the other goons)

Take him to camp and lock 'em up. Tight.

DOC

Chief Teagan, is this really...

One of the bandits hits him over the head with the stock of his rifle. Doc GRUNTS and falls.

CHIEF TEAGAN

Much better. Bastard always talked too much anyways.

Gruff LAUGHTER answers his quip.

CHIEF TEAGAN (CONT'D)

Pack it up boys, we're goin' home.

Their footsteps disappear behind the snow as they march off. It's silent once more.

HARPER
 (defeated)
 Son of a bitch.

She stands up slowly.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 What now, Mom? Go back the train
 and wait? Wait for what? For the
 raiders to take Holy Cross? And
 then what? Ask for my old job back?
 Because hell no am I going to work
 for those animals. But what else am
 I supposed to do? Maybe I could
 figure out how to work that train.
 But even if I get back to town
 before they do, Howell's going to
 hang me anyway. So what else is
 there to....

She stops, realizing what her next move is.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 Shit.
 (beat)
 Really Mom? That's what I'm
 supposed to do? Rescue that
 asshole?

There's no answer but the wind... But even so, Harper SIGHS.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 (decided)
 Fine, fine. I'll do it. But I'm not
 going to be happy about it.

Harper draws her knife, turns, and marches off across the
 snow.

FADE TO:

INT. RAIDER CAMP - LATER

An unconscious Doc stirs awake, GROANING as he sits up.

DOC
 (barely awake)
Der'mo, moya golova bolit...

He sits up, then hits his head on something metal.

DOC (CONT'D)
Pizdets!

BRYON
 (from outside)
 Ah! Sounds like the doc's awake.

Doc tries to move, but chains snap and hold him in place.

DOC
 What is this? Where am I?

BRYON
 (from outside)
 Calm down Doc, you're only gonna hurt yourself. You're in one of Teagan's war-crawlers. Well, in the trunk of one, at least.

DOC
 (horrified)
What?

BRYON
 (from outside)
 Sorry we couldn't find a nice cozy bunk for you. Beats a bullet in the brain though, which is what *I'da* given you..

Doc begins banging at the walls.

DOC
 (panicked)
Let me out! Let me out, now!

BRYON
 (cruel)
 What, is someone a bit claustrophobic? 'fraid of the dark, hmmm? Does the wittle doctor want his mommy...?

Whatever he's about to say is cut off by a sharp blow to the head. The guard GRUNTS, then falls into the snow. Someone fiddles with the keys a moment, then the trunk pops open.

DOC
 H... Harper?

HARPER
 Unfortunately, yes.

DOC
 Oh god, am I glad to see you!

HARPER
 (darkly)
 Trust me, the feeling isn't mutual.

Harper draws her knife and takes a step forward.

DOC
 (panicked)
 Wait, Harper! Let's talk about
 this! There's no reason to resort
 to... What... What are you doing?

HARPER
 (annoyed)
 Picking the locks on these chains.
 Bit tougher than the ones you used
 on me.

DOC
 (embarrassed)
 Oh. Well, to be fair, those were
 more... Perfunctory. They were
 just...

Harper suddenly stops and slaps him in the face.

DOC (CONT'D)
 (stunned)
 Harper!

HARPER
 Fuck you.

DOC
 I...!
 (beat)
 I suppose I deserve that.

HARPER
 Yes, you really do.

The locks spring open, and Doc turns and climbs out of the trunk, GROANING.

DOC
 Oh *god*, I'm not as young as I once
 was.

HARPER
 (LAUGHS)
 Yeah, no shit.

Doc stands up, then looks around.

DOC
(whispering)
Which way did you get in?

HARPER
(pointing)
That way, between those tankers.

DOC
(worried)
God, that's a lot of firepower.

HARPER
(understated threat)
I really hope you didn't tell him
anything about Holy Cross.

DOC
With all this... I hardly think
Teagan needs me to.

CHIEF TEAGAN
You're right -- I don't.

Doc and Harper freeze as a dozen weapons cock above their heads.

DOC
(whispered)
Harper... did you check the tops of
those trucks before you came in?

HARPER
(nervous)
Umm... No?

DOC
Ukhuyet'.

HARPER
What does that mean?

DOC
(hopeless)
It means we're fucked.

CHIEF TEAGAN
Congratulations Doc: you are
officially the smartest idiot I've
ever met.

DOC

(bargaining)

Chief Teagan, it's been a long day for all of us... perhaps you could just let me be on my way without the uranium, and we can agree to just forget this unfortunate...

CHIEF TEAGAN

Get with the program doc. We're way past all that.

(pause)

Who's that pretty little thing you got hiding behind ya, Doc?

HARPER

Oh fuck y...

DOC

(worried)

Harper!

(to Teagan)

Why do you ask?

CHIEF TEAGAN

Well, let's just say I might be convinced to let you be on your way with the uranium... if the girl stayed.

HARPER

This *girl* isn't staying with anyone you raider...!

DOC

(sharply)

Harper!

(whispered)

How good are you with that knife?

HARPER

(confused, whispering)

Pretty good. Why?

DOC

(to Teagan)

We have a deal, chief: the uranium for the girl.

HARPER

(horrified)

What!? You can't just...!

DOC
 (fake anger)
 SHUT UP HARPER!
 (whispering)
 Get a good grip, and don't let go.

HARPER
 What? I... oh.
 (pause)
 Oh, I hate you.

DOC
 Duly noted.
 (to Teagan)
 She's all yours, chief.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Oh yes she is. Come here, little one.

HARPER
 (muttering)
 I'm not little, you fucking creep.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Ooh, quite a mouth on this one, huh Doc?

DOC
 You have no idea.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Well, I'm sure her bark's worse than her bite.

DOC
 (sarcastically)
 Oh, I'm sure.

Teagan walks over to Harper.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 And I'm sure we can fix that tongue of yours... or cut it out. Either way, I'm going to...

Before he can finish his sentence, Harper's knife is out. They scuffle in the snow a moment, then stop.

HARPER
 Everyone! Drop your weapons! Now!

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Don't listen to...

Harper tightens her grip, and Teagan SQUEALS in pain.

HARPER

(whispered)

That's your carotid artery. A little more pressure, and you'll be bleeding out on the snow before you know what's happening. Tell them to *drop their fucking weapons*.

CHIEF TEAGAN

(squeaking)

Drop them! Drop them all, now!

RAIDER

You drop yours, or I kill the doc!

HARPER

(LAUGHS)

Be my guest. I don't like him any more than you do.

CHIEF TEAGAN

Do what I say you idiot! Do it!

After a moment, a dozen guns drop in the snow.

HARPER

Doc, get one of those rifles.

Doc scrambles forward, picks up a weapon, and aims it at the raiders.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Now, "Chief..." We're going to go back to where we came from. Your men are *all* going to stay here. Once we're far enough away, I let you go. Deal?

CHIEF TEAGAN

Go and shove that knife right up your...

Harper tightens her grip again.

HARPER

Deal?

CHIEF TEAGAN

Ow! Yes, yes, you have a...

Teagan stops, listening.

HARPER
We have a what?

CHIEF TEAGAN
Shhh! Do you hear that?

It's faint, but eventually we do -- a whistling higher than the wind.

CHIEF TEAGAN (CONT'D)
Oh shit... EVERYBODY DOWN!!!

A moment later, a mortar shell slams into one of the trucks. Raiders scream as they're thrown off the top, landing in the snow. Chaos.

DOC
Harper! Harper, are you alright?

HARPER
Ow... what the hell was that?

DOC
I'm not sure...

PROCTOR HOWELL
(over megaphone)
*This is Proctor Howell of the
Northwestern Parish. Lay down your
arms and surrender the fugitives.
This is your final warning. You
have twenty seconds to comply.*

HARPER
(GROANING)
Not this guy again...

DOC
He must have followed the train
somehow.

CHIEF TEAGAN
Raiders! Get up and fight, you
idiots!

HARPER
Doesn't look like he's too fond of
the Proctor either.

DOC
Actually, it looks like he's
forgotten all about us. Come on,
run!

PROCTOR HOWELL
 (over megaphone)
*Your grace has expired. May God
 have mercy on your souls.*

Another shell lands, throwing snow and bodies into the air.
 There are gunshots and a few SCREAMS.

DOC
 Wait... wait!

HARPER
 What?

Doc runs off a little ways, grabs the case of Uranium, and
 runs back with it.

HARPER (CONT'D)
 Oh, you've got to be kidding me...

DOC
 Let's go!

CHIEF TEAGAN
 Hey! Hey! Stop those two!

A few raiders fire at them before another Mortar lands,
 throwing them back into chaos.

DOC
 Keep running! Just keep running!

HARPER
 No shit!

As they run, the sounds of war fade behind them.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAIN - ENGINE ROOM - LATER

The train is rattling and steaming along. Doc pulls a lever,
 and it picks up speed.

DOC
 There... that should put some
 distance behind us.

HARPER
 So we're safe now?

DOC
 (pleased with himself)
Da. Safe as sandwiches.

HARPER
 Good.

She punches Doc below the belt, and he GRUNTS as he goes down.

DOC
 (pained)
 What was that for?

HARPER
 (furious)
 What was that for? Well let's see, shall we? Lying to me, kidnapping me, tying me up, selling out my home, and, oh yeah, trying to trade me to a fucking bandit chief!

DOC
 It was all part of the plan...

HARPER
 (cutting him off)
 And if it didn't work? What then? You take the uranium and leave me there?

DOC
 No... I would never...

Harper kicks him in the gut. He CRIES OUT this time.

HARPER
 You know what your problem is, Doc? You don't think you can fuck up. You don't think you can do anything wrong. Well guess what? You did, and you *fucking* can.

DOC
 I... I know that. And... I'm sorry.

HARPER
 (sarcastic)
 Oh, you're sorry? Good for you. Still doesn't change anything.

DOC
(haunted)
No it doesn't. Nothing can change
what I've done. Nothing.

There's a moment of silence between them. Finally...

HARPER
You'd better start explaining Doc,
because I don't know what the hell
you're playing at.

Doc SIGHS, then STRUGGLES into a chair. He collects his
thoughts.

DOC
(confessing)
My name is Doctor Elia Utkin. When
I was a young man, I worked at an
arctic research station as part of
my university training. Then one
summer, the magnetosphere of the
earth went into flux. We still
don't know what caused it, but it
wreaked havoc with every
telecommunications system on the
planet. I was able to communicate
with another scientist in
Antarctica somehow, and so we began
a research initiative at our
respective bases. Eventually, we
thought we had a solution: polarize
the ionosphere to generate an
artificially stabilized magnetic
field. We had only the best of
intentions -- we never could have
guessed the outcome.

HARPER
(realizing, horrified)
The Storm.

DOC
The increased ionic charge created
an electrical storm powerful enough
to level cities. We didn't realize
what was happening until it was too
late to stop it. By the time we
shut off the generators...

Doc breaks off, fighting tears. He takes a DEEP BREATH.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Seven billion dead. Every major
 city in ruins. Governments
 destroyed and no one able to
 coordinate rescue efforts. We
 didn't know what to do besides
 leave our stations and try to help
 where we could. That... that was
 the last time I spoke to her.

HARPER
 Who?

DOC
 (fondly)
 The scientist at the other station.
 Doctor Llewelyn.

HARPER
 It... it sounds like she meant a
 lot to you.

DOC
 (matter of fact)
 She meant the world.

HARPER
 (surprised)
 I didn't think you could feel that
 way about someone.

DOC
 (SCOFFS)
 I think you should know better than
 most that love and sex are not the
 same thing.

HARPER
 I... No. No they're not.

A long, awkward silence passes between them.

DOC
 (anxious)
 Well? What do you think?

HARPER
 It's... a lot to take in, Doc.
 (pause)
 What do you need the Uranium for?

DOC
 (suddenly nervous)
 Oh... er, *típa*, I need it for...
 (MORE)

DOC (CONT'D)

um... For the device I'm working on
at my...

HARPER

(stop bullshitting)

Doc. No more lies.

DOC

(SIGHS)

I'm sorry, it's... become something
of a habit, I'm afraid.

(pause)

I need it to make things right. Or
at least start to.

HARPER

How?

Doc tries to get his thoughts together.

DOC

It's a little hard to explain...
May I show you instead?

HARPER

(joking)

Oh, now he asks if I want to go
with him...

DOC

(serious)

I was wrong to take you from your
home. If you wish to leave, I will
stop to train immediately and take
you back to Holy Cross, no
questions asked.

There's a moment of silence as Harper thinks.

HARPER

Let's see it.

FADE TO:

INT. DECISION POINT - GENERATOR ROOM - LATER

A room full of old computer equipment -- a little quieter
than the train, but not by much. After a moment, a large
metal door opens and shuts.

HARPER

(surprised)

That didn't take very long.

DOC

I've been getting the reactor ready for years. The uranium was the very last piece.

HARPER

So is it...

DOC

It's running. Soon as the reaction gets underway, this station will generate enough power to run every settlement in 300 miles for the next 100 years.

HARPER

(nervous)

That's a lot of power.

DOC

(dismissive)

Not really. Most of them don't even have lights.

HARPER

Even so... a lot of people might get the wrong idea about this place. Or try to take it for themselves.

DOC

I know that. But I'd rather give them a chance to do the wrong thing than no chance to do the right one. I have to believe they'll at least try to work together.

HARPER

I can't say that's very likely.

DOC

It never is.

HARPER

How are you going to get the word out, anyways?

DOC

Radio.

HARPER

(SCOFFS)

Radio? Aren't you forgetting about the flux?

DOC
(CHUCKLES)
Aren't you forgetting I've been
studying the flux for nearly twenty
years? Where there's a way, there's
a will.

HARPER
That's not how that goes...

Doc turns, pulls out a violin case, and opens it.

HARPER (CONT'D)
(LAUGHS)
What, are you going to broadcast
your violin recital?

DOC
(tuning the violin)
Just an introduction. Do you know
what day it is, Harper?

HARPER
Uh... Tuesday?

DOC
Tuesday, December 24th. Did you
know the very first radio
transmission was on Christmas eve,
1906? Reginald Fessenden. He played
too. Apparently it was quite the
success.

HARPER
(SCOFFS)
What, you think Christmas Carols
are going to get people to stop
fighting?

DOC
Not all of them. And definitely not
forever. But it's happened before.
It can happen again.

HARPER
You sure?

Doc doesn't answer, but flicks a few switches and begins to
bow softly. It's instantly recognizable: O HOLY NIGHT.

FADE TO:

INT. HOLY CROSS TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The rowdy night crowd has gathered again, and the same jaunty, out of tune guitar is playing.

BARTENDER
 (yelling over crowd)
 Keep it down, keep it down! Yeah, I
 heard ya... no, I don't know where
 Harper is. How the hell should...

Suddenly, a radio on the bar crackles to life on its own, and one by one, people fall silent. Utkin's playing fills the room.

FADE TO:

EXT. ALASKAN WILDERNESS - CONTINUOUS

Flames crackle as the war crawlers burn. Clerics march through snow, toting rifles.

PROCTOR HOWELL
 Well well well, Chief Teagan. I
 think I'd call that a rout,
 wouldn't you?

CHIEF TEAGAN
 You can take your rout and stick it
 where the sun don't shine, you
 civie son of a...

In one of the cars, a radio crackles, and Utkin's song begins to play.

CHIEF TEAGAN (CONT'D)
 What the hell is that?

PROCTOR HOWELL
 (close to tears)
 Radio. That's... that's radio. I
 can't believe it... I never thought
 I'd hear it again.

CHIEF TEAGAN
 (intrigued)
 Huh. So that's what it sounds like.

They both listen as the song grows louder, drowning out the ambient noise until...

FADE TO:

INT. ANDROMEDA STATION - CONTINUOUS

A peaceful, quiet research station. A centrifuge hums for a moment, then grinds its gears.

ROWAN
(annoyed)
Oh, no you don't.

Rowan hits the device, and it resumes spinning.

DOCTOR LLEWELYN
(amused)
Ah, I see you adhere to the "hit the lab equipment until it starts working" school of thought. Classic.

ROWAN
(surprised)
Doctor Llewelyn! I'm sorry, I didn't expect you to be in this late....

DOCTOR LLEWELYN
Clearly.

ROWAN
It was just a little tap, I promise... there's no way I damaged it permanently...

DOCTOR LLEWELYN
(CHUCKLING)
Relax, Rowan. Sometimes it's the quickest solution.
(beat)
What are you doing here so late, anyway? It's the crack of midnight.

ROWAN
I'm trying to finish up the microbial analysis. Crop yields are down in hydroponics, and I was hoping...

DOCTOR LLEWELYN
It's Christmas Eve, Rowan. The microbes can wait. Go home. Kiss your wife. That's an order.

ROWAN
(reluctant, but relieved)
Yes ma'am.

Laurel switches off the centrifuge, takes a few steps, then stops.

ROWAN (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas, Doctor Llewelyn.

DOCTOR LLEWELYN
(smiling)
Merry Christmas.

Rowan leaves the lab. Llewelyn SIGHS, crosses the room, and switches the centrifuge back on.

DOCTOR LLEWELYN (CONT'D)
(to herself, about the
results)
Hmm... Promising. Very promising.

A radio across the lab crackles suddenly.

DOCTOR LLEWELYN (CONT'D)
What? Is that...

O Holy Night breaks through the static, clean, clear, and delicate. Llewelyn listens for a few moment, then...

DOCTOR LLEWELYN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Merry Christmas to you too, Utkin.

The song plays out, carrying over snow and ice and ruin -- a glimmer of hope in the darkened world.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS